



I. An essay to illustrate the principles of composition as connected with landscape painting

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- I. *An Essay to illustrate the Principles of Composition as connected with Landscape Painting.* By Mr. EDWARD DAYES.

To the Editor of the Philosophical Magazine.

SIR,

AS landscape painting is at present a very fashionable pursuit, the following essay on composition may not prove unacceptable to some of your numerous readers; and should such further observations on the arts as I may have leisure to offer, be deemed of importance enough to find a place in your valuable Magazine, they shall be at your service.

I am, with much respect,

Sir,

Your obliged humble Servant,
EDWARD DAYES.

— O! attend,
Whoe'er thou art whom those delights can touch,
Whose candid bosom the refining love
Of Nature warms,
And I will guide thee to her fav'rite walks,
And teach thy solitude her voice to hear,
And point her loveliest features to thy view. AKENSIDE.

General Observations.

IT will be found on inquiry, that the principles that govern one part of the arts extend to every other, whether the sub-
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ject be landscape or history: this much it may be necessary to premise, as it indicates the dependence of one part on another as to the forming a whole. By an inquiry into the obstructions to the obtaining a knowledge of this elegant and pleasing part of the arts, we shall find it arise (as in most other cases) from want of knowing what plan to pursue, and often from improper instructions; much of our success depending on being once in a right road.

Many are taught to believe that by copying, parts they will be able to form a whole; and this error is, in some measure, encouraged by many of our publications. Few things are likely to prove so injurious as pursuing petty plans; to dare much is the character of genius; and, if we must fall, let us, at any rate, fall like Phaëton.

The means most likely to enable us to acquire a knowledge in the arts is, first to study pictures, and then resort to Nature; remembering to add to the stock we may collect from the wisdom of others, such original matter as may result from our own diligence. But though copying pictures may be necessary, very little knowledge will be obtained by it, other than what depends on the mechanical parts of the art. He will at all times copy best, who paints best; nor can we hope ever to become great by merely imitating another: by such a practice we may learn how to mix colours, but that is very different from a knowledge of colouring. It is true, we must reason from cause to effect; but that is a mode of inquiry seldom pursued by the mere copyist.

Composition embraces two considerations: first, as it respects alterations which may take place in a view, and which is by the artist termed composing it; and, secondly, as it applies to works of fancy purely. But as the principles of one regulate the other, all that will be necessary is briefly to state that no license should be taken with the view so as to affect the general features: diversifying masses of earth, agreeably breaking the foreground, or the accidental introduction or omission of any inferior object, is allowable. The forms of mountains, should they appear disagreeable, may be thrown in shade, or involved in clouds, in part, to conceal them; and the shadows may be artfully introduced to produce an agreeable

agreeably-shaped mafs of light, though the objects themselves are unpleafant.

Though we may be thus confined in treating a view, there will be ample latitude for the difplay of our tafte in the formation of the clouds, trees, light, and fhade, and in the difpofition of the animated objects. One thing highly neceffary in the introduction of figures is, that they enter into and make part of the fcene; and not come in as mere accompaniments, or as having no connection with the reft of the picture. This error is daily practifed, and argues a moft futile imagination. A man and woman talking, a folitary failor with a bundle at his back, or miferable fifherman, with now and then a cow or two to keep each other in countenance, form the utmoft ftretch of fome people's fancy. By a little reflection we fhall avoid fuch abfurdities, and be enabled to introduce our little group with fitnefs. As all ranks of perfons inhabit the country, it admits of the utmoft diversity in the figures; any degree of elevation or delicacy may be given, if accompanied by an appropriate employ. If the fubject is pastoral, though the figures need not be Arcadian, the low and vulgar fhould be carefully avoided: it is our duty to raife, not deprefs, the human fpecies: though our purfuits are humble, they need not be mean.

One thing neceffary to the acquirement of excellence in this (or, indeed, any other branch of ftudy) is, to think it an object of fufficient confequence to deferve all our attention: this will prevent our falling into a carelefs habit, and, of courfe, going from bad to worfe. Lord Chefterfield's obfervation fhould never be loft fight of—"What is worth doing, is worth doing well." To think meanly of the arts, is to want the means to become excellent. Let us guard againft a common error, that genius cannot exift unconnected with diffipation: the fact is, the moft renowned artifts have been the moft temperate. Intemperance and ftudy cannot exift in the fame mind, or at leaft in fuch a degree as to produce any fenfible advantage. He who begins his career of life in the gratification of his corporeal pleasures, will in time find the memory of all other delights deadened, and ultimately

sink into a torpor, from which it will be impossible to rouse himself.

