

ing national wealth with national happiness—Rarity of genuine critics in Art—Absurdity of supposing that persons educated to ignoble pursuits, and who have previously shewn neither taste nor talents in Art, can possibly be qualified to govern the pursuits of its professors—Apology for the credulity on these points, and backwardness of the Taste, of the Public—That the liberality of the public disposition to encourage ingenuity and promote Art, has failed of its intended purpose—This effect accounted for—That the second principal cause which has retarded the progress both of critical knowledge and practical skill in Engraving, is want of that academical culture by which the growth of other arts has been promoted—That the Academy in Europe which should most have cultivated Engraving, is the Academy in Europe where it is most neglected—Folly and impolicy of the Legislators of the London Academy—Grounds of hope that more enlightened and enlarged sentiments, and higher and juster principles will finally prevail—That public Academies of Arts are useful in proportion as they are calculated to ascertain, sanction, and promulgate, sound principles of Art; which must always be discovered by individuals—Historical testimony of the high value of Principle.

LECTURE VI.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

*IT will probably not be forgotten that toward the conclusion of my Discourse of last Thursday, I took occasion to offer a few sentences on the *Uses* of modern En-

* This Lecture consists in substance, of what was originally the latter part of the fourth, and the beginning of a Lecture not publicly delivered, incorporated from a motive of bettering the arrangement of my materials. A few sentences have been added, in the hope of increasing the strength of the whole, and improving the connexion of its parts; but I can assure the reader that I have omitted no one word of what I publicly delivered in the Lecture-room. I have set down nought in malice, and shall nothing extenuate. I shall neither be deterred from printing the Lectures nor from adding the purposed Notes, notwithstanding that I have this day (November 5, 1806) been informed that a literary blunderbus is loading against me.

graving, and on the prevalence of certain popular mistakes respecting those uses. My strictures on these points would be very imperfect, were I to omit noticing the causes of those mistakes: and if this be incumbent on me, I must hold myself at least equally engaged to develope and declare whatever other causes have conspired with these to retard the progress of British Engraving.

It is my first wish that these Lectures should be useful: and I cannot in my own opinion render them more so, than by entering upon an inquiry on which the advancement or decay of the valuable Art, which is the proper subject of our present attention, must materially depend. With whatever interest I have dwelt on its ancient history; with whatever pleasure I have contemplated its modern revival; I consider them both as of small importance when compared with its present condition in this country, and its future possible commercial advantages to Great Britain: and highly as I may estimate those advantages;

and much as I may calculate on (or rather hope for) their practical increase; I consider even them as trifling when compared with the moral benefits which the Art of Engraving is calculated to confer on Society. Antiquity may fade into oblivion: Commerce may perish: but I may safely and proudly call upon all good men to unite in wishing that every moral art should be immortal in its duration, and boundless in the scope of its energies.

On a comprehensive and philosophical view, therefore, of the whole of our subject; my Lecture of this evening should be of far more importance than any of those which have preceded it. What is long past is beyond our power: what has recently happened is immediately connected with the present state of things; and the present with the future.

I divide this Discourse under two heads: First, The auspices under which the Art of Engraving has hitherto existed in England: Secondly, The means which have

been resorted to for its cultivation; including a consideration of those advantages which have been withheld from it.

With respect to those recent occurrences connected with this Art to which I must necessarily advert, allow me to premise that it is a consideration, not of persons, but of facts and principles, to which I would solicit your attention. Though I shall as much as possible avoid the mention of individuals, some must unavoidably appear on the stage, because the subject of the Play is historical: but I could wish it to be considered that not the characters or the performance, but the *moral* of the Drama, should engage your notice.

Within the last twenty or thirty years, various proposals have appeared among us, for supplying the public with useful and ornamental works of Art and Literature combined; and on the whole it is no exaggeration to say, that these plans have been met with liberal encouragement. I do not say that this encouragement has been

so superabundant as to enable the proprietors of those works to amass very large fortunes, while it covered whatever mismanagement has occurred, and handsomely remunerated the studies of the Artists who performed them: that might be matter of too nice calculation to be entered upon here; as might also, how far these objects should admit of compromise:—but, on the authorities of the lists of Subscribers, combined with other authorities which I believe to be good, I say that the encouragement these works have met with from the public, has been such as to warrant me in using the epithet *liberal*. Yet, it has been asserted and maintained in the first public assemblies in the kingdom, and perhaps in the world, that within the same period, the Art of Engraving has declined in this country. It is an extraordinary, and surely it is an *important* fact, that in the most commercial country of the world; and which it would be desirable to see the chief seat and seminary of the most commercial of the *fine* Arts; *that* Art has been declining, within a period of time, and *apparently* under circumstances,

in which it ought greatly to have improved.

If I am rightly informed, when these *effects* were stated in the House of Lords, there existed some difference of opinion as to their *causes*.—The truth is, that though the state of Engraving was regarded with a degree of interest, which bore some proportion to its national importance, the lofty station of their lordships allowed them no other than a *bird's-eye* view of the subject, and their attention was directed to spots that from a distance bore the semblance of freshness and verdure: while those who were stationed in the vale could not but perceive with regret that the fountains of public encouragement, whose streams (flowing with well intended liberality) would have been abundantly sufficient to irrigate and fertilize the fair provinces of Art, diverted from their natural channels, had formed swamps and morasses; and could not but mourn in silence that sterility should be imputed to the soil, where un-

skilfulness was due to those who had undertaken its cultivation,

In speaking of the publishers of engraved works of Art; whose want of previous education, and whose merely mercantile views, have had a most baleful influence on the art of Engraving; let me be forward to express my hope that certain respectable exceptions—men of information, liberality, conscience, and honour, will not be confounded with those who have interposed their opaque intellects between the Artists and the Public. About the time when the ill digested plans of the latter description began to be circulated, and for ten or fifteen years preceding that time, there resided in this metropolis Hogarth, Sir Robert Strange, Vivares, Woollett, Browne, Bartolozzi, Hall, Rooker, Green, Ryland, Watts, and my late, respected master (Mr. Byrne,) all exercising the profession of Engraving; and each employing himself, for the most part, according to the natural bent of his own genius, uncurbed, or but little curbed, by mercantile restraints

and ignorant dictations; and not compelled to labour against Time, who is always sure to prove victorious. With the occasional exception of Bartolozzi, and Browne, they published the best of their own works; as Raphael Morghen, and Bervic, the two most distinguished engravers of the continent, do at present; and by the strength of their united talents, they turned the tide and the profits of the European commerce for Prints, from France and Italy to England.*

