

towards settling the still unsettled question of the extent of licence allowable to the painter of a familiar historical scene; but it at least put an end to the more outrageous anomalies previously tolerated, and the historical painter was thenceforth in this country understood to be to some extent amenable to the laws which govern the historical writer.

It had now become a favourite project to adorn our churches and public buildings with paintings, after the fashion of those of the continent. It was decided to make the experiment on St. Paul's. The leading painters, with West and Reynolds at their head, offered at their own cost to cover the bare walls of the metropolitan cathedral with paintings of the leading events of Old and New Testament history, and the king and the archbishop of Canterbury gave their cordial adhesion to the proposal. But the bishop of London, whose veto was decisive, sternly refused his sanction, and the whole scheme fell to the ground,—thereby, said the enthusiastic professors, throwing back historical painting in England for a century. That such willing service might not be lost, however, the Society of Arts (taking into account the profits derived by the exhibition of the pictures painted for the Foundling Hospital) invited the six painters, designated by the Royal Academy to execute the paintings in St. Paul's, with four others, to paint around their great room ten large pictures from English History; for which they were to be remunerated by the proceeds of an exhibition of them when finished. The painters declined; but Barry, who had been burning to remove from English art the reproach cast upon it by Winckelmann and Du Bos, proffered to cover the entire room himself with a series of large allegorical paintings illustrative of Human Culture. The Society accepted his offer, and though he had but sixteen shillings in his pocket, he commenced his mighty task, working at odd jobs for the booksellers by night to procure the sustenance necessary to carry on the work of the day. After labouring almost without intermission for nearly seven years, he brought his undertaking to a close. A work like this was almost heroic: and out of respect for the man who thus braved neglect and poverty that he might carry out worthily his patriotic enterprise, we would fain persuade ourselves that the work was not a failure. Happily for his own peace of mind, Barry himself never suspected that he missed his aim. In his celebrated letter to the Dilettanti Society, he speaks without stint of its "public interest, and ethical utility of subject; castigated purity of Grecian design, beauty, grace, vigorous effect, and execution." We read those words and turn with amazement from the pictures. But we look

again and see ample evidence of genius, though of the genius that is near allied to madness. Few more efforts were made to achieve success in mural painting. It was reserved for our own day, and with another material, to show what English artists could effect in that branch of art. The frescoes of the New Houses of Parliament, and perhaps even more that in the great hall of Lincoln's Inn, have proved that if fitting opportunity offers, the skill will not be wanting to produce works worthy of the nation. But seeing what was in the 18th century regarded as the ideal of historical painting—looking at the cold mediocrity of West and his followers on the one hand, and the unchecked extravagance of Barry and Fuseli on the other,—it is a matter rather for rejoicing than regret that our churches and public places were not adorned with such illustrations of sacred and secular history as the painters of that day must have produced.

If we were attempting more than a few illustrations of the state of art, there are many other painters who would call for record. Romney, whose life is a romance, and who for a while divided the town with Reynolds, when Thurlow, like his sovereign, declared himself "of the Romney faction;" Fuseli, who imported into England the wildest extravagances of Germany; Paul Sandby, by many regarded as the father of that essential English art, water-colour painting; Wright of Derby, and many another might afford matter for remark: to say nothing of those who succeeded them, and reflected for the most part more or less strongly their genius or their manner—Northcote, Opie, Copley, Stothard, and those others of equal fame who handed down the practice and the traditions of their elders to the painters of our own day.

Nor should those who by means of the art of Engraving assisted in diffusing still more widely the works of the great artists who adorned this period, be left unmentioned. Sir Robert Strange and William Woollett did for English line engraving all that Reynolds and his associates accomplished for painting. More they could not do in their own country; but beyond its limits they perhaps did more. English pictures, except in special instances, never found their way across the channel; but the engravings of Strange and Woollett were eagerly purchased all over the continent. Both were men of rare genius. Strange confined his attention to historical engraving, and delighted in translating the works of the great masters of old. Woollett chiefly engraved landscapes, and especially those of British painters. Strange learnt the art from Le Bas, one of the most distinguished French engravers of the day, and he cultivated his powers by diligent study in the great