When this the watchful wicked wizard saw,
With sudden spring he leaped on them straight;
And soon as touch'd by his unhallow'd paw,
They found themselves within the curf'd gate,
Full hard to be repass'd, like that of Fate. THOMSON.

The figures in the bustling scenes of Vernet are highly appropriate, and will be well worth consulting; and those in the landscapes of N. Pouffin are excellent examples of the higher style. Gainsborough appears to be the only instance of the true pastoral that this country has produced, and is well worthy our attention for the figures.

Materials.

In treating of composition as it relates to works of fancy, it will be found to involve an inquiry after proper objects, and putting them together so as to form a picture.

By proper objects is meant the most perfect of their kind, accompanied with an application the most judicious. And here begins one of our greatest difficulties, the discovering what is proper, as it embraces an extensive field of action: whoever has acquired a knowledge of what is right, is in a fair way to do what is right. The foundation of all taste is general inquiry, or an inquiry after the species; for, though all trees are green, and those of the same genus resemble each other, and though rocks and mountains bear a particular form, yet some are confessedly superior, and should be carefully selected; for *painting is not the art of imitating Nature merely*, but requires the aid of reason in choosing the most perfect of her works, and rejecting her deformities.

He that brings forth some objects to my view
(As many old have done, and many new)
With nauseous images my fancy fills,
And all go down like poxymel of squills.

ROSCOMMON.

This principle of general nature equally extends to colour and every other part of the art, a knowledge of which can

only be obtained from Nature through the medium of art; that is, by carefully attending to the different excellencies found in the works of the most esteemed masters, and diligently comparing them with Nature. By such a practice we shall in time be enabled to feel their beauties, and then we may consider ourselves in a fair way to possess the like. It is not a slight or superficial view of an esteemed picture that can benefit us; we must fix our mind steadily on it till we have, as it were, analysed it, or discovered the cause of each particular effect, as the only means to enable us, in our future operations, to work on similar principles.

With a view to assist our inquiry, it may not be amiss to point out the peculiar excellencies to be found in the works of some of the most celebrated landscape painters. N. Pouffin, for dignity, will be found highly deserving attention; his buildings and figures are unequalled. Titian's colouring is rich, accompanied with great freedom of hand and fine forms of trees. G. Pouffin's mountains are grand, and generally form a fine line of horizon, with a peculiarity in the deep parts of the picture, and depth of water truly grand. The eccentricities of Salvator Rosa will furnish an example of great union of parts as to chiaro-scuro, colour, composition, and figures, while his rocks are sublime and grandly formed; the whole accompanied with great freedom of penciling. The colouring of Claude is fine, accompanied with a lovely tone of air; but his compositions often appear studied; or, in other words, over-laboured, from the introduction of too many beautiful parts. Wilson's compositions are grand, with a tone of colour truly *Titianesque*, and a light and shade unequalled.

The pastoral excellencies must be sought among the works of the Dutch and Flemish masters, particularly in those of Rubens, whose colour and chiaro-scuro are fine; Teniers jun. who, for firmness of touch and the true silvery tone, stands unrivalled; Cuyp, for a light elegant touch, fine colour, and cattle; P. Potter for cattle, and, in his best pictures, a deep tone of colour; both the latter for a light elegant pencil, exquisite warm amber colour, and elegantly formed trees; Beggem and Woverman's for animals, with a long string of et-
cæteras:

cæteras: Canaletti's buildings are boldly handled, with a fine tone of colour. To enumerate the excellencies found in the different masters were endless; these hints may serve to direct our inquiry.

It would be unpardonable to pass over the merits of our countrymen Gainsborough and Barrett (not to mention many justly celebrated living artists, whose works will ever rank among those of the first masters). The former, for lightness of handling, elegant rusticity of figures, breadth of *chiaro-scuro*, and sweet silvery tone of colour, is highly worthy of attention; while the latter, for the character of a tree and the true tone of gray distance, is highly estimable. The three great names of Wilson, Gainsborough, and Barrett, form a school for the student, while their labours reflect the highest honour on our nation.