* Mr. Prince Hoare, in his "inquiry into the requisite cultivation of the Arts," after stating this fact, says "*the causes of its present decline are well worthy the investigation of the Public.*" (see p. 260.) I shall continue to think with Mr. Hoare, notwithstanding the mandate of the four managers of the Royal Institution: and so, I hope, will the Public. I own, I never was more exceedingly surprised than when I found ranged on the side of those who differ, on this point, from Mr. Hoare and myself, some of the very persons who were invested with the power, and who had undertaken the arduous but delightful duty, of bettering the condition of Society by promoting investigation.—When at the gate of Lyons, an officer, armed with Royal authority, demanded six livres four sous of Tristram Shandy, he tells us he had no resource left, but to say

During this distinguished period of British engraving—a period in which some of the best Engravings (both historical and landscape) that were ever performed, were produced in England—a period, therefore, at which if we should arrive in the progress of these Lectures, we may dwell with pleasure and with pride;—I say that during this period—memorable in itself, but which subsequent events of an opposite character, have contributed to raise into superior importance—there appeared in London, a man, who, with talents too slender to support a reputation as an Engraver, possessed mercantile wisdom enough, gradually to arise to opulence and the highest civic honours, chiefly by dealing in the publications of the Artists I have named. Had he continued thus to deal, it would probably have been well for Art and for the Public, and also for himself. His own fortunes would have

something honestly worth the money. An example worth following upon such occasions; provided a man takes care not to throw the injury on the wrong side by saying too much.

arisen on the firmest foundation. The Tuscan basement, which the labours of these Artists had formed, would, in all probability, ere now have been surmounted by the noblest superstructure. But, unfortunately, not content with these honours, and emoluments, he aspired to direct and dictate the pursuits, and govern the studies, of others: and still more unfortunately for the Art under our consideration, other shopkeepers, even more ignorant than him both of the means and end of Art, were allured by his apparent success to follow his pernicious example.

I state these facts with no other reference to the past than may serve for our guidance in future: I state them in contradiction to misrepresentations, sophistically reiterated, and sedulously circulated of late: I state them from motives than which none ought to be more powerful or more sacred;—in illustration of principle, and from the firmest conviction of their truth.

The delicate plants which only the sunshine of the public countenance can foster,

began now to droop and pine in obscurity;* and, the balance of Taste being already against us, the current of trade began from that hour to turn against us also,

So far is it from being true that “the exertions of a few *commercial* individuals, but particularly “of one,” have changed the British trade for prints, from an import to an export,† that good impressions of the best works of Strange, Woollett, and the rest of the Engravers I have named, are still sought with avidity by the connoisseurs of the continent; whilst the boasted speculations of those mistaken individuals and their in-

* The degree and kind of intercourse between the Public and the Artists which would be most conducive to their mutual advantage, it is neither easy, nor perhaps necessary, here to define with exactness. The public Lectures which have lately been delivered on various Arts, afford a satisfactory earnest of one feasible means toward supplying the desideratum; and my Letter to a Member of the British Institution, which I hope will ere long be laid before the Public, will be found to contain the results of those further meditations on the subject, which I could not with propriety introduce in these Lectures, or compress into a note.

† See Boydell's “Suggestions, &c.” preface and p. 9. To those who have not read Mr. Boydell's pamphlet it will

fatuated followers, (for the most part) lie unheeded upon the stalls of Leipsig and Frankfort.

The low artifices and merely mercantile views of picture-dealers, which have been so loudly and justly reprobated, are not more inimical to the real progress of the Art of Painting, than those of the print-dealers and publishers have been and are to that of engraving. To those who have directed their attention this way, the interests and the hazards of commerce have often appeared to outweigh all other regards; and the success of the publisher has been thought to include that of the artist. But, at least, let us inquire whether this be not mistaking the cause for the effect, by looking at Art and Commerce in a wrong direction.—Even confining ourselves to a commercial view of the subject, I may safely venture to assert, that the converse of this proposition would be much nearer

appear surprising that he, or that any man, should either arrogate for the *agent*, the merit that is due to the *cause*, of a given effect; or attempt to betray the public into so gross an error.

the truth: for the success of the artist, could scarcely fail, in this commercial country, to command, as it has formerly commanded, that of the merchant.

I know it is common to hear it objected to all interference with commercial speculation, that "things eventually find their own level:" so did Monsieur Garnerin, in his celebrated descent, come at last to the ground. But in all cases, to prevent dangerous oscillation would surely be no improper employment of Science: and between the aims of sterling Taste and Talent, and the preponderance of ignorant Capital, the oscillations are much more frequent, and fraught with more mischief to Art, than can easily be known at a glance, or conceived by a distant observer.

Of the vast sums which have been so vauntingly held forth to Parliament and to the Public, as having been expended on the Arts,* fairness would seem to re-

* I have forgotten how many thousand pounds Macklin was accustomed to mention as having been expended by him on the Fine Arts: but Boydell's Lottery Scheme is now

quire that we should also have been told how much had previously been obtained, through means of those arts, from the well-meant liberality of the public; and how little came originally from the purses of the publishers:—Yet, this has never been done.

