

FUSELI HENRY

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF HENRY FUSELI,
VOLUME 3 (OF 3)

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ELEVENTH LECTURE. ON THE PREVAILING METHOD OF TREATING THE HISTORY OF PAINTING, WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE PICTURE OF LIONARDO DA VINCI OF "THE LAST SUPPER."

In this Lecture I shall submit to your consideration some criticisms on the prevailing method of treating the History of our Art; attended by a series of observations on the magnificent picture of the Last Supper, by Lionardo da Vinci, now before you.

History, mindless of its real object, sinking to Biography, has been swelled into a diffuse catalogue of individuals, who, tutored by different schools, or picking something from the

real establishers of Art, have done little more than repeat, or imitate through the medium of either, what those had found in Nature, discriminated, selected, and applied to Art, according to her dictates. Without wishing to depreciate the merit of that multitude who felt, proved themselves strong enough, and strenuously employed life to follow, it must be pronounced below the historian's dignity to allow them more than a transitory glance. Neither originality, nor selection and combination of materials scattered over the various classes of Art by others, have much right to attention from him who only investigates the real progress of Art, if the first proves to have added nothing essential to the system by novelty, and the second to have only diluted energy, and by a popular amalgama to have pleased the vulgar. Novelty, without enlarging the circle of knowledge, may delight or strike, but is nearer allied to whim than to invention; and an eclectic system, without equality of parts, as it originated in want of comprehension, totters on the brink of mediocrity.

The first ideas of Expression, Character, Form, Chiaroscuro, and Colour, originated in Tuscany: Masaccio, Lionardo da Vinci, M. Agnolo, Bartolomeo della Porta. The first was carried off before he could give more than hints of dramatic composition; the second appears to have established character on physiognomy, and to have seen the first vision of chiaroscuro, though he did not penetrate the full extent of its charm; the third had power, knowledge, and life sufficiently great, extensive, and long, to have fixed style on its basis, had not an irresistible bias

drawn off his attention from the modesty and variety of Nature; Baccio gave amplitude to drapery, and colour to form.

Of the Tuscan School that succeeded these, the main body not only added nothing to their discoveries, but, if their blind attachment to the singularities rather than the beauties of the third be excepted, equally inattentive to expression, character, propriety of form, the charms of chiaroscuro, and energies of colour, contented themselves to give to tame or puerile ideas, obvious and common-place conceptions, a kind of importance by mastery of execution and a bold but monotonous and always mannered outline; and though Andrea del Sarto, with Francia Bigio, Giacompo da Pontormo, and Rosso, may be allowed to have thought sometimes for themselves and struck out paths of their own, will it be asserted that they enlarged or even filled the circle traced out before? The most characteristic work of Andrea's original powers, is, no doubt, the historic series in S. Giovanni dei Scalzi; yet, when compared with the patriarchal simplicity of the groups in the Lunette of the Sistine Chapel, the *naïveté* of his characters and imagery will be found too much tainted with contemporary, local, and domestic features, for Divine, Apostolic, and Oriental agents. His drapery, whenever he escapes from the costume of the day, combines with singular felicity the breadth of the *Frati*, and the acute angles of Albert Durer; but neither its amplitude, nor the solemn repose and tranquillity of his scenery, can supply the want of personal dignity, or consecrate vulgar forms and trivial features.

The Roman school like an Oriental sun rose, not announced by dawn, and, setting, left no twilight. Raffaello established his school on the Drama; its scenery, its expression, its forms; History, Lyrics, Portrait, became under his hand the organs of passion and character. With his demise the purity of this principle vanished. Julio Romano, too original to adopt, formed a school of his own at Mantoua, which, as it was founded on no characteristic principle, added nothing to Art, and did not long survive its founder. Polydoro Caldara was more ambitious to emulate the forms of the antique than to propagate the style of his master, which was not comprehended by Penny, called Il Fattore, mangled by Perrino del Vaga, became common-place in the hands of the Zuccari, barbarous manner during the usurpation of Giuseppe Cesari, sunk to tameness in the timid imitation of Sacchi and Maratta, and expired under the frigid method of Mengs.

A certain national, though original character, marks the brightest epoch of the Venetian School. However deviating from each other, Tiziano, Tintoretto, Jacopo da Ponte, and Paolo Veronese, acknowledge but one element of imitation, Nature herself: this principle each bequeathed to his school, and no attempt to adulterate its simplicity by uniting different methods, distinguishes their immediate successors: hence they preserved features of originality longer than the surrounding schools, whom the vain wish to connect incompatible excellence, soon degraded to mediocrity, and from that plunged to insignificance.

If what is finite could grasp infinity, the variety of Nature might be united by individual energy; till then the attempt to amalgamate her scattered beauties by the imbecility of Art, will prove abortive. Genius is the pupil of Nature; perceives, is dazzled, and imperfectly transmits one of her features: thus saw M. Agnolo, Raffaello, Tiziano, Correggio; and such were their technic legacies, as inseparable from their attendant flaws, as in equal degrees irreconcilable. That Nature is not subject to decrepitude, is proved by the superiority of modern over ancient science; what hinders modern Art to equal that of classic eras, is the effect of irremovable causes.

But I hasten to the principal object of this Lecture, the consideration of the technic character of Lionardo da Vinci, one, and in my opinion the first of the great restorers of modern Art, as deduced from his most important work, the Last Supper, surviving as a whole in the magnificent copy of Marco Uggione, rescued from a random pilgrimage by the courage and vigilance of our President, and by the Academy made our own. The original of this work, the ultimate test of his most vigorous powers, the proof of his theory, and what may be called with propriety the first characteristic composition since the revival of the Art, was the principal ornament of the Refectory in the Dominican Convent of S. Maria delle Gratie, at Milan.

Let us begin with the centre, the seat of the principal figure, from which all the rest emanate like rays. Sublimely calm, the face of the Saviour broods over the immense, whilst every face

and every limb around him, roused by his mysterious word, fluctuate in restless curiosity and sympathetic pangs.

The face of the Saviour is an abyss of thought, and broods over the immense revolution in the economy of mankind, which throngs inwardly on his absorbed eye – as the spirit creative in the beginning over the water's darksome wave – undisturbed and quiet. It could not be lost in the copy before us: how could its sublime conception escape those who saw the original? It has survived the hand of Time in the study which Lionardo made in crayons, exhibited with most of the attendant heads in the British Gallery; and even in the feebler transcript of Del Testa.

I am not afraid of being under the necessity of retracting what I am going to advance, that neither during the splendid period immediately subsequent to Lionardo, nor in those which succeeded to our own time, has a face of the Redeemer been produced which, I will not say equalled, but approached the sublimity of Lionardo's conception, and in quiet and simple features of humanity embodied divine, or, what is the same, incomprehensible and infinite powers. To him who could contrive and give this combination, the unlimited praise lavished on the inferior characters who surround the hero, whilst his success in that was doubted – appears to me not only no praise, but a gross injustice.

Yet such was the judgment of Vasari, and in our days of Lanzi, both founded on the pretended impossibility of transcribing the beauty of forms and the varied energies of expression

distributed by the artist among the disciples. "The moment," says Lanzi, and says well, "is that in which the Saviour says to the Disciples, "One of you will betray me!" On every one of the innocent men the word acts like lightning: he who is at a greater distance, distrusting his own ears, applies to his neighbour; others, according to their variety of character, betray raised emotions. One of them faints, one is fixed in astonishment; this wildly rises, the simple candour of another tells that he cannot be suspected: Judas, meanwhile, assumes a look of intrepidity, but, though he counterfeits innocence, leaves no doubt of being the traitor. Vinci used to tell, that for a year he wandered about, perplexed with the thought how to embody in one face the image of so black a mind; and frequenting a village which a variety of villains haunted, he met at last, by the help of some associated features, with his man. Nor was his success less conspicuous in furnishing both the Jameses with congenial and characteristic beauty; but being unable to find an ideal superior to theirs for Christ, he left the head, as Vasari affirms, imperfect, though Arminine ascribes a high finish even to that."

Thus is the modesty and diffidence of the artist, who, in the midst of the most glorious success, always sought and wished for more, brought as evidence against him by all his pretended judges and critics, if we except the single Bottari, who finds in it, with the highest finish, all the fortitude of mind characteristic of the Saviour, united to lively consideration of the suffering that awaited him – though even that is, in my opinion, below the

conception of Lionardo.

Lest those who have read and recollect the character of Lionardo which I have submitted to the public, should, from the predilection with which I have dwelt on what I think the principal feature of his performance, the face and attitude of the hero, suspect I shift my ground, or charge me with inconsistency, I repeat what I said then, when I was nearly unacquainted with this work, that the distinguishing feature of his powers lay in the delineation of character, which he often raised to a species, and not seldom degraded to caricature. The triumphant proof of both is the great performance before us; the same mind that could unite divine power with the purest humanity, by an unaccountable dereliction, not only of the dignity due to his subject, but of sound sense, thought it not beneath him to haunt the recesses of deformity to unkennel a villain. Did he confine villainy to deformity? If he had, he would have disdained to give him two associates in feature; for the face of him who holds up his finger, and his who argues on the left extremity of the table, seem to have proceeded, if not absolutely from the same, from a very similar mould, yet they are in the number of the elect, and, though on the brink of caricature, have the air of good men. Expression alone separates them from the traitor, whom incapacity of remorse, hatred, rage at being discovered, and habitual meanness, seem to have divided into equal shares.

The portrait of Cesar Borgia, by Giorgione, now hung up for your study in the Academy for Painting, proves that the most

atrocious mind may lurk under good, sedate, and even handsome features. Though his hand were not drawing a dagger, who would expect mercy or remorse from the evil methodized villainy of that eye? But Judas was capable of remorse; intolerant of the dreadful suffering with which the horrid act had overwhelmed him, he rushed on confession of his crime, restitution, and suicide.

To the countenance and attitude of St. John, blooming with youth, innocent, resigned, partaking perhaps somewhat too much of the feminine, and those of the two James's invigorated by the strength of virility, energetic and bold, none will refuse a competent praise of varied beauty; but they neither are nor ought to be ideal, and had they been so, they could neither compete nor interfere with the sublimity that crowns the Saviour's brow, and stamps his countenance with the God.

The felicity, novelty, and propriety of Lionardo's conception and invention, are powerfully seconded by every part of execution: – the tone which veils and wraps actors and scene into one harmonious whole, and gives it breadth; the style of design, grand without affectation, and, if not delicate or ideal, characteristic of the actors; the draperies folded with equal simplicity, elegance, and costume, with all the propriety of presenting the highest finish, without anxiety of touch, or thronging the eye.

So artless is the assemblage of the figures, that the very name of composition seems to degrade what appears arranged

by Nature's own hand. That the nearest by relation, characters and age, should be placed nearest the master of the feast, and of course attract the eye soonest, was surely the most natural arrangement; but if they are conspicuous, they are not so at the expense of the rest: distance is compensated by action; the centre leads to all, as all lead to the centre. That the great restorer of light and shade sacrificed the effects and charms of *chiaroscuro* at the shrine of character, raised him at once above all his future competitors; changes admiration to sympathy, and makes us partners of the feast.

As expression sprang from the subject, so it gave rise to competition. That Raffaello was acquainted with Lionardo's work, and felt its power, is evident from his composition, engraved by M. Antonio: finding invention anticipated, he took refuge in imitation, and filled it with sentiments of his own; whether, beyond the dignity of attitude, he attempts to approach the profundity of Lionardo's Christ, cannot, from a print of very moderate dimensions, be decided. In the listening figure of Judas, with equal atrocity of guilt he appears to have combined somewhat more of apostolic consequence.

