

LECTURE III.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

BEFORE we proceed further with the historical progress of the art under our consideration, I have, on reflection, thought it would be an improvement of the course I pursued last year, to interpose, between my accounts of the ancient and modern modes of engraving, some explanation of the respective local powers and susceptibilities of those modern modes, and of such technical terms as appertain to the art, as it is exercised at present, and has been exercised for the last three hundred and fifty years: by which means I conceive, we shall keep what I have called the genealogy of the art more distinct than formerly, from the art itself—or from that branch of it which is intended to be more especially the subject of these Lectures.

Truth advances as error is made to recede. As error is never more stubborn than when backed by prejudice, I shall discourse also (and somewhat at large) on certain popular mistakes respecting this art, which prevail to a lamentable extent ; which must be the source of much regret to professional engravers of merit, and the operation of which must considerably diminish both the pleasure and the profit it is capable of imparting to the public.

Lavoisier remarks, in the preface to his new system of Chemistry, that he found by reforming the nomenclature, he improved the science itself. If therefore we could render more clear and determinate the *Language*, we should necessarily elucidate the *Philosophy** of the art under consideration ; and though I may have reason to think

* Aware that this word originally meant the love of wisdom, it may not be unnecessary to apprize the reader that I here use it to denote *the science of connecting principles*, which, as nearly as I can ascertain, is its modern acceptance.

that want of learning, and want of the authority which is due to learning, do not entitle me to hope that permanent or extensive benefit will result from any efforts of mine, (which considerations will certainly induce me—at least for the present, to restrict those efforts from their full scope) it is still my duty to enable you, if I can, to refer the examples, I shall eventually have the honour of submitting to your notice, up to some general heads. The advantages that chemistry would have derived from isolated experiments, would have been comparatively trifling, but for the nomenclature which enables us to class their various phænomena ; and it is the same with regard to engraving, for, as we have yet seen no Academy instituted for the acquirement and liberal communication of general truths in *this* art, what has hitherto been engraven, cannot be strictly and scientifically considered, as any other than the results of the isolated experiments of isolated individuals. Indeed, however much we may admire some of its productions, it is proper on such an occasion as the present,

that they should pass thus under our observation. No work of engraving is to be considered as *absolutely* perfect. As we raise our taste, its horizon will consequently widen; and the pigmy presumption of criticism is never more manifest, than when it dares to set limits to Art. Who shall say to an Art, "thus far shalt thou go, and *here* shall thy proud waves be stayed?"

I have been the rather induced to this alteration of my original plan, from perceiving that I should not be able to reach certain material points, in the chronological order which I have adopted, for a considerable time, and from its having been asserted by a gentleman who did me the honour of attending last season, that I then spoke of Engraving *as if* it were SCULPTURE, and had thus confounded two arts which are in themselves distinct and separate.

I feel a natural desire to be rightly and thoroughly understood, being aware that what I may have to say, will else be discreditable to myself and useless to others;

and though it will not be my practice, to occupy your time in combating the particular opinions of those individuals with whom I may not have the good fortune to agree; yet, combining this gentleman's remark, with another circumstance not irrelevant to the progress of Engraving, I have been led to think that some explanation may not be altogether unnecessary on the present occasion; and in this view I am thankful for a communication which I have no doubt has been made with the laudable intention of setting me right.

I have lately read over the printed abstract of a code of laws drawn up about forty years ago, for the regulation and government of our National Academy of Arts, and finding that in those laws the difference between the statuary's and the engraver's arts was marked with a hard and un-artist-like line, whilst their generic connexion was passed unnoticed, I hope I may be pardoned if I should suppose that there may possibly be some amongst this audience, who, like the gentleman to whom I have

already alluded, may have been led by academic authority into the habit of not adverting from the specific to the generic term, and consequently of supposing that engraving is *not* sculpture.

I would not be fastidious about words, or more precise than is necessary to the accomplishment of the purposes for which words are used: far less would I for a moment imagine that an art intrinsically valuable, could either derive additional value, or suffer depreciation in your esteem, from the term, or the occasional misuse of the term, by which it may be denoted: but correct definitions are certainly desirable; (where they can be had) and *Sculpture*, unless I am much mistaken, is a *generic* term, proper to the engraver's as well as the statuary's art, as comprehending both; just as the term *Art* comprehends in addition to these, Painting, Poetry, Music, and every mode of practically exhibiting refined mental operation, and is therefore applicable to either or all of them.

I trust you will agree with me, that it is right not to sacrifice to the *appearance* of delicacy, the *real benefits* of truth, nor to rely with too implicit faith upon the authority of distinguished names, in inquiries connected with the progress of Taste, Science, or Art: yet, in considering the definition of engraving, it appeared proper to remark how others (who from the nature of their studies might be expected to be more conversant with the kind of truth before us) regarded the respective meanings of the words in question, before I again submitted my opinion to your attention, and in referring to such, I found that most foreign languages expressly mark the generic verbal connexion as well as the actual practical relation, between Sculpture and Engraving: and that it is countenanced by the highest literary authorities in our own—I mean by Dr. Johnson and Dr. Swift.

Hence I am induced to re-assert, that ENGRAVING may be defined *a mode or species of SCULPTURE—performed by incision.*

Having hitherto discoursed in a general way on the various species of engraving, which were known to and practised by, the ancients; I now approach the modern modes, and purpose to discourse in my succeeding Lectures, more critically, upon that branch and those ramifications of the art, of which printing is the proper termination.

Engraving, is sometimes executed on **WOOD**, in which case the ink is not delivered from the incisions, but impressed from the surface of the block by means of the same kind of press with which letter types are printed; and the work is performed with gravers varying in their shapes and sizes according to the required depth and breadth of the lines.

On the whole, the local powers and advantages of wood-engraving, appear to be somewhat mistaken. Vignettes are the fashion, and it is also the fashion to consider this art as calculated to rival that of engraving on copper. Both these fashions

appear to me to be unfortunate for the art of engraving on wood: for reasons which I shall endeavour to explain.

From the ornamental character of the Vine, the French word *VIGNETTE*, which (as is well known) literally signifies a young or little vine, has gradually obtained among us a figurative meaning.

Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, uses this word to denote the decorative shrubs that grow about ruined edifices: and, by parity of reasoning, the little engraved embellishments, with which books are sometimes ornamented, have been called vignettes.

As they are not supposed, like pictures terminated by a regular boundary or frame, to convey or suggest the idea of a certain historical transaction or portion of nature as it might appear through an aperture, so in composing them, artists have not thought themselves amenable to the same laws, but have often taken a wider scope of probability: Hence a vignette to a poem, is oft times

a sort of midsummer-night's dream, where Fancy, unrestrained by time and place, indulges in the revelry of fairy fiction:— But, whether it be the appendage to a poem, or a history, or a book of any other kind— whether its subject be a stern and stubborn fact; or a mere painter's reverie; the objects introduced should always be of a subordinate and accessory kind, and the main subject of the work should never be thus represented.

On an island among the Lakes of Killarney, is the remain of a small Saxon chapel, which hence become very properly the subject of a vignette to a book of which the topography of Killarney is the subject, and where the lakes themselves are introduced, not as vignettes, but as pictures, terminated by a regular boundary.—Hence too, not the story of Ruth and Boaz, but the furniture of an Oriental Harvest field, became a very proper subject for a vignette to the book of Ruth. A principal beauty in most vignettes, consists in the delicacy with which they appear to relieve from the white paper

on which they are printed. The objects of which vignettes consist, themselves forming the boundary of the composition, their extremities should for the most part be tenderly blended—be almost melted as it were into the paper, or ground. Now, in printing with the letter-press, the pressure is rather the strongest at the extremities of the engraving, where we wish it to be weakest, and it is so from the unavoidable swelling, of the damp paper on which the impressions are worked, and the softness of the blankets in the tympan of the press. Hence, hard; instead of soft edges, are incident to vignettes engraven on wood, which all the care of the printer, with all the modern accuracy of his machine, can rarely avoid. A Nobleman, however, distinguished by his chemical and mechanical knowledge, and by his zeal for the improvement of society, is, as I understand, assiduously engaged in obviating these difficulties,* and removing

* Mr. M'Creery (the printer of these papers) has also conceived a plan for printing wood cuts with greater nicety than they are printed at present, which I hope will be found a real improvement.

these impediments, but until this be accomplished, the art should, in my opinion, be confined to such small works as do not require the delicacy of portrait, or of female character and expression, and be terminated by an oval, square, or some regular boundary.