Some author calls painting a *sixth sense*; it certainly adds a delight to the existence of the artist, by enabling him to enjoy many beauties unnoticed by the common eye.

For him the Spring
 Distills her dews, and from the silken gem
 Its lucid leaves unfolds: for him the hand
 Of Autumn tinges every fertile branch
 With blooming gold. AKENSIDE.

Those beauties, as they escape common observation, so it will become our bounden duty not to suffer them to pass without making such memorandums as may secure them for future use: unless we do this, and resort frequently to Nature for our materials, we shall fall into a habit of repeating ourselves, and our pictures will appear as if made up from the same small stock of ideas. It becomes an indispensable duty with us to view every thing with an eye to the art; from the palace to the cottage, from the craggy rock to the humble bank of earth: the various kinds of trees, with each species of shrub, must not pass unnoticed. To the artist every thing is of use; beautiful or terrific, awfully vast, or elegantly little; all, all must be treasured up for future use: but still in our research, not the individual, but the species, must form the object of our inquiry.

The

The higher style of landscape is by some termed the *heroic*, to distinguish it from the pastoral *. Among the objects of which the former is composed may be considered temples, pyramids, ruins of antient palaces and castles, altars, &c.; mountains covered with snow or involved in clouds, hanging rocks, and huge blocks bursting, as it were, out of the earth, &c. &c. Of objects for the latter, cottages, close woods, with open views of champaign countries, &c. &c. may be noticed. These can only be considered as making the general features; a further information will depend on industry.

To act is as necessary as to think: he who spends a life in comparing the styles of different masters, their peculiarities of colour, effect, or the propriety of their compositions, may in the end find himself a mere critic, but will never raise himself to the rank of an artist. Great advantage will be derived by frequently comparing our works with the labours of others, which will give us cause to rejoice at our improvement; or, what is a great step towards it, discover our defects.

Combination.

In forming compositions it will not be sufficient to bring together materials only; this can, at best, serve only to indicate a fertility of invention; they must be combined in such a way as to preserve an unity in the whole. Imagination is shown in the production of materials, but to arrange them requires the soundest judgment. To make all the parts of the picture tend to excite but one emotion, will require the utmost care. If the scene to be described is solemn, no lively or fantastic image can be admitted: on the contrary, if the agreeable is intended, every thing gloomy or sad should be rejected. The necessity of this union of parts is equally understood by the poet and painter, as the following quotations from Milton will evince: there is the utmost unity of parts in each, though tending to produce different sensations.

Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great sun begins his state,
Rob'd in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight,

* There is a third, a sort of mixed style, which does not deserve particularising, as it is composed of the other two.

While the ploughman, near at hand,
 Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
 And the milkmaid singeth blythe,
 And the mower whets his scythe,
 And every shepherd tells his tale
 Under the hawthorn in the dale. L'ALLEGRO.

How animated, how lively is the whole effect, particularly when contrasted with the following :

Till civil suited Morn appear,
 Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont
 With the Attic boy to hunt,
 But kerchief'd in a comely cloud,
 While rocking winds are piping loud,
 Or usher'd with a shower fill,
 When the gulf has blown his fill,
 Ending on the rustling leaves,
 With minute drops from off the eaves. IL PENSEROSO.

It is evident from the above examples that figures, colour, and *chiaro-scuro*, must all have one tendency, or the picture can never form a complete whole.

We need not wonder at that want of information in the higher walks of art which at present pervades society, if we consider the want of knowledge in those who make a trade of teaching, and that of the number of drawing-books poured on the public. Some consider neatness an object; others, touch, the form of a tree; or usher forth, as examples of art, incorrect sketches to copy; all being content with offering a part, none teaching the combination of a whole; or that to embody a grand idea is the highest point of human intellect. We are in duty bound to exert ourselves to improve the national taste by every fair and honest means; and, should we be so unfortunate as not to succeed, we may be comforted by the recollection that to labour to obtain excellence is excellent, as well as to endure whatever may happen to be the result.

Many deny the utility of the arts, while others acknowledge them as remotely useful only; but this were to question whether sight be preferable to blindness, sense to folly, or life to death. As we exist in the senses, to give them a
 keener

keener relish through the medium of the sciences, is truly Epicurean.

