

ishing its objects and annihilating its most substantial rewards; for wealth and ease and safety deny all exertion to heroic virtue; and in a society marked by these characteristics, such endowment can neither lead to power, to eminence, nor to fame.

Such was the situation of Greece, when, extending her conquests and importing both the wealth and the manners of foreign nations, she lost with her ancient poverty her ancient virtue. Venality and corruption pervaded every department of her states, and became the spring of all public measures, which, instead of tending to the national welfare, had for their only object the gratification of the selfish passions of individuals. Under these circumstances, it was no wonder that she should become an easy prey to a foreign power, which in fact rather purchased her in the market, than subdued her by force of arms.

Yet Greece, thus degenerate and fallen from the proud eminence she once maintained, continued in some respects to hold a distinguished rank among the contemporary nations. Conquered as she was, she continued in one point of view to preserve a high superiority even over the power which had subdued and enslaved her. Her progress in letters and philosophy, and her unrivalled eminence in the arts, compensated in some degree the loss of her national liberties, and forced even from her conquerors an avowal of her superiority in every department of science and mental energy. The victors did not blush to become the scholars of the vanquished. The most eminent of the Roman orators perfected themselves in their art in the school of Athens. The Greek philosophy had for some ages its disciples in Italy; and from the golden era of the administration of Pericles at Athens, the Greeks furnished the models of all that is excellent in the arts of poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture.

We proceed, therefore, to take a short survey of the attainments of the Greeks in those departments of science and of art, beginning with an account of their extraordinary eminence in sculpture, painting, and architecture, in which they arrived at a pitch of perfection which has been the admiration and envy of all succeeding ages.

CHAPTER VII.

The Greeks not eminent in the Useful Arts—Commerce—Superiority in the Fine Arts—Greek Architecture—Gothic Architecture—Sculpture—Inferiority of the Moderns—Greek religion favorable to Sculpture and Painting—Greek Painters.

It is not among the Greeks that we are to look for the greatest improvement in the useful or the necessary arts of life. When we speak of the eminence of this people in the arts, we are understood to mean those which, by distinction, are termed the fine arts, or those which mark the refinement of a people, and which come in the train of luxury. Agriculture, which deservedly holds the first rank among the useful arts of life, does not appear ever to have attained a remarkable degree of advancement among the Greeks.* At Sparta, this, as well as other arts, being confined to the slaves, it is not there that we are to look for any remarkable progress in those departments. With respect to Attica, the soil of that country was naturally barren: its best produce was the olive; and the Athenians the more readily confined themselves to that branch of husbandry, that it was little, if at all, attended to in any of the other states of Greece. That Attica produced little or no grain is evident from this fact, mentioned by Demosthenes, that the Athenians imported annually 400,000 medimni of corn. The medimnus was somewhat more than four pecks of English measure.

Deficient as the Greeks seem to have been in agriculture, they were not much more considerable as a commercial people. Xenophon, indeed, in his treatise on the Public Revenue, advises his countrymen to spare no pains in advancing their commerce, and lays it down as a sound maxim, that the riches of individuals constitute the strength of a state: but such ideas were repugnant to the common notions of his countrymen, at least in the earlier periods of the republics. The laws of Lycurgus, we have seen, proscribed commerce, with all other arts, as tending to produce an inequality of wealth: nor did the system of Solon give any encouragement to trade. Notwithstanding these impediments, however, from the time when the Greeks had seen and tasted the

* Plato de Legg. l. 7, and Aristotle in his Politic. l. 8, c. 10, both explode the practice of agriculture by the free-born citizens, and confine it to the slaves.

Asiatic luxuries, from the era of the invasion of Xerxes, the Athenians began to cultivate commerce with considerable assiduity. Corinth, we know, and the Greek colony of Syracuse, became from that source extremely opulent. They navigated the Mediterranean in large vessels, capable of containing 200 men; and in the age of Alexander we have seen a voyage performed, of ten months' duration, in sailing from the mouth of the Indus to Susa, in the farther extremity of the Persian Gulf.

But these were not the arts for which Greece was ever remarkable among the nations of antiquity. We must now speak of those for which she was eminently distinguished; in which she surpassed all the contemporary states, and of which the remaining monuments are at this day the models of anxious imitation, and the confessed standard of excellence in the judgment of the most polished nations of modern times. I speak of what are termed the *fine arts*, in all of which, *architecture*, *sculpture*, *painting*, and *music*, the Greeks were superlatively excellent.

