

FINE ARTS. WHETHER THEY ARE PROMOTED BY ACADEMIES AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The Champion.
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THE Directors of the British Institution conclude the preface to their catalogue of the works of Hogarth, Wilson, &c. in the following words. 'The present exhibition, while it gratifies the taste and feeling of the lover of art, may tend to excite animating reflections in the mind of the artist: *if at a time when the art received little comparative support such works were produced, a reasonable hope may be entertained that we shall see productions of still higher attainment, under more encouraging circumstances.*'

It should seem that a contrary conclusion might more naturally have suggested itself from a contemplation of the collection, with which the Directors of the Institution have so highly gratified the public taste and feeling. When the real lover of art looks round, and sees the works of Hogarth and of Wilson,—works which were produced in obscurity and poverty,—and recollects the pomp and pride of patronage under which these works are at present recommended to public notice, the obvious inference which strikes him is, how little the production of such, works depends on 'the most encouraging circumstances.' The visits of the gods of old, did not always add to the felicity of those whose guests they were; nor do we know that the countenance and favours of the great will lift the arts to that height of excellence, or will confer all those advantages which are expected from the proffered boon. The arts are of humble growth and station; they are the product of labour and self-denial; they have their seat in the heart of man, and in his imagination; it is there they labour, have their triumphs there, and unseen and unthought of, perform their ceaseless task.—Indeed, patronage, and works of art deserving patronage, rarely exist together; for it is only when the arts have attracted public esteem, and reflect credit on the patron, that they receive this flattering support, and then it generally proves fatal to them. We really do not see how the man of genius should be improved by being transplanted from his closet to the anti-chambers of the great, or to a fashionable rout. He has no business there—but to bow, to flatter, to smile, to submit to the caprice of taste, to adjust his dress, to think of nothing but his own person and his own interest, to talk of the antique, and furnish designs for the lids of snuff-boxes, and ladies' fans!

The passage above alluded to evidently proceeds on the common mistaken notion, that the progress of the arts depends entirely on the cultivation and encouragement bestowed on them; as if taste and genius were perfectly mechanical, arbitrary things,—as if they could be bought and sold, and regularly contracted for at a given price. It confounds the fine arts with the mechanic arts,—art with science. It supposes that feeling, imagination, invention, are the creatures of positive institution; that the temples of the muses may be raised and supported by voluntary contribution; that we can enshrine the soul of art in a stately pile of royal patronage, inspire corporate bodies with taste, and carve out the direction to fame in letters of stone on the front of public buildings. That the arts in any country may be at so low an ebb as to be capable of great improvement by positive means, so as to reach the common level to which such means can carry them, there is no doubt or question: but after they have in any particular instance by native genius and industry reached their highest eminence, to say that they

will, by mere artificial props and officious encouragement, arrive at a point of 'still higher attainment,' is assuming a good deal too much. Are we to understand that the laudable efforts of the British Institution are likely, by the mere operation of natural causes, to produce a greater comic painter, a more profound describer of manners than Hogarth? Or even that the lights and expectations held out in the preface to the British catalogue, will enable some one speedily to surpass the general excellence of Wilson's landscapes? Is there anything in the history of art to warrant such a conclusion—to support this theory of progressive perfectibility under the auspices of patrons and vice-patrons, presidents and select committees?

On the contrary, as far as the general theory is concerned the traces of youth, manhood, and old age are almost as distinctly marked in the history of the art as of the individual. The arts have in general risen rapidly from their first obscure dawn to their meridian height and greatest lustre, and have no sooner reached this proud eminence than they have as rapidly hastened to decay and desolation. It is a little extraordinary, if the real sources of perfection are to be sought, in Schools, in Models, and Public Institutions, that wherever schools, models, and public institutions have existed, there the arts should regularly disappear;—that the effect should never follow from the cause. The Greek statues remain to this day unrivalled,—the undisputed standard of the most perfect symmetry of form. What then has the Genius of progressive improvement been doing all this time? Has he been reposing after his labours? How is it that the moderns are still so far behind, notwithstanding all that was done ready to their hands by the ancients,—when they possess a double advantage over them, and have not nature only to form themselves upon, but nature and the antique? In Italy the art of painting has had the same fate. After its long and painful struggles in the time of the earlier artists, Cimabue, Ghirlandaio, Masaccio, and others, it burst out with a light almost too dazzling to behold, in the works of Titian, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Correggio; which was reflected, with diminished lustre, in the productions of their immediate disciples; lingered for a while with the school of the Carraccis, and expired with Guido; Reni. For with him disappeared—

'The last of those bright clouds,
That on the unsteady breeze of honour sailed
In long procession, calm and beautiful.'