The well-known Last Supper of the Loggia, painted, or what is more probable, superintended by Raffaello, is, by being made a night scene, by contrast and *chiaroscuro*, become an original conception; but as it presents little more than groups busy to arrange themselves for sitting down or breaking up, it cannot excite more interest than what is due to contrast and effect, and

active groups eager to move yet not tumultuary.

But if Lionardo disdained to consult the recesses of composition and the charms of artificial chiaroscuro, he did not debase his work to mere apposition: uniting the whole by tone, he gave it substance by truth of imitation, and effect by the disposition of the characters; the groups flanking each side of the Saviour, emerge, recede, and support each other with a roundness, depth, and evidence which leave all attempts at emendation or improvement hopeless. But why should I attempt to enumerate beauties which are before you, and which if you do not perceive yourselves, no words of mine can ever make you feel?

The universality of Lionardo da Vinci is become proverbial: but though possessed of every element, he rather gave glimpses than a standard of form; though full of energy, he had not powers effectually to court the various graces he pursued. His line was free from meagreness, and his forms presented volume, but he appears not to have ever been much acquainted, or to have sedulously sought much acquaintance, with the Antique. Character was his favourite study, and character he has often raised from an individual to a species, and as often depressed to caricature. The strength of his execution lay in the delineation of male heads; those of his females owe nearly all their charms to chiaroscuro, of which he is the supposed inventor: they are seldom more discriminated than the children they fondle; they are sisters of one family. The extremities of his hands are often

inelegant, though timorously drawn, like those of Christ among the Doctors in the picture we lately saw exhibited. Lionardo da Vinci touched in every muscle of his forms the master-key of the passion he wished to express, but he is ideal only in chiaroscuro.

Such was the state of the Art before the appearance of M. Agnolo and Raffaello, and the establishment of style.

Of M. Agnolo it is difficult to decide who have understood less, his encomiasts or his critics, though both rightly agree in dating from him an epoch – those of the establishment, these of the subversion of Art.

It is the lot of Genius to be opposed, and to be invigorated by opposition. All extremes touch each other: frigid praise and frigid censure wait on easily attainable or common powers: but the successful adventurer in the realms of Discovery, in spite of the shrugs, checks, and sneers of the timid, the malign, and the envious, leaps on an unknown or long lost shore, ennobles it with his name, and grasps immortality.

M. Agnolo appeared, and soon discovered that works worthy of perpetuity could neither be built on defective and unsubstantial forms, nor on the transient whim of fashion and local sentiment; that their stamina were the real stamina of Nature, the genuine feelings of humanity; and planned for painting what Homer had planned for poetry, the epic part, which, with the utmost simplicity of a whole, should unite magnificence of plan and endless variety of subordinate parts. His line became generic, but perhaps too uniformly grand: character and beauty were

admitted only as far as they could be made subservient to grandeur. The child, the female, meanness, deformity, were by him indiscriminately stamped with grandeur. A beggar rose from his hand the patriarch of poverty; the hump of his dwarf is impressed with dignity; his women are moulds of generation; his infants teem with the man; his men are a race of giants. This is the "terribil via," this is that "magic circle," in which we are told that none durst move but he. No, none but he who makes sublimity of conception his element of form. M. Agnolo himself offers the proof: for the lines that bear in a mass on his mighty tide of thought in the Gods and Patriarchs and Sibyls of the Sistine Chapel, already too ostentatiously show themselves in the Last Judgement, and rather expose than support his ebbing powers in the Chapel of Paul. Considered as a whole, the Crucifixion of St. Peter and the Conversion of Paul, in that place, are the dotage of M. Agnolo's style; but they have parts which make that dotage more enviable than the equal vigour of mediocrity.

With what an eye M. Agnolo contemplated the Antique, we may judge from his Bacchus, the early production of his youth: in style it is at least equal, perhaps in pulp and fleshiness superior, to what is called the Antique Roman Style. His idea seems to have been the personification of youthful inebriety, but it is the inebriety of a superior being, not yet forsaken by grace, not yet relinquished by mind. In more advanced years, the Torso of Apollonius became his standard of form. But the Dæmons of Dante had too early tintured his fancy to admit in their full

majesty the Gods of Homer and of Phidias.

Such was the opinion formed of the plan and style of M. Agnolo by the judges, the critics, the poets, the artists, the public, of his own and the following age, from Bembo to Ariosto, from Raffaello to Tiziano, down to Agostino and Annibale Carracci. Let us now compare it with the technical verdict given by the greatest professional critic, on the Continent, of our times. "M. Agnolo," says Mengs, "seeking always to be grand, was perhaps only bulky, and by the perpetual use of a convex line, over-spanned the forms and irrecoverably lost the line of Nature. This charged style attended him in his youth, and engrossed him when a man. For this reason his works will always be much inferior to the antique of the good style; for though they made robust and muscular figures, they never made them heavy: – an instance is the Hercules of Glycon, who, though so bulky, and of form so majestic, is easily seen to be swift like a stag, and elastic like a ball. The style of M. Agnolo could not give similar ideas, for the joints of his figures are too contracted, and seem only made for the posture into which he puts them. The forms of his flesh are too round, his muscles of a mass and shape always similar, which hides their springs of motion; nor do you ever see in his works a muscle in repose, than which a greater fault Design knows not. He perfectly knew what place each muscle ought to occupy, but never gave its form. Nor did he understand the nature of tendons, as he made them equally fleshy from end to end, and his bones too round. Raffaello partook of all these defects, without

ever reaching the profundity of his muscular theory. Raffaello's strength lay in characterizing aged and nervous frames; he was too hard for delicacy, and in figures of grandeur an exaggerated copy of M. Agnolo." So far Mengs.

M. Agnolo appears to have had no infancy; if he had, we are not acquainted with it. His earliest works are equal in principle and compass of execution to the vigorous proofs of his virility. Like an oriental sun, he burst upon us at once, without a dawn. Raffaello Sanzio we see in his cradle, we hear him stammer, but *propriety* rocked the cradle, and *character* formed his lips. Even in the trammels of Pietro Perugino, dry and servile in his style of design, he traced what was essential, and separated it from what was accidental in his model. The works of Lionardo da Vinci and the Cartoon of Pisa are said to have invigorated his eye, but it was the Antique that completed the system which he had begun to establish on Nature; from them he learned discrimination and choice of forms. He found that in the construction of the body the articulations of the bones were the true cause of ease and grace in the action of the limbs, and that the knowledge of this was the reason of the superiority of antique design. He found that certain features were fittest for certain expressions and peculiar to certain characters; that such a head, such hands, such feet, are the stamen or the growth of such a body, and on physiognomy established homogeneousness. Of all artists he was the greatest, the most precise, the most acute observer. When he designed, he first attended to the primary intention and motive of his

figure, next to its general measure, then to the bones and their articulations; from them to the principal muscles, or the muscles eminently wanted, and their attendant nerves, and at last to the more or less essential minutiae. But the characteristic part of the subject is infallibly the characteristic part of his design, if it be formed even by a few rapid or a single stroke of his pen or pencil. The strokes themselves are characteristic, they follow or indicate the texture or fibre of the part; flesh in their rounding, nerves in straight, bones in angular touches.

Such was the felicity and such the propriety of Raffaello when employed in the dramatic evolutions of character, – both suffered when he attempted to abstract the forms of sublimity or beauty. The painter of humanity not often wielded with success superhuman weapons. His Gods never rose above prophetic or patriarchal forms: if the finger of M. Agnolo impressed the divine countenance oftener with sternness than awe, the Gods of Raffaello are sometimes too affable and mild, like him who speaks to Jacob in the ceiling of the Vatican; sometimes too violent, like him who separates light from darkness in the Loggia: but though made chiefly to walk with dignity on earth, he soared above it in the mild effulgence and majestic rapture of Christ on Tabor, not indeed as we see his face now from the repairs of the manufacturers in the Louvre, and still more in the frown of the angelic countenance that withers all the strength of the warrior Heliodorus. Of ideal female beauty, though he himself, in his letter to Count Castiglione, tells us that from its scarcity

in life he made attempts to reach it by an idea formed in his own mind, he certainly wanted that standard which guided him in character. His Goddesses and mythologic females are no more than aggravations of the generic forms of M. Agnolo. Roundness, mildness, sanctimony, and insipidity, compose the features and air of his Madonnas: transcripts of the nursery, or some favourite face. The Madonna del Impanato, the Madonna Bella, the Madonna della Sedia, and even the longer proportions and greater delicacy and dignity of the Madonna formerly in the collection of Versailles, share more or less of this insipidity: it chiefly arises from the high, smooth, roundish forehead, the shaven vacuity between the arched semicircular eye-brows, their elevation above the eyes, and the ungraceful division, growth and scantiness of hair. This indeed might be the result of his desire not to stain the virgin character of sanctity with the most distant hint of coquetry or meretricious charms; for in his Magdalens, he throws it with luxuriant profusion, and surrounds the breast and shoulders with undulating waves and plaits of gold. The character of Mary Magdalen met his, – it was the character of a passion.

It is evident from every picture or design at every period of his art in which she had a part, that he supposed her enamoured when she follows the body of the Saviour to the tomb, or throws herself dishevelled over his feet, or addresses him when he bears his cross. The cast of her features, her forms, her action, are the character of love in agony. When character inspired Raffaello, his women became definitions of grace and pathos at once.

Such is the exquisite line and turn of the averted half-kneeling female with the two children among the spectators of Heliodorus. Her attitude, the turn of her neck, supplies all face, and intimates more than he ever expressed by features; and that she would not have gained by showing them, may be guessed from her companion on the foreground, who, though highly elegant and equally pathetic in her action, has not features worthy of either. The fact is, form and style were by Raffaello employed chiefly, if not always, as vehicles of character and pathos; the Drama is his element, and to that he has adapted them in a mode and with a propriety which leave all attempts at emendation hopeless: if his lines have been excelled or rivalled in energy, correctness, elegance, – considered as instruments of the passions, they have never been equalled, and as parts of invention, composition and expression relative to his story, have never been approached.

The result of these observations on M. Agnolo and Raffaello is this, that M. Agnolo drew in generic forms the human race; that Raffaello drew the forms and characters of society diversified by artificial wants.

We find therefore M. Agnolo more sublime, and we sympathise more with Raffaello, because he resembles us more. When Reynolds said that M. Agnolo had more *imagination*, and Raffaello more *fancy*, he meant to say, that the one had more sublimity, more elementary fire; the other was richer in social imagery, in genial conceits, and artificial variety. Simplicity is the stamen of M. Agnolo; varied propriety, with character, that

of Raffaello.

Of the great restorers of Art, the two we have considered, made Design and Style the basis of their plan, content with negative and unambitious colour; the two next inverted the principle, and employed Design and Style as vehicles of *colour* or of *harmony*.