After the defeat of Xerxes, the Greeks, secure for some time from foreign invaders, and in full possession of their liberty, achieved with distinguished glory, may certainly be considered as at the summit of their grandeur as a nation. They maintained for a considerable time their power and independence, and distinguished themselves during that period by an universality of genius unknown to other ages and nations. The fine arts bear a near affinity to each other; and it has seldom been known in any age which produced or encouraged artists in one department, that there were wanting others who displayed similar excellence in the rest. Of this, both ancient and modern history affords ample proof, in the ages of Pericles, of Leo X., and of Lewis XIV. The arts broke out at once with prodigious lustre at Athens, under the luxurious administration of Pericles. In architecture and sculpture, Phidias at that time distinguished himself by such superior ability, that his works were regarded as wonders by the ancients, as long as any knowledge or taste remained among them. His brother Panæus (or Panænas) was an able assistant in some of his noblest works, and is himself distinguished as the artist who painted the famous picture in the Pœcile at Athens, representing the battle of Marathon, which is described by Pausanias and Pliny as so perfect a picture, that it presented striking portraits of the leaders on both sides. It was from the designs of Phidias that many of the noblest buildings of Athens were reared; and from the example of these, a just and excellent taste in architecture soon diffused itself over all Greece. Phidias had many disciples; and after his time arose a succession of eminent architects, sculptors, and painters, who maintained those sister arts in high perfection for above a century, till after the death of Alexander the Great. This, therefore, may be termed the golden age of the arts in Greece; while in those departments the contempo-

rary nations were yet in the rudest ignorance. We shall afterwards see what reason there is to believe that the Etruscans were an exception from this observation: but it is certain that, whatever were their attainments in the fine arts in those remote ages, their successors, the Romans, inherited none of that knowledge from them; for at the period of the conquest of Greece, the Romans had not a tincture of taste in those arts, till they caught the infection from the precious spoils which the sole love of plunder then imported into Italy. But of this change operated on the taste and manners of the Romans, we shall, in its proper place, treat more at large. It is sufficient here to observe, that even when time had brought the arts to the highest perfection they ever attained among the Romans, this people never ceased to acknowledge the high superiority of the Greeks, of which we have this convincing proof, that when the Roman authors celebrate any exquisite production of art, it is ever the work of a Phidias, Praxiteles, Lysippus, Glycon, Zeuxis, Apelles, Parrhasius, or, in fine, of some artist who adorned that splendid period, and not of those who had worked at Rome, or who had lived nearer to their own times than the age of Alexander the Great.

The Greeks are universally acknowledged as the parents of architecture, or at least of that peculiar style of which all after ages have confessed the superior excellence. The Grecian architecture consisted of three different manners, or what artists have termed the three distinct orders; the *Doric*, *Ionic*, and *Corinthian*. The Doric was probably the first regular order among the Greeks. It has a masculine grandeur, and a superior air of strength to both the others. It is, therefore, the best adapted to works where magnitude and sublimity are the principal objects. Some of the most ancient temples of Greece were of this order, particularly that of Theseus at Athens, built ten years after the battle of Marathon, that is, 481 years before the Christian era; a fabric which has stood more than 2300 years, and is at this day almost entire.

One observation may here be made which is applicable to all the works of taste. The character of sublimity is chaste and simple. In the arts dependent on design, if the artist aim at this character, he must disregard all trivial decorations; nor must the eye be distracted by a multiplicity of parts. In architecture, there must be few divisions in the principal members of the building, and the parts must be large and of ample relief. There must be a modesty of decoration, contemning all minuteness of ornament, which distracts the eye, that ought to be filled with the general mass, and with the proportions of the greater parts to each other. In this respect the Doric is confessedly superior to all the other orders of architecture, as it unites strength and majesty with a becoming simplicity, and the utmost symmetry of proportions.

As the *beautiful* is more congenial to some tastes than the

sublime, the lightness and elegance of the Ionic order will, perhaps, find more admirers than the chastened severity of the Doric. The latter has been compared to the robust and muscular proportions of a man, while the former has been likened to the finer, more slender and delicate proportions of a woman. Yet the character of this order is likewise simplicity, which is as essential a requisite to true beauty as it is to grandeur and sublimity. But the simplicity of beauty is not inconsistent with that degree of ornament which would derogate from the simplicity of the sublime. The Ionic admits with propriety, of decorations which would be unsuitable to the Doric. The volute of the Ionic capital, frequently ornamented with foliage, the entablature consisting of more parts, and often decorated with sculpture in *basso*, and even *alto rilievo*; all these have a propriety in this order of architecture, which is quite agreeable to its character. Of this order were constructed some of the noblest of the Greek temples; particularly the temple of Apollo at Miletus, that of the Delphic oracle, and the superb temple of Diana at Ephesus, classed among the wonders of the world.

