

CHAPTER XX.

State of Art in the reign of George II.—Inferiority of native artists.—Formation of an English School of Painting.—Academies.—First Exhibition of Works of English Artists.—Exhibition of Sign-paintings.—Foundation of the Royal Academy.—Early Exhibitions.—Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wilson, and West.—Engraving.—Strange and Woollett.—Mezzotint.—MacArdell, &c.—Boydell and commerce in English engravings.—Sculpture.—Banks, Bacon, and Flaxman.—Architecture.—Sir William Chambers.—Bridge-building.

A TRANSITION to the Fine Arts from Agriculture and Manufactures, from Spinning Machines and Cotton Mills, from Iron-works and Potteries, from Canals and Steam Engines, is not so abrupt as it may at first appear. In our immediate times, the intimate connexion between the Arts of Design and those exercises of industry which have too exclusively been designated as the Useful Arts, has been distinctly recognised. It has been found after a long experience, that Taste is an essential element in the excellence of manufactures, and of their consequent commercial value. But this connexion was perceived a century ago, when a society, now more flourishing than ever, founded by a drawing-master, proposed "to promote the arts, manufactures, and commerce of this kingdom, by giving honorary or pecuniary rewards as may be best adapted to the case, for the communication to the Society, and through the Society to the public, of all such useful inventions, discoveries and improvements, as tend to that purpose." The Society of Arts gave medals to Mr. Curwen for agricultural improvements, and he stated that but for this stimulus he should never have been a farmer. The Society of Arts awarded premiums for improvements in dyeing and tanning, in spinning and weaving, in paper-making and lace-making, and may thus have somewhat excited the inventive powers which superseded many of the old modes of hand-labour. The Society of Arts gave its modest grants of ten guineas to Banks and Flaxman, for their earliest efforts in sculpture; and probably without this encouragement these eminent artists might never have been sculptors. The mutual dependence existing between the Polite Arts, as the Arts of Painting and Sculpture were then termed, and the humbler industrial arts which form the foundations of the industrial fabric, was never more distinctly asserted than in

the proceedings of this comprehensive Association, for the encouragement of seemingly diverging pursuits, but all of which tended to the same development of public prosperity.

In a former chapter we traced the history of Art in England from the Restoration to the reign of George II. At that time English Art was in a very low state. Architecture had greatly declined from the position to which Wren had raised it. Painters and sculptors were numerous and well paid, but the high places of the professions were chiefly filled by Italians, Germans, Flemings and Frenchmen. Even in portrait painting, the branch in which employment was most abundant, the English practitioners were content if they could produce a satisfactory likeness; whilst for everything but the head they trusted to the skill of "drapery painters," whose highest ambition it was so to complete the work, that it might be recognised as in the style of Sir Godfrey Kneller. As a lively French writer said, "Englishmen make their portraits as they make their pins, each passes through several hands, one shapes the head, another the point; it takes as many painters to finish a full-length portrait as it does tradesmen to equip *a petit maître*." Whenever foreigners referred to the state of art in England it was with a sort of contemptuous pity. There is ample reward, it was said, for the foreign artist who shows even moderate skill, but nothing seems to evoke native talent; surely there must be something in the soil and climate inimical to artistic genius.* Even Englishmen shared the prejudice, or were too diffident of their own judgment to oppose in a matter of taste the acknowledged leaders of European opinion. Yet if there were no living English sculptor or historical painter of unquestioned eminence, the name of Hogarth might seem sufficient to have turned the edge of so dull a sarcasm. But Hogarth, however great he was admitted to be as a humourist, was scarcely recognised even by his countrymen as a painter. His

* Abbé du Bos.—"Reflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture," Par. 1755, vol. ii. 145-7. Le Blanc.—"Letters d'un Français," Par. 1745; and see the "Discours Preliminaire" to a 5th ed. of these Letters. Lyon, 1753; Roquet.—"L'Etat des Arts en Angleterre," Par. 1755. To the same effect were some remarks of Montesquieu, in his "Esprit des Loix," and of the Abbé Winckelmann. From the frequent references made to them by English writers on art for more than half a century, it is clear that these sarcasms were keenly felt by artists, and not without influence on patrons. Barry thought it necessary to write a formal answer to them in his "Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England," 8vo. 1775; and it was in order to refute them practically that he painted his series of pictures in the Great Room of the Society of Arts. (See the Introduction to his "Account of a Series of Pictures," &c.) As late as 1791, the intelligent German, Wendeborn, notes that "it is rather singular that most of those who have excelled in the polite arts in England have been foreigners," and he adds, that though it is no longer exclusively so, among the artists are still many foreigners. Wendeborn.—"View of England towards the close of the 18th century," vol. ii. p. 185.