Permit me to remind you how rarely an accomplished and impartial judge appears in any of the departments of Taste. Of the various and blended attainments of the Scholar, the Artist, and the Critic; in Literature, Painting, and Engraving; let us recollect—let us calculate—what portions should fall to the lot of him, who undertakes to conduct a connected series of historical or poetical pictures and engravings. When we have so done, and when we have reflected how very seldom a sound

before me, which states that it has been proved, before both Houses of Parliament, that the plates from which the *Prize* prints were taken, cost upwards of 300,000*l.* his *Pictures and Drawings* 46,266*l.* and the *Shakespear Gallery* upwards of 30,000*l.*—It is within the knowledge of persons now living, that both Macklin and Boydell began the trade of print-selling with very inconsiderable capitals.

critic appears in any of those arts, we may be able to estimate how very few can have been competent to guide the public taste in works of this description. But knaves will hover round in ambush where profit is to be obtained; and fools rush in, where angels would tread with caution: nor can it be dissembled that the public, with the best intentions in the world, has been credulous enough to entrust such undertakings to any, and to all, who had craft and effrontery, or folly, enough to hold forth a specious advertisement or a pompous prospectus.

If a wretched bungling engraver, whose own prints should appear the strongest condemnation of his pretensions to rule and govern the studies of others; if a frame-maker, or a farrier, or any other person whose previous education had been as remote from the real objects of Art; were now to appear before us, and solicit, and seem to expect, our subscriptions to any engraving, or series of engravings, combined with poetry or history, to be gra-

dually produced under his supreme superintendence; and which he might choose to call *Sumptuous*, or *Superb*, or *National*, or *Magnificent*,—who but must laugh?—Who but would consider the pretensions of so gross a pretender, as ridiculous in themselves as those of the lamp-lighter, who, in Mr. Dibdin's song, declares himself a son of Apollo, and commissioned to enlighten the world!

Ladies and Gentlemen,—What I have faintly endeavoured to picture on your fancy, may seem a farce, in speculation: If it has been a tragedy, in reality, I could wish to engrave it on your memories. I have put a supposititious case: It is yours to perceive whether any such characters as I have portrayed, have really risen to affluence upon the studies and attainments of men, some of whom have fallen into the grave, while others have migrated to foreign* countries; and whether others again,

* The departure of Schiavonetti (one of the very best historical engravers the country contains) though not a

are not still languidly vegetating in our own, under the ample *shade* of catch-guinea lottery schemes and mercantile importance. Nor can I wish to direct your attention to such considerations, with any other view than to render the past experience, which has been dearly purchased, subservient to future benefit.

greater discredit, will be a much greater loss, to us than the migration of Bartolozzi; on account of their respective ages. Beside which, if I am rightly informed, the former is going to France; against which country we shall soon have to contend, I hope, in the honourable rivalry of Arts and Commerce. Yet who can discommend the prudence of Schiavonetti? Europe resounds with the praises of Raphael Morghen, and the Academies of the Continent pour forth their honours at his feet: while Schiavonetti, by much his superior in taste and academical knowledge, in England is unhonoured, and scarcely better known or encouraged than the veriest painted-toy-monger, whose works decorate, or disgrace, Bond-street, or the Strand. "England, with all thy faults, I love thee still," may still be said by the merchant, and by the professors of the arts of war and politics; for their affections may still be gratified: but for an Engraver (I speak not of the mere rapid multipliers of rubbish) to say so, it now requires—notwithstanding the acknowledged liberality of our disposition to encourage foreigners—that he be born an Englishman.

To the well-intended liberality of the public much credit is due, and I believe much gratitude is felt;* and for the credulity which I have seemed to blame, I could wish to apologise. The opinion that it is laudable to promote commercial speculation, and to shelter and insure commercial hazard, is now so associated with English habits of thinking, that the slightest external stimulus is not only sufficient to excite it, but so to cloud every other view, and benumb every other feeling, that, while it prevails, we are almost ready to sink our regard for the HAPPINESS, in our zeal for the WEALTH of the Nation; or to suppose that the latter must necessarily comprise so much of the former, that he, who but proposes to en-

* I mean by those Artists of discernment to whom the intention is obvious. He that would know how grateful those persons are who have really enjoyed the advantages of this liberality, should be referred to Mr. Alderman Boydell's late pamphlet; where he will find the affluent reproached (though not very intelligibly) with not having seconded the exertions, I suppose, of his late uncle and the print-dealers of his day. (see p. 11, and see also his preface.)

rich himself, must of course deserve our encouragement.*

* By many it may be thought to be at the best but remotely connected with our subject, but I cannot repress here a wish that has often crossed my mind. It is, that Dr. Adam Smith, or any other philosopher of equal powers, had devoted some portion of his time and study to an investigation of the nature and causes of the HAPPINESS of nations. Under the influence of the discoveries he would have made, and the doctrines he would have inculcated, my imagination would contemplate Europe as far wiser and better than it is. In the United Kingdoms especially,—beyond which perhaps an Englishman's wishes in the present state of political events, may not wander far,—I cannot but fancy a very superior order of things. Instead of the Genius of the country being chained to the desk of office, or the counting-house, the mild but salutary influence of the fine Arts, would probably have been encouraged to co-operate more intimately, and more extensively, with the precepts of Christianity and the principles of Morals; the dawnings of British ingenuity might have been found even more *politically* desirable than the possession of a distant and uncultivated tract; and the light of its noon, and the beauty and the good,—aye, and the *Wealth* it would have disclosed, might have been allowed, even in the past and present distracted state of Europe, a much larger portion of relative national importance than has fallen to its lot. I should have been glad to have seen the effects to be fairly expected from the stimulus of mental pleasure, compared