From that period, painting sunk to so low a state in Italy as to excite only pity or contempt. There is not a single name to redeem its faded glory from utter oblivion., Yet this has not been owing to any want of Dilettanti and Della Cruscan societies,—of academies of Florence, of Bologna, of Parma, and Pisa,—of honorary members and Foreign Correspondents—of pupils and teachers, professors and patrons, and the whole busy tribe of critics and connoisseurs. Art will not be constrained by mastery, but at sight of the formidable array prepared to receive it,

'Spreads its light wings, and in a moment flies.'

The genius of painting lies buried under the Vatican, or skulks behind some old portrait of Titian from which it stole out lately to paint a miniature of Lady Montagu! What is become of the successors of Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vandyke? What have the French Academicians done for the arts; or what will they ever do, but add intolerable

affectation and grimace to centos of heads from the antique, and caricature Greek forms by putting them into opera attitudes? Were Claude Lorraine, or Nicolas Poussin, formed by the rules of De Piles or Du Fresnoy? There are no general tickets of admission to the temple of Fame, transferable to large societies, or organised bodies,-- the paths leading to it are steep and narrow, for by the time they are worn plain and easy, the niches are full. What extraordinary advances have we made in our own country in consequence of the establishment of the Royal Academy? What greater names has the English School to boast, than those of Hogarth, Reynolds, and Wilson, who owed nothing to it! Even the venerable president of the Royal Academy was one of its founders.

It is plain then that the sanguine anticipation of the preface-writer, however amiable and patriotic in its motive, has little foundation in fact. It has even less in the true theory and principles of excellence in the art.

'It has been often made a subject of complaint,' says a cotemporary critic, 'that the arts in this country, and in modern times, have not kept pace with the general progress of society and civilisation in other respects, and it has been proposed to remedy the deficiency by, more carefully availing ourselves of the advantages which time and circumstances have placed within our reach, but which we have hitherto neglected, the study of the antique, the formation of academies, and the distribution of prizes.

'First, the complaint itself, that the arts do not attain that progressive degree of perfection which might reasonably be expected from them, proceeds on a false notion, for the analogy appealed to in support of the regular advances of art to higher degrees of excellence, totally fails; it applies to science, not to art. Secondly, the expedients proposed to remedy the evil by adventitious means are only calculated to confirm it. The arts hold immediate communication with nature, and are only derived from that source. When that original impulse no longer exists, when the inspiration of genius is fled, all the attempts to recal it are no better than the tricks of galvanism to restore the dead to life. The arts may be said to resemble Antreus in his struggle with Hercules, who was strangled when he was raised above the ground, and only revived and recovered his strength when he touched his I mother earth.'

We intend to offer a few general observations in illustration of this view of the subject, which appears to us to be just. There are three ways in which institutions for the promotion of the fine arts may be supposed to favour the object in view; either by furnishing the best models to the student,--or by holding out the prospect of immediate patronage and reward,--or by diffusing a more general taste for the arts. All of these, so far from answering the end proposed, will be found on examination to have a contrary tendency.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

The Champion
September 11, 1814.

'It was ever the trick of our English nation, if they had a good thing, to make it too common.'

WE observed in the conclusion of our last article on this subject, that there were three ways in which academies or public institutions might be supposed to promote the fine arts,—either by furnishing the best models to the student, or by holding out immediate emolument and patronage, or by improving the public taste. We shall consider each of these in order.