fellow-painters regarded him as an interloper, and the fashionable critic pronounced him "rather a writer of comedy with the pencil than a painter," says Walpole complacently, "he has but slender merit." * Indeed, though Hogarth was the true founder of the English school of painting, his example had but little apparent influence upon his contemporaries or immediate successors, and it was no doubt in perfect good faith that Burke, in his eloquent eulogy on Reynolds—written seven-and-twenty years after Hogarth's death—affirmed, and affirmed without contradiction, that "Sir Joshua Reynolds was the first Englishman who added the praise of the elegant arts to the other glories of his country."

But, however it might be in the days of George II., when his successor ascended the throne it must have been evident to all but the most prejudiced, that an English school of painting was in process of formation. Reynolds was already the acknowledged leader in portraiture, and Reynolds was an Englishman, and in no sense a disciple of Kneller; Wilson was strenuously asserting English superiority in landscape painting; and Gainsborough, though practising in a provincial town, was becoming known in the metropolis as a painter both of landscape and portrait, in a style at once thoroughly English and thoroughly original.

But what served most to give consistency to the labours of the artists, and to stimulate their efforts by bringing them distinctly before the public eye, was the foundation of the Royal Academy, with its great annual exhibition of works of art. The establishment of an academy of art had long been a cherished purpose with English artists. As early as 1711 a private academy for the study of art was instituted, with Sir Godfrey Kneller for its president; but after a time, differences arose, and the members separated into two or three adverse parties. At the head of one of these (the English section) was Sir James Thornhill, who, in 1724, opened a new academy at his own house in the Piazza, Covent Garden, which continued till his death in 1734. Hogarth, his son-in-law, having inherited "the apparatus of the academy," proposed to the other society, which held its meetings in Greyhound Court, by the Strand, and was presided over by Moser, the enamel painter, to unite into a single body, and to take a suitable room where thirty or forty persons might draw from the living model. "Attributing the failures of the previous academies," writes Hogarth, "to the leading members having assumed a superiority which their fellow-students could not brook, I proposed that every member should contribute an equal sum towards the support of the establishment,

* "Anecdotes of Painting," iv. 146, 160, ed. 1786.

and have an equal right to vote on every question relative to its affairs. By these regulations the Academy has now existed nearly thirty years, and is, for every useful purpose, equal to that in France, or any other." * This was the famous "Academy in St. Martin's Lane," so often referred to in the lives of English painters, and to which many of the best artists of this period were indebted for no small portion of their skill in drawing. But these academies, as well as others, like Shipley's, and the Duke of Richmond's, were rather schools for drawing from the living model, or casts from the antique, than institutions such as we are accustomed to associate with the title of academies of art. Several efforts had been made, however, to establish societies of this more ambitious order. Before starting his own private school, Sir James Thornhill had submitted to lord Halifax for the royal consideration, the scheme of a Royal Academy, with apartments for professors, which he proposed to erect "at the upper end of the Mews"—and pretty nearly therefore on the site of the present Royal Academy—and which he estimated would only cost 3139/4†

A quarter of a century later the project was formally renewed "with the consent, and indeed at the desire, both of artists and lovers of art," by Mr. Gwyn, an architect of reputation, and one of the original members of the Royal Academy. The French Academy was pointed out as the model, though it was added, if an "English Academy of painting, sculpture, and architecture" were to be erected, it would be desirable to consult the laws of all similar institutions in Europe.‡ In 1753 the members of the St. Martin's Lane Academy made an effort to raise their institution to the rank of a "Public Academy for the Improvement of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture." It was in opposition to this proposition that Hogarth addressed to lord Bute the paper already quoted. Whether from internal opposition, or the apathy of the artists generally, the scheme fell to the ground; as did also a still more pretentious one for an Academy to be incorporated by royal charter, put forth a couple of years later.§ Meantime the public interest in art was steadily gaining strength. The foundation, in 1734, of the Dilettanti Society, though its attention was directed chiefly to the arts of ancient Greece, had done something to foster

* Paper by Hogarth in Nicholls's Hogarth, i. 293, and in supplement to Ireland's Hogarth; Walpole—"Anecdotes of Painting," v. 253; Edwards—"Anecdotes of Painting," Introduction, &c.

† Walpole, iv. 46.