The style of Tiziano's design has two periods: he began with copying what was before him without choice, and for some time continued in the meagre, anxious, and accidental manner of Giovanni Bellino; but discovering in the works of Giorgione that breadth of form produced breadth of colour, he endeavoured, and succeeded, to see Nature by comparison, and in a more ample light. That he possessed the theory of the human body, needs not to be proved from the doubtful designs which he is said to have made for the anatomical work of Vesalio; that he had familiarized himself with the style of M. Agnolo, and burned with ambition to emulate it, is less evident from adopting some of his attitudes in the pictures of Pietro Martyre and the Battle of Ghiaradadda, than from the elemental conceptions, the colossal style, and daring foreshortenings which astonish in the Cain and Abel, the Abraham and Isaac, the Goliath and David, on the ceiling of the fabric of St. Spirito at Venice. Here, and here alone, is the result of that union of tone and style which, in Tintoretto's opinion, was required to make a perfect painter, – for in general the male forms of Tiziano are those of sanguine health, often too fleshy for character, less elastic than muscular, or vigorous

without grandeur. His females are the fair dimpled Venetian race, soft without delicacy, too full for elegance, for action too plump; his infants are poised between both, and preferable to either. In portrait he has united character and resemblance with dignity, and still remains unrivalled.

A certain national character marks the brightest æra of the Venetian school: however deviating from each other, Tiziano, Tintoretto, Bassan, and Paolo, acknowledged but one element of imitation, Nature herself. This principle each bequeathed to his followers; and no attempt to adulterate its simplicity, by uniting different methods, distinguished their immediate successors. Hence they preserved features of originality longer than the surrounding schools, whom the vain wish to connect incompatible excellence soon degraded to mediocrity, and from that plunged to insignificance.

The soft transitions from the convex to the concave line, which connect grandeur with lightness, form the style of Correggio; but using their coalition without balance, merely to obtain a breadth of demi-tint and uninterrupted tones of harmony, he became, from excess of roundness, oftener heavy than light, and frequently incorrect.

It is not easy, from the unaccountable obscurity in which his life is involved, to ascertain whether he saw the Antique in sufficient degrees of quantity or beauty; but he certainly must have been familiar with modelling, and the helps of sculpture, to plan with such boldness, and conquer with such

ease, the unparalleled difficulties of his foreshortenings. His grace is oftener beholden to convenience of place than elegance of line. The most appropriate, the most elegant attitudes were adopted, rejected, perhaps sacrificed to the most awkward ones, in compliance with his imperious principle: parts vanished, were absorbed, or emerged in obedience to it.

The Danaë, of which we have seen duplicates, the head excepted, he seems to have painted from an antique female torso. But ideal beauty of face, if ever he conceived, he never has expressed; his beauty is equally remote from the idea of the Venus, the Niobe, and the best forms of Nature. The Magdalen, in the picture of St. Girolamo of Parma, is beholden for the charms of her face to chiaroscuro, and that incomparable hue and suavity of bloom which scarcely permit us to discover the defects of forms not much above the vulgar. But that he sometimes reached the sublime, by hiding the limits of his figures in the bland medium which inwraps them, his Jupiter and Io prove.

Such were the principles on which the Tuscan, the Roman, the Venetian, and the Lombard schools established their systems of style, or rather the *manner* which, in various directions and modes of application, perverted style. M. Agnolo lived to see the electric shock which his design had given to Art, propagated by the Tuscan and Venetian schools as the ostentatious vehicle of puny conceits and emblematic quibbles, or the palliative of empty pomp and degraded luxuriance of colour.

Of his imitators, the two most eminent are Pellegrino Tibaldi,

called "M. Agnolo riformato" by the Bolognese Eclectics, and Francesco Mazzuoli, called Parmegiano.

Pellegrino Tibaldi penetrated the technic without the moral principle of his master's style; he had often grandeur of line without sublimity of conception; hence the *manner* of M. Agnolo is frequently the *style* of Pellegrino Tibaldi. Conglobation and eccentricity, an aggregate of convexities suddenly broken by rectangular, or cut by perpendicular lines, compose his system. His fame principally rests on the Frescoes of the Academic Institute at Bologna, and the Ceiling of the Merchants' Hall at Ancona. It is probably on the strength of those, that the Carracci, his countrymen, are said to have called him their "M. Agnolo riformato," – M. Agnolo corrected. I will not do that injustice to the Carracci to suppose, that for one moment they could allude by this verdict to the Ceiling and the Prophets and Sibyls of the Capella Sistina; they glanced perhaps at the technic exuberance of the Last Judgement, and the senile caprices of the Capella Paolina. These, they meant to inform us, had been pruned, regulated, and reformed by Pellegrino Tibaldi. Do his works in the Institute warrant this verdict? So far from it, that it exhibits little more than the dotage of M. Agnolo. The single figures, groups, and compositions of the Institute, present a singular mixture of extraordinary vigour and puerile imbecility of conception, of character and caricature, of style and manner.

The figure of Polypheme groping at the mouth of his cave for Ulysses, and the composition of Æolus granting to Ulysses

favourable winds, are striking instances of both. Than the Cyclops, M. Agnolo himself never conceived a form of savage energy, provoked by sufferings and revenge, with attitude and limbs more in unison; whilst the God of Winds is degraded to the scanty and ludicrous semblance of Thersites, and Ulysses with his companions travestied by the semi-barbarous look and costume of the age of Constantine or Attila.

From Pellegrino Tibaldi, the Germans, Dutch, and Flemings, Hemskerk, Goltzius, and Spranger, borrowed the compendium of the great Tuscan's peculiarities, dropsied the forms of vigour, or dressed the gewgaws of children in colossal shapes.

Parmegiano poised his line between the grace of Correggio and the energy of M. Agnolo, and from contrast produced Elegance; but instead of making propriety her measure, degraded her to affectation. That disengaged play of delicate forms, the "sveltezza" of the Italians, is the prerogative of Parmegiano, though nearly always obtained at the expense of proportion. He conceived the variety, but not the simplicity of beauty, and drove contrast to extravagance. The figure of St. John, in the altar-piece of St. Salvador at Città di Castello, now at the Marquis of Abercorn's, and known from the print of Giulio Bonasone, which less imitates than exaggerates its original in the Cartoon of Pisa, is one proof among many: his action is the accident of his attitude; he is conscious of his grandeur, and loses the fervour of the apostle in the orator.

So his celebrated Moses, if I see right, has in his forms less

of grandeur than agility, in his action more passion than majesty, and loses the legislator in the savage. This figure, together with Raphael's figure of God in the Vision of Ezekiel, is said to have furnished Gray with some of the master-traits of his Bard, – figures than which Painting cannot produce two more dissimilar: calm, placid contemplation, and the decided burst of passion in coalition.

Whilst M. Agnolo was doomed to live and brood over the perversion of *his* style, death prevented Raffaello from witnessing the gradual decay of his.

Such was the state of style, when, toward the decline of the sixteenth century, Lodovico Carracci, with his cousins Agostino and Annibale, founded at Bologna, on the hints caught from Pellegrino Tibaldi, that Eclectic School which, by selecting the beauties, correcting the faults, supplying the defects, and avoiding the extremes of the different styles, attempted to form a perfect system. The specious ingredients of this technic panacea have been preserved in a complimentary sonnet of Agostino Carracci, and are compounded of the design and symmetry of Raffaello, the terrible manner of M. Agnolo, the sovereign purity of Correggio's style, Tiziano's truth and nature, Tintoretto's and Paolo's vivacity and chiaroscuro, Lombardy's tone of colour, the learned invention of Primaticcio, the decorum and solidity of Pellegrino Tibaldi, and a little of Parmegiano's grace, all amalgamated by Niccolo dell' Abbate.

I shall not attempt a parody of this prescription by transferring

it to Poetry, and prescribing to the candidate for dramatic fame the imitation of Shakspeare, Otway, Jonson, Milton, Dryden, Congreve, Racine, Addison, as amalgamated by Nicholas Rowe. Let me only ask whether such a mixture of demands ever entered with equal evidence the mind of any one artist, ancient or modern; whether, if it be granted possible that they did, they were ever balanced with equal impartiality; and grant this, whether they ever were or could be executed with equal felicity? A character of equal universal power is not a human character; and the nearest approach to perfection can only be in carrying to excellence one great quality with the least alloy of collateral defects: to attempt more will probably end in the extinction of character, and that, in mediocrity – the cypher of Art.

And were the Carracci such? Separate the precept from the practice, the artist from the teacher, and the Carracci are in possession of my submissive homage. Lodovico is the inventor of that solemn hue, that sober twilight, which you have heard so often recommended as the proper tone of historic colour. Agostino, with learning, taste, and form, combined Corregiesque tints. Annibale, inferior to both in sensibility and taste, in the wide range of talent, undaunted execution and academic prowess, left either far behind. But if he preserved the breadth of the style we speak of, he added nothing to its dignity; his pupils were inferior to *him*, and to his pupils, their successors. *Style* continued to linger, with fatal symptoms of decay, in Italy; and if it survives, has not yet found a place to re-establish its powers

on this side of the Alps.

TWELFTH LECTURE.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE ART, AND THE CAUSES WHICH CHECK ITS PROGRESS

Such is the influence of the plastic Arts on society, on manners, sentiments, the commodities and the ornaments of life, that we think ourselves generally entitled to form our estimate of times and nations by its standard. As our homage attends those whose patronage reared them to a state of efflorescence or maturity, so we pass with neglect, or pursue with contempt, the age or race which want of culture or of opportunity averted from developing symptoms of a similar attachment.

A genuine perception of Beauty is the highest degree of education, the ultimate polish of man; the master-key of the mind, it makes us better than we were before. Elevated or charmed by the contemplation of superior works of Art, our mind passes from the images themselves to their authors, and from them to the race which reared the powers that furnish us with models of imitation or multiply our pleasures.

This inward sense is supported by exterior motives in contact with a far greater part of society, whom wants and commerce connect with the Arts; for nations pay or receive tribute in

proportion as their technic sense exerts itself or slumbers. Whatever is commodious, amene, or useful, depends in a great measure on the Arts: dress, furniture, and habitation owe to their breath what they can boast of grace, propriety, or shape: they teach Elegance to finish what Necessity invented, and make us enamoured of our wants.

This benign influence infallibly spreads or diminishes in proportion as its original source, a sense of genuine Beauty, flows from an ample or a scanty vein, in a clear or turbid stream. As Taste is adulterated or sinks, Ornament takes a meagre, clumsy, barbarous, ludicrous, or meretricious form; Affectation dictates; Simplicity and elegance are loaded; interest vanishes: in a short time Necessity alone remains, and Novelty with Error go hand in hand.

These obvious observations on the importance of the Arts, lead to the question so often discussed, and at no time more important than ours – on the causes that raised them at various times, and among different nations – on the means of assisting their progress, and how to check their decay. Of much that has been said on it, much must be repeated, and something added.

The Greeks commonly lead the van of the arguments produced to answer this question. Their religious and civil establishments; their manners, games, contests of valour and of talents; the Cyclus of their Mythology, peopled with celestial and heroic forms; the honours, the celebrity of artists; the serene Grecian sky and mildness of the climate, are the causes supposed

to have carried that nation within the ken of perfection.

Without refusing to each of these various advantages its share of effect, History informs us that if Religion and Liberty prepared a public, and spread a technic taste over all Greece, Athens and Corinth must be considered as the principal nurses of Art, without whose fostering care the general causes mentioned could not have had so decided an effect; for nothing surely contributed so much to the gradual evolution of Art, as that perpetual opportunity which they presented to the artist of public exhibition; the decoration of temples, halls, porticoes, a succession of employments equally numerous, important, and dignified: hence that emulation to gain the heights of Art; the fervour of public encouragement, the zeal and gratitude of the artists were reciprocal: Polygnotus prepared with Cimon what Phidias with Pericles established, on public taste, Essential, Characteristic, and Ideal Styles.

