

406 Cumberland's *Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni*.

dressings potatoes which renders that vegetable far more palatable than it is to be found in England.'

Pray, good Sir, what is that method? If you had bestowed a few words to teach our countrymen how to eat potatoes in greater perfection than they now do, *we*, who are fond of this excellent root, scruple not to add, that *such* an article of information would have added a positive merit to your volume.

Remarks of this nature may all, perhaps, be slighted by so spirited a writer: but we are no admirers of 'those hasty sketches which the reader will find so loosely thrown together;' and as the writer intimates an intention of hastening 'among the wider regions of continental domain, in search of materials for a more important superstructure,' we wish that, as he then means to throw aside his 'anonymous pen,' he really might 'assume a more respectable appearance:' for which, Nature does not seem to have denied him sufficient talents. Before he reveals his name, however, we advise him to make himself master of the small sword and pistol shooting.

N. We cannot conclude without remarking that, in our opinion, much of the blame which the author so liberally bestows on the inhabitants of Haverfordwest, respecting the strange story of Mr. G—th, may be retorted on himself for leaving in confinement an object so worthy of relief. A really benevolent man would not have quitted Haverford without obtaining Mr. G.'s liberation, if the means were in his power; and that the comparatively small sum necessary for this purpose might have been commanded by our author, we have every right to suppose from his amusing himself with so long and so expensive a ramble.

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ART. XII. *Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni, a Bolognese Artist, who followed the Styles of the best Schools in the Sixteenth Century. Accompanied by a Catalogue of the Engravings, with their Measures, of the works of that tasteful Composer; and Remarks on the general Character of his rare and exquisite Performances. To which is prefixed, a Plan for the Improvement of the Arts in England. By George Cumberland*. Crown 8vo. pp. 100. 3s. Boards. Robinsons. 1793.*

IN the 'Plan for improving the Arts in England,' prefixed to this work, Mr. Cumberland, like a good patriot, endeavours to advance the interests of his country, by exciting a greater attention to the *antique*; and we do not think that his scheme is a bad one, though we strongly doubt its adoption. We will give the general outline of the proposal in the author's own words:

* Not the author of *The Observer, West Indian, &c.* whose Christian name is Richard.

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‘ That a subscription be commenced (and if the Dilettante Society would begin it out of their funds, it would be consistent with their own generous efforts to improve the arts) in order to raise the sum of —, which when completed, application should be made to Parliament for further assistance; the total of which sums, under their sanction, should be consolidated into a perpetual fund, to which proper trustees may be nominated, for the declared purposes, out of the annual interest, of commencing *two galleries*, and filling them, as fast as the interest accrues, with *plaster casts* from antique statues, bas-reliefs, fragments of architecture, fine bronzes, &c. collected not only from Italy, but from all parts of Europe.

‘ That these galleries should be placed, so as to enjoy a north light, being parallel to each other, and consist of strong but simple forms; void at first of all ornament, and solely calculated for the purpose of containing, in a good point of view, and well lighted, the several specimens of art. A convenient space for visitors to pass in view of them below and between the objects and the artists, who should be possessed of a raised stage, under a continued window, contrived so as to illuminate at once their drawing desk, and the images on the opposite wall.

‘ These galleries, one for statues and architectural models, and one for bas-reliefs, should be each commenced, at the same time, in parallel directions, and each annually extended and furnished with casts, in the proportion that the funds would admit. They should be indiscriminately opened to all students in the arts, and the public, under proper regulations, during the greatest part of the day throughout the year.

‘ All fine bas-reliefs, &c. should, if possible, be sent to England in molds, with a cast in them, by which means they not only come the safest from injury, but it would enable the managers to place in the gallery two or three casts of such as best deserved imitation; and then the molds might be sold to our molders in plaster of paris, by which means other cities would be enriched with many fine objects at a reasonable expence, to the great advantage of architects, schools, and the public in general.

‘ There are not wanting people, who think, that such objects, by being cheaply multiplied, would injure the progress of our artists: but experience teaches otherwise; for those nations which most abound in such things, most abound in artists; and the more any thing is multiplied by casts or impressions, the more is the original esteemed; for while the narrow-minded amateur hides his fine Cameo, lest a sulphur should be obtained from it, both he and his ring are forgot; when, on the other hand, the liberal collector, whose chief pleasure it is to gratify all lovers with a copy of the fine originals he possesses, finds, to his surprize, the fame of his antique, and the credit of its owner, increased in the same proportion; and hence we may rest assured, that the multiplication of works of art always ends in a multiplied demand for the labours of artists.