‡ "An Essay on Design: including Proposals for erecting a Public Academy," 8vo. 1749.

§ Edwards; Nicholls; Sir Robert Strange—"On the Rise of the Royal Academy," 8vo. 1775; Plan of an Academy," &c., 4to. 1

the spirit of inquiry among the upper circles of society; and the Society of Arts had done still more to diffuse an interest in art among the middle classes. Failing in establishing an academy, it seems to have occurred to the artists that they might at least copy so much of the French plan as to set up a public exhibition of their works. Accordingly a committee was formed; the great body of artists were appealed to; the Society of Arts proffered the use of their room, and there on the 21st of April, 1760, exactly a hundred years ago, was opened the first public exhibition in London of the works of living artists. The works exhibited were few in number, and the greater part of little worth; but the names of Reynolds and Wilson were among the painters; Roubiliac and Wilton among the sculptors; Woollett and Strange among the engravers, who contributed examples of their skill; and the public crowded in such numbers to the novel spectacle that it was resolved to repeat the experiment next year on a larger scale. The "great room," Spring Gardens, was accordingly hired, and there, in May, 1761, was held the exhibition which was really the progenitor of that which still, every returning May, attracts to itself alike the rank, the beauty, and the intelligence of the land. The admission was by catalogues, which, besides serving as guides to the exhibition, were adorned with a vignette by *Wale*, and a frontispiece and a tailpiece designed by *Hogarth* and engraved by *Grignon*—the one symbolising the growth of the arts under the fostering care of *Britannia* and the benignant influence of the sovereign; the other ridiculing the miserable fate of the decayed "exoticks" which a connoisseur (typified by a monkey in court-suit and ruffles) magnifying glass in hand, is vainly watering. Thirteen thousand of these catalogues were sold at a shilling each,—what would one be worth now?

"This exhibition," wrote *Johnson* to his friend, *Baretti*,* "has filled the heads of the artists and the lovers of art. Surely life, if it be not long, is tedious, since we are forced to call in so many trifles to rid us of our time—that time which can never return." Next year, however, the sage we may presume took a less austere view of the matter, for the preface to the catalogue was clothed in his sonorous sentences.

But the great moralist was not alone in thinking that the artists were over exuberant in their enthusiasm. Where the philosopher sighed, however, the wits laughed outright. London was startled by the announcement of a rival exhibition to be held "at the large room, at the upper end of Bow Street, Covent-garden," and which

* *Boswell*, under June, 1761.

was to consist of "Original Paintings, Busts, Carved Figures, &c., by the Sign-Painters," together with "such original designs as might be transmitted to them," the whole being "specimens of the native genius of the nation." The Society was, of course, a myth. The burlesque originated with the famous Nonsense Club, its prime contriver being *Bonnell Thornton*, under whose superintendence it was really carried out in all its parts. The whim took. It was seen to be a harmless jest, and *Hogarth* himself, who had contributed some works to the Spring Gardens exhibition, readily lent assistance to the Bow Street parody, by giving a touch with his pencil where effect could be added by it: thus in the companion portraits of the empress *Maria Theresa*, and the king of *Prussia*, we are told that he changed the cast of their eyes so as to make them leer significantly at each other. Indeed the fun was altogether of this order. The apothecaries' sign of "The Three Gallipots" had for its companion "The Three Coffins." No. 16 in the catalogue was entitled "A Man:" while the picture was nine tailors at work. In No. 37, "A Man loaded with Mischief," a fellow was painted carrying on his shoulders a woman, a magpie, and a monkey: a sign still occasionally to be seen on some of the low public-houses around London, and on one in Oxford Street. Some of the jokes were rather broader than would be tolerated now, and some of the laughers carried the day: the jest was enjoyed, and it was not spoiled by repetition.*

Only in London, and at such a time, could an exhibition of this kind have been possible. Although an act had been passed for the removal of such sign-boards as obstructed the public ways, almost every shop still had its sign, and every tradesman strove to render his board more attractive than his neighbour's, if not by beauty of design, by oddity of conception, or some sort of extravagance. A market for ready-made signs was kept in *Harp Alley*, *Shoe Lane*. But sometimes commissions for signs were given to painters of established reputation. *Wale*, for example, who was selected by his brother artists to draw the frontispiece for their exhibition catalogue, who was one of the first members, and subsequently professor of perspective and librarian of the Royal Academy, was not above painting signs; *Penny* and *Catton*, both among the first academicians, and the former the first professor of painting, with others of equal standing, at least occasionally employed their pencils in a similar manner. One of *Wale's* most famous signs was a portrait of *Shakspeare*, which hung across the road at