First, a constant reference to the best models of art necessarily tends to enervate the mind, to intercept our view of nature, and to distract the attention by a variety of unattainable excellence. An intimate acquaintance with the works of the celebrated masters may, indeed, add to the indolent refinements of taste, but will never produce one work of original genius—one great artist. In proof of the general truth of this observation, we might cite the works of Carlo Maratti, of Raphael Mengs, or of any of the effeminate school of critics and copyists, who have attempted to blend the borrowed beauties of others in a perfect whole. What do they contain, but a negation of every excellence which they pretend to combine? Inoffensive insipidity is the utmost that can ever be expected, because it is the utmost that ever was attained, from the desire to produce a balance of good qualities, and to animate lifeless compositions by the transfusion of a spirit of originality. The assiduous imitator, in his attempts to grasp all, loses his hold of that which was placed within his reach, and, from aspiring at universal excellence, sinks into uniform mediocrity¹. The student who has models of every kind of excellence constantly before him, is not only diverted from that particular walk of art, in which, by patient exertion, he might have obtained ultimate success, but, from having his imagination habitually raised to an overstrained standard of refinement, by the sight of the most exquisite examples in art, he becomes impatient and dissatisfied with his own attempts, determines to reach the same perfection all at once, or throws down his pencil in despair. Thus the young enthusiast, whose genius and energy were to rival the great Masters of antiquity, or create a new aera in the art itself, baffled in his first sanguine expectations, reposes in indolence on what others have done; wonders how such perfection could have been achieved,—grows familiar with the minutest peculiarities of the different schools,—flutters between the splendour of Rubens and the grace of Raphael, finds it easier to copy pictures than to paint them, and easier to see than to copy them, takes infinite pains to gain admission to all the great collections, lounges from one auction room to another, and writes newspaper criticisms on the Fine Arts. Such was not Correggio; he saw and felt for himself; he was of no school, but had his own world of art to create. That image of truth and beauty, which existed in his mind, he was forced to construct for himself, without rules or models. As it had arisen in his mind from the contemplation of nature, so he could only hope to embody it to

¹ There is a certain pedantry, a given division of labour, an almost exclusive attention to some one object, which is necessary in Art, as in all the works of man. Without this, the unavoidable consequence is a gradual dissipation and prostitution of intellect, which leaves the mind without energy to devote to any pursuit the pains necessary to excel in it, and suspends every purpose in irritable imbecility. But the modern painter is bound not only to run the circle of his own art, but of all others. He must be 'statesman, chemist, fiddler, and buffoon.' He must have too many accomplishments to excel in his profession. When every one is bound to know every thing, there is no time to do any thing.

others, by the imitation of nature. We can conceive the work growing under his hands by slow and patient touches, approaching nearer to perfection, softened into finer grace, gaining strength from delicacy, and at last reflecting the pure image of nature on the canvass. Such is always the true progress of art; such are the necessary means by which the greatest works of every kind have been produced. They have been the effect of power gathering strength from exercise, and warmth from its own impulse—stimulated to fresh efforts by conscious success, and by the surprise and strangeness of a new world of beauty, opening to the delighted imagination. The triumphs of art were victories over the difficulties of art; the prodigies of genius, the result of that strength which had grappled with nature. Titian copied even a plant or a piece of common drapery from the objects themselves; and Raphael is known to have made elaborate studies of the principal heads in his pictures. All the great painters of this period were thoroughly grounded in the first principles of their art; had learned to copy a face, a hand, or an eye, and had acquired patience to finish a single figure, before they undertook to paint extensive compositions. They knew that though Fame is represented with her head above the clouds, her feet rest upon the earth. Genius can only have its full scope where, though much may have been done, more remains to do; where models exist chiefly to shew the deficiencies of art, and where the perfect idea is left to be filled up in the painter's imagination. When once the stimulus of novelty and of original exertion is wanting, generations repose on what has been done for them by their predecessors, as individuals, after a certain period, rest satisfied with the knowledge they have already acquired.