‘ The cheapness of paste has by no means decreased the esteem of diamonds; and man, happily for the multitude, has always considered richness and rareness of materials as no final addition to the merit of workmanship;

workmanship; even pictures have been painted, by good artists, on silver, to enhance their value. And here I cannot avoid observing the utility it would be of to sculpture, if our artists would, as was done by the ablest of both Greece and Rome, make models for architects in terra-cotta, at reasonable prices; for there are many who cannot afford marble, that would gladly encourage them in this effort in monuments, friezes, &c. The frequency of which in churches would probably increase the ambition of the wealthy to be represented in more expensive materials; and thence afford the artists more numerous opportunities of displaying their talents.

‘ To return from this digression; as each bas-relief, &c. must of necessity be placed at some distance from the ground, the space below I should propose to fill with the concise history of the *cast*, such as what have been the conjectures of antiquarians as to its history, author, &c. to which should be added, the time and place, when and where it was found, and the name of the country and situation the original at present ornaments.

‘ The pedestal of each statue might contain the like inscriptions, in painted letters, the more easily to correct them on any new information.

‘ How useful such inscriptions would be to travellers, antiquarians, and artists, I need not point out; neither need I add the utility that would arise from marking with a line on each object the division of the restored parts; which lines might be made, by whatever artist was employed to send home the molds, on the spot: for the baneful effects of partial ignorance, which, like a weed, springs up among the best crops of human learning, are seldom more manifest than among those whose labours are directed to the elucidation of fine art in antique monuments.

‘ Such galleries, when finished, would possess advantages that are wanting in numerous museums; where often, to gratify the love of ornament in the architect, fine bas-reliefs are placed so high, as to be of little use to students, and as traps only to the antiquarian; of which, having with younger limbs, and younger eyes, often followed the enthusiastic *Winkelman*, I could give many instances.

‘ Here, however, all would be brought to a level, and to light; all the restorations carefully distinguished; and such men of learning, as, without great detriment to their affairs, can never see Italy, would hence find daily opportunities of benefiting and crediting the nation, as well as themselves, by their erudite remarks on monuments that relate entirely to classic ground.

‘ In a word, well prepared, both by the knowledge and study of these casts, our artists would be less confused on their arrival in Italy among the originals; and a much shorter stay would then suffice: lastly, on their return, these galleries would help to perpetuate in their memories the result of their studies; a fund of employment would be afforded to young artists in copying these antiques for foreigners, as well as natives; and our engravers would here always find objects from whence great works might be executed, equally interesting to all Europe, and much more correct, as well as less expensive, than any that have hitherto appeared in elucidation of antiquities.’

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All this seems rational, and of easy accomplishment: but where is MUNIFICENCE to execute the idea? Mr. Cumberland's wish that the Cartons of the immortal Raphael were more open to public inspection, will not, we fear, be productive of much effect.—The difficulty of viewing the *cabinet d'œuvres* of that astonishing painter has been long a subject of complaint: but the time may possibly arrive, when the Royal Academy may be the depository of those inestimable treasures; and, by removing every difficulty of access, *improve* as well as *delight* a nation so strenuous in its progress to refinement, and already so respectable for its works of taste, elegance, and grandeur.

We cannot avoid reprobating an unfairness (not to use a more severe yet justifiable expression,) in Mr. C.'s mention of two or three artists only, as worthy of the public attention, at a time when he might have brought forward men of superior abilities. This gentleman [to us unknown, and new, as a writer,] should take care that, while he wishes to impress the world with an idea of his liberality in elevating two or three *favourite* characters, he does not create a contrary sentiment by a partial neglect of *others*.

There is also a vein of splenetic asperity in the following note, which we think ill founded, and consequently reprehensible:

'There are men in London, who, speculating in the labours of artists, have acquired great fortunes, not without speculating on the credulity of the public as largely. These people, encouraged by the respect that wealth insures in a commercial country, and, perhaps, self-persuaded by the vanity that attends success, are now taking upon themselves the importance of patriots among fellow-citizens, and (which cannot smilingly be passed over, because prejudicial to the art they profess to serve) patronizers of art itself. But if the public are to estimate the progress of fine art, by the abortion their struggles for profit produce, we shall soon arrive at a period, when the errors their barbarous impatience and rapacity have introduced, will, by excess, cure themselves; and then the few, who have patiently pursued the direct path, will rise, and find their reward in the employment and approbation of the disabused public.'

Although no names are mentioned, it is impossible to mistake the illiberal allusion.—The objects of his attack have extended a patronage beyond the reach of Kings.