Whether human nature admitted of no more, or other causes prevented a farther evolution of powers, nothing greater did arise; Polish, Elegance, and Novelty supplied Invention: here is the period of decay; the Art gradually sunk to mediocrity, and its final reward – Indifference.

The artist and the public are ever in the strictest reciprocity: if the Arts flourished nowhere as in Greece, no other nation ever interested itself with motives so pure in their establishment and progress, or allowed them so ample a compass. As long as their march was marked with such dignity, whilst their union

excited admiration, commanded attachment, and led the public, they grew, they rose; but when individually to please, the artist attempted to monopolize the interest due to Art, to abstract by novelty and to flatter the multitude, ruin followed. To prosper, the Art not only must feel itself free, it ought to reign: if it be domineered over, if it follow the dictate of Fashion or a Patron's whims, then is its dissolution at hand.

To attain the height of the Ancient was impossible for Modern Art, circumscribed by narrower limits, forced to form itself rapidly and on borrowed principles; still it owes its origin and support to nearly similar causes. During the fourteenth, and still more in the course of the fifteenth century, so much activity, so general a predilection for Art spread themselves over the greater part of Italy, that we are astonished at the farrago of various imagery produced at those periods. The artist and the Art were indeed considered as little more than craftsmen and a craft; but they were indemnified for the want of honours, by the dignity of their employment, by commissions to decorate churches, convents, and public buildings.

Let no one to whom truth and its propagation are dear, believe or maintain that Christianity was inimical to the progress of Arts, which probably nothing else could have revived. Nothing less than Christian enthusiasm could give that lasting and energetic impulse whose magic result we admire in the works that illustrate the period of Genius and their establishment. Nor is the objection that England, France, and Germany professed

Christianity, built churches and convents, and yet had no Art, an objection of consequence; because it might with equal propriety be asked, why it did not appear sooner in Italy itself. The Art forms a part of social education and the ultimate polish of man, nor can it appear during the rudeness of infant societies; and as, among the Western nations, the Italians were the first who extricated themselves from the bonds of barbarism and formed asylums for industry, Art and Science kept pace with the social progress, and produced their first legitimate essays among them.

How favourably religious enthusiasm operated on Art, their sympathetic revolutions still farther prove; they flourished, they languished, they fell together. As zeal relented and public grandeur gave way to private splendour, the Arts became the hirelings of Vanity and Wealth; servile they roamed from place to place, ready to administer to the whims and wants of the best bidder: in this point of sight we can easily solve all the phænomena which occur in the history of Art, – its rise, its fall, eclipse, and re-appearance in various places, with styles as different as various tastes.

The efficient cause, therefore, why higher Art at present is sunk to such a state of inactivity and languor that it may be doubted whether it will exist much longer, is not a particular one, which private patronage, or the will of an individual, however great, can remove; but a general cause, founded on the bent, the manners, habits, modes of a nation, – and not of one nation alone, but of all who at present pretend to culture. Our age,

when compared with former ages, has but little occasion for great works, and that is the reason why so few are produced:¹— the ambition, activity, and spirit of public life is shrunk to the minute detail of domestic arrangements – every thing that surrounds us tends to show us in private, is become snug, less, narrow, pretty, insignificant. We are not, perhaps, the less happy on account of all this; but from such selfish trifling to expect a system of Art built on grandeur, without a total revolution, would only be less presumptuous than insane.

What right have we to expect such a revolution in our favour?

Let us advert for a moment to the enormous difference of difficulty between forming and amending the taste of a public – between legislation and reform: either task is that of Genius; both have adherents, disciples, champions; but persecution, derision, checks will generally oppose the efforts of the latter, whilst submission, gratitude, encouragement, attend the smooth march of the former. No madness is so incurable as wilful perverseness; and when men can once, with Medea, declare that they know what is best, and approve of it, but must, or choose to follow the worst, perhaps a revolution worse to be dreaded than the disease itself, must precede the possibility of a cure. Though, as it has been observed, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries granted to the artists little more than the attention due to ingenious craftsmen; they were, from the object of their occupations and the taste of their employers, the legitimate precursors of M.

¹ Vel duo vel nemo – turpe et miserabile!

Agnolo and Raffaello, who did no more than raise their style to the sublimity and pathos of the subject. These trod with loftier gait and bolder strides a path, on which the former had sometimes stumbled, often crept, but always advanced: the public and the artist went hand in hand – but on what spot of Europe can the young artist of our day be placed to meet with circumstances equally favourable? Arm him, if you please, with the epic and dramatic powers of M. Agnolo and Raffaello, where are the religious and civic establishments, where the temples and halls open to receive, where the public prepared to call them forth, to stimulate, to reward them?

Idle complaints! I hear a thousand voices reply! You accuse the public of apathy for the Arts, while public and private exhibitions tread on each other's heels, panorama opens on panorama, and the splendour of galleries dazzles the wearied eye, and the ear is stunned with the incessant stroke of the sculptor's hammer, and our temples narrowed by crowds of monuments shouldering each other to perpetuate the memory of Statesmen who deluded, or of Heroes who bled at a Nation's call! Look round all Europe – revolve the page of history from Osymandias to Pericles, from Pericles to Constantine – and say what age, what race stretched forth a stronger arm to raise the drooping genius of Art? Is it the public's fault if encouragement is turned into a job, and dispatch and quantity have supplanted excellence and quality, as objects of the artist's emulation? – And do you think that accidental and temporary encouragement

can invalidate charges founded on permanent causes? What blew up the Art, will in its own surcease terminate its success. Art is not ephemeral; Religion and Liberty had for ages prepared what Religion and Liberty were to establish among the ancients: the germ of the Olympian Jupiter, and the Minerva of Phidias, lay in the Gods of Aëgina, and that of Theseus, Hercules, and Alcibiades in the blocks of Harmodios and Aristogiton.

If the revolution of a neighbouring nation emancipated the people from the yoke of superstition, it has perhaps precipitated them to irreligion. He who has no visible object of worship is indifferent about modes, and rites, and places; and unless some great civil provisional establishment replaces the means furnished by the former system, the Arts of France, should they disdain to become the minions and handmaids of fashion, may soon find that the only public occupation left for them will be a representation of themselves, deploring their new-acquired advantages. By a great establishment, I mean one that will employ the living artists, raise among them a spirit of emulation dignified by the objects of their occupation, and inspire the public with that spirit; not an ostentatious display of ancient and modern treasures of genius, accumulated by the hand of conquest or of rapine. To plunder the earth was a Roman principle, and it is not perhaps matter of lamentation that Modern Rome, by a retaliation of her own principle, is made to pay the debt contracted with mankind. But let none fondly believe that the importation of Greek and Italian works of Art is an importation

of Greek and Italian genius, taste, establishments and means of encouragement; without transplanting and disseminating these, the gorgeous accumulation of technic monuments is no more than a dead capital, and, instead of a benefit, a check on living Art.

With regard to ourselves, the barbarous, though then perhaps useful rage of image-breakers in the seventeenth century, seems much too gratuitously propagated as a principle in an age much more likely to suffer from irreligion than superstition. A public body inflamed by superstition, suffers, but it suffers from the ebullitions of radical heat, and may return to a state of health and life; whilst a public body plunged into irreligion, is in a state of palsied apathy, the cadaverous symptom of approaching dissolution. Perhaps neither of these two extremes may be precisely our own state; we probably float between both. But surely in an age of inquiry and individual liberty of *thought*, when there are almost as many sects as heads, there was little danger that the admission of Art to places of devotion could ever be attended by the errors of idolatry; nor have the motives which resisted the offer of ornamenting our churches perhaps any eminent degree of ecclesiastic or political sagacity to recommend them. Who would not rejoice if the charm of our Art, displaying the actions and example of the sacred Founder of our religion and of his disciples in temples and conventicles, contributed to enlighten the zeal, stimulate the feelings, sweeten the acrimony, or dignify the enthusiasm of their respective

audiences? The source of the grand monumental style of Greece was Religion with Liberty. At that period the artist, as Pliny expresses himself, was the property of the public, or in other words, he considered himself as responsible for the influence of his works on public principle: with the decline of Religion and Liberty his importance and the Art declined; and though the Egyptian custom of embalming the dead and suffering the living to linger had not yet been adopted, from the organ of the public he became the tool of private patronage; and private patronage, however commendable or liberal, can no more supply the want of general encouragement, than the conservatories and hotbeds of the rich, the want of a fertile soil or genial climate. Luxury in times of taste keeps up execution in proportion as it saps the dignity and moral principle of the Art; gold is the motive of its exertions, and nothing that ennobles man was ever produced by gold. When Nero transported the Pontic Apollo to the golden house, and furnished the colossal shoulders of the god with his own head, Sculpture lent her hand to legitimate the sacrilege: why should Painting be supposed to have been more squeamish when applied to decorate the apartments of his pleasures and the cabinet of Poppæa with Milesian pollutions, or the attitudes of Elephantis?

The effect of honours and rewards has been insisted on as a necessary incentive to artists: they ought indeed to be, they sometimes are, the result of superior powers; but accidental or partial honours cannot create Genius, nor private profusion

supply public neglect. No genuine work of Art ever was or ever can be produced, but for its own sake; if the artist do not conceive to please himself, he never will finish to please the world. Can we persuade ourselves that all the treasures of the globe could suddenly produce an Iliad or Paradise Lost, or the Jupiter of Phidias, or the Capella Sistina? Circumstances may assist or retard parts, but cannot make them: they are the winds that now blow out a light, now animate a spark to conflagration. Nature herself has set her barriers between age and age, between genius and genius, which no mortal overleaps; all attempts to raise to perfection at once, what can only be reared by a succession of epochs, must prove abortive and nugatory: the very proposals of premiums, honours, and rewards to excite talent or rouse genius, prove of themselves that the age is unfavourable to Art; for, had it the patronage of the public, how could it want them?

We have now been in possession of an Academy more than half a century; all the intrinsic means of forming a style alternate at our commands; professional instruction has never ceased to direct the student; premiums are distributed to rear talent and stimulate emulation, and stipends are granted to relieve the wants of genius and finish education. And what is the result? If we apply to our Exhibition, what does it present, in the aggregate, but a gorgeous display of varied powers, condemned, if not to the beasts, at least to the dictates of fashion and vanity? What therefore can be urged against the conclusion, that, as far as the public is concerned, the Art is sinking, and threatens to sink

still deeper, from the want of demand for great and significant works? Florence, Bologna, Venice, each singly taken, produced in the course of the sixteenth century alone, more great historic pictures than all Britain taken together, from its earliest attempts at painting to its present efforts. What are we to conclude from this? that the soil from which Shakspeare and Milton sprang, is unfit to rear the Genius of Poetic Art? or find the cause of this seeming impotence in that general change of habits, customs, pursuits, and amusements, which for near a century has stamped the national character of Europe with apathy or discountenance of the genuine principles of Art?

But if the severity of these observations, this denudation of our present state moderates our hopes, it ought to invigorate our efforts for the ultimate preservation, and, if immediate restoration be hopeless, the gradual recovery of Art. To raise the Arts to a conspicuous height may not perhaps be in our power; we shall have deserved well of posterity if we succeed in stemming their farther downfall, if we fix them on the solid base of principle. If it be out of our power to furnish the student's activity with adequate practice, we may contribute to form his theory; and Criticism founded on experiment, instructed by comparison, in possession of the labours of every epoch of Art, may spread the genuine elements of taste, and check the present torrent of affectation and insipidity.