The real advantages of wood engraving, are, that it is performed with more ease and celerity than engraving on copper, and that when so performed, the blocks may be fitted into the same frames, and printed with letter-types. If the wood engraver ape with difficulty those second and third courses of lines, (as the dark crossings are technically termed) or those delicate terminations, which are executed with comparative ease by the engraver on copper, though he may shew his skill, he must also expose his folly.—While he exhausts his strength in imperfect imitations of the graces of the superior art, he must subject himself to unfavourable comparisons, and will probably neglect the energies of which his own might be found susceptible.

For the higher efforts of the art, copper was soon discovered to be the more eligible material. Here the work was at first performed entirely by lines, or angular incisions, cut, or (as the Hebrew word more emphatically expresses) *ploughed*, with the graver—a steel instrument, whose general form and uses I should presume were too well known to need a description. These lines, it has since been found expedient to intermingle with others corroded by aquafortis, and occasionally with more delicate lines produced with a sharp steel instrument, held as a pencil is held, and which has been denominated a *dry* needle or dry *point*, in contradistinction to the (etching) point, whose use is followed by the operation of aquafortis. In printing copper-plate engravings, the ink is delivered from the incisions, and by means of the rolling-press.

ETCHING is the art of corroding with aquafortis, lines drawn with a stylus or steel point (commonly termed an etching-needle) on copper; or to speak more gene-

rally, is the superaddition of the chemical process of corrosion, to the art of drawing, through varnish, on plates of metal. The characteristic or local advantage of etching, is the unlimited freedom of which it is susceptible: the point meeting little resistance from the varnish, glides along the surface of the plate, and easily takes any turn that the taste of the artist may direct, or his hand accomplish, and hence its peculiar adaptation to the expression of that class of objects which it has lately been the fashion to call picturesque.

Various other modes of preparing copper-plates for printing, have, by assumption on the one side, and courtesy on the other, been denominated and allowed to be, modes of engraving, and though *MEZZOTINTO* is performed partly by *excision* or cutting off, I feel rather disposed to acquiesce in its claims, than to imitate my critic, by calling them in question.

In the process of *Mezzotinto*, the whole surface of the copper-plate is first worked

over with a toothed or serrated instrument of steel, which is rocked to and fro in various directions, so that if the plate were then to be printed, a mere blank or black space would be produced on the paper. After this mechanical operation (which is called laying *the ground*) the work of art commences, and is performed chiefly by means of scrapers of various shapes and dimensions, which are used to scrape away the surface or barb of the ground, in the necessary forms, until the requisite degrees of light and middle-tint are produced.

Mezzotinto is most properly employed on dark subjects where the constituent parts are large, its shadows being susceptible of great obscurity, profundity, and richness, particularly where the *mezzo* tint is cleared and enriched by the admixture of etched or engraved lines, as was the practice of White, and is the revived practice of Earlom and others; it is however attended with this disadvantage, that in the lights, where the artist frequently wishes most to engage attention by irritating the sense of vision, it

is least capable of effecting it, the lights of mezzotinto where they occur in broad masses, being comparatively cold, poor, and spiritless.

In the only professed Essay on Prints, I believe, that this country has produced, mezzotinto is erroneously preferred to all other modes of engraving. The author says, that it "gives the strongest representation of the real surface.*" He does not inform us of the real surface of what, though he cannot mean that all surfaces are alike:—He says further that "nothing except paint can express flesh more naturally, or the flowing of hair," which is so gross a mis-perception (if I may be allowed such a word) of the respective local powers of the various modes of engraving, as one should imagine could hardly befall the dullest organs; and so palpable a dereliction of the real capabilities of mezzotinto, as might half incline us to suspect it was rather ironically than ignorantly said—if

* See Gilpin on Prints, p. 38.

the doctrines inculcated throughout the essay, were not for the most part, equally vague and unsound.

Some of this author's more recent publications, are interspersed with excellent remarks—but, are also blotted with bad landscapes, and tarnished with false principles of Art. His aquatinted smearings, (fashionable though they have been) are as much beneath criticism, as his moral and christian virtues were above praise. Polished gold surrounds itself with splendour; and if base metal be placed near, it will deceitfully seem to possess a golden lustre and richness: I shall presume therefore, that no apology will be necessary for pointing out such of the mistakes of this writer,* as fall within the scope of my

* It is true, he published his *Essay on Prints* at a time when the engravers of this country were few, and wanted either talents, or encouragement, or opportunity, to impart their professional critical knowledge to the public. Mr. Burke has delicately apologised for this deficiency; and a laudable endeavour to supply it, might form an apology for

subject. The errors—the want of radical principles, in Gilpin's *Essay on Prints*, combined with the total want of such academical cultivation of engraving as might either impart critical information to the public, or practical improvement to its professors, were my chief inducements for undertaking these lectures, and would have been my excuse if I had failed, or had not met with such unequivocal testimonies of the approbation of the judicious, as are highly gratifying to my feelings.—But to return from this digression.

STIPPLING is a mode of producing prints by means of combinations of dots, which are either round or multangular, as the conical point, or point of the graver, is employed to form them. Stippling with the graver, was occasionally practised both by Martin Schoen and Albert Durer, in the very infancy of the art: the latter employed it in imitating the texture of beaver

the Rev. Mr. Gilpin; if his books upon Art in general had not too much the air of the old fable of a man shewing a lion the picture of a man killing a lion.

hats, and other similar objects. Perceiving that it was peculiarly expressive of softness, Agostino Veneziano,* and Boulanger, sometimes stippled their flesh, and Julio Campagnola his back-grounds also. Almost a century afterward, it was observed by De Marteau that by etching some of the dots and engraving others, very successful imitations of drawings hatched with chalk, might be produced; and hence it has been called the *CHALK manner* of engraving.

In England, the chalk manner is new, having been imported from Paris not many years ago,† by Ryland, who employed it so as rather to imitate such drawings as are done with crayons, or *stumped*, than such as are *hatched* with chalk. It was run after, however, with avidity by the pub-

* The works of Agostino de Musis, better known by the surname Veneziano, are very scarce, but among them will be found a small plate of an old man seated on a bank, with a cottage in the back ground, where the face of the figure is entirely stippled with the graver. He did not however, employ this mode of working in more than one or two other instances, and these I have never seen. In the flesh of Boulanger stippling is very common.

† About fifty.

lic, chiefly because it *was* new, for it was but a sort of retrograde and degenerate novelty as it was practised by the immediate imitators of Ryland. Yet, with so much heedless anxiety was it pursued, that people never stopt to consider whether even red-chalk or stumped drawings themselves (of which these prints were professed imitations) were so good representations of nature, or afforded a more happy and efficient means of transfusing the soul of painting, than the art of engraving in lines, as it was then exercised by Bartolozzi, Vivares, Woollett, and Strange, who were all living at the time, but—Ryland and novelty led the way, and fashion and Bartolozzi followed.