To proceed to the supposed advantages to be derived, in a pecuniary point of view, from the public patronage of the arts. It in this respect unfortunately defeats itself; for it multiplies its objects faster than it can satisfy their claims, and raises up a swarm of competitors for the prize of genius from the dregs of idleness and dulness. The real patron is anxious to reward merit, not to encourage gratuitous pretensions to it; to see that the man of genius *takes no detriment*, that another Wilson is not left to perish for want; not to propagate the breed, for that he knows to be impossible. But there are some persons who think it as essential to the interests of art, to keep up 'an airy of children,'—the young fry of embryo candidates for fame,—as others think it essential to the welfare of the kingdom to preserve the spawn of the herring fisheries. In general, public, that is, indiscriminate patronage is, and can be nothing better than a species of intellectual seduction; by administering provocatives to vanity and avarice, it is leading astray the youth of this nation by fallacious hopes, which can scarcely ever be realized. It is beating up for raw dependants, sending out into the highways for the halt, the lame, and the blind, and making a scramble among a set of idle boys for prizes of the first, second, and third class, like those we make among children for gingerbread toys. True patronage does not consist in ostentatious professions of high keeping, and promiscuous intercourse with the arts. At the same time, the good that might be done by private taste and benevolence is in a great measure defeated. The moment that a few individuals of discernment and liberal spirit become members of a public body, they are no longer anything more than parts of a machine, which is usually wielded at will by some officious, over-weening pretender; their good-sense and good-nature are lost in a mass of ignorance and presumption; their names only serve to reflect credit on proceedings in which they have no share, and which are determined on by a majority of persons who have no interest in the arts but what arises from the importance attached to them by regular organisation, and no opinions but what are dictated to them by some

self-constituted judge. Whenever vanity and self-importance are (as in general they must be) the governing principles of systems of public patronage, there is an end at once of all candour and directness of conduct. Their decisions are before the public: and the individuals who take the lead in these decisions are responsible for them. They have therefore to manage the public opinion, in order to secure that of their own body. Hence, instead of giving a firm, manly, and independent tone to that opinion, they make it their business to watch all its caprices, and follow it in every casual turning. They dare not give their sanction to sterling merit, struggling with difficulties, but take advantage of its success, to reflect credit on their own reputation for sagacity. Their taste is a servile dependant on their vanity, and their patronage has an air of pauperism about it. They neglect or treat with insult the favourite whom they suspect of having fallen off in the opinion of the public; but, if he is able to recover his ground without their assistance, are ready to heap their mercenary bounties upon those of others, greet him with friendly congratulations, and share his triumph with him. Perhaps the only public patronage which was ever really useful to the arts, or worthy of them, was that which they received first in Greece, and afterwards in Italy, from the religious institutions of the country; when the artist felt himself, as it were, a servant at the altar; when his hand gave a visible form to Gods or Heroes, Angels or Apostles; and when the enthusiasm of genius was exalted by mingling with the flame of national devotion. The artist was not here degraded, by being made the dependant on the caprice of wealth or fashion, but felt himself at once the servant and the benefactor of the public. He had to embody, by the highest efforts of his art, subjects which were sacred to the imagination and feelings of the spectators; there was a common link, a mutual sympathy between them in their common faith². Every other mode of patronage, but that which arises, either from the general institutions and manners of a people, or from the real unaffected taste of individuals, must, we conceive, be illegitimate, corrupted in its source, and either ineffectual or injurious to its professed object. Positive encouragements and rewards will not make an honest man, or a great artist. The assumed familiarity and condescending goodness of patrons and vice-patrons will serve to intoxicate rather than to sober the mind, and a card to dinner in Cleveland-row or Portland-place will have a tendency to divert the student's thoughts from his morning's work, rather than to rivet, them upon it. The device by which a celebrated painter has represented the Virgin teaching the infant Christ to read by pointing with a butterfly to the letters of the alphabet, has not been thought a very wise one. Correggio is the most melancholy

² Of the effect of the authority of the subject of a composition, in suspending the exercise of personal taste and feeling in the spectators, we have a striking instance in our own country, where this cause must, from collateral circumstances, operate less forcibly. Mr. West's pictures would not be tolerated but from the respect inspired by the subjects of which he treats. When a young lady and her mother, the wife and daughter of a clergyman, are told, that a gawky ill-favoured youth is the beloved disciple of Christ, and that a tall, starched figure of a woman visible near him is the Virgin Mary, whatever they might have thought before, they can no more refrain from shedding tears than if they had seen the very persons recorded in sacred history. It is not the picture, but the associations connected with it, that produce the effect. Just as if the same young lady and her mother had been told, 'that is the Emperor Alexander,' they would say, '*what a handsome man!*' or if they were shown the Prince Regent, would exclaim '*how elegant!*'

instance on record of the want of a proper encouragement of the arts: but a golden shower of patronage, tempting as that which fell into the lap of his own Danae, and dropping prize medals and epic mottoes, would not produce another Correggio!