This is the real use of our Institution, if we may judge from analogy. Soon after the middle of the sixteenth century, when

the gradual evanescence of the great luminaries in Art began to alarm the public, an idea started at Florence of uniting the most eminent artists into a society, under the immediate patronage of the Grand Duke, and the title of Academy: it had something of a Conventual air, has even now its own chapel, and celebrates an annual festival with appropriate ceremonies; less designed to promote than to prevent the gradual debasement of Art. Similar associations in other places were formed in imitation, and at the time of the Carracci even the private schools of painters adopted the same name. All, whether public or private, supported by patronage or individual contribution, were and are symptoms of Art in distress, monuments of public dereliction and decay of Taste. But they are at the same time the asylum of the student, the theatre of his exercises, the repositories of the materials, the archives of the documents of our art, whose principles their officers are bound now to maintain, and for the preservation of which they are responsible to posterity, undebauched by the flattery, heedless of the sneers, undismayed by the frown of their own time.

Permit me to part with one final observation. Reynolds has told us, and from *him* whose genius was crowned with the most brilliant success during his life, from him it came with unexampled magnanimity, "that those who court the applause of their own time, must reckon on the neglect of posterity." On this I shall not insist as a general maxim; all depends on the character of the time in which an artist lives, and on the motive of his

exertions. M. Agnolo, Raffaello, Tiziano, and Vasari, Giuseppe d'Arpino, and Luca Giordano, enjoyed equal celebrity during their own times. The three first enjoy it now, the three last are forgotten or censured. What are we to infer from this unequal verdict of posterity? What, but what Cicero says, that time obliterates the conceits of opinion or fashion, and establishes the verdicts of Nature? The age of Julio and Leone demanded genius for its own sake, and found it – the age of Cosmo, Ferdinand, and Urban, demanded talents and dispatch to flatter their own vanity, and found them too; but Cosmo, Ferdinand, and Urban, are sunk in the same oblivion, or involved in the same censure with their tools – Julio and Leone continue to live with the permanent powers which they had called forth.

APHORISMS, CHIEFLY RELATIVE TO THE FINE ARTS

APHORISMS

1. Life is rapid, art is slow, occasion coy, practice fallacious, and judgment partial.
2. The price of excellence is labour, and time that of immortality.
3. Art, like love, excludes all competition, and absorbs the man.
4. Art is the attendant of nature, and genius and talent the ministers of art.
5. Genius either discovers new materials of nature, or combines the known with novelty.
6. Talent arranges, cultivates, polishes, the discoveries of genius.
7. Intuition is the attendant of genius; gradual improvement that of talent.
8. Arrangement presupposes materials: fruits follow the bud and foliage, and judgment the luxuriance of fancy.
9. The fiery sets his subject in a blaze, and mounts its vapours; the melancholy cleaves the rock, or gropes through thorns for his;

the sanguine deluges all, and seizes none; the phlegmatic sucks one, and drops off with repletion.

10. Some enter the gates of art with golden keys, and take their seats with dignity among the demi-gods of fame; some burst the doors and leap into a niche with savage power; thousands consume their time in chinking useless keys, and aiming feeble pushes against the inexorable doors.

11. Heaven and earth, advantages and obstacles, conspire to educate genius.

12. Organization is the mother of talent; practice its nurse; the senses its dominion; but hearts alone can penetrate hearts.

13. It is the lot of genius to be opposed, and to be invigorated by opposition: all extremes touch each other; frigid praise and censure wait upon attainable or common powers; but the successful adventurer in the realms of discovery leaps on an unknown or long-lost shore, ennobles it with his name, and grasps immortality.

14. Genius without bias, is a stream without direction: it inundates all, and ends in stagnation.

15. He who pretends to have sacrificed genius to the pursuits of interest or fashion; and he who wants to persuade you he has indisputable titles to a crown, but chooses to wave them for the emoluments of a partnership in trade, deserve equal belief.

16. Taste is the legitimate offspring of nature, educated by propriety: fashion is the bastard of vanity, dressed by art.

17. The immediate operation of taste is to ascertain the kind;

the next, to appreciate the degrees of excellence.

Coroll.— Taste, founded on sense and elegance of mind, is reared by culture, invigorated by practice and comparison: scantiness stops short of it; fashion adulterates it: it is shackled by pedantry, and overwhelmed by luxuriance.

Taste sheds a ray over the homeliest or the most uncouth subject. Fashion frequently flattens the elegant, the gentle, and the great, into one lumpy mass of disgust.

If "foul and fair" be all that your gross-spun sense discerns, if you are blind to the intermediate degrees of excellence, you may perhaps be a great man — a senator — a conqueror; but if you respect yourself, never presume to utter a syllable on works of taste.

18. If mind and organs conspire to qualify you for a judge in works of taste, remember that you are to be possessed of three things — the subject of the work which you are to examine; the character of the artist as such; and, before all, of impartiality.

Coroll.— All first impressions are involuntary and inevitable; but the knowledge of the subject will guide you to judge first of the whole; not to creep on from part to part, and nibble at execution before you know what it means to convey. The notion of a tree precedes that of counting leaves or disentangling branches.

Every artist has, or ought to have, a character or system of his own; if, instead of referring that to the test of nature, you judge him by your own packed notions, or arraign him at the tribunal

of schools which he does not recognize – you degrade the dignity of art, and add another fool to the herd of Dilettanti.

But if, for reasons best known to yourself, you come determined to condemn what yet you have not seen, let me advise you to drop your pursuits of art for one of far greater importance – the inquiry into yourself; nor aim at taste till you are sure of justice.

19. Misconception of its own powers is the injurious attendant of genius, and the most severe remembrancer of its vanity.

Coroll.— Much of Leonardo da Vinci's life evaporated in useless experiment and quaint research; Michael Angelo perplexed the limbs of grandeur with the minute ramifications of anatomy; Rafaelle forsook humanity to people a mythologic desert with clumsy gods and clumsier goddesses; Shakspeare, trusting time and chance with Hamlet and Othello, revised a frozen sonnet, or fondled his Adonis; whilst Milton dropt the trumpet that had astonished hell, left Paradise, and introduced a pedagogue to Heaven. When genius is surprised by such lethargic moments, we can forget that Johnson wrote Irene, and Hogarth made a solemn fool of Paul.

20. Reality teems with disappointment for him whose sources of enjoyment spring in the elysium of fancy.

21. Where perfection cannot take place, a very high degree of general excellence is impossible. Negligence is the shade of energy; where there is neither, expect mediocrity, the common expletive of society; capacity without elevation, industry without

predilection, practice without choice.

Coroll.— "About this time," says Tacitus, "died Poppæus Sabinus, who, from a middling origin, rose to imperial friendships, the consulate, and the honours of the triumph: he was selected for the space of four-and-twenty years to govern the most important provinces,² not for any distinguished merit of his own, but because he was equal to his task, and not above it."

Behold here the most comprehensive epitaph of mediocrity, and the most unambiguous solution of every riddle with which its brilliant success may have perplexed your mind.

22. Determine the principle on which you commence your career of art: some woo the art itself, some its appendages; some confine their view to the present, some extend it to futurity: the butterfly flutters round a meadow; the eagle crosses seas.

23. In ranging the phenomena of art, remember carefully, though you place it on the side of exceptions, that a decided bias is not always a sign of latent power; nor indolence, indifference, or even apathy, a sign of impotence.

24. Circumstances may assist or retard parts, but cannot make them: they are the winds that now blow out a light, now animate a spark to conflagration.

Coroll.— Augustus and Mæcenæ are said to have made Virgil: what was it, then, that prevented Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antonines, from producing at least a Lucan?

² Tacit. Annal. lib. VI. "Nullam ob eximiam artem, sed quod par negotiis, neque supra erat."

25. Deserve, but expect not, to be praised by your contemporaries, for any excellence which they may be jealous of being allowed to possess themselves; leave the dispensation of justice to posterity.

26. If wishes are the spawn of imbecility, precipitation is the bantling of fool-hardiness: legitimate will, investigates and acquires the means. Mistake not an itching finger for authentic will.

27. Some of the most genuine effusions of genius in art, some of the most estimable qualities in society, may be beholden for our homage to very disputable principles.

Coroll.— The admission of a master's humanity to his slave supposes the validity of an execrable right; and the courage shown in a duel cannot be applauded without submitting to the dictates of feudal barbarity. Had the poet's conception prepared us for the rashness of Lear, the ambition of Macbeth's wife, and the villany of Iago, by the usual gradations of nature, he could not have rushed on our heart with the irresistibility that now subdues it. Had the line of Correggio floated in a less expanse, he would have lost that spell of light and shade which has enthralled all eyes; and Rubens, had he not invigorated bodies to hills of flesh, and tinged his pencil in the rainbow, would not have been the painter of magnificence.

28. Genius has no imitator. Some can be poets and painters only at second-hand: deaf and blind to the tones and motions of Nature herself, they hear or see her only through some reflected

medium of art; they are emboldened by prescription.

29. Let him who has more genius than talent give up as impossible what he finds difficult. Talent may mimic genius with success, and frequently impose on all but the first judges; but genius is awkward in the attempt to use the tools of talent.

Coroll.—Hyperides, Lysias, Isocrates, might imitate much of Demosthenes; but he would have become ridiculous by stooping to collect their beauties.³ The spear of Roland might be couched to gain a lady's favour; but its sole ornament was the heart, torn from the breast-plate of her foe.

30. Mediocrity is formed, and talent submits, to receive prescription; that, the liveried attendant, this, the docile client of a patron's views or whims: but genius, free and unbounded as its *origin*, scorns to receive commands, or in submission, neglects those it received.

Coroll.—The gentle spirit of Rafaelle embellished the conceits of Bembo and Divizio, to scatter incense round the triple mitre of his prince; and the Vatican became the flattering annals of the court of Julius and Leo: whilst Michael Angelo refused admittance to master and to times, and doomed his purple critic to hell.⁴

31. Distinguish between genius and singularity of character;

³ D. Longin. περί ύψους, § 34.

⁴ "Les hommes qui ont changé l'univers, n'y sont jamais parvenus en gagnant des chefs; mais toujours en remuant des masses. Le premier moyen est du ressort de l'intrigue, et n'amène que des résultats secondaires; le second est la marche du Génie, et change la face du monde." — *Napoleon*.

an artist of mediocrity may be an odd man: let the nature of works be your guide.

32. The most impotent, the most vulgar, and the coldest artists generally arrogate to themselves the most vigorous, the most dignified, and the warmest subjects.

33. He has powers, dignity, and fire, who can inspire a trifle with importance.

34. Know that nothing is trifling in the hand of genius, and that importance itself becomes a bauble in that of mediocrity: – the shepherd's staff of Paris would have been an engine of death in the grasp of Achilles; the ash of Peleus could only have dropped from the effeminate fingers of the curled archer.

35. Art either imitates or copies, selects or transcribes; consults the class, or follows the individual.

36. Imitative art, is either epic or sublime, dramatic or impassioned, historic or circumscribed by truth. The first astonishes, the second moves, the third informs.

37. Whatever hides its limits in its greatness – whatever shows a feature of immensity, let the elements of Nature or the qualities of animated being make up its substance, is sublime.