Perhaps Bartolozzi perceived that this stippling mode of engraving, was capable of more easily bestowing that soft blending and infantile indefinity, which are conspicuous in his style;—perhaps he recollected the fate of Milton, Corregio, and Collins, and saw that the existing state of the public taste, would neither appreciate nor reward the solitary efforts of a line-engraver who should regu-

late his aims by exalted views of the perfectibility of his art; and perhaps he knew that in executing his plates in the chalk manner, he could much sooner avail himself of the assistance of his pupils than in the more arduous practice of engraving in lines, and thus perform more rapidly the numerous commissions of the print dealers. However this may have been, certain it is that he bowed down his great abilities, and made a willing or a reluctant sacrifice of principle on the altar of fashion: an aberration which persons of real taste have not ceased to regret.

The print dealers* upon mistaken notions of private advantage, are ever exhausting the permanent hopes of the art: they are always ready, like Mr. Windham's savage, to cut down the tree in order to obtain its fruit. The novelty of chalk-engraving, by calling forth their ignorant exertions, co-

* The reader's mind will readily suggest to him that there are exceptions to this, as to all other general assertions. The author will hope to see the day when the exceptions shall be more numerous.

incided with, and increased this mania of the public, and except for the landscapes of Vivares, Rooker, and Woollett, which required and exhibited, more vigour and more detail of drawing than stippling could bestow; and that now and then an historical engraving by Strange and Bartolozzi, and the series from Mr. West's History of England, (of which the death of General Wolfe was the first) attested the existence and maintained the dignity of the legitimate art—with these illustrious exceptions, I say, the engravers of Great Britain were compelled to feel and silently to acknowledge, that since "ignorance was bliss, 'twas folly to be wise."

For myself,—though very young at the time, I could not help seeing with concern, that this re-discovery of, and rage for dotting, had happened at a most unfortunate period for the progress of engraving: It seemed to me as if a premature dotage had overtaken its manly prime. It has since turned out to be only one of those diseases which arise from the redundancy of particular

humours—a sort of influenza, for which (if my opinion of Academies* be right) the Royal Academy of Arts should have provided a remedy, but which the natural vigour of the constitution of Engraving has since overcome.

The dealers in fashionable articles, may be compared to dogs, that after a longer or a shorter chase, generally hunt their game to death. The Royal Academy had cleared no roads, and set up no directing posts, and even those among the well-intending public who were fondest of the sport—following these hounds, lost their way in the intricate and desultory chase. As at the Easter hunt, some stop short, others are thrown from their hobbies, and others again follow the dogs to the last—so it has been with regard to the fashion of engraving so as to imitate chalk or crayon drawings. At length, however, this interesting art (of which, if I *seem*, I *only seem* to make sport) fetching a few noble

* The reader will find that opinion more amply declared in the concluding Lecture.

bounds, has escaped from the toils of its pursuers, and now roves at leisure, when, as a means of translating pictures, it is more worthy than ever of being pursued.*

Upon what principles I am led to perceive that this province of engraving has

* In a pamphlet lately printed, under the signature of Mr. Josiah Boydell, which professes to contain "a Plan for the encouragement of Arts," &c. (which is in my opinion, one of the most radically defective plans ever attempted to be obtruded on the public, and founded in such gross mistake, that it might with more propriety be termed a Plan for the *discouragement* of the Arts) we find Mr. Boydell very free in reprobating the "dotting manner," and in censuring the public for their bad taste in engraving. In speaking of the different modes of engraving, his pamphlet might have sparkled with a little useful light, if he had been able and willing to have enlightened his readers on the subject: Yet, he gives no *reasons* why one manner of engraving is to be preferred to another: nor endeavours to inform, nor to *reform* the Public Taste, but by reproaching that public with having been "the promoters of such publications," as he now affects to contemn, i. e. such as are engraven in the manner of his own Shakespear. He seems to expect that we should now believe *line*-engraving to be the superior art, for no other reason than he formerly expected or wished us to believe that *chalk*-engraving was so. Upon venturing some years ago, to speak in favour of engraving in *lines*, at the Shakespear

recently disclosed more various and extensive, and richer tracts than it was formerly known to contain, I shall have the pleasure to explain at another time.* At present

Gallery, I was told, by a person related to the present Alderman, that, compared with the mode of engraving of which he now finds it expedient to speak as above, "line-engraving was but an inferior art—a kind of *tattooing*, which was going fast out of fashion,"—and this was spoken as if *fashion* were known and acknowledged to be the arbiter of Art.

The truth now appears to be, that the conductors of the Shakespear kept the dotting manner *in fashion* as long as they could, (let the larger engravings for Boydell's Shakespear contradict me, if I am wrong) for reasons which he himself divulges in the pamphlet before me, namely—because "the difference both as to time and expense is as three to one," and because they therefore found it "answer to the publisher," and that now the public taste is emancipating itself from the slavery of fashion, and that Messrs. Boydell and Co. find themselves in danger of being left in the minority, they are endeavouring to accommodate their principles (if such motives may be called principles) to the change.—Thus verifying the position I have laid down in another discourse, that to follow, flatter, and degrade, not to lead, exalt, and refine, the Public Taste, is the constant object of these mock *Mæcenates* of modern engraving—at least the constant tendency of their *profitable* endeavours.

* I had not at this time the smallest suspicion that the

we proceed with our detail of the various species into which the art has been divided.

About the same time with chalk-engraving, the mode of etching in AQUATINTA was introduced into England by Mr. P. Sandby. An etching in aquatinta, if the granulation employed be very minute, will, of consequence, very much resemble a drawing washed with bistre or Indian ink, being performed, in as far as it is a work of art, with the same implement (namely, a hair pencil) used in the same manner; and as Faust sold his first printed Bibles for MS; so it is said that the early aquatinta works of Le Prince (who for some time kept his process secret) were believed to *be* drawings.

In printing Aquatinta, the ink is delivered from a corroded granulated ground,

explanation here proposed would—I should scarcely have thought it *could* have been prevented. The mandate of the managers (of the Royal Institution) has *powerfully* reminded me of the uncertainty of human events.

the art of producing which, was invented by the French Abbe St. Non, and communicated by him to his countryman Le Prince. St. Non produced his grain by sifting powdered resin over a plate of copper, and fixing it by a slight degree of heat; Le Prince, at first, by the same process, but afterward by forming his plates partly of copper and partly of some metal less rapidly soluble in aquafortis; but our own countryman Mr. Sandby made a very considerable improvement upon both, by floating his copper-plate with a solution of Gum resin in highly rectified spirit: as the spirit evaporates, the resin cracks, but adheres to the copper in small nodules, between the minute interstices of which, the aquafortis is admitted, and corrodes the plate: and the professional powers which this gentleman previously possessed, enabled him to perform much larger and better works in aquatinta, than had hitherto been produced, the superior merit of which, the print before you will sufficiently testify.

Dr. Rees's Cyclopeda adds to its good

practical directions for etching in aquatinta, that "it is a species of engraving, simple and expeditious, if every thing goes on well; but it is very precarious, and the errors which are made, are rectified with great difficulty," yet it appears to me that the obstacles which have opposed themselves to the perfection of this species of art, are entirely within the reach of ingenuity and exact attention to phenomena, to remove. When the artist shall be able to command his various *grains* and degrees of light and shade, both in flat breadths and regular graduation, without harshness or other imperfection; aquatinta will be a superior mode of art to that of drawing in bistre or Indian ink, because it will add to all the excellences of which they are susceptible, a variety of granulation of which they are not susceptible; and when this variety shall be capable of being graduated and blended at pleasure, and when its compass shall be ascertained, it may receive the perfection of harmony.

One very frequent defect is observable

where the aquatint is thrown over an etched outline which is corroded to any considerable depth: here the resin does not granulate along the edges of the line which has been previously *bit in*, as it does in the blank spaces, and hence a white edge remains on either side the outline when printed, which mars the advantages we should else derive from their mixture.

