

by no means inferior to the tranquil landsman, whose life is generally marked by a more steady uniformity. Merit is confined to no station under heaven. In every department of human life is it to be met with, and its more prominent features shall be by us faithfully recorded.

We shall close this account, with a list of the Naval Stations of our Fleets and Commanders on the first of July, 1793. By such an enumeration curiosity will be in a measure gratified:—

COMMANDERS.	STATIONS.
Bridport, Lord	French Coast.
Bligh, R. R. Esq.	West Indies.
Curtis, Sir Roger	Lisbon.
Christian, Sir Hugh C.	Cape of Good Hope.
Duncan, Lord	North Seas.
Frederick, T. L. Esq.	Lisbon.
Gardner, Sir Alan	Cruizing.
Harvey, H. Esq.	West Indies.
Kingmill, R. Esq.	Cork.
King, Sir P.	Plymouth.
Lutwidge, S. Esq.	Sheerness.

Nelson,

This list exhibits at one view the distribution of our naval power. So stupendous a force must excite our astonishment. From the ability and skill of the several commanders, we have reason to hope that the enemies of Britain will be humbled, and our fears of an invasion put to flight. These fleets are truly the *wooden walls* of Old England. Whilst we maintain a superiority at sea, it is next to an impossibility that the landing of any considerable number of men on our shores can be effected. May our *naval superiority*, therefore, continue to the latest posterity! This, our dominion on the ocean, however, should be exercised with mildness and humanity. When victories are obtained, may they be accompanied with little bloodshed, and may they accelerate the arrival of PEACE, that most distinguished blessing, which shall at some future period extend its balmy wing over *all* the nations of the earth.

THE

THE REFLECTOR.

[No. XVIII.]

ON CRITICISM.

First follow nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard which is still the same;
Unerring nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,
At once the source and end, and test of art.

POPE.

THE term *Criticism* conveys a degree of terror to vulgar ears. It is imagined to be a mysterious something, severe in the extreme. Many persons shrink away from it, as from the ghosts and apparitions of former days. Its look scares, its touch is death. But wherefore these terrible ideas of an art, innocent in its nature, and useful in its operation? By no one should true criticism be feared. Her province is to enlighten and reform human genius. She prescribes rules of writing dictated by wisdom, the observance of which enables the author to instruct and meliorate mankind with a more sovereign efficacy.

Criticism, divested of its technical notions, and applied to the estimation of good writing, is founded on experience. It is not the result of arbitrary determination. It is not the product of caprice and whimsicality. No; true criticism consists of rules legitimately ascertained, from contemplating the works of others which have borne the test of public opinion. Feeling that propriety and beauty arose from certain arrangements and combinations, this disposition of things passes into an established rule not to be violated with impunity. This is the most natural account of Criticism under whatever forms it may be considered. Let this representation of its origin be carefully remembered. It will assist us in forming a just idea of a subject, possessing no mean rank in the republic of letters.

T.

To illustrate the preceding observation, an instance has been taken from "Aristotle's rules concerning the unity of action in dramatic and epic composition. They were not rules first discovered by logical reasoning, and then applied to poetry; but they were drawn from the practice of Homer and Sophocles; they were founded upon observing the superior pleasure which we receive from the relation of an action which is *one* and *entire*, beyond what we receive from the relation of scattered and unconnected facts." But it may be asked concerning the rules of Criticism, Is an author to keep them constantly in view? Must they be to him what the beacon is to the mariner? Is he never to lose sight of them? To these queries it is replied, That this servile attention is by no means necessary. We wish not to load a writer with trammels. We want not to hamper his genius. But in composition, we expect that he will not overleap the boundaries which experience and good sense have wisely prescribed.

An eminent genius will write *intuitively* according to these rules, though with an irregularity that is oftentimes the parent of blemishes. The diversity of the human mind is astonishing. Some intellects will at once perform what other intellects can never be brought to accomplish. Writers of ability launch forth into their subjects with such energy, that they will not suffer any rules to operate for the regulation of their excursions. Many beauties, therefore, are thus snatched beyond the reach of art. Yet as to these writers it must be confessed that an attention to the established canons of criticism would prove highly serviceable to them. It would heighten their beauties, diminish their blemishes, and sing over their whole production an inimitable grace, easier to be conceived than described.

Shakespeare, it has been often said, pleases in spite of his irregularities. And for what reason? Because his beauties are so exquisitely charming, that they compensate for his other defects. We are enraptured with him,

him,

mer days. Its look teaches, its touch is death. But wherefore these terrible ideas of an art, innocent in its nature, and useful in its operation? By no one should true criticism be feared. Her province is to enlighten and reform human genius. She prescribes rules of writing dictated by wisdom, the observance of which enables the author to instruct and meliorate mankind with a more sovereign efficacy.