The best method to improve and elevate our thoughts will be, by frequently contemplating the most noble objects in nature, and taking every opportunity of viewing pictures the most likely to inspire fine ideas. But we shall view fine works of art to very little purpose, if we feel no higher wish than mere imitation: if the noble enthusiasm of rivalry does not possess our breasts, it is much to be feared our remarks will be cold, and our exertions languid: let us then, like Jacob, dare to wrestle even with an angel.

Various schemes have been recommended to assist the powers of imagination. One advises contemplating the breaks in the plastering of old walls; another, the veins of marble; and a third, as the *ne plus ultra*, has produced a system of blotting: but those methods, however ingenious, are fallacious. Gainsborough is said to have formed landscapes on the table with broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass; and Chattelain, whose drawing he was fond of, used to design his rocks from lumps of coal.

This is a bad practice. If we do not resort to nature for our materials, and connect our inquiry with the best works of art, our compositions must not be expected to rise above the pastoral character of those of the former, and our rocks, like those of the latter, may smell of the coal-hole.

The Dutch painters, in their local representation, have copied each object as it occurred, without attempting to improve them; which many imagine gives them a certain natural air, which, by the bye, is absurd, and argues a great want of taste: this error equally attaches to the Flemish school, and may be seen even in the landscapes of Rubens. The universal affection for landscape painting does not arise from the love of imitation merely; the pastoral scenes of the Dutch delight from other motives, and principally because familiar to every imagination; they exhibit a life of peace, leisure, and innocence, with joy, plenty, and contentment; blessings not to be found in the bustling scenes of active life. One rule we are bound to observe in the pastoral; that is, not to represent scenes of wretchedness, or such objects as

may disgust. In composing scenes of rural life, though they do not require any great elevation of thought, or extraordinary capacity in the arrangement of the parts, yet they demand the greatest care in the finishing, cleanness and delicacy in the colouring, and the utmost unity and simplicity throughout the whole. To give interest, we should add all that stock of lesser graces dependent on ourselves; such as a light elegant touch, beauty and cleanness of colour, and a graceful simplicity of form. Scenes that do not interest from themselves must be made to do so by the labours of the artist; but where the subject is grand, we should clothe it with all the dignity of art, accompanied with a broad, firm, and spirited handling.

The beautiful, in painting, as in poetry and music, is calculated to move the softer passions; therefore every thing abrupt and hard should be rejected in the forms of the objects, chiaro-scuro, or colour; as is instanced in Claude's best pictures. But where a stronger emotion is to be raised, the images, forms, colour, and light and shade, by possessing contrary properties, will conspire to excite opposite sensations, as in the works of Salvator Rosa, and some of Wilson's grand compositions.

Abrupt, angular, and dark objects associate best with the sublime, accompanied with a certain degree of obscurity and depth of colour.

Violent passions of the mind are ever accompanied with actions more or less angular; on the contrary, beauty loves the easy sweeping line of grace, with perspicuity, light, and a richness of colour: in fact, one effect should, as much as possible, be calculated to excite painful, the other agreeable, sensations. Mountains involved in clouds, and objects seen through a mist, will always appear with more dignity than if distinctly viewed.

All agreeable sensations are founded in temperance: too great a quantity of light, colour, or sound, excites pain. It is the temperate of eating, drinking, sleeping, nay, of every thing, that makes them delightful. The intemperance of Alexander caused him to weep for more worlds to conquer—Horrid!

Massy and dark skies will best associate with the grand,
while

while the more light and fleecy will ever attend the beautiful.

As lines are strongly expressive of motion and passion, perhaps in a boisterous sky the forms ought to intersect each other more angularly than in a tranquil scene; for, as a straight line is indicative of rest, every departure from it must imply motion; therefore the nearer the forms, in crossing each other, approach to a right angle, the more expressive of violence. But we must use caution in the practice. The slowly gliding river excites the idea of rest in its straight lines, in opposition to the contorted ones in the rushing current: the violent motion of lightning is always in acute angles. It is nearly the same whether the eye or the object moves: if the sight is employed in tracing lines running abruptly in contrary directions, it will convey the idea of violent motion, though it is not the lines but the eye that moves. The easy serpentine sweeping lines, expressive of the meandering of rivers or roads, serve wonderfully to carry off the distance. Of this there is a fine example in the picture of "Going to market," by Rubens, at Buckingham-house. The same thing, if used with caution, in the formation of the clouds, will carry the eye into the distance, and help the deception.