38. Whatever by reflected self-love inspires us with hope, fear, pity, terror, love, or mirth – whatever makes events, and time, and place, the ministers of character and pathos, let fiction or reality compose its tissue, is dramatic.

39. That which tells us, not what might be, but what is; circumscribes the grand and the pathetic with truth of time,

place, custom; what gives "a local habitation and a name," is historic.

Coroll.— No human performance is either purely epic, dramatic, or historic. Novelty and feelings will make the historian sometimes launch out into the marvellous; or will warm his bosom and extort a tear.

The dramatist while gazing at some tremendous feature, or the pomp of superior agency, will drop the chain he holds, and be absorbed in the sublime; whilst the epic or lyric poet, forgetting his solitary grandeur, will sometimes descend and mix with his agents.

The tragic and the comic dramatists formed themselves on Hector and Andromache, on Irus and Ulysses. The spirit from the prison-house breathes like the shade of Patroclus; Octavia and the daughter of Soranus⁵ melt like Ophelia and Alcestis.

40. Those who have assigned to the plastic arts beauty, strictly so called, as the ultimate end of imitation, have circumscribed the whole by a part.

Coroll.— The charms of Helen and of Niobe are instruments of sublimity: Meleager and Cordelia fall victims to the passions; Agrippina and Berenice give interest to truth.

41. Beauty, whether individual or ideal, consists in the concurrence of parts to one end, or the union of the simple and the various.

Coroll.— Whatever be your powers, assume not to legislate

⁵ Tacit. Annal. lib. xiv. et xvi.

on beauty: though always the same herself, her empire is despotic, and subject to the anarchies of despotism, enthroned to-day, dethroned to-morrow: in treating subjects of universal claim, most has been done by leaving most to the reader's and spectator's taste or fancy. "It is difficult," says Horace, "to pronounce exactly to every man's eye and mind, what every man thinks himself entitled to estimate by a standard of his own."⁶ The Apollo and Medicean Venus are not by all received as the canons of male and female beauty; and Homer's Helen is the finest woman we have read of, merely because he has left her to be made up of the Dulcineas of his readers.

42. Beauty alone, fades to insipidity; and like possession cloy.

43. Grace is beauty in motion, or rather grace regulates the air, the attitudes and movements of beauty.

44. Nature makes no parade of her means – hence all studied grace is unnatural.

Coroll.– The attitudes of Parmegiano are exhibitions of studied grace. The grace of Guido is become proverbial, but it is the grace of the art.

45. All actions and attitudes of children are graceful, because they are the luxuriant and immediate offspring of the moment – divested of affectation, and free from all pretence.

Coroll.– The attitudes and motions of the figures of Rafaele are graceful because they are poised by Nature.

46. Proportion, or symmetry, is the basis of beauty; propriety,

⁶ Difficile est proprie communia dicere. Hor. A.P.

of grace.

47. Creation gives, invention finds existence.

48. Invention in general is the combination of the possible, the probable, or the known, in a mode that strikes with novelty.

Coroll.— Invention has been said to mean no more than the moment of any fact chosen by the artist.

To say that the painter's invention is not to find or to combine its own subject, is to confine it to the poet's or historian's alms — is to annihilate its essence; it says in other words, that Macbeth or Ugolino would be no subjects for the pencil, if they had not been prepared by history and borrowed from Shakspeare and Dante.

49. Ask not — Where is fancy bred? in the heart? in the head? how begot? how nourished?

Coroll.— The critic who inquires whether in the madness of Lear, grief for the loss of empire, or the resentment of filial ingratitude preponderated — and he who doubts whether it be within the limits of art to embody beings of fancy, agitate different questions, but of equal futility.

50. Genius may adopt, but never steals.

Coroll.— An adopted idea or figure in the works of genius will be a foil or a companion; but an idea of genius borrowed by mediocrity scorns the base alliance and crushes all its mean associates — it is the Cyclop's thumb, by which the pigmy measured his own littleness, — "or hangs like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief."

51. Genius, inspired by invention, rends the veil that separates

existence from possibility; peeps into the dark, and catches a shape, a feature, or a colour, in the reflected ray.

52. Talent, though panting, pursues genius through the plains of invention, but stops short at the brink that separates the real from the possible. Virgil followed Homer in making Mezentius speak to Rhœbus, but shrank from the reply of the prophetic courser.⁷

53. Whenever the medium of any work, whether lines, colour, grouping, diction, becomes so predominant as to absorb the subject in its splendour, the work is degraded to an inferior order.

54. The painter, who makes an historical figure address the spectator from the canvass, and the actor who addresses a soliloquy to you from the stage, have equal claims to your contempt or pity.

55. Common-place figures are as inadmissible in the grand style of painting as common-place characters or sentiments in poetry.

Coroll.—Common-place figures were first introduced by the gorgeous machinists of Venice, and adopted by the Bolognese school of Eclectics; the modern school of Rome from Carlo Maratta to Battoni knew nothing else; and they have been since indiscriminately disseminated on this side of the Alps, by those whom mediocrity obliged to hide themselves in crowds, or a knack at grouping stimulated to aggregate a rabble.

⁷ Τον δ' ἀρ' ὑπο ζυγοφιν προσεφη ποδας αἰολος ἵππος. Iliad xix. 404. —Rhœbe diu, etc. —*Virg.* x.

56. The copious is seldom grand.

57. Glitter is the refuge of the mean.

58. All apparatus destroys terror, as all ornament grandeur: the minute catalogue of the cauldron's ingredients in Macbeth destroys the terror attendant on mysterious darkness; and the seraglio-trappings of Rubens annihilate his heroes.

59. All conceits, not founded upon probable combinations of nature, are absurd. The *capricci* of Salvator Rosa, and of his imitators, are, to the fiends of Michael Angelo, what the paroxysms of a fever are to the sallies of vigorous fancy.

60. Distinguish carefully between bold fancy and a daring hand; between the powers of nature and the acquisitions of practice: most of Salvator's banditti are a medley made up of starveling models and the shreds of his lumber-room brushed into notice by a daring pencil.

61. Distinguish between boldness and brutality of hand, between the face of beauty and *the bark of a tree*.

62. All mediocrity pretends.

63. Invention, strictly speaking, being confined to *one* moment, he invents best who in that moment combines the traces of the past, the energy of the present, and a glimpse of the future.

64. Composition has been divided into natural and ornamental: that is dictated by the subject, this by effect or situation.

65. Distinguish between composition and grouping: though none can compose without grouping, most group without

composing.

Coroll.— The assertion that grouping may not be composing, has been said to make a distinction without a difference: as if there had not been, still are, and always will be squadrons of artists, whose skill in grouping can no more be denied, than their claim to invention, and consequently to composition, admitted, if invention means the true conception of a subject and composition the best mode of representing it. After the demise of Lionardo and Michael Angelo, their successors, however discordant else, uniformly agreed to lose the subject in the medium. Raffaello had no followers. Tiziano and something of Tintoretto excepted, what instance can there be produced of composition in the works of the Venetian school? Are the splendid masquerades of Paolo to be dignified with that name? If composition has a part in the effusions of the great founder of the Lombard school, it surely did not arrange the celestial hubbub of his cupolas, content to inspire his *Io*, the *Zingaro*, *Christ in the Garden*, perhaps (I speak with diffidence) his *Notte*. So characteristically separate from real composition are the most splendid assemblages, the most happy combinations of figures, if founded on the mere power of grouping, that one of the first, and certainly the most courteous critic in Art of the age, in compliment to the Venetian and Flemish Schools, has thought proper to divide composition into legitimate and ornamental.

66. Ask not, what is the shape of composition? You may in vain climb the pyramid, wind with the stream, or point the

flame; for composition, unbounded like Nature, and her subjects, though resident in all, may be in none of these.

67. The nature of picturesque composition is depth, or to come forward and recede.

Coroll.— Pausias, in painting a sacrifice, foreshortened the victim, and threw its shade on part of the surrounding crowd, to show its height and length.⁸

68. Sculpture composes in single groups or separate figures, but apposition is the element of basso-relievo.

Coroll.— Poussin painted basso-relievo, Algardi chiselled pictures.

69. He who treats you with all the figures of a subject save the principal, is as civil or important as he who invites you to dine with all a nobleman's family, the master only excepted: this sometimes may be no loss, but surely you cannot be said to have dined with the chief of the family.

70. Examine whether an artist treats you with a subject, or only with some of its limbs: many see only the lines, some the masses, others the colours, and not a few the mere back-ground of their subject.

71. Second thoughts are admissible in painting and poetry only as dressers of the first conception; no great idea was ever formed in fragments.

72. He alone can conceive and compose, who sees the whole at once before him.

⁸ Plin. lib. xxxv.

73. He who conceives the given point of a subject in many different ways, conceives it not at all. Appeal to the artist's own feelings; you will ever find him most reluctant to give up that part of it which he conceived intuitively, and readier to dismiss that which harassed him by alteration.

74. Metaphysical composition, if it be numerous, will be oftener mistaken for dilapidation of fragments than regular distribution of materials.

Coroll.— The School of Athens as it is called, by Raffaele, communicates to few more than an arbitrary assemblage of speculative groups: yet if the subject be the dramatic representation of philosophy, as it prepares for active life, the parts of the building are not connected with more regular gradation than those groups: fitted by physical and intellectual harmony, man ascends from himself to society, from society to God.

75. No excellence of execution can atone for meanness of conception.

76. Grandeur of conception will predominate over the most vulgar materials – if in the subjects of Jesus before Pilate, by Rembrandt, and the Resuscitation of Lazarus by Lievens,⁹ the materials had all been equal to the conception, they would have been works of superhuman powers.

⁹ This picture, during a period of nearly half a century, graced the collection of Charles Lambert, Esq. of Paper-buildings, Temple; where it remained without having been washed or varnished. At his death it was purchased by my friend Mr. Knowles, has been cleaned by a skilful hand, and restored to nearly its pristine state.

77. Repetition of attitude and gesture invigorates the expression of the grand: as a torrent gives its own direction to every object it sweeps along, so the impression of a sublime or pathetic moment absorbs the contrasts of inferior agents.

78. Tameness lies on this side of expression, grimace overleaps it; insipidity is the relative of folly, eccentricity of madness.

79. The fear of not being understood, or felt, makes some invigorate expression to grimace.

80. The temple of expression, like that of religion, has a portico and a sanctuary; that is trod by all, this only admits her votaries.

81. Propriety, modesty and delicacy, guard expression from the half-conceits of the weak, the intemperance of the extravagant, and the brutality of the vulgar.

82. Sensibility is the mother of sympathy. How can he paint Beauty who has not throbbed at her charms? How shall he fill the eye with the dew of humanity whose own never shed a tear for others? How can he form a mouth to threaten or command, who licks the hereditary spittle of princes?

83. He fails with greater dignity, who expresses the principal feature of his subject and misses or neglects all the secondary, than he who consumes his powers on what is subordinate and comes exhausted to the chief.

Coroll.— Those who have asserted that Lionardo, in finishing the Last Supper, was so exhausted by his exertions to trace

the characters and emotions of the disciples, that, unable to fix the physiognomy of Christ, he found himself reduced to the necessity of leaving that head unfinished, – either never saw it, or if they did, were too low to reach the height, and too shallow to fathom the depth of the conception.

84. The coward, driven to despair, leaps back into the face of danger; and the tame, stimulated to exertions and aiming at expression, puffs spirit into flutter; or tears the garb of passion and flourishes the rags.