If the prevalence of such sentiments has been sufficient to induce the Legislature liberally to grant Lottery-acts, without examining whether those who solicited such acts had so benefited the Arts, and so kept their terms with their subscribers, as to deserve them; ought we to be surprised that the public should implicitly credit the professions of the London publishers?—should cancel all consideration of how

by such an author with those to be apprehended from the spur of painful necessity: and the lessons of benevolence and the practical wisdom to be deduced from the operations of Art on the realities of Nature; and the feelings and the reasonings to which these give birth; balanced against and finally blended with the effects of the artful arrangement of general terms, and the prevailing system of political maxims drawn from the mingled errors and experience of departed times: the penetration, perspicuity, comprehension of mind, and simplicity of developement which such an one must possess, could scarcely have failed to render as clear to the calculating head as to the philanthropic heart, whether the body of Art should be animated by a soul of Avarice, or by that pure spirit of Social Happiness which Poets invoke and Patriots adore. The superficial, and perhaps the profound, reader, must pardon the appearance of this Utopian reverie.

far it was likely, or even possible, that such characters could be qualified to conduct such works as they had undertaken?—should suffer itself to believe that publications, whose imperfections are numerous and palpable, were the best the Arts of the country could produce?—and should even seem to be influenced by a notion, that by some magical touch of Pall-mall, Bond-street, or other popular situation in the metropolis, Ignorance must start into Knowledge, and vulgar appetite be suddenly converted to exquisite Taste.

[This is the Lecture, and the pages the reader has just passed, the particular part of the Lecture, for which the managers *thought it right* (if the word *thought* may here be used without impropriety) to dismiss me from my Lectureship at the Royal Institution:—A dismissal, which, however seriously it may in some respects have been felt, is a much less evil to my sense of Honour and Right, than would have been the suppression of the truths which I believe the Lecture to contain; and which I have reason to hope those who took on themselves my dismissal would have perceived it to contain; had they heard it delivered in the Lecture-room, or in their own Committee-room; where I offered to repeat either the whole or the questionable passages:—Like the Dutch sailor who broke his leg by a fall from the main-mast, and whose philosophy is commended in the Spectator,

I have now to thank God, that neither my head nor my heart is broken by *my* fall.—When questioned before the Board of Management, I did not—it was impossible that I should, affect to conceal that certain allusions contained in this Lecture were meant to be applied to the late Mr. Boydell.—I frankly avowed that I wished and intended they should be so understood. If that Alderman and *Engraver*, had been the subject of my discourse, as he might have been without the smallest impropriety (for there is no reason why he might not turn out as useful a subject to me, as Gray or Dr. Johnson to the Rev. Mr. Crowe, or any *deceased* Musician to Dr. Crotch) I might perhaps have sought, and perhaps have found, some acts of his that would bear to be nearly inspected, and might still be deemed acts of Generosity, and examples worthy to be followed: but the Alderman and *Merchant* fell under my notice; and only as far as respected the profession of Engraving. The consequences of limiting the exertions of others in that Art by his own narrow ideas of its perfectibility; the policy or impolicy of sacrificing the future hopes of an Art, to (Opulence) the present deity of Commerce; the wisdom or folly of preferring pecuniary *Goodness*, to moral riches, were the important principles before me: and from them it was incumbent on me not to divert the attention of my audience.

The latter part of the succeeding Lecture, would have consisted of a portion of my analytical inquiry into the elementary principles of Engraving; and the former part would have been devoted to a consideration of the means which have been resorted to for its cultivation. It is a mortifying circumstance, that sordid intrigues, or unworthy and ill-founded fears, by prevent-

ing this Discourse* from being delivered, should have obliged me to suppress the progress which I had made in the analytical inquiry: but in no part of the course, had I depended so much on the examples and illustrations which I meant to have exhibited at the time of reading. They are indispensable to a clear understanding of the subject. I am therefore compelled by these machinations, to omit that which of all I had to deliver, I conceive would have been most useful to my audience. I now proceed with what has not yet been publicly read; which, for the sake of producing a more connected arrangement, has been formed into the second division of this Discourse. I have availed myself of the interval of time which has elapsed, to revise the whole: in doing which, I have in this, as in other places, added some few touches which would not have appeared in the Lecture-room, and by which, I hope, the general effect will be improved.]

HAVING admitted the charges of deterioration which have been brought against modern English engraving, when its actual present state is compared with the state in which an impartial and dispassionate ob-

* The syllabus of my succeeding Lecture, which began with the words "Further explanation of the causes that have retarded the advancement of Engraving," had been sent for, and delivered to the acting Secretary, to be inserted in the weekly advertisement, before my examination (if it were proper to call it so) took place. If it struck unfounded terrors—I am sorry for it. The Boydells (I use this word as the denomination of a species) will now see that they had nothing to fear from that Lecture.

server would have had a right to expect to have found it after a transplantation to this country of half a century; and having ascribed this deficiency in part to the baleful influence which unqualified persons have assumed and exercised, in ignorantly dictating to the studies, and curbing the energies, of its professors; I have now to submit that another cause, not less potent in its operation, has contributed to the present regretted state of Engraving. But I hope also to make it appear that such have been the exertions of its professors, under disadvantages which I trust I shall be able to manifest, that you will in conclusion think with me, that (like Sterne's reduced Marquis) the Art has "fought up against its condition with great firmness;" and is now in a better state than the country had a right, under its past and present privations and discouragements, to expect.

The fate of English engraving has been that of the English language; of which Dr. Johnson so eloquently complains. "Employed in the cultivation of every other art,

it has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered to spread under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance; resigned to the tyranny of Time and Fashion; and exposed to the corruptions of Ignorance, and the caprices of Innovation. It has been treated not as the pupil, but the slave, of Science;—the Pioneer of Art, doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths through which Painting and Architecture press forward to conquest and glory, without bestowing a smile on the humble drudge that facilitates their progress."

That no efficient endeavours have yet been made to ascertain, develope, and promulgate, the elementary principles of Engraving; that criticism and practical skill in this Art have hence been left to wander, without light and without roads, in wild uncertainty; and that the Honours of an Academy expressly instituted for the promotion of the Arts, have been denied to those who might most distinguish themselves in this arduous study; has justly excited the surprise of foreigners, and the re-

gret of those persons amongst ourselves who knew the intrinsic value of the Art, and who perceived that the Painters of Great Britain were destined to derive encouragement at home, and could only enjoy reputation abroad, in proportion as Engraving was critically understood, and successfully cultivated.