centres of Italian art. But whilst no engraver ever entered more into the spirit of the painters whose works he copied, his style was decidedly his own. Nearly all his plates were executed from drawings made by himself from the original pictures; and much as we may admire them when seen apart, it is only on examining such a collection of his engravings as that in the Print Room of the British Museum, where they fill three folio volumes, that his remarkable industry and fertility of resource, as well as his artistic feeling and the brilliancy of his technical skill, can be fairly appreciated. Woollett owed little to any instructor. His teacher was an obscure English engraver, and he never studied out of his native country. But he lived at a time when England was putting forth her strength in art, and he fully participated in the movement. Like our landscape painters, he refused to be bound by established practices. The effect he desired to produce he took what seemed the surest means of producing, without regard to its being the most regular. Etching, the graver, and the needle he freely used, as each seemed the most efficient for the purpose in view. The best of his plates consequently exhibit a union of force and delicacy scarcely to be found elsewhere in landscape engravings. His characterization of surface is nearly perfect. The landscapes of Woollett indeed gave a decided impulse to landscape engraving abroad as well as at home. He engraved the figure also with great ability, and his plate from West's "Death of Wolfe" is generally regarded as a masterpiece. But it is in his landscapes that his great originality and genius are shown, and Woollett is as justly considered the founder of the English school of landscape engraving as Strange is of that of historical engraving. Several other English line engravers, of very considerable skill, flourished during the same period, of whom it will be enough to name Major, who wrote himself engraver to the king; Basire, Byrne, Rooker, the able but unhappy Ryland, and the best of all our portrait engravers William Sharp, who together created a school of line engravers which though not always adequately patronized, has continued with unabated power to the present day.

In mezzotint engraving—a branch of engraving in which England has always maintained the lead—the first practitioner was James MacArdell, who did for the portraits of Reynolds, at least all that his predecessor, John Smith, performed for those of Kneller. With MacArdell, or immediately succeeding him, practised Fisher, Valentine Green, Raphael Smith, W. Dickinson, Earlom, and the Watsons, James, Thomas, and Caroline; whilst Paul Sandby showed the capabilities of the infant art of aquatinta en-

graving. Along with the admirable native engravers, several distinguished foreigners found ample employment. Of these the chief were Bartolozzi, best known by the "chalk" engravings after his own designs, and the drawings of the great masters; Vivares, unrivalled for the freedom of his foliage, and the graceful ease with which he rendered the landscapes of Lorraine, Poussin, and Gainsborough; Grignon, who seems to have been equally expert in every class of subjects and in every style; and Gravelot, now re-collected only by his bookplates.

English engravings had indeed become an important branch of commerce. If we may credit the statement made in the House of Lords by lord Suffolk in his speech on Boydell's 'Lottery Bill,' "the revenue coming into this country from this source at one time exceeded 260,000*l.* per annum." Boydell was the principal agent in promoting this traffic. Himself an engraver, though of but small talent, he was led by observing the success of Hogarth's plates to speculate on the possibility of establishing a print-selling business on an extended scale. He tried and succeeded, and with every fresh success his boldness increased, until he was able to assert that he had laid out "above 350,000*l.* in promoting the fine arts in this country."* On the plates issued by him he employed engravers of the highest standing; and he set the example of publishing illustrated books of a more splendid character than had previously been issued by any English publisher. By his fellow citizens he was elected alderman, and then lord-mayor, but his highest ambition was to produce an edition of Shakspeare which should in its illustrations be the most perfect which the arts of the country could produce. To effect this he invited the principal painters of the day to paint finished oil pictures of incidents selected from the various plays; and to contain the pictures so produced he built a spacious suite of rooms in Pall Mall, which he designated the Shakspeare Gallery, but which is now the Gallery of the British Institution. The engravings as published formed a magnificent work in nine folio volumes. The pictures, with the gallery which contain them. Boydell intended to have bequeathed to the nation; but commercial losses arising out of the French revolution compelled him to sell them, and he obtained the sanction of parliament for disposing of them by lottery. Boydell was of course not alone in his enterprise. His success stimulated other publishers, and some of them produced works scarcely less important than his own.

