

GEORGE CUMBERLAND TO BLAKE

18 DECEMBER 1808

Dear Blake,

A gentleman of my acquaintance, to whom I was shewing your incomparable etchings last night, was so charmed with them, that he requested me to get him a compleat set of all you have published in the way of Books colour'd as mine are:[1] and at the same time he wishes to know what will be the price of as many as you can spare him, if all are not to be had, being willing to wait your own time in order to have them as those of mine are.

With respect to the Money, I will take care that it shall be reced and sent to you through my Son as fast as they are procured.

I find by a Letter from my son that the picture you sent, he asked you for, which is what I do not approve, as I certainly had no such thing in contemplation when I sent you those very slight sketches from Raffael-I am glad, however, that you found them acceptable, and shall certainly send you a few more as soon as I can light on them among my papers. The Holy family[2] is, like all your designs, full of Genius and originality. I shall give it a handsome frame and shew it to all who come to my house.

When you answer this, pray tell me if you have been able to do anything with the Bookseller-something of that kind would be no bad thing, and might turn out a great one if a competition could be raised by that means among the genuine qymeliars[3] of talents of every sort. You talked also of publishing your new method of engraving-send it to me and I will do my best to prepare it for the Press-perhaps when done you might, with a few specimens of Plates, make a little work for subscribers for it-as Du-Crow did of his Aqua-tinta-selling about 6 Pages for [half *del.*] a guinea to non subscribers-but if you do not chuse that method, we might insert it in Nicholson's Journal or the Monthly Magazine, with reference to you for explanations

with best regards to you & yours, I am always,  
your sincere friend,

G. Cumberland  
Culworth 18 Dec. 1808

1 Cumberland is known to have possessed at least five of the Illuminated Books; see the *Census*, New York, 1953.

2 Perhaps a water-colour drawing of "The Holy Family with John the Baptist and a lamb", which was afterwards in the possession of Alexander A. Weston. Its present whereabouts are not known.

3 A doubtful word, perhaps intended for "cymeliarchs" from Gk. [cheimeliarchos], a treasurer, or storekeeper, as suggested by the late W.E. Moss