I have been led to assert that these obstacles are not insurmountable, from observing that these desirable graduations are sometimes produced, and these white* edgings avoided; and though this is said to be *fortunately*, or *happily*, or *accidentally* done, we should not be induced to forget that causes and effects do not vary, and that in all cases of this kind, where we are so ready

* It was formerly the custom, after floating the plate with the solution, to leave it awhile in a slanting position to drain and to harden: it has recently been observed, that if the plate be left to dry in an horizontal instead of a sloping direction, the white edges do not occur.—Of this I have been informed since I read the discourse.

speaking of *accident*, it is not Nature nods, but we that dream.

It has been a real misfortune to this species of etching, that it has been taught and spoken of, as if it were a kind of legerdemain trick. Every booby who could hold a pencil and pour gum and spirit over a plate of copper, has congratulated himself on possessing *the Secret*, and (which is much worse) many have succeeded to a considerable extent in teaching the credulous part of the public, to believe them *Aquatinta Engravers*. Hence, and from its comparative celerity of execution, while the art is brought into discredit, and Europe is deluged with worthless productions, every legitimate artist who endeavours to blend a portion of his own fame with the deeds of heroism that are daily acting around him, is sure to be anticipated in the *subject* of his work by twenty contemptible aquatintas.

It were sincerely to be wished, that upon such occasions people would repress their eagerness to obtain these interesting memo-

rials, by recollecting an old adage which I need not repeat, and would regulate their choice by reflecting how few can be capable of doing justice to the great achievements of a Wolfe, or a Nelson. It is a condition of human nature, that high intellectual attainment is arduous and slow in its progress, while ephemeral productions are generally trivial and vapid—as if it were ordained, that the duration and importance of works of art, should bear a certain proportion to the mental and manual skill which must be exerted in their production.

He who wishes to possess *the best* representation of the mournful victory of Trafalgar, must not expect it will be the *first*.* And why should he? Is it a baby toy, that he should be impatient to possess it?—Can he fear that the laurels of NELSON will wither round his tomb?—Or does he imagine that patriotism will not long continue to—“ dwell a weeping Hermit there?”

Of freedom, our misgiving sense must

* This Lecture was delivered in 1805.

take the apparent evil with the real good. Few possess the power, and no man may monopolize the right, of consecrating the memory of the brave. The artist of high endowment who hopes to float down the stream of time with Nelson, must allow, and will be willing to allow, the same liberty to others, with regard to choice of subject, as he claims for himself. It remains, and ought to remain, with the public, to compare and discriminate between their respective pretensions: to encourage the legitimate artist, and discountenance the empirical pretender.

I should but ill promote the purpose for which I am placed before you, were I from any mistaken motive of delicacy, to forbear to use my best endeavours (feeble as those endeavours may be) to lay before you such principles of sound criticism as may assist your choice, so that when you see and compare engravings, your preference may be just.—If you subscribe to (with the liberal view of encouraging in their progress) works which you do *not see*, you can make your election on no surer ground

than the known talents and reputations of the artists who are to execute such works : But a species of imposture with which the world was heretofore unacquainted, has of late boldly stepped forward in the public prints, which is so infatuated with the past favours of the public, that it unblushingly presumes you will encourage projected Engravings, for the sake of the shopkeeper who is to sell them, and who bespeaks your patronage while he aims at hood-winking your judgment, by advertising *his intention to publish* such or such works.* It is my duty to say, that if you *do* subscribe your money upon this principle, I trust it will be only to such shopkeepers as have not compromised their real interests by the publi-

* This is generally done with studied ambiguity, so as to leave it undetermined, and to inculcate that it is of no importance, *who* is to be the writer, painter, or engraver of the work proposed : Or at other times (if the reader is able to conceive any distinct impression from the advertisement) he is led to believe that the publisher is himself to be the author. I conceive the above to be one of the passages which has induced those who might apply it to themselves, to solicit, and—*obtain!* my dismissal from the Lecture-room of the Royal Institution.

cation of bad prints : but I trust also to the broader principle that the good sense of the public will repel this and every attempt to wrest* the reputation of works of art, out of the hands of their real authors, I hope that no *artist* will sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage, and I wish that print-sellers may in future be content to move in their proper orbit, and be satisfied with the profits, which are very considerable, that arise from the sale of engravings.

* “ Sejanus, Wolsey, hurt not honest Fleury,

But well may put *some* statesmen in a *a fury*.”

The impudent (I must call it so) practice of advertising anonymous works of Art, is an evil which ought not to be tolerated. I speak against it on principle, and from the firmest conviction of its destructive tendency. Nor do I fear that persons of any reflection will impute it to me, if an anonymous life and an anonymous death of Lord Nelson, were at this time advertising in the daily prints, to be published by subscription ; or that more than six persons will be found, who will think that I ought on that account to have forborne to state the principle.—Even the first Nobility in the kingdom, when they condescend to allow their names to appear as the patrons of Oratorios and Concerts, never dispense with those of the professional artists who are to perform them : they have too much respect for Art and for the public, and too much regard for propriety.

The next mode of Engraving that solicits our attention, is that invented about fifteen years since, by Mr. Wilson Lowry. It consists of two instruments, one for etching successive lines, either equidistant, or in just graduation from being wide apart to the nearest approximation, *ad infinitum*, and another, more recently constructed, for striking elliptical, parabolical and hyperbolical curves, and in general all those lines which geometricians call *mechanical curves*, from the dimensions of the point of a needle, to an extent of five feet.—Both these inventions combine elegance with utility, and both are of high value as auxiliaries of the imitative part of engraving: but as the auxiliaries of chemical, agricultural, and mechanical science, they are of incalculable advantage. The accuracy of their operation, as far as human sense, aided by the magnifying powers of glasses, enables us to say so, is perfect; and I need not attempt to describe to you the advantages that must result to the whole cycle of Science, from mathematical accuracy.—As long as this Institution, and the Society for the encouragement of arts, manufactures, and com-

merce, shall deserve and receive the gratitude of the country, so long must the inventor of these instruments be considered as a benefactor to the public.

Another species of Etching, which perhaps in the order of time, should have preceded Mr. Lowry's, and which has been occasionally practised with considerable success, is executed with a black-lead pencil. Common etching ground is softened and attempered to the existing state of the weather, by the admixture of animal oil, and over a plate thinly covered with this sort of varnish, and smoked until it has become black, the artist cautiously spreads a sheet of very thin paper, and performs his etching, simply by making a hatched drawing with his lead pencil, on this paper; which being afterward taken from the plate, and aquafortis applied, the process is completed: as much of the varnish as it was necessary to remove, in order to admit the aquafortis to the copper, will be found to have adhered to the back of the paper, which (presuming the plate to be judi-

ously corroded) will exhibit the exact archetype of the print.

An art of producing prints from drawings hatched with lines on calcareous substances, has been recently discovered, of which it is my duty to state what I conceive to be the local energies and proper employment: in doing which, I find myself obliged to warn the patrons of merit in the fine arts, not to suffer their judgments to be led astray by the false lights of a specious prospectus, and a novel invention. The STONE-ETCHING is calculated, perhaps beyond any art at present known, to render a faithful fac-simile of a painter's sketch. It is an accession to that sketch itself, if the artist choose to sketch on stone, of the power of multiplying itself to any * number that may be required. I must at the same time remark to you, that it is *not* the painter's *sketches*, that it is most desirable to multiply, but his *finished performances*.

* This is what we are taught to believe, and what I am neither prepared nor disposed to deny.

We wish most to see the mercury of his active imagination, amalgamated with the sterling gold of his cultivated understanding; and we justly value an art of engraving in proportion as it is capable of rendering or reproducing the pure forms into which this rich mass may be moulded.

There are certain local energies peculiar to every branch of engraving. He who should endeavour in mezzotinto or the chalk-manner, to rival the playful freedom and Virgilian taste displayed in the trees of Vivares, would find himself as much mistaken in his aims, as he who on stone, should attempt to render the delicate blandishments, or produce a complete abstract of the full harmony, of Corregio or Claude. On the other hand, stone-etching is far more capable of producing a faithful transcript of a slight drawing hatched with chalk or lead pencil, than the powers of the graver and aquafortis united, on copper. Both this and the mode of etching through soft ground, afford the most efficient means of multiplying *such drawings*: This is the

boundary of their aim, and in this (when the artist is master of his process) they are compleatly successful.