In the early years of the reign of George III. there was only one English sculptor of any reputation, and his celebrity arose

* Petitions to House of Commons—"Annual Register," vol. xlvi.

rather from the paucity of competition than from his own ability. Into what strange defiances of common sense the lack of imagination will lead artists who are poetic by rule, the monuments of Joseph Wilton which disfigure our metropolitan cathedrals will be sufficient to convince any one who will take the trouble to examine them. Banks (1735-1805) some thirteen years the junior of Wilton, was our first great English sculptor. He loved to work on classic themes, and Reynolds said that he had the mind of an ancient Greek. But his poetic subjects brought him only the poet's fare, and like most of his craft who find portraiture irksome he had to turn for profit to the sculpture of monuments. His real strength however, lay in his poetic conception; his monumental groups are for the most part of inferior value—the exceptions being when there was something to call for simple poetic treatment, as in the exquisite monument to a child, Penelope Boothby, in Ashborne Church, a work which when in the exhibition room at Somerset House, by its gentle pathos moved to tears the crowd that daily surrounded it. John Bacon (1740-1799) was a more popular, and in a pecuniary point of view, far more successful sculptor than Banks; but in all the higher qualities of his art greatly his inferior. To his chisel we owe a very large proportion of the public monuments erected in the latter part of the last century.

Later in date than the sculptors just noticed, came one greater than either. Had his powers of execution been equal to his conception, John Flaxman would have been one of the very greatest sculptors of modern times. As it is, in chastened affluence of imagination, purity and grace, he has hardly a superior. His was a fancy which could soar into the highest heaven of invention, yet stoop without discredit to the humblest task-work. Some of his grander productions like the Archangel Michael and Satan (at Petworth) are the glory of the English school of sculpture; his designs from Homer (and there are others scarcely less noble or beautiful) have won the admiration of the best critics throughout Europe; yet he was ready to model a porcelain cup or plate for Wedgwood, and in doing so never failed to produce one that an ancient Greek would have beheld with delight. Along with our three famous countrymen lived and laboured a Dutchman, if not more famous than they, far more the favourite of fortune. This was Joseph Nollekens, a carver of Grecian deities, the best of which is renowned as the 'long-sided Venus.' But if he missed the ideal, he never missed sober every-day reality. He was in portrait-sculpture what Reynolds was in portrait-painting, and he prospered accordingly. He died at a ripe old age worth 200,000*l.*—which is a fair measure of his ability.

We have traced * the progress of Architecture from Wren down to Kent and Burlington. From the era of churches and mansions, we have arrived at that of public and commercial buildings. Sir Robert Taylor was the leading architect when George III. ascended the throne. He was a man of taste and industry, but not of much original power: the wings he added to the Bank, an adaptation of a design by Bramante, were much admired at the time, but were ruthlessly swept away by his successor as bank architect, sir John Soane. Contemporary with Taylor was Dance, the architect of the Mansion House and of Newgate—the latter a work of most prison like character. The Woods (father and son), of Bath, and the brothers Adam, of Edinburgh and London, call for honourable notice for their efforts to raise the character of our street architecture. Bath, "that beautiful city which charms even eyes familiar with the masterpieces of Bramante and Palladio," † may be said to have been created by the Woods: the taste of Robert and James Adam is fairly shown in the Adelphi—though they erected a large number of other buildings. But the greatest architect of the time was sir William Chambers, whose fame—his Chinese fantasies being forgotten—now rests secure, on his one grand work, Somerset House—by far the noblest English building of its time, and, with all its faults, still one of the noblest buildings in the capital. Unfortunately, it was never completed on its original plan; and the erection of King's College in an anomalous style—itsself about to be rendered still more anomalous by the perversion of the semi-Greek chapel into semi-Gothic—will for ever prevent the completion of its eastern side, a misfortune rendered the more obvious by Mr. Pennethorne's recent admirable completion of the western portion. Somerset House was the last crowning triumph of the Italian style, introduced by Inigo Jones and carried on with very unequal success by succeeding architects. The investigations of two painters, James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, as made known in their "Antiquities of Athens," (1762-94), by calling the attention of professional men and the public to the architecture of ancient Greece, effected an entire change in the received notions of architectural beauty. It was of course some time before the change became apparent in our public edifices; but, from the publication of the "Antiquities," there was a constantly growing approximation to Greek forms however much the Greek spirit might be absent, until in our own day it culminated in the works of sir Robert Smirke, and was followed by the inevitable reaction. Stuart himself, after the publication of the first volume of his great

* Vol v. chap. xviii.