We shall conclude with offering some remarks on the question, Whether Academies and Institutions must not be supposed to assist the progress of the fine arts, by promoting them.

In general, it must happen in the first stages of the arts, that as none but those who had a natural genius for them would attempt to practise them, so none but those who had a natural taste for them would pretend to judge of or criticise them. This must be an incalculable advantage to the man of true genius; for it is no other than the privilege of being tried by his peers. In an age when connoisseurship had not become a fashion; when religion, war, and intrigue occupied the time and thoughts of the great, only those minds of superior refinement would be led to notice the works of art, who had a real sense of their excellence; and, in giving way to the powerful bent of his own genius, the painter was most likely to consult the taste of his judges. He had not to deal with pretenders to taste, through vanity, affectation, and idleness. He had to appeal to the higher faculties of the soul,—to that deep and innate sensibility to truth and beauty, which required only fit objects to have its enthusiasm excited,—and to that independent strength of mind, which, in the midst of ignorance and barbarism, hailed and fostered genius wherever it met with it. Titian was patronised by Charles V. Count Castiglione was the friend of Raphael. These were true patrons and true critics; and, as there were no others (for the world, in general, merely looked on and wondered), there can be little doubt that such a period of dearth of factitious patronage would be most favourable to the full development of the greatest talents, and to the attainment of the highest excellence.

The diffusion of taste is not, then, the same thing as the improvement of taste; but it is only the former of these objects that is promoted by public institutions and other artificial means. Thus the number of candidates for fame, and pretenders to criticism, is increased beyond all calculation, while the quantity of genius and feeling remain much the same as before; with these disadvantages, that the man of original genius is often lost among the crowd of competitors who would never have become such, but from encouragement and example, and that the voice of the few whom nature intended for judges, is apt to be drowned in the noisy and forward suffrages of shallow smatterers in taste. The principle of universal suffrage, however applicable to matters of government, which concern the common feelings and common interests of society, is by no means applicable to matters of taste, which can only be decided upon by the most refined understandings. It is throwing down the barriers which separate knowledge and feeling from ignorance and vulgarity, and proclaiming a Bartholomew-fair-show of the fine arts—

‘And fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’

The public taste is, therefore, necessarily vitiated, in proportion as it is public; it is lowered with every infusion it receives of common opinion. The greater the number of judges, the less capable must they be of judging, for the addition to the number of good

ones will always be small, while the multitude of bad ones is endless, and thus the decay of art may be said to be the necessary consequence of its progress.

Can there be a greater confirmation of these remarks than to look at the texture of that assemblage of select critics, who every year visit the exhibition at Somerset-house from all parts of the metropolis of this united kingdom? Is it at all wonderful that for such a succession of connoisseurs, such a collection of works of art should be provided; where the eye in vain seeks relief from the glitter of the frames in the glare of the pictures; where vermilion cheeks make vermilion lips look pale; where the merciless splendour of the painter's pallet puts nature out of countenance; and where the unmeaning grimace of fashion and folly is almost the only variety in the wide dazzling waste of colour. Indeed, the great error of British art has hitherto been a desire to produce popular effect by the cheapest and most obvious means, and at the expence of every thing else;--to lose all the delicacy and variety of nature in one undistinguished bloom of florid health, and all precision, truth, and refinement of character in the same harmless mould of smiling, self-complacent insipidity,

'Pleased with itself, that all the world can please.'