85. Affectation cannot excite sympathy. How can you feel for him who cannot feel for himself? How can he feel for himself, who exhibits the artificial graces of studied attitude?

86. The loathsome is abominable, and no engine of expression.

Coroll. When Spenser dragged into light the entrails of the serpent, slain by the Red-cross Knight, he dreamt a butcher's dream and not a poet's: and Fletcher,¹⁰ or his partner, when rummaging the surgeon's box of cataplasms and trusses to assuage hunger, solicited the grunt of an applauding sty.

87. Sympathy and disgust are the lines that separate terror from horror: though we shudder at, we scarcely pity what we abominate.

Coroll.— Rowe, when he congratulates the ghost on bidding Hamlet spare his mother, accuses *her* of a crime with which the poet never charged her: that Shakspeare might be hurried on to

¹⁰ Sea Voyage, Act 3rd. sc. 1st.

horror let the "vile jelly" witness, which Cornwall treads from Gloster's bleeding sockets.

88. Expression animates, convulses, or absorbs form. The Apollo is animated; the warrior of Agasias is agitated; the Laocoon is convulsed; the Niobe is absorbed.

89. The being seized by an enormous passion, be it joy or grief, hope or despair, loses the character of its own individual expression, and is absorbed by the power of the feature that attracts it: Niobe and her family are assimilated by extreme anguish; Ugolino is petrified by the fate that sweeps his sons; and every metamorphosis from that of Clytie to the transfusion of Gianni Fucci¹¹ tells a new allegory of sympathetic power.

90. Reject with indignant incredulity all self-congratulations of conscious villainy, though they be uttered by Richard or by Iago.

91. The axe, the wheel, saw-dust, and the blood-stained sheet are not legitimate substitutes of terror.

92. All division diminishes, all mixtures impair the simplicity and clearness of expression.

93. The epoch which discovered expression, or what the Greeks called "manners,"¹² is marked by Pliny as that which gave importance and effect to art.

Coroll.—Homer invested his heroes with ideal powers, but copied nature in delineating their moral character. Achilles, the

¹¹ Dante Inferno, Cant. xxiv.

¹² HÖH. Mores. Plin. l. xxxv.

irresistible in arms, clad in celestial armour, is a splendid being, created by himself; Achilles the fool of passions, is the real man delivered to him by tradition.

That the plastic artist should have had an aim beyond the poet is improbable, because the poet, in general, furnished him with materials; he composed his man of beauty and ideal limbs, not to obscure, but to invigorate his character and our attention.

The limbs, the form of Ajax hurling defiance from the sea-swept rock unto the murky sky, were, no doubt, exquisite; but if the artist mitigated his expression, the indignation due to blasphemy from the spectator gave way to sterner indignation at the injustice of his gods.

The expression of the ancients, from the heights and depths of the sublime, descended and emerged to search every nook of the human breast; from the ambrosial locks of Zeus, and the maternal phantom fluttering round Ulysses,¹³ to the half-slain mother, shuddering lest the infant should suck the blood from her palsied nipple, and the fond attention of Penelope dwelling on the relation of her returned son.¹⁴

The expression of the ancients explored nature even in the mute recesses, in the sullen organs of the brute; from the Argus of Ulysses, to the lamb, the symbol of expiatory resignation, on

¹³ The Necromantia of Nicias – the sacking of a town, by Aristides. Plin. l. xxxv.

¹⁴ A group of Stephanus in the Villa Ludovisi, known by the name of Papyrius and his mother, called a Phædra and Hippolytus, or an Electra with Orestes, by J. Winkelmann, bears more resemblance to an Æthra with Theseus, or a Penelope with Telemachus.

an altar, and to the untameable feature of the toad.

The expression of the ancients roamed all the fields of licit and illicit pleasure; from the petulance with which Ctesilochus exhibited the pangs of a Jupiter delivered by celestial midwives, to the libidinous sports of Parrhasius, and from these to the indecent caricature¹⁵ which furnished Crassus with a repartee.

The ancients extended expression even to the colour of their materials in sculpture: to express the remorse of Athamas, Aristonidas the Theban mixed metals; and Alcon formed a Hercules of iron, to express the perseverance of the God.¹⁶

94. Invention, before it attends to composition, group, or contrast, classes its subject and ascertains what kind of impression it is to make on the whole.

95. Invention never suffers the action to expire, nor the spectator's fancy to consume itself in preparation, or stagnate into repose: it neither begins from the egg, nor coldly gathers the remains; for action and interest terminate together.

96. The middle moment, the moment of suspense, the crisis, is the moment of importance, big with the past and pregnant with the future: we rush from the flames with the Warrior of Agasias, and look forward to his enemy; or we hang in suspense over the wound of the Expiring Soldier,¹⁷ and poise with every drop which

¹⁵ Gallum inficetissime linguam exserentem. – Plin. l. xxxv.

¹⁶ Plin. l. xxx. W. c. xiv.

¹⁷ Commonly named the Dying Gladiator; by J. Winkelmann called a Herald; with more probability the "Vulneratus deficiens, in quo possit intelligi quantum restet

yet remains of life.

97. Distinguish between the hero and the actor; between exertions of study and effects of impulse.

98. Know that expression has its classes. The frown of the Hercynian phantom may repress the ardour, but cannot subdue the dignity of Drusus;¹⁸ the terror of the Centurion at the Resurrection¹⁹ is not the panic of his soldiers; the palpitation of Hamlet cannot degenerate into vulgar fright.

Coroll.— Of all the eclectics, Domenichino alone composed for expression; but his expression compared with Raffaello's is the expression of Theocritus compared with that of Homer. A detail of pretty images is rather calculated to diminish than to enforce energy with the whole: a lovely child taking refuge in the bosom of a lovely mother is an idea of nature, and pleasing in a lowly or domestic subject; but amidst the terrors of martyrdom, it is a shred tacked to a purple robe. In touching the circle that surrounds the Ananias of Raffaele, you touch the electric chain; an irresistible spark darts from the last as from the first, and penetrates and subdues. At the Martyrdom of St. Agnes,²⁰ you saunter amidst the mob of a lane, where the silly chat of neighbouring gossips announces a topic as silly, till you find, with

animæ." A work of Ctesilas in bronze, was probably the model of this. Plin. l. xxxiv.

¹⁸ Sueton. l. vi.

¹⁹ In one of the cartoons of Raffaello, now lost, but still in some degree existing in tapestry and in print.

²⁰ Engraved by G. Audran.

indignation, that instead of a broken pot, or a petty theft, you are to witness a scene for which Heaven opens, the angels descend, and Jesus rises from his throne.

99. Expression alone can invest beauty with supreme and lasting command over the eye.

Coroll.— On beauty, unsupported by vigour and expression, Homer dwells less than on active deformity; he tells us, in three lines, that Nireus led three ships, his parentage, his form, his effeminacy; but opens in Thersites a source of comedy and entertainment.

Raffaëlle not only subjected beauty to expression, but, at the command of invention, degraded it into a handmaid of deformity: thus the flowers of infancy and youth, virility and age, are scattered round the temple-gate, to impress us more by comparison with the distorted beings that crawl before and defy the powers of every other hand but the one delegated by Omnipotence.²¹

100. Imitation seems to cease, where the ideal part begins.

101. The imitator rises above the copyist by generalizing the individual to a class; the idealist mounts above the imitator by uniting classes.

102. The imitator, by comparison and taste, unites the scattered limbs of kindred excellence; the idealist, by the "mind's eye," fixes, personifies, embodies possibility: modes and degrees of single powers are the province of the former; the latter unites

²¹ In the cartoon of Peter and John.

whatever implies no contradiction in an assemblage of varied excellence.

Coroll.— This is best explained by the *Ilias*. Each individual of Homer forms a class, and is circumscribed by one quality of heroic power; Achilles alone unites their different energies.

The height, the strength, the giant-stride and supercilious air of Ajax; the courage, the impetuosity, the never-failing aim, the never-bloodless stroke of Diomedes; the presence of mind, the powerful agility of Ulysses; the velocity of the lesser Ajax; Agamemnon's sense of prerogative and domineering spirit, — assign to each his separate class of heroism, yet lessen not their shades of imperfection. Ajax appears the warrior rather than the leader; Ulysses is too prudent to be more than brave; the hawk more than the eagle predominates in the son of Oileus; Agamemnon has the prerogative of power, but not of heroism; Diomede alone might appear to have been raised too high, had he been endowed with an assuming spirit. So far the poet found, ennobled, classified; but all these he sums up, and creates an ideal form from their assemblage, in Achilles: — he is the grandson of Jupiter, the son of a goddess, the favourite of Heaven —²²"What arms can fit me but the shield of Ajax? The lance maddens not in the grasp of Diomede to chase the flames from the ships. Let him confer with thee, Ulysses, and the rest." Such is his language. Before the pursuer of Hector vanishes the velocity of Ajax; from destroying Agamemnon he is prevented by Minerva; he gives his

²² *Iliad*, L. xviii. l. 93; L. xvi. l. 74 and 75; L. ix. l. 346.

armour to the son of Menœtius, and disperses all but the gods; his spear none can throw, and none tear from the ground when thrown; a miracle alone can save those that oppose him singly; when else he fights, 'tis not to gain a battle, but to subvert Troy.

What Achilles is to his confederates, the Apollo, the Torso, the statues²³ of the Quirinal, are to all other known figures of gods, of demi-gods and heroes.

103. Fancy not to compose an ideal form by mixing up a mass of promiscuous beauties; for, unless you consulted what was homogeneous and what was possible in Nature, you have hatched only a monster: this, we suppose, was understood by Zeuxis when he collected the beauties of Agrigentum to compose a perfect female.²⁴

104. If there be any thing serious in art, it certainly then ought to be exerted when religion is the subject; but idolaters and iconoclasts seem to have conspired, either to banish the author of their faith to the cold sphere of mythology, or to debase him to the dregs of mankind.

Coroll.— Majesty is the feature of the Supreme Being; no eternal Father of the moderns approaches the majesty of Jupiter.

The gods of Michael Angelo are stern. The gods of Raffaele are affable and weak. The gods of Guido have the air of ancient

²³ Commonly called the Castor and Pollux of Monte Cavallo, — the name given from their horses to the Quirinal.

²⁴ Plin. N.H. l. xxxv. c. ix. Tantus diligentia, ut Agrigentinis facturus tabulam, quam in templo Junonis Lucinæ publice dicarent, inspexerit virgines eorum nudas, et quinque elegerit, ut quod in quaque laudatissimum esset, pictura redderet.

courtiers.

In the race of Jupiter, majesty is tempered by emanations of beauty and of grace, but never softened into love.

The Christ of Michael Angelo is severe. The Christ of Raffaelle is poised between the heraldry of church tradition and the dignified mildness of his own character. The Christ of Guido is a well suspended corpse.

"The character corresponding with that of Christ," says a critic and a painter,²⁵ "is a mixture of the characters of Jupiter and Apollo, allowing only for the accidental expression of the moment." What magic shall amalgamate the superhuman airs of Rhea's and Latona's sons with sufferings and resignation? The critic, in his exultation, forgot the leading feature of his master – humility.

Whatever be the ideal form of Christ, the Saviour of mankind, extending his arm to relieve the afflicted, the hopeless, the dying, is a subject that comes home to the breast of every one who calls himself after his name: – the artist is in the sphere of adoration with the Christian.