Mr. Burke has delicately apologised for the seeming remissness on this point of the engravers themselves, by stating of artists in general, that they are too constantly and busily engaged in the practice, to attempt to explain to the public the theories, of their respective professions:—and from the dealers in Engravings, for reasons already stated, such an attempt was hardly to be expected. But when a Royal Academy was established in London, expressly for the cultivation of the fine Arts,—surely then, both the public and the professors of this Art, had every rational ground to hope—nay, to expect, that some steps would have been taken toward the accomplishment of purposes so desirable.

Whatever hopes,—whatever rational expectations might then have been formed, were disappointed by the appearance of the Academical Code. *Professors* of Painting, Architecture, Anatomy, Perspective, ancient Literature, and foreign correspondence, were thereby appointed “to lead the students into the readiest and most efficacious paths of study;” with a limited admission of the public to the Lectures, which were ordered to be delivered on Art: but provision was made for no Professor of the Statuary’s art; no Professor of Landscape; and none of Engraving. Further to discourage—I am compelled to use this word—further to *discourage* this latter Art, it was ordained that Engravers, however great their professional merits, should not be eligible to the higher honours of the Royal Academy. By a strange infatuation, which only witchcraft or fool-craft could effect, and of which the spell is not yet broken, the impulse which acts most forcibly on ingenuous and well constituted minds—that honourable estimation which is at once the noblest reward of existing merit, and the

most powerful spring of future exertion,*
—was withheld even from those who might

* In an oration made in the Parliament which has recently been dissolved, on a great public question, the following passage occurs; the reasoning of which I consider, upon strict analogy, to be applicable to the present state of those who profess the Art of Engraving. I do not vouch for its being a correct extract from the speech of the noble Lord who is said to have delivered it—I take it from a news-paper report.

Speaking of the Catholics of Ireland, Lord Grenville is reported to have said, “Have your Lordships well weighed the consequences that must flow from the operation of such attempts to degrade and dispirit the minds of *any class* of men? Have you studied the difference of conduct under which men act, who have high rewards and distinctions set before them to influence their ambition and animate their labours? How different would the views and the spirit of a student of the Law be, if he could entertain no hope of ever reaching the high distinction now enjoyed by the Noble Lord on the woolsack? Does not much of his estimation of himself, and of the honour he attaches to his profession, arise from that single consideration? Suppose for a moment, that the Students of Lincoln’s-Inn, and of the Middle Temple exclusively, possessed this great and animating prospect, and that those of the Inner Temple, were debarred from ever entertaining such proud pretensions. Will your Lordships bring yourselves to believe that all three can devote themselves with equal spirit and ardour to

most excel* in the Art of Engraving: and the Academy in Europe which should

their professional pursuits? Must not the Members of the Inner Temple feel themselves comparatively low and insignificant, whenever they reflect on the comparative insignificance of the objects to which they are allowed to aspire?

If in the Army a similar dispiriting distinction was to be made between two regiments; if the Officers of the one were never to be raised above the rank of Colonels, while the Officers of the other might aspire to be Generals and great Commanders; how different must be the feelings and the spirit by which they must be actuated: They cannot feel themselves, or be looked upon, as the same race of beings. Apply my Lords, all the effects of such disparagement; compare the sentiments of such men with the sentiments of those whose views and ambition are checked by no such restraints, whose prospects are clouded by no such marks of inferiority: Your own breasts must tell you what works within theirs. The sentiments that must be engendered by such invidious distinctions and preferences may easily be conceived: They must irritate the pride, and fret the feelings of every honourable, high, and aspiring, mind:—and what evil consequences must proceed from such degrading distinctions, may more easily be imagined than expressed.

* The admission of the four most distinguished Engravers to the rank of Royal Academician, I should conceive would have been sufficient for every purpose of laud-

most have honoured that Art, has been from that hour the Academy in Europe where it is most neglected.

In other words, at that eventful crisis of commercial advantage and public happiness, the establishment of a National Academy, it was in this country virtually enacted that none but mercenary and ignoble minds should be devoted to an Art, the successful study of which was fated to form the basis of British encouragement to the higher efforts of Painting:—an Art which, when its immediate and remote consequences are taken into consideration, must be regarded as capable of influencing, to no inconsiderable degree, the general commercial prosperity of England; and which is almost the sole, but

able emulation. It would have conferred on Engraving a degree of relative honour and importance to Art in the aggregate, as 4 to 40, (which I presume to think not unreasonable :) and, with the addition of a *Professor* of Engraving, would have placed that Art, with respect to Academical cultivation, on a level with Architecture; of which profession there are four Royal Academicians.

certainly the most efficient, means of diffusing through the world a just and general taste for the arts of Design.

Now, no art is ever likely to attain such a degree of perfection as to operate the improvement of the public Taste, or any considerable amendment of its morals, where it is exercised for a recompense merely mercenary. In a commercial country, more especially, where wealth has usurped the title of *Goodness*, we should rather increase the weight in the scale of Honour, to counterpoise and check that sordid propensity, whose preponderance must else bring down the arts of refinement to the condition of mere handicraft trades,—and their professors to the condition of those who toil at the lower employments of life, and are driven by the fear of evil, rather than attracted by the prospect of good. For we should not forget, that man is prone to temptation. The artist who cannot obtain honour, will of course, or must of necessity, aim at profit: and under such circumstances, to follow, to flatter, and to

corrupt, the public Taste, is easily seen to be a more certain, and much more ready, way to wealth, than to acquire and exercise the power to lead, exalt, and refine it. The sure way, therefore, to degrade any *Art*; to break down its pretensions to that honourable denomination; and to annihilate the benefits that, *as an art*, it is capable of imparting to Society; would be to ordain or contrive that it should be exercised for money, and for *no higher* reward.*