The last of the Grecian orders of architecture is the Corinthian. It marks a period of luxury and magnificence, when pomp and splendor had become the predominant passion, but had not so far prevailed as to extinguish the taste for the sublime and beautiful. It had its origin at Corinth, one of the most luxurious cities of Greece; and was, probably, the production of an artist who wished to strike out a novelty agreeable to the reigning affectation of splendor, and to preserve at the same time a grandeur and beauty of proportions; thus studying at once to captivate the vulgar eye, and to preserve the approbation of the critic. Of this order were built many of the most superb temples of Greece, particularly that of Jupiter Olympius at Athens, founded by Pisisstratus, but not completely finished till seven hundred years after, under the reign of Hadrian. Its remains are yet very considerable. But pleasing as this magnificent order may be to the general taste, it will hold but an inferior estimation with those who possess a refined judgment. It conveys not to the chastened eye that calm and sober pleasure which arises from grand and simple symmetry, or the effect of a few striking parts united to produce one great and harmonious whole; but leads off the attention to admire the minute elegance of its divisions, and solicits applause less from the production of a great and beautiful effect, than from the consideration of the labor, the cost, and artifice employed in its construction.

I have thus endeavored to give some idea of the distinct characters of the three different orders of Grecian architecture. They have been elegantly and happily distinguished by the poet of the Seasons:—

————— First unadorned
And nobly plain, the manly Doric rose;
The Ionic then with decent matron grace
Her airy pillar heaved; luxuriant last,
The rich Corinthian spread her wanton wreath.

Thomson's Liberty, part ii.

The foregoing remarks, it must be observed, are applicable only to those orders such as we find them in the chastest models of antiquity. It is but too certain that affectation even among the ancients corrupted the general taste; and that the caprice of artists aiming at novelty and singularity, often produced very faulty deviations from the distinct characters of each of those orders. The moderns, treading in their steps, have indulged a license still more unbounded; and such have been the whimsical innovations of architects, that even from the professed treatises on the art, it is difficult to determine what are the pure and unadulterated models of the several orders; so that, had not time happily spared to us at this day some precious remnants of the genuine architecture of the Greeks in its purity, we must in vain have sought for it, either in the practice of architects, or in their writings.

While on the subject of architecture, which, in books that treat of the science, exhibits five distinct orders, it would be improper here to omit mentioning the other two, the Tuscan and the Composite, though of Italian origin; or to pass over entirely in silence a complete species of architecture, which, arising in times comparatively modern to those of which we now treat, seems to have borrowed nothing from those models of antiquity, but to depend on principles and rules peculiar to itself.

The *Tuscan* order is, as I have said, of Italian origin. The Etruscans, long before the era when Rome is supposed to have been founded, were a splendid, an opulent, and a highly polished people. Of this, the monuments at this day remaining of their works in sculpture and painting afford a convincing proof; for, not to mention the subjects of those paintings which exhibit all the refinements of social life, the very eminence which they evince in the art of design presupposes wealth, luxury, and high civilization. It is true, those paintings are supposed to have been the work of Greek artists; but if those artists were encouraged by the Etruscans, and wrought for them, we must thence of necessity conclude that they were a most polished people. The Etruscan architecture appears to be nearly allied to the Grecian, but to possess an inferior degree of elegance. The more ancient buildings of Rome were probably of this species of architecture, though the proper Greek orders came afterwards to be in more general estimation. A respect, however, for antiquity prevented the Romans from ever entirely abandoning the Tuscan mode. The Trajan pillar is of this order of architecture. This magnificent column has braved the injuries of time, and is entire at the present day. Its excellence consists less in the form and proportions of

the pillar, than in the beautiful sculpture which decorates it. Of this fine sculpture, which represents the victories of Trajan over the Dacians, a very adequate idea may be formed, from the engravings of the *Columna Trajana* by Bartoli.