But, though we may view the Pegasean flights of the unbridled fancy of Gainsborough, Wilson, or Mortimer, with the same kind of pleasure that Dr. Johnson affords us in commenting on the first thoughts (which I may call the rude sketches) of Pope, yet it is from contemplating the finished works of this poet, and of these painters, that we derive the solid and permanent gratification of Sense, Imagination and Judgment united, which it is the true aim of superior Art to produce.

Sir Joshua Reynolds says that "we are to consider rules as fences, to be placed where trespass is expected, and enforced in proportion as peculiar faults are prevalent at the time in which they are delivered; for what it may be proper strongly to recommend or enforce in one age, may not with equal propriety be so much laboured in another." The fashion of the present day

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runs in favour of slight, sketchy performances. The Rev. Mr. Gilpin's principles of art obtained a too ready admission within the higher circles, because they were easy, and flattered the vanities of those who with little effort could acquire a certain ignorant rambling of the hand and the pencil, with an opinion that they could draw. With this they were content: a sketch was with Mr. Gilpin the mental part of the art, and hence it became an object to exhibit it disencumbered of its corporeal clay: but with due submission to metaphysical authorities, while we are in this mortal state, body without soul, or soul without body, are equally anomalous to our natures. The stiff, dry, laborious, tasteless attention to minutiae, which characterises the infancy of art, (particularly of German engraving) and the modern, fashionable mode, of blotting and smearing a mere general effect, are equally unadapted to our sublunary state. The perfection of Engraving—as of all other imitative arts, will, if I mistake not, be found to consist of the highest and most complete union of *general* with *particular* nature;

and this, I may venture to prophesy, will be the fashion at some future day, which may not be far distant—or rather, when we are tired of the erratic proceedings of fashion, we shall return to the paths of nature and principle.

[The third Discourse concluded in this place; having been divided into two readings for the sake of not fatiguing the attention of my auditors, by detaining them longer than the hour they are accustomed to attend in the Lecture-room: but, as the same motive does not now exist, I hope the reader will not be displeased to find a fragment of what was originally the fourth, added to the third Lecture.—I have thought it would be an improved arrangement of my materials, not to separate those observations which relate to the two principal causes that have retarded the progress of British Engraving, and which will accordingly be found incorporated in the last Discourse of the present volume.]

I HAVE not found it expedient, nor indeed practicable, to limit my explanations of technical terms, to such as are peculiar and confined to Engraving:—for, having to trace the relation it bears to other arts,

we shall have occasion for some terms that are common to all, and such of these as I can anticipate, it will not be improper to define.

In attending to this part of my task, I shall endeavour to trench as little as possible upon the departments of other Lecturers—not only for the reason which the Professor Fuseli has given in the commencement of his Academical Discourses—namely, “that my vocabulary of technic expression may not clash with the dictionary of my audience,” but also because, among the Metaphysics of art, where so many have stumbled, it behoves me to step with caution.

Toward the close of my last discourse (on the several species of modern Engraving) I found myself obliged to anticipate that the meanings I annex respectively to the words *General* and *Particular*, as applied to works of Art, would not be misunderstood: an anticipation of some terms is

not easily avoidable, and can be no reason why they should not be subsequently explained.

TO PARTICULARISE, is to be attentive to the minutæ, severally considered, of the object or objects before us. In imitative art, it is to represent those objects in detail.—In explaining the term *Generalising*, as it is less well understood, I shall be obliged to be more diffuse.

TO GENERALISE, is not to render vague and indeterminate, but to express with sufficient firmness, what is common to a number of objects of the same class. A general idea—if the word idea may be used to signify any other than recalled and particular sensation, is a *generic* idea, and a general representation or description, in Painting or in Poetry, is also generic—or *such* a representation as is common to a number. In Moral Philosophy, general ideas being comparatively vague and indeterminable, have sometimes been denied to exist; but in Art, they may be rendered obvious—may be

returned back to the sense from whose particular impressions they are constituted or abstracted: and this, I believe, is practicable in all arts, though perhaps not in the same degree. The Statuary, the Poet, the Painter, the Engraver, the Musician—all who aspire to touch with pure delight the imaginations of others—all Generalise, and without generalising, it may be questioned whether any have attained to high and lasting reputation.

Great mistakes have arisen in the philosophy of Art, (if not in the philosophy of morals) from confounding a *general, abstract, or common* idea or representation, with a *vague* idea or representation. Now, with respect to art, the difference is very important—amounting in our critical reasonings, to as much as the difference between a bust chiselled in the rough, and a finished head of an angel or deity:—a Jesus Christ, for example, can only be exalted above all individual men, by possessing what is *common* to all *good men* in character and expression.

Permit me then to repeat, that a general *representation*, is *not* a vague, but a *generic* representation: not a representation of what is hastily seen or carelessly noticed and imperfectly recognised, but a firm representation of what is most frequently seen.— What is most frequently seen, is best remembered; what is common to a species or a genus is more frequently seen than that which is peculiar to an individual, and hence we recollect the general character of Man or Woman; or of the Oak or the Ash, when they are well painted or engraven, more strongly than we recollect in all their details, any particular man or woman, oak or ash, we have seen.

To Generalise, is therefore to define broadly or comprehensively; and every comprehensive definition, such as is proper in a Dictionary, must be of this kind: Languages, like the imitative arts, being modes of imparting information by exhibiting principled combinations of thought.

In commenting on this mental opera-

tion and its effects, Dr. Johnson, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, have proceeded so far as to say that nothing can please many and please long, but just representations of general nature: which (though, like all other extensive truths, it may be liable to exceptions) is a good sound general position, or well founded aphorism, and may be evinced by citing before you the works of those masters who have pleased many, and will long continue to please.

“ The characters of Shakespear (says his learned commentator) are not modified by the accidents of transient fashion or temporary opinion: They are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets, a character is too often an individual, in those of Shakespear it is commonly a species.”

“ His adherence to general nature (con-

tinues Johnson) has exposed him to the censure of critics who form their judgments upon narrower principles. His Romans have been thought not sufficiently Roman, and his Kings not completely royal."

I have not pursued this quotation further, (beautiful though its language continues to be) because it appears to me that Johnson, —hurried away by the rapid stream of his own eloquence, ascribes Shakespear's merit too entirely to this principle. He continues to praise our poet for this talent of generalising, almost as if he exclusively deserved praise on that account; whereas, if I am not mistaken, Shakespear should also be praised for intuitively knowing when and where to employ, so as to promote the general scope of his design, those particular traits which distinguish the individual.—The very nature of the Drama—especially of the Historic Drama and of Comedy, required him to do this, and it may fairly be asked why, but for this particularity, are some of his characters become obsolete?

Art seems most frequently, if not always,

to consist in knowing when, where, and how to be general, and when, where, and how to be particular, and in using this knowledge to advantage: Yet that the artist should in every performance, without exception, generalise as much as he conceives the particular occasion or subject of his work will admit, I am not now prepared to maintain, though I think we may perceive that this principle, modified and varied by difference of talent and opinion, has governed those Engravers, and those Painters, Statuaries, and Poets also, whose works have been most extensively and permanently approved. Of the possible subjects of art, none would seem to require more particularity than a Portrait, yet if we examine the portraits of Titian or Reynolds, or those of the most able Portrait painters of our own time and country, I believe we shall find that they have generalised, not only in their back-grounds and draperies, but even in the Faces themselves, as much as they conceived the occasions would respectively admit: and I trust, I shall be able to shew from the works of Woollett and other mo-

dern Engravers who have distinguished themselves, that their practice has been regulated by the same principles, especially in characterising the substances or textures of the various objects they had to represent.