A well known witticism of the late Hon. Charles Townshend, may help to illustrate these principles—if indeed, their truth be not of itself, sufficiently evident. Some thirty or forty years ago, there existed in London a debating Society, which, from

* It is painful, but is sometimes necessary, to trace the operations of unworthiness. The process by which what was once regarded as a fine Art, is gradually converted to a common trade, is this. The public taste will rest satisfied with inferior degrees of excellence in a living Art, where higher degrees are not produced. If the Garricks have quitted, or can be kept from, the stage, inferior actors will

the house where its meetings were held, was called the Robin Hood Society. Hear-

find reputation. To satisfy the existing Taste, or to debase it that it may be the more cheaply and easily satisfied, is the aim of the manager or dealer; who, at the best, cannot aim to raise it above the level of his own. Meanwhile it has become the ultimate object of the Artist, (a stranger to his own reputation but through this corrupt medium—feeling no more of the cheering influence of the sun-shine of the public countenance than the dealer may find it his interest to transmit,) to accommodate his talents to his employer's wishes, and the prices that he is content to pay. These causes being once put in action, the Art is necessarily retrograde. How much of Novelty, combined with how little of intrinsic merit, will (in Mr. Boydell's phrase) "answer to the publisher," is sooner or latter ascertained; and the results of the studies of the Artists of the first generation, becoming rudimental to the next, manual, soon takes place of mental, industry. The excellence which has resulted from mental feeling being banished, what can be learned of Art in the trammels of imitation is all that remains. To increase the quantity, not to raise the quality, of its productions, is now the way to wealth; and the Artist, if he might still be called so—the practitioner, is induced to take numerous pupils or apprentices to multiply the number of his productions; and when the public is content to receive with approbation such art as any one can teach, and as every one might learn, the process is complete.

ing it asserted that, when Jeacock the baker was President, there was better speaking at the Robin Hood than in St. Stephen's Chapel, Mr. Townshend replied, "You are not to wonder that people should go to the *Baker* for oratory, when they come to the House of Commons for *Bread*."—In like manner I do not hesitate to say, that you must look elsewhere for excellence than in a country where the professors of a given Art, are doomed to exercise that Art for *nothing but bread*: Neither oratory nor imitative Art, under such circumstances can be more than the paralysed, inefficient, representative—the shadowy semblance, of what it would have been under a more auspicious dispensation of things.

Where nothing better than money is the prize, none better than mercenary candidates will start in the race: and, what steady perseverance in arduous study; what noble flights of virtuous enthusiasm; what disinterested or patriotic employment of exalted talent; ought to have been expected under such an order of things, might have been seen in the purlieus of Duke's

Place, or read in the History of Man, without making this great metropolis the theatre of deleterious experiment; and should therefore have been well known to those who undertook to legislate for an Academy of Arts.

On this point, and with the examples of the Academies of Rome, Paris, Vienna, Petersburg, and I believe all the public Academies of Europe, (our own excepted) on my side the question, I may surely be allowed to differ from the *Architect* of those laws; I may even venture to deny that his basement is of adequate breadth, or his foundation sufficiently firm.

Helvetius has remarked the propensity by which most men are impelled to undervalue those attainments of others, of whose nature, and the extent of whose uses, they are ignorant: He has also noted how frequently individuals are disposed to identify excellence itself, with the kind of excellence which each flatters himself that he possesses.*

* These are positions so uneasy, that we can scarcely

Hence, the present knowledge of some (I am afraid I might say of most) persons, and their own estimates of their own powers, are made too much the measure of the possible exertions of others. We are apt to listen to accounts of such exertions with a degree of uncertainty which inclines us to limit them by what we already know; and generally to expect that they will turn out less than we imagine ourselves to be capable of. It is upon this principle that the poets have ventured Ajax, who was not celebrated for the brightness of his intellects, as braving Jove himself! though he stood in awe of Achilles:* He had witnessed the impetuous valour of Achilles, but was unable to comprehend the omni-

think them natural, while we are almost ready to confirm their truth by hating Helvetius for the discovery.

* I have taken this remark on the character of Ajax, from Rousseau, though I confess, I do not know, and cannot find, the particular passages on which it is founded. Probably the sublime remonstrance of this Hero in the XVII. Book of the Iliad, may be one.

potence of Jove: and it is on this principle, and perhaps from no engraver having been present, to assert the intellectuality and public utility of his profession, when the laws of the London Academy were framed, that while Architecture is there placed on a level with the painter's Art, and above that of the Statuary, engraving has been stamped with invidious and degrading inferiority.

Now, if there be any class of men, whom we should hope to find superior to—whom we should naturally expect would have raised themselves above, this ordinary condition of human nature, surely it would be those whose study, whose duty, and whose pleasure it is, to better and improve that condition—the first professors of the arts of civilization and refinement. From every professor of the Fine Arts, we have a reasonable right to expect the sentiments and feelings of a large and liberal mind; and a contrary principle of conduct, was as foreign and unfit in those who undertook

to legislate for an Academy of Arts, as it would be in this place. How would it sound here, if a Painter, a Statuary, or an Architect, (or an Artist of any other description) were to present himself before you, and say, either directly or by implication,—“Ladies and Gentlemen—attend alone to the Art which *I* have the honour to profess, for all other arts are unworthy of your notice.”—We rather expect that such a person will address you in some such language as the following: “I am happy to have it in my power to anticipate that you are well informed of other Arts and Sciences, because your minds are thereby duly prepared to receive the information it is my duty to impart: My task is on this account less difficult and more delightful: The more you know of other arts, the more easily you will acquire a knowledge of mine also; nor have I any reason to fear that when you *have* acquired this knowledge, you will love it the less. Like St. Paul at Ephesus, I find an altar already raised to the *unknown* Art; and

have only to wish that, like him, I might be empowered to declare unto you a new object of devotion.”