The Composite order, likewise of Italian extraction, was unknown in the age of the perfection of Greek architecture. Vitruvius makes no mention of it. It seems to have been the production of some conceited artist, who wanted to strike out something new in that way, or to evince his superiority to the ancient masters; but it serves only to show that the Greeks had exhausted all the principles of united grandeur and beauty in the three orders before mentioned, and to prove that it is not possible to frame a new order unless by combining and slightly varying the old.

The Gothic architecture, which is often found to produce a very striking effect, offers no contradiction to the observations I have made on the different orders of Grecian architecture. The effect produced by the Gothic architecture is not to be accounted for on the same principle of conformity to the rules of symmetry or harmony, in the proportions observed between the several parts; but depends on a certain idea of vastness, gloominess, and solemnity, which we know to be powerful ingredients in the sublime. Nothing is more common than to hear some pretended *cognoscenti*—who derive all their opinions from certain general laws of taste, which they want the capacity of applying to their proper subject, and have no guidance of a natural feeling to discern where they are inapplicable—exclaim with great emphasis, that it is surprising that the Italians, who had before them so many precious monuments of the Greek architecture, should ever have given into a taste so barbarous as the Gothic; and this, perhaps, while they are gazing with vacancy of eye upon the cathedral of Milan, one of the noblest Gothic structures in the world. The truth is, the two species of architecture are so different, that no comparison can with justice be instituted between them. The object, indeed, of both is the same—to strike with pleasure, or with awe; but they employ means which are totally distinct, and both obtain their ends. I have observed that the sublime disregards all minuteness of ornament, which serves but to distract the eye. The Gothic architecture may be judged to offend in that particular; though it ought to be considered that in the best specimens of Gothic architecture, even where we find that minuteness of ornament, its effect is counterbalanced by the simplicity of the greater members of the fabric. The capital of a Gothic column, it is true, is crowded with a profusion of fantastic ornaments of men, beasts, birds, and plants; but that capital itself consists of few divisions; its column is of a magnitude that nobly fills the eye; the sudden elevation of the arch has something bold and aspiring; and while we contemplate the great and striking members of the

building, the minuteness of ornament on its parts is but transiently remarked, or noticed only as a superficial decoration, which detracts nothing from the grand effect of the whole mass.

To return: The Greeks, of all the nations of antiquity, possessed an unrivalled excellence in the arts depending on design. Sculpture and painting were brought by them to as high a pitch of perfection as architecture. It is the peculiar advantage of the art of sculpture, that, being ordinarily employed on the most durable materials, and such as possess small intrinsic value, it bids the fairest of all the arts to eternize the fame of the artist. While its works resist all natural decay from time, they afford no temptation to alter their form, in which consists their only value. They may lie hid from neglect in an age of ignorance: but they are safe, though buried in the earth; and avarice or industry, to supply the demands of an after age of taste, will probably recover them. What precious remains of ancient sculpture have, in the last three centuries, been dug out of the ruins of Rome! What treasures may we suppose yet remain in Greece and in the rest of Italy! To the discovery of some of those remnants of ancient art has been attributed the revival of painting and sculpture, after their total extinction during the middle ages. This, at least, is certain, that, till Michael Angelo and Raphael, feeling the beauties of the antique, began to emulate their noble manner, and introduced into their works, the one a grandeur, and the other a beauty unknown to the age in which they lived, the manner of their predecessors had been harsh, constrained, and utterly deficient in grace. Michael Angelo was so smitten with the beauties of the antique, that he occupied himself in drawing numberless sketches of a mutilated trunk of a statue of Hercules, still to be seen at Rome, and from him called the *Torso* of Michael Angelo. Raphael, whose works have entitled him to the same epithet which the Greeks bestowed on Apelles, *The Divine*—Raphael confessed the excellence of the antique, by borrowing from it many of his noblest airs and attitudes; and his enemies (for merit will ever have its enemies) have asserted, that of those gems and basso-relievos which he had been at pains to collect and copy, he destroyed not a few, in order that the beauties he had thence borrowed might pass for his own. The practice of those artists, whose names are the first among the moderns, affords sufficient argument of the superiority of the ancients. Their works remain the highest models of the art; and we who, in the imitation of the human figure, have not nature, as they had, constantly before our eyes undisguised, and in her most graceful and sublimest aspects, can find no means so short and so sure to attain to excellence, as by imitating the antique.

Every artist should accustom his eye to the contemplation of the antique, before he begins to work after nature; for this reason, that the antique presents nature without her defects, offering the collected result of all her scattered beauties, and these even