It is probable that in all that stream of idleness and curiosity which flows in, hour after hour, and day after day, to the richly hung apartments of Somerset-house, there are not fifty persons to be found who can really distinguish 'a Guido from a Daub,' or who would recognise a work of the most refined genius from the most common and everyday performance. Come, then, ye banks of Wapping, and classic haunts of Ratcliffe-highway, and join thy fields, blithe Tothill—let the postchaises, gay with oaken boughs, be put in requisition for school-boys from Eton and Harrow, and school-girls from Hackney and Mile-end,—and let a jury be empannelled to decide on the merits of Raphael, and----. The verdict will be infallible. We remember having been formerly a good deal amused with seeing a smart, handsome-looking Quaker lad, standing before a picture of Christ as the saviour of the world, with a circle of young female friends around him, and a newspaper in his hand, out of which he read to his admiring auditors a criticism on the picture ascribing to it every perfection, human and divine. —Now, in truth, the colouring was any thing but solemn, the drawing any thing but grand, the expression any thing but sublime. The friendly critic had, however, bedaubed it so with praise, that it was not easy to gainsay its wondrous excellence. In fact, one of the worst consequences of the establishment of academies, &c. is, that the rank and station of the painter throw a lustre round his pictures, which imposes completely on the herd of spectators, and makes it a kind of treason against the art, for anyone to speak his mind freely, or detect the imposture. If, indeed, the election to title and academic honours went by merit, this might form a kind of clue or standard for the public to decide justly upon:--but we have heard that genius and taste determine precedence there, almost as little as at court; and that modesty and talent stand very little chance indeed with interest, cabal, impudence, and cunning. The purity or liberality of professional decisions cannot, therefore, in such cases be expected to counteract the tendency which an appeal to the public has to lower the standard of taste. The artist, to succeed, must let himself down to the level of his judges, for he cannot raise them up to his own. The highest efforts of genius, in every walk of art, can never be properly understood by mankind in general: there are numberless beauties and truths which lie far beyond their comprehension. It is only as refinement or

sublimity are blended with other qualities of a more obvious and common nature, that they pass current with the world. Common sense, which has been sometimes appealed to as the criterion of taste, is nothing but the common capacity, applied to common facts and feelings; but it neither is, nor pretends to be, the judge of any thing else.-To suppose that it can really appreciate the excellence of works of high art, is as absurd as to suppose that it could produce them.

Taste is the highest degree of sensibility, or the impression made on the most cultivated and sensible of minds, as genius is the result of the highest powers both of feeling and invention. It may be objected, that the public taste is capable of gradual improvement, because, in the end, the public do justice to works of the greatest merit. This is a mistake. The reputation ultimately, and often slowly affixed to works of genius is stamped upon them by authority, not by popular consent or the common sense of the world. We imagine that the admiration of the works of celebrated men has become common, because the admiration of their names has become so. But does not every ignorant connoisseur pretend the same veneration, and talk with the same vapid assurance of Michael Angelo, though he has never seen even a copy of any of his pictures, as if he had studied them accurately,--merely because Sir Joshua Reynolds has praised him? Is Milton more popular now than when the *Paradise Lost* was first published? Or does he not rather owe his reputation to the judgment of a few persons in every successive period, accumulating in his favour, and overpowering by its weight the public indifference? Why is Shakspeare popular? Not from his refinement of character, or sentiment, so much as from his power of telling a story, the variety and invention, the tragic catastrophe and broad farce of his plays. Spenser is not yet understood. Does not Boccaccio pass to this day for a writer of ribaldry, because his jests and lascivious tales were all that caught the vulgar ear, while the story of the Falcon is forgotten!

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

The Champion.
October 2, 1814.

SIR,--I beg to offer one or two explanations with respect to the article on the subject of public institutions for the promotion of the Fine Arts, which does not appear to me to have been exactly understood by 'A STUDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.' The whole drift of that article is to explode the visionary theory, that art may go on in an infinite series of imitation and improvement. This theory has not a single fact or argument to support it. All the highest efforts of art originate in the imitation of nature, and end there. No imitation of the others can carry us beyond this point, or ever enable us to reach it. The imitation of the works of genius facilitates the acquisition of a certain degree of excellence, but weakens and distracts while it facilitates, and renders the acquisition of the highest degree of excellence impossible. Wherever the greatest individual genius has been exerted upon the finest models of nature, there the greatest works of art have been produced,--the Greek statues and the Italian pictures. There is no substitute in art for nature; in proportion as we remove from this original source, we dwindle into mediocrity and flimsiness, and whenever the artificial and systematic assistance afforded to genius becomes extreme, it overlays it altogether. We cannot make use of