A great and beneficent character, eminently exerting unknown healing powers over the family of disease and pain, claims the participation of every feeling man, though he be no believer: – the artist is in the sphere of sentiment with the Deist or Mahometan.

But a mean man marked with the features of a mean sect,

²⁵ Mengs Lettera à don A. Ponz. Opere di A.R. Mengs, t. ii. p. 83.

surrounded by a beggarly ill-shaped rabble and stupid masks – is probably a juggler that claims the attention of no one.

The Resurrection of Christ derives its interest from its rapidity, the Ascension from its slowness.

In the Resurrection, the hero, like a ball of fire, shoots up resistless from the bursting tomb, and scatters terror and astonishment, – what apprehension could not dream of, what the eye had never beheld, and tongue had never uttered, blazes before us, – tumultuous agitation rends the whole. Such is the spirit of the Resurrection by Raffaele.

The Ascension is the last of many similar scenes: no longer with the rapidity of a conqueror, but with the calm serenity of triumphant power, the hero is borne up in splendour, and gradually vanishes from those who, by repeated visions, had been taught to expect whatever was amazing. Silent and composed, with eyes more absorbed in adoration than wonder, they followed the glorious emanation, till addressed by the white-robed messengers of their departed King.

105. We are more impressed by Gothic than by Greek mythology, because the bands are not yet rent which tie us to its magic: he has a powerful hold of us, who holds us by our superstition or by a theory of honour.

106. The east expands, the north concentrates images.

107. Disproportion of parts is the element of hugeness, – proportion, of grandeur; all Oriental, all Gothic styles of Architecture, are huge; the Grecian alone, is grand.

108. The female, able to invigorate her taste without degenerating into a pedant, sloven or virago, may give her hand to the man of elegance, who scorns to sacrifice his sense to the presiding phantoms of an effeminate age.

109. The collector who arrogates not to himself the praise bestowed on his collections, and the reader who fancies himself not the author of the beauties he recites to an admiring circle – are not the last of men.

110. The epoch of rules, of theories, poetics, criticisms in a nation, will add to their stock of authors in the same proportion as it diminishes their stock of genius: their productions will bear the stamp of study, not of nature; they will adopt, not generate; sentiment will supplant images, and narrative invention; words will be no longer the dress but the limbs of composition, and feeble elegance will supply the want of nerves.

111. He "lisp'd not in numbers, no numbers came to him," though he count his verses by thousands, who has not learnt to distinguish the harmony of two lines from that of a period – whom dull monotony of ear condemns to the drowsy psalmody of one returning couplet.

112. Some seek renown as the Parthians sought victory – by seeming to fly from it.

113. He has more than genius – he is a hero – who can check his powers in their full career to glory, merely not to crush the feeble on his road.

114. He who could have the choice, and should prefer to be

the first painter of insects, of flowers, or of drapery, to being the second in the ranks of history, though degraded to the last class of art, would undoubtedly be in the first of men by the decision of Cæsar.

115. Such is the aspiring nature of man, that nothing wounds the copyist more sorely than the suspicion of being thought what he is.

116. He who depends for all upon his model, should treat no other subject but his model.

117. The praises lavished on the sketches of vigorous conception, only sharpen the throes of labour in finishing.

118. As far as the medium of an art can be taught, so far is the artist confined to the class of mere mechanics; he only then elevates himself to talent, when he imparts to his method, or his tool, some unattainable or exclusive excellence of his own.

119. None but the first can represent the first. Genius, absorbed by the subject, hastens to the centre; and from that point disseminates, to that leads back the rays: talent, full of its own dexterities, begins to point the rays before they have a centre, and aggregates a mass of secondary beauties.

120. The ear absorbed in harmonies of its own creation, is deaf to all external ones.

121. Harmony disposes, melody determines.

122. There is not a bauble thrown by the sportive hand of fashion, which may not be caught with advantage by the hand of art.

Coroll.— Shakspeare has been excused for seeking in the Roman senate what he knew all senates could furnish — a buffoon. Paulo of Verona, with equal strength of argument, may be excused for cramming on the foreground of an assembly or a feast, what he knew a feast or assembly could furnish — a dog, an ape, a scullion, a parrot, or a dwarf.

123. He has done much in art who raises your curiosity — he has done all who has raised it and keeps it up restless and uniform; prostrate yourself before the genius of Homer.

124. Difficulties surmounted to obtain what in itself is of no real value, deserve pity or contempt: the painted catalogue of wrinkles by Denner are not offsprings of art, but fac-similes of natural history.

125. Love for what is called deception in painting, marks either the infancy or decrepitude of a nation's taste.

126. Indiscriminate execution, like the monkey's razor, cuts shear asunder the parts it meant to polish.

Coroll.— Francesco Barbieri broke like a torrent over the academic rules of his masters. As the desire of disseminating character over every part of his composition made Raphael less attentive to its general effect, so an ungovernable itch of copying all that lay in his way made this man sacrifice order, costume, mind, to mere effects of colour: a map of flesh, a pile of wood, a sleeve, a hilt, a feathered hat, a table-cloth, or a gold-tissued robe, were for Guercino what a quibble was for Shakspeare. The countenance of his Dido has that sublimity

of woe which affects us in the Æneis, but she is pierced with a toledo and wrapped in brocade; Anna is an Italian Duenna; the scene, the Mole of Ancona or of Naples, the spectators a brace of whiskered Spaniards, and a deserting Amorino winds up the farce. In his St. Petronilla the rags and brawny limbs of two gigantic porters crush the effect which the saint ought to have, and all the rest is frittered into spots. Yet is that picture a tremendous instance of mechanic powers and intrepidity of hand. As a firm base supports, pervades, unites the tones of harmony, so a certain stern virility inspires, invigorates and gives a zest to all Guercino's colour. The gayer tints of Guido vanish before his as insipid,²⁶ Domenichino appears laboured, and the Carracci dim. Nor was Guercino a stranger to the genuine expressions of untaught nature, and there is more of pathos in the dog which he introduced caressing the returned prodigal, than in all the Farnese gallery; as the Argus of Ulysses, looking up at his old master, then dropping his head and dying, moves more than all the metamorphoses of Ovid. If his male figures be brought to the test of style, it may be said, that he never made a man; their virility is tumour or knotty labour; to youth he gave emaciated lankness, and to old age little besides decrepitude and beards – meanness to all: and though he was more cautious in female forms, they owe the best part of their charms to chiaroscuro.

²⁶ Such was probably that austerity of tone in the works of Athenion, which the ancients preferred to the sweetness or gayer tints of Nicias – "austerior colore et in austeritate jucundior." – Plin. l. xxxv. c. xi.

127. Execution has its classes.

Coroll.— Satan summoning the Princes of Hell stretched over the fiery flood; or the giant snake of the Norway seas hovering over a storm-vexed vessel, by Gerard Douw, or Vanderverf — are incongruous ideas; would be incongruous though Michael Angelo had planned their design and Rembrandt massed their light and shade.

128. It has been said, but let us repeat it: the proportion of will and power is not always reciprocal. A copious measure of will is sometimes assigned to ordinary and contracted minds; whilst the greatest faculties as frequently evaporate in indolence and languor.

129. Mighty execution of impotent conception, and vigour of conception with trembling execution, are coalitions equally deplorable.

130. He is a prince of artists and of men who knows the moment when his work is done. On this Apelles founded his superiority over his contemporaries; the knowledge when to stop, left Sylla nothing to fear, though disarmed; the want of knowing this, exposed Cæsar to the dagger of Brutus.

131. Next to him who can finish, is he who has hid from you that he cannot.

132. If finishing be to terminate all the parts of a performance in an equal degree, no artist ever finished his work. A great part of conception or execution is always sacrificed to some individual excellence which either he possesses or thinks he

possesses. The colourist makes lines only the vehicle of colour; the designer subordinates hue to his line; the man of breadth or chiaroscuro overwhelms sometimes both, and the subject itself to produce effect.

133. The fewer the traces that appear of the means by which any work has been produced, the more it resembles the operations of Nature, and the nearer it is to sublimity.

134. Indiscriminate pursuit of perfection infallibly leads to mediocrity.

Coroll.— Take the design of Rome, Venetian motion and shade, Lombardy's tone of colour, add the terrible manner of Angelo, Titian's truth of nature, and the supreme purity of Corregio's style; mix them up with the decorum and solidity of Tibaldi, with the learned invention of Primaticcio, and a few grains of Parmegiano's grace: and what do you think will be the result of this chaotic prescription, such elemental strife? Excellence, perhaps, equal to one or all of the names that compose these ingredients? You are deceived, if you fancy that a multitude of dissimilar threads can compose a uniform texture — that dissemination of spots will make masses, or a little of many things produce a whole. If Nature stamped you with a character, you will either annihilate it by indiscriminate imitation of heterogeneous excellence, or debase it to mediocrity and add one to the ciphers of art. Yet such is the prescription of Agostino Carracci,²⁷ and such in general must be the dictates of academics.

²⁷ See the sonnet of Agostino Carracci, which begins "Chi farsi un bon Pittor cerca

135. If you mean to reign dictator over the arts of your own times, assail not your rivals with the blustering tone of condemnation and rigid censure; – sap with conditional or lamenting praise – confine them to unfashionable excellence – exclude them from the avenues of fame.

136. If you wish to give consequence to your inferiors, answer their attacks.

Coroll.– Michael Angelo, advised to resent the insolence of some obscure upstart who was pushing forward to notice by declaring himself his rival, answered: "Chi combatte con dappochi, non vince a nulla: " who contests with the base, loses with all!

137. Genius knows no partner. All partnership is deleterious to poetry and art: one must rule.²⁸

138. The wish of perpetuating a name by enlisting under the banners of another, is the ambition of inferior minds: biography, with all its branches of "Ana," translation and engraving, however useful to man or dear to art, is the unequivocal homage of inferiority offered by taste and talent to the majesty of genius.

139. Dive in the crowd, meet beauty: follow vigour, compare character, snatch the feature that moves unobserved and the sudden burst of passion – and you are at the school of nature

e desia," &c. which the author himself seems to ridicule by the manner in which he concludes.

²⁸ Οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανιῇ εἰς κοιρανὸς ἔστω. II. ii. 204. The conception of every great work must originate in one, though it may be above the power or strength of one to execute the whole.

with Lysippus.²⁹

140. The lessons of disappointment, humiliation and blunder, impress more than those of a thousand masters.

141. There are artists, who have wasted much of life in abstruse theories on proportion, who have measured the Antique in all its forms and characters, compared it with Nature, and mixed up amalgamas of both, yet never made a figure stand or move.

Coroll.— "The Apollo is altogether composed of lines sweetly convex, of very small obtuse angles, and of flats, but the soft convexities predominate the character of the figure, being a compound of strength, dignity and delicacy. The artist has expressed the first by convex outlines, the second by their uniformity, and the third by undulation of forms. The convex line predominates in the Laocoon, and the forms of the muscles are angular at their insertions and ends to express agitation; for by these means the nerves and tendons become more visible, straight lines meeting with concave and convex ones, form those angles which produce violence of action. The sculptor of the Farnesian Hercules invented a style totally different; to obtain fleshiness, he composed the figure of round and convex muscles, but made their insertions flat to signify that they are nervous and unincumbered with fat, the characteristic of strength."

²⁹ Pliny, l. xxxiv. c. 8.

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