* *Chalmers's* "Preface to the Connoisseur."

the north-east corner of Little Russell Street, Drury Lane, and which, with its elaborate frame, is said to have cost five hundred pounds. This branch of Art, however, outlived the exhibition but a very few years. A more stringent act was passed for their removal (11th Geo. III.), and sign-boards ceased to swing except over taverns.*

The members of the Spring Gardens society obtained a charter of incorporation and the exhibitions went on with increasing success. But the directors began to assume more authority than the other members were ready to allow. Differences ensued. The directors claimed the right of filling up all vacancies in their number. This the members refused to admit, and at a special meeting sixteen of the directors were ejected. The other eight shortly after resigned. They were all men of position and influence. West, one of their number, was the especial favourite of the king; Chambers was the royal architect; and they felt that if they could obtain the royal patronage they were strong enough to establish a new academy more comprehensive in purpose, but more exclusive in membership than that they had just left. A draft of a constitution and laws was drawn up by Mr. (afterwards sir William) Chambers, with the assistance of West, Moser, and Cotes, and submitted to the king, who, entering with great zeal into the project, directed that the new institution should be called the Royal Academy, and placed under his immediate protection and patronage. By the "Instrument of Institution" the society was to consist of "40 academicians chosen from among the most able and respectable artists resident in Great Britain;" 20 associates from whom future academicians were to be selected; and six associate engravers. There is to be an annual exhibition of works of art, which is to be open to all artists to contribute works, subject to the approval of a committee of selection. Schools of painting and of drawing from the life and from casts are provided, which are to be open without charge to all students who have acquired proper rudimentary instruction, and who conform to the rules of the institution: and professors are annually to read courses of lectures on the principles of the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, and also on anatomy and perspective. Hogarth was dead; but had he been living he would not have joined the infant academy, "considering," as he wrote to lord Bute, "the electing presidents, professors, &c., as a ridiculous imitation of the foolish parade of the French Academy." Reynolds held aloof from all the preliminary proceedings, and it was not until he was apprised

* Edwards—Introduction, and notice of Wale; Smith's "Anecdotes of Nollekens," &c.

that it was the wish of the king that he should be its first president, and that it was his majesty's intention on his installation into that office to confer upon him the honour of knighthood, that he consented to join the new society. The foundation of the Royal Academy dates from the 10th of December, 1768; its first exhibition was held at the auction room in Pall Mall, in 1769. The list of the original members is a curious index to the state of art in England at that time. Of the thirty-three whose names are inserted in the first catalogue, eight or nine are foreigners; two are ladies; some are only known as designers and engravers; some were coach and sign-painters—most are mere names: probably not more than half-a-dozen would be recognised except by the student of the literature of art.

Equally curious is it to compare the first thin, loosely printed catalogue of 16 pages with one of the present day. Besides the thirty-three Academicians, only seventeen non-members contribute. There are in all but 136 entries, and among these some are of engravings, and others of drawings in crayons and "stained drawings." No quotations enliven the dreary lists of 'portraits,' 'flower-pieces,' and 'landskips'; but occasionally the descriptions are as curiously precise as though the painter supposed his picture would be carried for comparison to the very spot it was intended to represent. The fashionable landscape-painter George Barret,—one who was rich whilst Wilson starved—described his performances with the precision of a topographer. On the other hand Wilson has nothing appended to either of his three pictures but the single word a "Landskip." Reynolds sent four pictures, all portraits, and all in classic guise, and Gainsborough had also four pictures. West contributed two compositions. Angelica Kauffman, R.A., had four classical subjects, and Mary Moser, R.A., two "flower pieces."

As soon as Somerset House, erected on the site of one of the royal palaces, was completed, the Royal Academy removed to a suite of rooms which the king had caused to be constructed in the new building expressly for their use, and there the annual exhibitions continued to be held till the Academy was removed to the National Gallery. The first exhibition in Somerset House was held in 1780, and the progress from the opening exhibition eleven years earlier is very marked. While the Academicians who exhibit remain in number the same, the non-academicians have increased to 183; the number of entries in the catalogue is 489, and the character of the works exhibited is evidently higher. Besides the names enumerated above, we now meet with some who are destined to sustain the reputation of the school in the succeeding generation; J. S. Copley,

R. A. elect (the father of lord Lyndhurst); Fuseli; de Louthembourg; Zoffany; Stothard; Wyatt the architect; and the sculptors Banks, Bacon and Flaxman. At this time there was no limit to the number of works sent in, and we find Gainsborough on this occasion contributing six large landscapes and ten portraits, whilst in the next year Reynolds sent no fewer than one-and-twenty pictures, including his Dido, and the famous portraits of the ladies Waldegrave for which Walpole (though not without grumbling) paid the artist a thousand guineas—being the largest sum up to that time ever paid to an English portrait painter.