Such is the tone of sentiment, that, upon all occasions, we should naturally expect from an artist; and from artists selected for the purpose, and invested with the power, of legislating for the general advantage of the Arts, we had an equal right to expect a corresponding clearness and comprehension of judgment; profound knowledge of causes and effects; familiar acquaintance with at least such past events as were connected with the progressive improvement of Art, and the benign influence of Art upon the progress of Society; combined with penetration to see into remote consequences, and energy to trace the necessary, and secure the probable, connexion between the past, the present, and the future. In a country—a commercial country, where the opulent were numerous and the tasteful but few, the legislator for the Arts should have foreseen whether early encouragement to the higher efforts

In painting was to be expected, mediately or immediately, from the wealthy and the great; or from the public at large: he should have known whether the engraver's art, was in itself useful and praiseworthy, or worthless or contemptible; and in either case, whether it was not likely in the surrounding state of things to become the principal means of early encouragement to Painting. How these means could be rendered most efficient? would have become a necessary subsequent consideration; and in the presence of legislators warmed by a zeal so honest, and capable of entertaining sentiments and views thus liberal and extensive,—Engraving might have boldly stood up and said with Banquo,

— my noble partner, *

You greet with present grace, and great prediction
Of noble having and of Royal hope;
That he seems rapt withal—to me you speak not:
If you can look into the seeds of Time,
And say *which grain will grow*, and which will not,
Speak then to me.—

* The Macbeth of British art, was bewitched, I believe, by Reynolds—and Barry; Sir William Chambers acting as Hecate. Less than the influence of Hecate could not

It has been said that, with the view of excluding Sir Robert Strange from our Academy, the Art of Engraving was altogether excluded from participating in its benefits: but the obvious injustice of so palpable a departure from principle, and the shame which would have attended it, unites with the other omissions, and with the general complexion of the Academic laws,* to persuade us that this omission rather originated in the narrowness of the views of

have effected a preference so manifestly unfair and impolitic as our academical establishment exhibits, of Architecture over the arts of the Statuary and Engraver. I would, however, cheerfully have forgiven Sir William for presuming that Great-Britain would have numerous palaces to erect, if he had done her the justice to expect also, that she would have Kings, and Statesmen, and Heroes, to honour.

* See the printed abstract of the Institution and Laws of the Royal Academy of Arts; and see also a pamphlet printed for Stockdale, 1804, entitled "a Concise Vindication of the conduct of the five suspended Members of the Council of the Royal Academy;" and another published by Longman, Cadell, and Miller, entitled "a Concise Review of the Concise Vindication of the conduct, &c. &c.;" wherein some of these mischievous errors are sufficiently manifest.

its legislators; amongst whom all the crooked littlenesses—all the selfish, short-sighted, temporary, expediency of politics, appear to have taken place of the simplicity of motive, and amplitude of principle, of legislation:—of legislation, not for the punishment of crime, but which should have comprehended the generation and reward of unborn and immeasurable merit!

In delivering these sentiments of the errors and omissions of the laws and legislators of the Royal Academy, I am very far from imputing those errors to its present members. It is possible that ignorance, or mistaken superciliousness, may place an art, as it placed Sampson of old, in a situation where the exertion of blinded strength can only be destructive. If the present situation of British engraving should at all resemble this, it would be unjust that either the mischief or the blame should fall on those who neither blinded the art nor placed it in the portal.

One of the present members of the Aca-

demy—the highly favoured votary of every Muse, has recently united the purest charms of poetic persuasion with the most resistless powers of reasoning, to impress us with the important truth, that *no Art has ever flourished, or ever can flourish as an Art, in any country, unless in that country it be HONOURED as an Art—unless it be cherished and respected as a mode of refined mental operation.* The same sentiments have been promulgated from this place in language not less forcible by another of its members: and that *the cultivation of public Taste can alone give vigour to living Art,* has lately been enforced with appropriate energy in the Lecture-room of the Royal Academy itself, both from the chair of the Professor, and from that of the President. Indeed, no tasteful or cultivated mind has been found to deny, that upon these delicate and dulcet chords all the music of all the Arts must be sounded; and from such men, placed at the head of the Arts, I am willing to anticipate every just and early extension of their good offices toward the Art under our consideration. My inten-

tion has been, not to cast on them the faintest shade of unmerited blame, but, to apologise for the present regretted state of Engraving, by accounting for a deficiency which has not been disputed; to shield it from the shafts which have ungenerously been levelled at its very existence *as an Art*; and to vindicate, and as far as the efforts of an humble individual may conduce, to re-establish and perpetuate, its claims to that honourable denomination.

But a doctrine which at a cursory view seems to rise directly counter to these opinions, and which I believe originated with Voltaire, has lately *re-presented* itself to our notice. It amounts to an affirmation that great or useful discoveries in Art or Science, are never made by Academies, Colleges, or similar aggregated bodies of Artists, or men of Science; and that the inculcation of *System* at such public Institutions, has a constant tendency to produce more harm than good.

To deem Academies useless, or worse.

than useless, because great discoveries always originate with individuals, is to draw a false inference from a self-evident truth. Discoveries in Art and Science must originate with individuals. It cannot in the nature of things be otherwise. In the Universe of Art, individual genius is the projectile force. Academies, therefore, should not be blamed for not performing what is not the proper office or duty of Academies to perform.

But the question of what is,—or what ought to be, termed an Academy? should previously have been stated. Now as an Academy, collectively speaking, is not a discoverer, so neither is it a school: (though it may very properly include a school.)—It is rather a *Parliament** of Art. It differs from, and is superior to, an ordinary school, in respect that it is less a place to instruct novices in what is known and practised, and more a place for men of distinguished

* I conceive this word to be French, and its genuine English definition to be free and unrestrained oral discussion.

abilities to confer in, and communicate their lights and discoveries to each other, for their mutual benefit and the general improvement of Art. Such were those groves of immortal memory from whence we derive the term, and which once adorned the banks of the Ilyssus; and such might now illuminate the borders of the Thames,—or perhaps the boundaries of the earth!—for we are not deficient in Artists of high attainment; but in wise, effective, and comprehensive, Academical Laws.