Those who have not the opportunity of frequently applying to pictures, will find their advantage in a good collection of prints; but they must not be used to steal from (which is beneath the dignity of a great and independent spirit), but to study from, to acquire a knowledge of composition and chiaro-scuro.

An indifferent original composition will always be superior to one patched together with stolen materials. The arts would be unworthy our pursuit, were they of easy attainment; we should therefore (if we wish to attain excellence) be careful not to suffer ourselves to be robbed of our time through an indolence of spirit; something should be done every day, if we expect success. He who feels a desire to act, should be prompt to embrace the golden offer: if we neglect the opportunity to-day, we shall feel less inclined to-morrow; nor are we sure at any other time we shall be able to rekindle the same ardour. To act is far easier than to

suffer; let us therefore husband that time, the continuance of which is so uncertain, and whose loss is irrecoverable.

Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
 Next day the fatal precedent will plead:
 Thus on, till wisdom is push'd out of life. YOUNG:

In arranging the materials of our picture, all that can be recommended is, to avoid regular forms in the mass of objects; as angular, circular, or any geometrical figure. That regularity which constitutes a beauty in buildings, would become a deformity in landscape. Should a long line of horizon, or any other objects, occur in a view, to diversify it, some part should be left obscure, if it does not admit of breaking; and in composing the clouds, and light and shade, we have an opportunity of helping the effect by giving them a slight tendency to a contrary direction: few things appear so unpleasant, as tiresome long horizontal lines following each other. But, however desirable variety may be, we should be careful to guard against running into an affected contrast; a worse evil of the two. We must be cautious that our composition does not crowd too much into one part of the picture; but, by way of supporting a sort of balance, some one mass, as a counterpoise, should appear in another part: this is not confined to the objects merely, but equally extends to *chiaro-scuro* and colour, to prevent a spottiness. It is a fault not uncommon to have too many parts in the composition: this should be avoided in elevated scenes, whose parts should be simple and little decorated: much finishing would destroy the simple dignity such subjects require. The back-grounds to some of Sir Joshua's pictures are in the first style of landscape painting.

It will be our duty to divest ourselves of prejudice as much as possible in viewing works of art; if we become partial to one master, we lose the benefit we ought to derive from them all: and let us by no means adopt the conduct of those who view old pictures to find out their excellencies, and modern ones their defects. Painting, as before observed, is not, what many ignorantly suppose, the art of copying Nature merely: no, no; it requires the aid of reason, and strong
 reason,

reason, to judge of what is fit for the art, and that it is which makes it an art indeed: a trifling skill will enable a man to become a mere imitator. It must be observed, however, that if our composition does not rise above common nature, it will be less interesting than a more indifferent local scene, fitted to increase our topographical knowledge.

From the whole of our inquiry it results, that the mind should never cease from its pursuit after whatever is beautiful or grand; let us then, by an abstract inquiry, endeavour to create a nature of our own, if possible, more dignified and noble than the one that strikes our senses: we should feel an enthusiasm in our pursuits not to be satisfied with any perfection short of divine.

II. *Letter from Professor DE CARRO to Dr. PEARSON, on the Vaccine Inoculation.*

DEAR SIR,

Vienna, Oct. 22, 1800.

I CANNOT wait any longer to communicate to you my further success in the vaccine inoculation. A dreadful epidemic small-pox has given this autumn a new lustre to that practice, which, from the sensation it has created in this city, is not likely to be ever laid aside.

This extension of practice, which hitherto has been entirely, or nearly so, in my hands, has enabled me to estimate the accuracy of your observations on the inefficacy of a cow-pock that comes too rapidly to its height, and which does not follow the laws of that disease. I must candidly confess, that until this autumn I had not a very exact idea of the vaccine pustule; that is to say, I knew very well how it should be to correspond with the description of the English inoculation, such as I had seen it on my own children; but I was not aware that it must be absolutely so, and that every appearance after inoculation was not to be looked upon as a true vaccine. The astonishing likeness of my vaccine pustule in my sixty last inoculations has given me a true knowledge of it, and I scarcely believe that I can in future be mistaken.

On