Criticism, divested of its technical notions, and applied to the estimation of good writing, is founded on experience. It is not the result of arbitrary determination. It is not the product of caprice and whimsicality. No; true criticism consists of rules legitimately ascertained, from contemplating the works of others which have borne the test of public opinion. Feeling that propriety and beauty arose from certain arrangements and combinations, this disposition of things passes into an established rule not to be violated with impunity. This is the most natural account of Criticism under whatever forms it may be considered. Let this representation of its origin be carefully remembered. It will assist us in forming a just idea of a subject, possessing no mean rank in the republic of letters.

T.

genius. But in composition, we expect that he will not overleap the boundaries which experience and good sense have wisely prescribed.

An eminent genius will write *intuitively* according to these rules, though with an irregularity that is oftentimes the parent of blemishes. The diversity of the human mind is astonishing. Some intellects will at once perform what other intellects can never be brought to accomplish. Writers of ability launch forth into their subjects with such energy, that they will not suffer any rules to operate for the regulation of their excursions. Many beauties, therefore, are thus snatched beyond the reach of art. Yet as to these writers it must be confessed that an attention to the established canons of criticism would prove highly serviceable to them. It would heighten their beauties, diminish their blemishes, and sling over their whole production an inimitable grace, easier to be conceived than described.

Shakespeare, it has been often said, pleases in spite of his irregularities. And for what reason? Because his beauties are so exquisitely charming, that they compensate for his other defects. We are enraptured with him,

him, not on account of his blemishes, but because they are greatly outweighed by the beautiful parts which accord with those sound rules of writing which criticism hath prescribed. The justness of his sentiments, the simplicity of his language, the strokes of passion, and the lively delineation of character must impress every mind. From such composition no reader of discernment can withhold his tribute of applause.

The imperfection of human genius renders rules highly necessary for the perfecting of composition. Without some standard we are at a loss how to form an equitable judgment of what is presented to our attention. Except some guide be held forth to us, we are out at sea, wandering in the wide and trackless ocean. But with a chart and compass we know our situation, and can ascertain the port whither we are destined. It is with literature as with every thing else, some settled laws must be established. What has most generally been found to please, and amongst persons most capable of making a just estimation, is the only rule which can be laid down for the production of similar beauties. The ~~best~~ writers could have no such rules, but when once they had exhibited to the world those beauties generated by the native energy of their minds, which have charmed mankind, then their successors gathered from their productions the rules necessary to be observed. It was a work of time and labour. But once ascertained, let us seriously attend to it.

Every thing in nature and art must be judged by the rules of good sense, aided by the advantages of a well-directed education. Avoiding, however, servility in the imitation of others, we should never suffer taste to prevail at the expence of judgment. Of the diversity of opinions respecting literary topics, we are apprised. For a time, compositions may be popular where there is no just ground for approbation. Parties in religion or politics may impart to certain productions an importance which otherwise could not have been obtained. But

when

when the clouds of prejudice pass away, the merits of the work will be considered. By its intrinsic value alone will it rise or fall. So true is the remark of Cicero:—"Time overthrows the illusions of opinion, but establishes the decisions of nature."

Aristotle and Longinus are the two *master critics* of antiquity. From their writings have been derived those rules of judging which have suffered little or no alteration by the lapse of ages. The former, in particular, has by the comprehensiveness of his mind, and by the acuteness of his genius, traversed the whole circle of human knowledge. Into almost every subject has he pryed with an eagle eye. Few topics has he left untouched. The very recent translation of his writings by Dr. Gillies, merits from every studious mind particular attention.

Pope's Essay on Criticism should not be unnoticed in the discussion of the present subject. With its contents most of our readers, we doubt not, are acquainted. The young writer will derive considerable advantage from the attentive perusal of it. "It is a work," said Dr. Johnson, "which displays such extent of comprehension, such niceties of distinction, such acquaintance with mankind, and such knowledge both of ancient and modern learning, as are not often attained by the maturest age and longest experience." Yet was it among his early compositions.

We conclude this *Reflector* by remarking, that true Criticism, and an amiable candour, are closely allied.—Lorenzo de Medici, an eminent genius of modern times, being present when the character of a celebrated musician was the subject of censure, observed to his detractors:—"If you knew how *difficult* it is to arrive at *excellence* in *any science*, you would speak of him with more respect." Severity is abhorrent from the nature of the genuine critic. With the difficulty of producing what is really excellent he is not unacquainted. Over the midnight lamp has he ruminated for the acquisition of knowledge, and with a tremulous hand has he marked

VOL. IV.

F F

the

But with a chart and compass we know our situation, and can ascertain the port whither we are destined. It is with literature as with every thing else, some settled laws must be established. What has most generally been found to please, and amongst persons most capable of making a just estimation, is the only rule which can be laid down for the production of similar beauties. The best writers could have no such rules, but when once they had exhibited to the world those beauties generated by the native energy of their minds, which have charmed mankind, then their successors gathered from their productions the rules necessary to be observed. It was a work of time and labour. But once ascertained, let us seriously attend to it.