It has been observed, to you with great truth by the professor Opie, that the Venus de Medicis and other Greek statues of high character, were formed by this mental process; and when Zeuxis painted his celebrated Helen from six selected beauties, he did not (as has been vulgarly supposed) copy the head of one, the arm of another, the leg of a third, and so forth.—This would have been an heterogeneous jumble of *parts*,—but having placed all his models in the attitude he intended for his Helen, he abstracted and drew from all, what was *common* to all, omitting the peculiarities of each, and thus formed his general idea and representation of that superlative Beauty, which had set the world in arms!

Whether I shall prove tedious or instruc-

tive by endeavouring to throw in these gleams of analogical light, which to me appear to disclose the delicate ties of relationship between the Sister Arts, I cannot tell; I can only hope that, where I *intend* to illustrate my subject, I shall not stray, nor lead my audience astray, after *false* lights: But I have dwelt the longer on the term generalising, from having observed, that the neglect of attending to its true import, has led both in theory and practice to two vicious and opposite extremes, which have been promulgated and maintained with equal zeal by their respective partizans: On the one side it has been held, that we ought—and indeed that we *can* only represent particular and individual Nature, and on the other, that Art, strictly speaking, is no imitation at all of external nature. The first of these principles, leads of necessity to taking pains in a wrong direction, or what the Lecturer on Painting, by a bold metaphor, has called “climbing downward:” the latter to such aerostatic flights as baffle our perceptive faculties. He who, possessed by the former notion,

should sit down to Paint or Engrave portraits, if he began at Reynolds or Sharp, must descend to Denner or Fiquet; and in Landscape, if he began to paint or engrave trees with Poussin or Vivares, must finish with the laboured precision of botanical detail.

On the other hand—the contrary practice must produce such vague smearings—such “airy nothings,” as we might suppose could neither receive name, nor local habitation receive *them*, did we not frequently see the habitations of our friends thus disfigured. In short, the prevalence of this principle, if admitted as such, must require the practitioner to leave more and more, till at length *all* must be left for the imagination of the spectator, and fortuitous blotting, or manual dexterity, be substituted for essential imitation, or characteristic representation of Nature.

I shall at present add but little, to the much that has been said and written on those indispensable terms of Art, Beauty, and Sublimity.

Of BEAUTY it may be said, as a celebrated critic has said of Shakespear, that the subject has been illustrated into obscurity. We have been alternately and successively taught to identify it with utility, with proportion, with goodness, with fashion, with propriety, with serpentine lines, and with central forms; or to consider it as a compound quality, consisting of various modifications and mixtures of these;—and these doctrines are severally supported by elaborate reasonings, and highly respected names.

Amid the splendour of such various lights, who is not dazzled and confounded?—Who shall direct his attention steadily to the object—and that object, Beauty!

From a persuasion that these differences of opinion, are rather seeming, than real differences, I should have thought it a pleasing task, if time had permitted me, to endeavour to reconcile them. Some reconciliation may, however, arise out of the

brief notice I may now be able to bestow on the subject.

Presuming the *Beautiful** to be synonymous with the *Lovely*—as in my opinion it is,—the following questions immediately arise. Is it what is felt or perceived to be lovely or pleasurable, by each individual, that is properly termed beautiful? or what by sympathetic consent is acknowledged to be so felt by the societies of which such individuals are respectively members?—Or has this feeling resulted from the gradual refinement of all societies, in so far as such refinement may operate at any specified time or place?

* If we derive our English word Beauty from the French language, its radix must be in the first syllable, which means finery, or what is agreeably irritating to the sense of vision: If we have taken its meaning from the Greek $\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, I am informed that it is synonymous with Goodness: I am also informed, that if we go still further back, to Homer, and the writers anterior to the Attic philosophy, we recede in a circle, and are carried round to French meaning; $\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ and $\kappa\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ relating only to physical beauty.

It does appear to me that the word **Beauty**, though it be always used to denote lovely or pleasurable objects or feelings, is subject in its application to the variations of meaning that may arise from the reciprocal reflection, and re-reflection of the pleasurable perceptions or feelings of individuals, on the general pleasurable perception or feeling of society—and *vice versa*.

In the gross sense of the term therefore, the feeling of the beautiful exists, (as has been declared from this place) among savages; and the strong expression of pleasure with which they view shining baubles, (which pleasure is very far from being confined to savages) demonstrates the identity of the beautiful with the pleasurable or lovely, as far as respects *them*.

A modern traveller of urbanity and observation, portrays the rural delights of a Dutchman in the following terms. "He builds himself a dwelling: It is a hut in size—It is a palace in neatness. It is necessarily situated among damps, upon a flat,

and perhaps behind the banks of a sluggish canal" (objects the most irreconcilable to our notions of beauty)—Yet, he writes upon it, "my Delight!" "Country pleasures!" "Country prospects!"—or some other inscription that might characterise the vale of Tempe, or the garden of Eden. He cuts his trees into fantastic forms, hangs his awning round with small bells, and decorates his Sunday jacket with dozens of little buttons."

It may very fairly be asked, is this Beauty? and it may be answered, yes—to a Dutchman, living among Dutchmen, it *is* beauty. That is, it may with as much propriety be so termed, as sparkling beads or shining counters to a South-sea islander, or as the preposterous fashions which sometimes obtain a temporary admission amongst ourselves.

Of these examples, that of the South-sea islander is meant as an instance of the simple pleasure (or beauty) of unimproved

vision: the two latter as instances of that feeling of the beautiful, which results in part from the operation of education and habit, or is produced by the action and reaction of the sympathies of society on the individuals of which the societies are respectively constituted, and of the mental energies or influence of the individuals on the societies. Both are intended as examples to illustrate the perception or acknowledgment of mere *local* beauty, the one such as *custom*, (or extended fashion) the other such as *fashion*, (or limited custom) teaches us to enjoy.

It may not be unworthy of remark, that a change somewhat analogous to this in principle, takes place in the mind of every educated individual as he advances from childhood toward maturity. The adult is no longer delighted with what appeared beautiful in infancy, nor the young man with what charmed him at the age of adolescence. His taste gradually changes, or rather forms, as his pleasures and the circle

of his social intercourse increase—and

“ To youth as it ripens gives sentiment new ;
 “ The *object* still *changing*, the *sympathy* true.”

But beside this local perception or acknowledgment of beauty, which is elaborated from the pleasures of each particular community ; there is a feeling or perception of the beautiful which is unvarying in its principle, and refined in proportion to the real refinement of intellectual pleasure. It appears to have originally sprung from the same root with the grosser meaning of the term ; the difference to have resulted from cultivation ; and the one to bear the same reference to the calm enjoyments of mental taste, that the other does to the more tumultuous pleasures of unimproved sensation.

Beauty, as has long since been observed by Mr. Burke, is a social quality, and all rules and aphorisms of which it is the basis, are corollaries elaborated from the social state, approximating to correctness as that social state is really refined, or cultivated upon genuine principles. If mortal hand

could graduate the scale, the perception of Beauty, might be made the test and measure of civilization; for the enjoyment of the beautiful—the feeling of what is truly beautiful, appears to have been in all countries and in every age, attendant upon what was esteemed to be lovely or attractive, and to have been refined, as pleasure is refined, in a direct ratio to the progress of human intellect; from the lowest degree—from the simple raptures of the South-sea islander, up to its highest point of Attic perfection.*

Having stated my belief that some reconciliation of the various hypotheses which have been entertained and inculcated with

* Those who heard me read this discourse in the Lecture-room, will perhaps remember, that I then introduced examples from Greek mythology, in support, as I conceived, of this opinion. I believed at that time, that the Greek artists and philosophers, had regarded Venus as the goddess of Beauty, and Cupid, or Love, as the offspring of Venus; and I made use of this belief as the key-stone of my hypothesis, which must now stand—*if* it stand, without it—a mere Gothic arch.

respect to the source of Beauty, might arise out of the view which I had taken of the subject, it is incumbent upon me to state also why I have been led to form that opinion. Those who contend that there are certain forms as well as colours, that, abstractedly from all mental associations, are most grateful to the sense of Vision, will agree with me, that though such objects merely address themselves to the sense, we are very much accustomed to term them pleasing or beautiful, or (from analogy consisting probably in a similar affection of the nerves) by the more mental term, lovely; and as all lovely objects are most lovely when they are in their highest perfection, when they are likewise most useful, best proportioned, and most excellent, I conceive that the advocates of Utility, Perfection, Proportion, Goodness, and Propriety, will agree with me also; for they will not contend that *all* useful, or perfect, or well proportioned objects are beautiful, since a bat or a toad may be as perfect and as well proportioned, and for aught we know as useful as a rose or a swan. Wherefore, I

argue, on the whole, that unless objects call forth the tender affections, or are lovely, they are not beautiful, however perfect, central, or well proportioned their forms; and vice versâ, that if they do call forth this tender sentiment, they are beautiful, though we should not have discovered their usefulness, or the justness of their proportions.