When the Royal Academy took possession of its apartments in Somerset House it stood alone as the visible exponent of British art. The Incorporated Society had persisted for some years in a vain struggle, but from the opening of the Royal Academy no new member joined its ranks; its exhibitions dwindled rapidly into insignificance; and it eventually succumbed before its too powerful rival. The humble Free Society which had clung like a parasite to the Society of Arts had also perished of inanition. The Academy, though often assailed from without, and not always at peace within, has continued in an unbroken career of prosperity down to the present hour—unchanged in its constitution, and without increase in its members, though everything around it has changed, and the number of professional artists has increased fifty-fold since its foundation.*

Among the founders of the Royal Academy were indeed men of no common order; and the glory which they shed around it must have done much to ensure its firm establishment. Reynolds, with whom the early years of the Academy are most intimately associated, was a painter who at once raised English portraiture from sheer mindless mimicry to a level with that of the noblest days of art. Without attempting to rival the great masters in the higher walks of painting, he strove to compete with the worthiest in his own peculiar line. He has been condemned for not attempting loftier themes,

* The Academy has had no historian; its origin and progress must be traced too often by the light of unfriendly pilots, amid all sorts of muddy banks and quicksands. The following are a few of the sources from which we have derived assistance: "Abstract of the Instrument of the Institution and Laws of the Royal Academy of Arts," 8vo. Lond. 1797; "Catalogues of the Royal Academy;" "The conduct of the Royal Academicians while members of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, viz., from 1760 to their expulsion in 1769. With some part of their transactions since," 8vo. 1771, and Abstracts of Papers of Incorporated Society published in the "Literary Panorama," 1808; Galt's "Life of Benjamin West," vol. ii. chap. iv., where full particulars respecting the foundation of the Academy are given on the authority of West himself, who conducted the negotiations with the king; the Lives of Sir Joshua Reynolds, by Malone, Northcote, and Cotton; Barry's Works; Pye on "Patronage of British Art;" "Reports (with evidence) of Committees of House of Commons," 1834 and 1836; Hogarth, Sir Robert Strange, Nicholls, Edwards, Cunningham, &c.

but we may in these days be well content that he employed his pencil in handing down the portraits of the statesmen, soldiers, and writers, and of the matrons, maids, and children among whom he lived and moved, rather than in fabricating from the recipes and models of the painting-room eighteenth-century Phrynes, Venuses, and Epaminondases, or even Apostles and Madonnas. For not only was Reynolds the greatest colourist that England had ever seen, but her most intellectual portrait-painter, and she had men, women, and children well worthy the best pencil that could be found to hand down their features to posterity. But whilst Reynolds could do this, he wanted, for what are called the higher branches of art, alike sufficient technical training, power of studious application, historical insight, and poetic imagination. All that he aimed to do he did perfectly. His mastery over his materials is the more surprising the more his works are studied. His touch is always sure and firm, yet light as a zephyr. His clearness of perception is almost perfect. To every part is given just the tone and touch and surface which most befits it. Where his colours have not lost their original hue, they glow with a sombre splendour, which, though borrowed neither from Flanders nor Venice, reminds the spectator of the greatest masters of both those countries. Then what fascination in his female forms and features, how charming his children, how manly his men! Reynolds lived always in easy intercourse with the most distinguished of his time, and something of the genial grace of such companionship is visible in his works. He did not copy a face with camera-like particularity, but he always gave what was most essential: his likenesses are not perhaps always the most faithful rendering of the man in his ordinary daily life, but they bring out his most intellectual and characteristic aspect. Burke was mistaken when he said that Reynolds was the first Englishman who added the praise of the elegant arts to the other glories of his country. But if he was not that, we cannot but regard him, when we reflect on the influence which he exerted alike by his pencil, his writings, and his character, as the true founder of the English school of painting.