Every thing in nature and art must be judged by the rules of good sense, aided by the advantages of a well-directed education. Avoiding, however, servility in the imitation of others, we should never suffer taste to prevail at the expence of judgment. Of the diversity of opinions respecting literary topics, we are apprised. For a time, compositions may be popular where there is no just ground for approbation. Parties in religion or politics may impart to certain productions an importance which otherwise could not have been obtained. But when

the very recent translation of his writings by Dr. Gillies, merits from every studious mind particular attention.

Pope's Essay on Criticism should not be unnoticed in the discussion of the present subject. With its contents most of our readers, we doubt not, are acquainted. The young writer will derive considerable advantage from the attentive perusal of it. "It is a work," said Dr. Johnson, "which displays such extent of comprehension, such niceties of distinction, such acquaintance with mankind, and such knowledge both of ancient and modern learning, as are not often attained by the maturest age and longest experience." Yet was it among his early compositions.

We conclude this *Reflector* by remarking, that true Criticism, and an amiable candour, are closely allied.—Lorenzo de Medici, an eminent genius of modern times, being present when the character of a celebrated musician was the subject of censure, observed to his detractors:—"If you knew how *difficult* it is to arrive at *excellence in any science*, you would speak of him with more respect." Severity is abhorrent from the nature of the genuine critic. With the difficulty of producing what is really excellent he is not unacquainted. Over the midnight lamp has he tremulous for the acquisition of knowledge, and with a tremulous hand has he marked

VOL. IV.

F f

the

the beauties of the authors passing beneath his review. For young writers he therefore makes due allowance, severe only to arrogant stupidity, or disgusting conceit. The amiable youth he takes by the hand, and leads him gently on to the attainment of his wishes. Such a mode of Criticism begets love wherever it is exercised. It enlarges the human mind, invigorates its best powers, and prepares it for its noblest exertions.

In our next Volume (each of which consists of FOUR Numbers) the Reflectors will contain a Survey of Homer's Iliad, Virgil's Eneid, Milton's Paradise Lost, and Thompson's Seasons.

ON INNOCENCE.

Sweet INNOCENCE! Thou stranger to offence
And inward storm! He who yon sky involves
In frowns of darkness, ever smiles on thee
With kind regard.

THOMSON.

THE greatest blessing of which man can be possessed, is *Innocence*. In every situation, in every condition of life, it possesses the most attractive charms, and produces the most cordial satisfaction. Its pleasures are lasting and stable. The man who seeks happiness in any other way, must in the end feel himself fatally disappointed. A transient glow of satisfaction, while engaged in his favourite pursuits, he may indeed feel; but no sooner does he allow himself an hour of calm, sober reflection, than disappointment and sorrow arise in his bosom, as the effects of his perverted choice.

The pleasures of *sensuality* are more violent and pointed, but those of *Innocence* more tranquil and solid. The former, on this account may be expected to find a greater number of votaries, among gross and vulgar minds, who possess not fortitude to perform the duties

of

of *Innocence*, and cannot be expected to taste its pleasures. To enjoy them indeed, in their full extent, requires no little delicacy of taste and sentiment. We must not only know, but feel. Our heart must glow with affection towards what is generous, excellent, and praise-worthy. Our whole soul must be dedicated to the interests of virtue. There must be no sort of wavering between the choice of a vicious and a virtuous course, whatever allurements the former may possess. The least simple compliance effectually leads on to a greater, and undermines the strong hold of virtue. Our conduct must be regular, and constant, if we would not forfeit the pleasures of *Innocence*. Happy the man, who by such a course of action, secures the friendship and complaisance of the Great Author of his being! Nothing can annoy his repose, or destroy his pleasure. He looks upon the ills incident to this life, only as a field for the exercise of his virtue.

If to these motives to a virtuous course, any other need be added, does not the voice of conscience urge a most powerful plea in its favour? The voice of God himself, speaking in the heart of man, admonishes and remonstrates with the most stubborn of his rational creatures. He condescends to speak, in a language, plain, simple, and understood by all. Its general dictates are the same, in the breast of every individual, of every nation; however debased by ignorance, or distorted by fanaticism in particular instances of conduct. Does not then man, by a vicious course of action, thwart the noble designs, and expose himself to the just punishment of his Creator?

The votaries of vice may indeed frame excuses for their conduct, and lull themselves into a vain security, while they enjoy the smiles of health and fortune, but when age or sickness shall have brought them to their senses, conscience will again resume her seat, and bring their actions before them in awful review. They will then regret that ever they departed from the paths of

F f 2

virtue