It has sometimes been thought that a verbal distinction ought to be made between that refined and permanent sense of Beauty, which results sympathetically from the gradual refinement of Societies, and the vague and temporary use of the term; but critics of the first authority, either from modest doubts of their own literary influence, or from perceiving that the gross, was in fact blended with the refined meaning, have found it wisest to acquiesce in the present usages; and as words in a discourse, like colours in a picture, or lines in an engraving, always derive part of their meaning, from those other words, colours or lines, near which they happen to be placed, it

will be my duty to attend to this relation, and avail myself of these means, in order to be correctly understood.

The meaning of **SUBLIMITY** appears now to be more settled. It *literally* signifies loftiness: and whether we say a sublime object, is an object of power to *dilate* or *exalt* the mind of the beholder, we mean the same thing: being obliged in this, as in most other cases, to make use of a physical term to express a metaphysical meaning.

The author of the "Inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful," has taught, that *Terror* and *Sublimity* are synonymous terms: a mistake for which (especially with Longinus before him) it is so difficult to account, that, after reading him with attention, we can scarcely believe we have not misconceived his meaning,—yet, he plainly and expressly says, that "Terror is in all cases whatsoever, either openly or latently the ruling principle of the Sublime."

The introduction of the Ghost in Shake-

spear's Hamlet is fraught with all those circumstances which would seem to render it a fit illustration of the subject before us : but it goes directly to invalidate Mr. Burke's hypothesis.

Of the four persons who witness its appearance, it is worthy of notice, that the sublimity of their characters is in an inverse ratio to their Fears—or rises in proportion as they are exempt from Terror. Bernardo and Marcellus,

“ Distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of *Fear*
Stand dumb.”—

Horatio, possessing somewhat more courage, speaks to it, and HAMLET not only speaks to it as he had vowed—“ though Hell itself should bid him hold his peace,” but follows it toward the brink of extreme danger, (in opposition to the earnest dissuasions of his friends) with a mind dilating more and more, as the danger seems to increase.

I had pursued this chain of reasoning to

more considerable length, but the recent appearance of a book, where the subject is amply discussed, and which is in almost every hand, renders it unnecessary to read all that I had written. It may be sufficient to add, that Mr. Knight has recalled the word (Sublimity) to its original meaning: He has satisfactorily shewn that rapturous or elevated feeling, *whatever* may be the exciting cause, *is* Sublimity, and that the tenderest Odes of Love, as well as the most terrific Images of War,* may raise the mind to this exalted tone: He has proved that Time does not alter Truth: He has re-registered the decision of that “ardent Judge who, zealous to his trust, with warmth gave sentence—but was always just.”

I do not foresee that I shall have much occasion for the word Picturesque: Yet it is at present so fashionably technical in almost all conversations respecting Art, that something would seem wanting, were I entirely to omit noticing it in this place.

* The instances cited by Longinus, and referred to by Mr. Knight, are the well known prayer of Ajax, and Sappho's impassioned Ode, “Blest as the immortal Gods, &c.”

The term PICTURESQUE signifies, as a Painter would wish. Though we know that all painters wish not alike; that Gerard Lairesse, as well as some other painters, have ridiculed the idea of any other than the beautiful class of objects being esteemed picturesque, and that each painter of genius, may claim and exercise an equal right of denominating those objects and effects Picturesque, which are congenial with his own powers, or his own views of the practical energies of his art, yet, we are supposed to be able to form by induction a common or generic idea of what painters in the aggregate would prefer—or (which is the same thing) to form an abstract idea of a painter, with whose pleasures we would sympathise, and of whose enthusiasm we must partake, if we would really feel and enjoy the Picturesque.

The enjoyment of the Picturesque, consists in a perception, as far as respects Painting, of what Akenside could call 'the kindred powers of discordant things,'—that is, of the kindred analogies and connecting

principles between Nature and the Painter's Art.

In general we argue Cause from Effect: Here by a sort of re-active or inverted perception, means and end are in the painter's mind supposed to change places, and, possessing a painter's taste, we apply the term picturesque to those objects and effects, which are calculated to call forth the spontaneous and peculiar energies, and facilities of the Painter's Art. But example may perhaps throw a milder light upon the subject, and some may the more readily discern what *is*, from being led to observe what *is not* picturesque. With this in view allow me to recal Gray's inimitable Ode of the Bard to your recollection: From this poem, pictures have often been attempted, and very good pictures have sometimes been produced:—Yet perhaps the Bard has never been, and perhaps never can be, painted so as to affect the spectator's mind like a perusal of the Ode itself, because it contains incidents and circumstances, which though highly poetical, are so far from be-

ing picturesque, that they cannot even be represented by painting.

An aged Bard denouncing prophetic vengeance, and an Host struck with dismay, may be painted; the Bard may be exalted on a rock, he may be "robed in the sable garb of Woe, and his loose beard and hoary hair, stream like a meteor through the troubled air?"—But who shall delineate, "the *deep sorrows* of his Lyre?"—What pencil shall describe "desart caves, *sighing* to the torrent's awful voice beneath?—Or Giant Oaks *breathing revenge in hoarser murmurs*?"—With an hundred other circumstances from which the Poem derives so much pathos and majesty?—The reason is, that these incidents, though they may be deemed analogous to the local energies and graces of the Musician's Art, are not so to those of the Painter's.

Let it not be thought here that I presume to affirm or to think it impossible for the Art of Painting, to reach these ideas of the Poet. I am so far from entertaining

such an opinion, that I think ideas equally beyond the apparent scope of a given Art, in the vulgar estimation, have sometimes been happily attained—not only by this Art, but by that of Engraving also, as I shall presently endeavour to evince.

In using the term Picturesque, we speak according to the best dictates of our own taste, of the known and practicable, not of the possible unknown, powers of the Art of Painting, and mean simply and briefly, analogous to the general idea or opinion we entertain of the known energies of the Painter's Art: and having once chosen to admit this foreign termination into your language, you may (by the same license) frame the term *Sculpturesque*, or *Woolletesque*, or almost any other *esque* you please.

“The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,”

is a verse, that, as it first strikes our attention, seems to be entirely and very much beyond the reach of the Engraver's Art, or—(to adopt this fashionable termina-

tion) not at all Engraver-*esque*: Yet, I have never met with a person of observation and feeling, who had enjoyed the freshness of the morning at that early hour, and had seen the *Aurora* of Count Goudt, who did not acknowledge with delight, that the Count had been as completely successful in affecting his imagination, with this sentiment, as Gray.

We cannot, however, expect that every imagination will be thus awakened or impressed: Those who have not enjoyed this early freshness, in a romantic country, cannot possibly enjoy this Print, because it operates—like all the higher efforts in Art, by stimulating imagination to the conception of more than is actually exhibited.