Gainsborough had far less technical power than Reynolds, and in portraiture far less variety. But if he could not attain the elevation of Reynolds's Mrs. Siddons, or Cornelia, he could more than equal Reynolds in depicting the lighter phases of female beauty. Those who saw Gainsborough's portraits in the wonderful collection brought together last year in the British Institution, or the exquisite specimens of his pencil in the great Manchester Exhibition, will be little likely to gainsay his powers as a painter of female portraits. But it is after all as a landscape painter, and the painter

of those delightful "Cottage Doors," and similar homely rustic subjects which he painted with such unrivalled skill, that he ranks supreme. He was the first painter of the poetry of homely English scenery—the first who showed how the shallow ford, the village green, the leafy woodside, or shady river's bank might on canvas delight the eye and stir the memory and stimulate the fancy—and in his own way he has found no compeer and no successor.

By those whose tastes lead them to prefer what is called classic landscape, Wilson has always been placed above Gainsborough as a painter. But Wilson was less original and less native in style. Italian scene with Phaëtons or Apollos in the clouds, and Niobes on the earth, will never come home to the common understanding. Wilson was neglected whilst alive; he has been perhaps over-praised since his death. Like Gainsborough, he was altogether a painter. But there was less spontaneity in his constitution. Even his English scenes are painted on an Italian model. If he looked abroad on nature it was to consider how the scenery would "compose" into a picture. The men and women who walked about were to him but "figures." He was a great painter, but his greatness was conventional. Yet few landscape-painters of any country have had a finer eye for grandeur of form and largeness of effect, and if it be to Gainsborough that we can trace the love of simple unsophisticated English scenery, truth and freshness of colour, and directness of imitation, which have ever since characterised English landscape-painting—the truest and noblest school of landscape that has yet been seen—it is to Wilson that we are indebted for its preservation in its early stages from vulgarity and commonplace.

Reynolds, Wilson, and Gainsborough were born within a few years of each other. The other painter, whose name is most closely associated with them in these early days of English art, who succeeded Reynolds as president of the Royal Academy, and who must, we fear, be regarded as the founder of English historical painting, Benjamin West, was some years their junior. A native of Pennsylvania, then an English colony, he came to London at the age of five-and-twenty, and was introduced by Drummond, archbishop of York, to George III., who, pleased with the simplicity of his quaker manners, and the grave religious character of his pictures and sketches, at once took the young American into his favour. West had spent three years in Italy in the study of the old masters, and he had acquired a fatal facility of composition and execution. His pictures, when scriptural, were always illustrative of passages which stirred the sympathies of every person of religious feelings,

and they were so painted that all could at once understand them; and his historical and classical subjects were hardly more recondite and were equally clear. The king saw in them pictures he could feel and comprehend. West received an unlimited commission, and as long as the king retained his faculties, West was duly paid his salary of 1000*l.* a year. The royal patronage would alone have insured the painter success, but the same qualities which delighted the king delighted a large section of his subjects also; and it was the popular belief that England possessed in West another Raffaele. That belief has long passed away, and the reaction has been severe. West never rose above mediocrity, and mediocrity is as fatal to the painter as the poet. But worse painters have had a more enduring celebrity, and some pictures of West's ought to save him from oblivion. One of these is his celebrated "Death of General Wolfe," in which, in spite of the warnings of his friends, and it is said the united and semi-official protest of the president of the Royal Academy and the archbishop of York,* West, instead of clothing the hero and his associates in the costumes of Greece or Rome, or that conventional "drapery" which painters were accustomed to substitute for the dress of any particular age or country, ventured on the daring innovation of making the actors wear the actual coats and cocked hats in which they fought. The picture was painted with unusual care, referred to an event which stirred every heart, and was treated in a manner which men of all conditions could appreciate. It had an immense success. The king was delighted; Reynolds was converted; but the painter's brother artists—hardest of all to satisfy—were not convinced. Barry undertook to show how the event should have been treated in the classic style. He painted the scene, and people were amazed at beholding Wolfe and his grenadiers braving the climate of Canada as well as the bayonets of Montcalm in a state of nudity. But if Barry outraged all "the proprieties," West, some thought, had not wholly resisted temptation. He had painted the dying general in the midst of his officers, who were grouped about him, not as they must have been under such circumstances, but plainly with a view to scenic effect, and he had brought into the foreground a naked Indian, though no such person was actually there. Penny, then professor of painting at the academy, undertook to depict the hero's death as it really occurred—almost alone and in the rear of the fight. But he too got entangled in conventionalisms, and was, moreover, incompetent to grapple with the theme, and West's triumph was complete, "The Death of Wolfe," we may say now, went but a little way

* See Galt's "Life of West."