other men's minds, any more than of their limbs³. Art is not science, nor is the progress made in the one ever like the progress made in the other: The one is retrograde for the very same reason that the other is progressive; because science is mechanical, and art is not, and in proportion as we rely on mechanical means, we lose the essence. Is there a single exception to this rule? The worst artists in the world are the modern Italians, who lived in the midst of the finest works of art:--the persons least like the Greek sculptors are the modern French painters, who copy nothing but the antique. Velasquez might be improved by a pilgrimage to the Vatican, but if it had been his morning's lounge, it would have ruined him. Michael Angelo, the cartoons of Leonardi da Vinci, and the antique, your correspondent tells us, produced Raphael. Why have they produced no second Raphael? What produced Michael Angelo, Leonardi da Vinci, and the antique? Surely not Michael Angelo, Leonardi da Vinci, and the antique! If Sir Joshua Reynolds would never have observed a certain expression in nature, if he had not seen it in Correggio, it is tolerably certain that he would never execute it so well; and in fact, though Sir Joshua was largely indebted to Correggio, yet his imitations are not equal to the originals. The two little boys in Correggio's *Danae* are worth all the children Sir Joshua ever painted: and the Hymen in the same picture, (with leave be it spoken,) is worth all his works put together. —But the Student of the Royal Academy thinks that Carlo Maratti, and Raphael Mengs are only exceptions to the common rule of progressive improvement in the art. If these are the exceptions, where are the examples? If we are to credit him, and it would be uncivil not to do it, they are to be found in the present students of the Royal Academy, whom, he says, it would be unreasonable to confound with such minds as those of Carlo Maratti and Raphael Mengs. Be it so. This is a point to be decided by time.

The whole question was at once decided by the person who said that, '*to imitate the Iliad, was not to imitate Homer.*' After this has once been stated, it is quite in vain to argue the point farther. The idea of piling art on art, and heaping excellence on excellence, is a mere fable; and we may very safely say, that the frontispiece of all such pretended institutions and academies for the promotion of the fine arts, founded on this principle, and 'pointing to the skies,' should be—

'Like a tall bully, lifts the head, and lies.'

Absurd as this theory is, it flatters our vanity and our indolence, and these are two great points gained. It is gratifying to suppose that art may have gone on from the beginning, reposing upon art, like the Indian elephant and the tortoise, that it has improved, and will still go on improving, without the trouble of going back to nature. By these theorists, Nature is always kept in the background, or does not even terminate the vista in their prospects. She is a mistress too importunate, and who requires too great sacrifices from the effeminacy of modern amateurs. They will only see her in company, or by proxy, and are as much afraid of being reduced to their shifts with her in private, as *Tattle in Love for Love* was afraid of being left alone with a pretty girl.

³ Occasional assistance may be derived from both, but, in general, we must trust to our own strength. We cannot hope to become rich by living upon alms. Constant assistance is the worst incumbrance. The accumulation of models, and erection of universal schools for art, improves the genius of the student much in the same way that the encouragement of night-cellars and gin-shops improves the health and morals of the people.

I can only recollect one other thing to reply to. Your correspondent objects to my having said, 'All the great painters of this period were thoroughly grounded in the first principles of their art; had learned to copy a head, a hand, or an eye,' &c. All this knowledge of detail he attributes to academical instruction, and quotes Sir Joshua Reynolds, who says of himself—'Not having had the advantage of an early academical education, I never had that facility in drawing the naked figure which an artist ought to have.' First, I might answer, that the drawing from casts can never assist the student in copying the face, the eye, or the extremities; and that it was only of service in the knowledge of the trunk, and the general proportions, which are comparatively lost in the style of English art, which is not naked, but clothed. Secondly, I would say, with respect to Sir Joshua, that his inability to draw the naked figure arose from his not having been accustomed to draw it; and that drawing from the antique would not have enabled either him or anyone else to draw from the naked figure. The difficulty of copying from nature, or in other words of doing any thing that has not been done before, or that is worth doing, is that of combining many ideas at once, or of reconciling things in motion: whereas in copying from the antique, you have only to copy still life, and in proportion as you get a knack at the one, you disqualify yourself for the other.

As to what your correspondent adds of painting and poetry being the same thing, it is an old story which I do not believe. But who would ever think of setting up a school of poetry? Byshe's *Art of Poetry* and the *Gradus ad Parnassum* are a jest. Royal Academies and British Institutions are to painting, what Byshe's *Art of Poetry* and the *Gradus ad Parnassum* are to the 'sister art.' Poetry, as it becomes artificial, becomes bad, instead of good—the poetry of words, instead of things. Milton is the only poet who gave to borrowed materials the force of originality. I am, Sir, Your humble Servant, W. H.