“ ’Tis *charmed Fancy* bids the lovely Landscape live,” and I lately had a pleasing opportunity of observing this effect produced upon a friend of mine, possessing a mind, certainly of no common powers. In the ardour of youthful enthusiasm, he occasionally rose at day-break to roam over

the Swiss mountains in pursuit of a favourite study, and now—at the distance of forty years, Count Goudt's engraving of the Aurora seemed to operate on his imagination in precisely the same manner that the distant prospect of Eton College, did on that of our poet Gray, and with equal potency to call up remote but kindred recollections. It may be thought that our recollections of odours, are not very vivid, yet, those of sight, seemed in his mind (as we were looking together at the Print) to recal these also, with all the concomitant feelings of early life. He appeared to feel “a momentary bliss,” to be exhilarated by ideal gales,—again to bound in imagination over the mountains of Helvetia, “and redolent of joy and youth, to breathe life's second spring.”

It is not uncommon among print-publishers—nor even amongst Engravers themselves, to hear the word COLOUR mistakenly employed to signify *shade*; so that if they think an engraving too dark, they say it has too much *colour*, too little colour if too

light—and so forth. The same ignorance which has hitherto reigned over the pursuits of this Art, has here imposed its authority, and with the same unfortunate success: I cannot however yield to it the same submission, since it is not only a palpable misuse of a word, but would lead to endless confusion, when I come to explain to you my ideas of the means the Art of Engraving possesses of rendering local colour in the abstract. Wherefore, whenever I may use the term *colour*, I mean it in no other than its ordinary acceptance.

By MIDDLE-TINT, I understand and mean, “the medium between strong light and strong shade.”—These are Mr. Gilpin’s words, and he adds, with a propriety that confers value on the definition—“the phrase is *not at all* expressive of *colour*.”

As we frequently hear the uninformed talk as if they conceived the highest effort of Painting, was merely to *copy* nature, as nature appears to them, so it is very common to hear unreflecting people speak of

Engraving, as if it were no other than an art of copying that of Painting: which though a great mistake, is yet a very pardonable mistake on the part of those who have been led into it, when we consider the state in which the Art of Engraving has hitherto existed, and the difficulties and the degradation under which in this country, it has hitherto laboured.

Now, Engraving is no more an art of *copying* Painting, than the English language is *an art of copying* Greek or Latin. Engraving is a distinct language of Art: and though it may bear such resemblance to Painting in the construction of its grammar, as grammars of languages bear to each other, yet its alphabet and idiom, or mode of expression, are totally different. *If* English be made the vehicle of the same thoughts which have previously been conveyed to us in Greek; or if Engraving be made the vehicle of the same thoughts which have previously been imparted to us by painting, it affords the means of affecting our minds in the same manner: this simi-

lar affection of the mind, has led to the mistake, and I have little doubt but that English would have been inconsiderately called an art of copying Greek, if we had never read any other English than *translations from the Greek*.

The pretensions of engraving, as of all the arts denominated Fine, are simple, chaste, unsophisticated. Art ever disdains artifice, attempts no imposition, but honestly claims attention as being what it is. A Statue is to be looked at as being a statue—not a real Figure; a Picture, not as a portion of actual Nature; a Print, not as a copy of Painting.

An Engraving therefore—that of the death of General Wolfe, for example, is no more a copy of Mr. West's picture, than the same composition, if sculptured or modelled in low relief, would be a copy. In both cases they would be, not copies, but *translations* from one language of Art, into another language of Art. How far Woollett's may be esteemed a correct trans-

lation, we shall inquire upon some future occasion—at present, let those to whom the distinction is not rendered sufficiently obvious, recollect, that neither in the case of the basso-relievo nor the engraving, is local colour employed, which forms so indispensable a part of a picture, and is consequently so essential to the production of the resemblance of a picture, that it would have been among the first considerations that would have engaged the attention of him who should conceive he was exercising an art of copying that of Painting.

But absurdity blossoms luxuriantly when grafted on an original stock of error; and this vulgar and erroneous notion, that an Engraving is a copy of a Painting, has been assiduously cultivated by the avarice or ignorance of the dealers in prints, who always follow and pamper the taste of the mob, be it ever so depraved, provided it be profitable. That grass was green, and that soldiers' coats were red, was known to the most ignorant of the gaping multitude, and gave wings to credulity, and currency to

empiricism. Whether ignorance, or the unprincipled love of gain, were the predominating cause, I do not presume to determine—neither is it of the smallest importance, since the effect has been equally fatal to the improvement of the public taste: It is error sufficient to call for animadversion here, if the printsellers, possessing or possessed by this mistaken notion, and with the view of making the copy, in their own vulgar estimation, approach nearer to its original, have caused colours to be literally and barbarously added to engraving: Now to colour a legitimate engraving,* (one of Sir Robert Strange's, or Woollett's for instance) is not less palpably absurd to an eye of tasteful discernment, than it would be to colour a Diamond, which, as is well known, would but obscure the native brilliancy and beauty of the stone.

* Since I had the honour of reading this Lecture, I have been told to look at the coloured engravings of Volpato, after Raphael's pictures in the Vatican. The inspection has served to confirm my principles: the colourist has employed opaque pigments, and consequently has obscured the Engraving, and used only the outlines, of Volpato.

Had the Statuary's Art been unfortunately placed under the same auspices with that of the Engraver, who can doubt that the monuments lately erected to the memory of our brave defenders, would have been mere gew-gaws for children—would have been ordered to stop in Fleet-street, on their way to St. Paul's, for the additions of colour and glass eyes—in short, for the fair author of Royal Wax-work—to finish?

If a good engraving must thus suffer by being coloured; so neither can bad ones, be thus converted to good pictures: at the utmost, nothing better than a sort of mule production can thus be generated—though with much more of the ass than of the horse in its constitution.

I may possibly be told here, that the mode of engraving, or endotting, which I have already described, held forth the means of obviating these objections, by its susceptibility of being *printed* in colours; (and hence one cause of the avidity with which the majority of print-dealers pur-

sued it.) But even were the printer an artist, and even were the colours employed, true to nature or the original picture from which any coloured plate has been engraved, the very nature of the process of printing in colours, would throw back these elements into chaotic confusion : the colours are unavoidably so blurred and confounded, in what, in the language of printing is called *filling in* the plate, and afterward wiping and clearing off the superfluous colour or ink, that such prints as they come from the press, have a very crude, confused, and discordant appearance.

To substitute order and harmony, to discord and confusion, seems to call for no common powers : Yet, who are the persons employed to execute this delicate and difficult task ? They are in general the most ignorant, of all the ignorant pretenders to Art : Those who can scarcely hold a pencil, are the cheap drudges appointed by the dealers, to perform a task which requires the practised hand, the cultivated eye, and the consummate judgment of a master.

The eye, the hand, and the judgment of a *Painter*, can alone confer value on a coloured work of art—call it picture, print, or whatever you please: nothing else can entitle it to the denomination of a *work of Art*. Unless therefore, the incidental smearings and errors of the printer in colours, be rectified by the author of the original picture from which any stippled plate has been engraven, or some person of equal, and of similar powers, and capable of entering into his views; such performances must ever remain unworthy the attention of those who possess the smallest pretensions to Taste.

From what has been said, I believe it will have appeared that the production of good coloured prints, would be incompatible with the views, or at least with the practical exertion of the talents, of a genuine Painter, who (even were he to be well paid for it) could never submit to stifle his inventive powers in the drudgery of copying his own works, while by multiplying them, he lessened the nominal value of each; and

would also be incompatible with the views of those who deal in these coloured commodities from motives of mere pecuniary profit,—disregarding the profit of the mind.

It may perhaps be necessary to return to points which have been so much misrepresented as those to which we have just been attending, at some future time. Of the phenomena both of Nature and Art, the most frequent, are sometimes the least understood; nor is it uncommon for what we daily and hourly see, to escape mental cognizance, or at least to elude critical attention.