† Macaulay.

work, adopted the profession of an architect, and found considerable employment: his best known building is the Chapel of Greenwich Hospital—an elegant structure, but alone sufficient to show that he was by no means a purist in the application of Greek principles. Revett also practised as an architect, but without any marked success. It remains only to notice James Wyatt, who suddenly became famous by the erection of the Pantheon, Oxford-street (1772), and during the rest of the century secured a large share of public favour. His ambition in the first instance was to produce an Italianised Greek style; but later he unhappily turned his attention to Gothic, and to him is due the destruction of much, and the disfigurement of more, of the most precious of our mediæval remains. His tasteless additions are now for the most part removed, or in process of removal, but the injury to the original is irreparable.

We ought not, however, to quit this part of our subject without mentioning the names of two or three architects to whom we owe some bridges of great value and beauty, though unfortunately in the chief instances deficient in the essential quality of stability. Of these architects—for bridge-building was not then considered a branch of engineering—the earliest was Labeyle, a Swiss, builder of Westminster bridge, opened in 1750, and now in process of replacement by a less picturesque but far more convenient and, we may hope, more lasting structure. Blackfriars bridge (opened in 1760), a more elegant but not more stable edifice than Labeyle's, was the work of Richard Mylne. A competitor with Mylne for the erection of this bridge was John Gwyn, whose proposals for a Royal Academy we have mentioned. Gwyn had studied the subject of bridges and public ways closely, and was a man of remarkably clear insight. In his "London and Westminster Improved," (1766, to which Johnson wrote the "Noble Dedication," as Boswell terms it), Gwyn not only urged the necessity of replacing old London bridge by a new one, carrying another bridge across the Thames near the site where Waterloo bridge now stands, and removing Smithfield and Fleet markets, but in maps, as well as in the text, clearly pointed out most of the new lines of thoroughfare and principal improvements which have been since effected in the metropolis, and others which yet remain unaccomplished. Gwyn was the builder of the well-known Magdalen bridge, Oxford, and of the handsome but inconveniently steep English bridge at Shrewsbury.

CHAPTER XXI.

Manners as depicted in the Literature of the period.—Changes in the commerce of Literature.—Samuel Johnson the link between two periods.—Literature of George the Second's time.—The Novelists.—Richardson.—Fielding.—Smollett.—Sterne.—Goldsmith.—Literature of the first quarter of a century of the reign of George the Third.—Manners.—Stage Coaches.—Highwaymen.—The Post.—Inns.—Public refreshment places of London.—Ranelagh.—Vauxhall.—The Pantheon.—The Theatre.—Garrick.—Bath.—Gaming Tables.

ON a rainy day, somewhere about the year 1780, a man of advanced age stood bareheaded in the market of Uttoxeter, making strange contortions of visage whilst he remained for an hour in front of a particular stall. It was Dr. Samuel Johnson, who had gone from Lichfield to this small market town, to subject himself to the penance of rough weather and mocking by-standers, for expiation of an act of filial disobedience which he had committed fifty years before. His father was a bookseller at Lichfield, who died in 1731,—a man who knew something more of books than their titles; a proud man struggling to conceal his poverty. He had a shop with a good stock of the solid folios and quartos of the age of Anne and George I. "He propagates learning all over this diocese," said a chaplain in 1716. His manner of trade was nevertheless somewhat different from that of the bookseller of a cathedral town in the next century. He carried some of his most vendible stock to markets around Lichfield. "At that time booksellers' shops in the provincial towns of England were very rare, so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day.*" The old man, being on a sick-bed, had requested his son Samuel to attend the book-stall at Uttoxeter. The young student had come home from Oxford too poor to complete his academical career. "My pride prevented me from doing my duty, and I gave my father a refusal," said the literary veteran, whose pride, during the fifty years that had elapsed between the committal of the fault and its singular atonement, had sustained many a grievous trial and sore indignity. As Johnson was enduring his hour of penance, we may well believe that thoughts of the great changes that he had witnessed in the com-

* Boswell's "Life of Johnson," chap. i.