If liberal communication and interchange of sentiment and opinion, be the beneficial things they are allowed to be upon the large scale of Society, they should surely be still more beneficial on the smaller scale of an Academy; where the parties are more select, their sympathies more accordant, and their intercourse more complete.

That I have the misfortune, on the question of the value or uselessness of Academies and System, to differ from an author of senatorial rank, and of still higher rank

in the estimation of the tasteful and judicious; I cannot be certain. We may seem to differ in words, while in fact we may really agree. If he writes against Academies as they generally have existed, or do exist, he admits the possibility—he even contends for the practice—(though without specifying the most eligible means) of cultivating imagination and judgment together:—and if he writes against System, and by system means consistency of co-operative principles, his own “analytical inquiry,” might be pleaded (if such an argument might be esteemed fair in such a discussion) in refutation of such doctrine.—At least he will allow that analytical research *should* extend to the whole of the subject treated; and that the object of the separate ascertainment of elementary principles, is synthetic and systematic combination.

You will permit me now to recur to what I before stated, namely, that to discover new principles in Art must ever be the fortune or merit of individuals; and

that the energies of Genius (always the offspring of single minds) are, collectively speaking, the centrifugal force by which the great system of the Universe of Art is continued in motion. As Providence has appointed a centripetal power (not to *destroy*, but) to restrain the centrifugal; so in Art (and I suspect also in morals) the redundancy of impetus—the eccentricities and excesses of individual energy—are sympathetically restrained, and rendered subservient to its progress through time and space: and perhaps by no power that human wisdom has yet devised, could this purpose be in any country more effectually accomplished, than by instituting an Academy of Arts upon expansive principles—or which should “grow with *its* growth, and strengthen with its strength.”

A very principal object, then, of such public Institutions (if my opinion be right) is to detect and check the mischievous tendency of unprincipled Novelty; to discourage the meretricious fallacies of mistaken or empirical pretenders to art and

criticism; and, either by their productions in Art; or by public Lectures; or public discussions of principles as they might apply to, or be drawn from, the works of distinguished masters; *—or by all of these and by every other honourable and efficient means, to ascertain, recognise, sanction, and promulgate, such discoveries of sound principle, as may be made by individual artists and critics. Of so much importance does this object appear; and so vitally essential to the ends and purposes of such Institutions; that, unless it be accomplished, I fear an Academy can be little more in any country than a mercantile body; a drawing school; or a benefit society; or a mere feather in the cap of royal vanity or national folly.—It may be a nursery of Saplings; but can never be the

* I am informed that public discussions of the merits and demerits of celebrated Pictures was once common, and that the Discourses published by Felibien, are really such as took place, in the French Academy: and we know from History that the ancients entertained an high opinion of this mode of instruction.

forest of Oaks, with which a country that aspires to greatness, should be strengthened and adorned.

Had such an Academy of Arts, including that of Engraving, existed in Germany or the Netherlands in the sixteenth century; the bright but erratic course of Henry Goltzius, (which we shall hereafter have occasion to notice) might have been restrained by salutary attraction: He might have shed a steadier light and rolled a fair planet in the Universe of Art. The principles which governed his various practice, and the discoveries to which that practice in its turn gave birth—communicated to his contemporaries, and regulated by the general feeling and judgment of the great body of Artists,—would have really and highly enriched his art, and the most valuable rudimental knowledge would have been transmitted to his successors.

I have chosen the example of Henry Goltzius, because among engravers he is a conspicuous figure; one whose genius is

admired, and whose eccentricities are now notorious: but so unsettled have always been the principles of Engraving, that observations similar to these in principle might be applied to almost every engraver of distinguished talent; from the time of Martin Schön and Andrea Mantegna, down to our own.

It is curious—but it deserves our attention upon a much nobler principle than the gratification of curiosity—to look through history, and observe the general slow progress, and the occasional vigorous and rapid advancement, of Art and Science. As long as in such pursuits men are governed by temporary expedients arising out of, and falling into, particular occasions;—as long as their attention is confined to detached phenomena; their progress is necessarily slow, if they can be said to proceed at all: but I believe that whenever rapid advances in Science, or in the general practice of any Art, have taken place, such advances have resulted from the ascertainment and promulgation of its radical or first principles;

and the vigorous exertions which vivid feeling, supported by, and relying upon, these, is enabled to make.* Need I expatiate on the relative value of expediency and principle? Need I say that they differ as widely as cunning from wisdom; as intricacy and littleness from simplicity and breadth; as the narrow and intricate ways of a politician, from the noble and expanded views of a legislator? Or shall I request you, in confirmation of these truths, to compare the advancement of the Sciences, those of Chemistry and natural Philosophy in particular, within the last two centuries, with their progress during the whole former history of the World.

The ascertainment, then, of what ought

* Works of the Arts and Literature of former and more refined periods, have frequently fallen under our notice in the course of these Lectures. In the estimation of the philosophical Artist, the intrinsic value even of these, sublime monuments of human intellect, can be rated no higher than as the Principles on which they were produced may be traced in the examples. In no other view are they conducive to our further progress.

to be esteemed Principle, is, in every Art, of the very highest importance. If we embark in that of Engraving, either as professors or collectors, without it,—we may carry sail indeed; but we traverse an ocean of uncertainty, without light, without rudder, without compass, or polar star; and are only right by occasional good fortune. With principle for our guide, we proceed regularly in our conquests over error and barbarism, with the superior discipline and steady bravery of a Roman legion; possessing, and securing, and cultivating, the ground we have gained.

FINIS,

J. M'CREERY, Printer,
Black-Horse Court, Fleet-Street.