The anecdotes of the celebrated Italian engraver, Julio Bonafoni, are dry and uninteresting. He was an artist of note in his day *, almost unknown in the present: but he has

* He is supposed to have flourished during the greatest part of the sixteenth century.

met with a champion in Mr. C. to rescue him from that oblivion into which he was rapidly descending.

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ART. XIII. *False Colours*, a Comedy in five Acts. As performed at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, by his Majesty's Company from the Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane. By Edward Morris, Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge. 8vo. 1s. 6d. Cadell. 1793.

OF the difficulty of writing comedy with success, few authors, who have not made the attempt, are aware. Knowledge so minute and varied, judgment so strong and self-denying, imagination so ardent, and humour, wit, and passion, so incessant, are required, that few indeed are found equal to the task. To succeed even indifferently is a proof of talents which cannot be called common. In this predicament we rank the author of the play under consideration. He has seen much, has made many observations on men and manners, and often has arranged his materials with effect: but, on the whole, not with effect enough. Character should be displayed, and the recesses of the heart developed: but, in order that emotion may be created, we must have it directed toward some certain point. When an author places any dependence on his story, that story must be progressive; and not scene after scene be left in total neglect till it is forgotten. Wit and humour generally become impertinent when they do not answer this purpose: character itself must contribute; or, from a beauty of the first order, it will become an excrescence. We have but little anxiety for the hero and heroine [Sir Harry Cecil and Constance] of this play; and the little that is excited is soon suffered to slumber, and, like a man ashamed of sleeping in company, often endeavours to awake, but cannot. Various efforts are also made to pourtray character, and certainly we meet with many touches of true painting: but the failures and mistakes are much more numerous. Lord Visage we think particularly objectionable. He is a physiognomist, and in his character Lavater is satirized, or, to speak more accurately, burlesqued. A poet, who does not deeply consider the moral effects of his satire, is, in our opinion, highly culpable. Any attempt to make men believe that the countenance of man does not bear visible signs of individual propensities, and of vicious or of virtuous habits, is immoral, because it is false; and though there may be persons who pretend to more physiognomical science than they have acquired, and who therefore individually may deserve ridicule, yet, to ridicule the science itself without this discrimination, or without making the audience understand that the satire is levelled at such mistaken individuals but not at

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ley. What follows, however, will serve to shew that the incendiaries of Birmingham have supplied his worship with a much stronger argument against his opponent, than any that himself hath been able to produce. Though of Dr. Priestley's peculiar opinions, both in politics and religion, we are by no means admirers; yet we think him, notwithstanding, entitled to justice; and, under this impression, we have no scruple to add, from Dr. Cooper's having gone out of the way to attack both him and others with the most unqualified censures, that he has shewn himself worthy of a seat upon the same bench with those meritorious justices Carles and Spencer.

Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni, a Bolognese Artist, who followed the Styles of the best Schools in the Sixteenth Century. Accompanied by a Catalogue of the Engravings, with their Measures, of the Works of that tasteful Composer. And Remarks on the general Character of his rare and exquisite Performances. To which is prefixed, a Plan for the Improvement of the Arts in England. By George Cumberland. 8vo. 2s. 6d. Boards. Robinsons. 1793.

In the scheme for improving the arts in this country, which forms the prefatory part of Mr. Cumberland's biographical undertaking, we are shewn the importance of not only maintaining that pre-eminence to which the English arts have attained, but also the necessity of a steady perseverance in our endeavours to imitate, more closely, the exquisite models of the ancients. The subject is considered as it affects our commerce and manufacturers; and the author alleges, that,

‘Whatever people content themselves with a lower ambition than to equal the Greeks at the highest period of art, will be found to be wandering from perfection, instead of approaching towards it.’

The plan suggested for the ‘general improvement of taste, consists in the establishing of two public galleries, in which should be deposited *plaster casts* of all the valuable antique statues, bas-reliefs, &c. in different parts of Europe. To these galleries the author proposes the indiscriminate admission of all students in the arts, and that the expence be defrayed out of a fund raised for that purpose by voluntary subscriptions, and to which the author himself very liberally offers to contribute.

In the anecdotes of the life of Bonasoni, we do not trace any thing that would prove interesting to the generality of readers, for which reason we forbear to enter into them. Yet the particulars related of that artist are a sufficient proof, that justice has not heretofore been done to him by those biographers who have noticed his contemporaries. The catalogue of Bonasoni's works will have its value with those for whose inspection it is more immediately calculated, and we think the whole of the publication possessed of merit.

