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THE Polite Arts were so little cultivated by the Natives of England until the middle of the last century, that foreigners, and even many of our own countrymen, imagined that some natural causes prevented the English from becoming masters either in Painting or Sculpture. But happily since that period, the most undoubted proofs have been produced, that no defects in the climate of Britain, or in the constitutions of its inhabitants, can prevent them from equalling their European neighbours in the productions of art.

To trace the causes which obstructed their advancement in this country, belongs rather to the regular historian, than to the biographical collector, and the Author will not, therefore, attempt to develope them, especially as that task has already been ably performed by many preceding writers*, who have taken upon themselves to defend, in this respect, the honour of their country. But as the arts have now attained a manifest superiority in this country, it will not be improper to trace the steps by which they

have risen to their present elevation, since the period at which Mr. Walpole (afterwards Earl of Orford) commences the fourth volume of his Anecdotes.

The honourable author observes, that at the commencement of the reign of George the First, "the Arts were sunk to the lowest ebb in Britain;" to which it may be added, that they made but flow and weak advances in their improvements until the middle of the succeeding reign. Not that the arts were at this period unemployed, for the painting of ceilings and staircases was much in vogue: sometimes the pannels of the room, but more frequently the compartments over the chimney and doors, were filled with some kind of picture, which was seldom the original work of any master, but commonly the production of some practical copyist*, who subsisted by manufacturing such decorative pieces, and was glad to furnish a landscape on a half length canvas for forty or fifty shillings. This fashion continued about half a century, but had greatly declined at the period when the Exhibitions were first established; since which there has been a total change in the style of interior domestic decorations. While painting was thus making slow advances, or rather struggling for existence, the arts of drawing and engraving were but feebly maintained by the accidental demand of print-sellers and booksellers, who began, about the early part of the last century, to decorate their publications in a style of elegance superior to what had before been attempted in this country.

* Among the firsts, whose works were most considered in this line of decoration, were Vogelfang, Vandelst, Cooper, Cradoc, &c. See their names in Walpole.
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But no inconvenience was more sensibly felt at that time than the want of examples, adapted to the use of those who wished to acquire some knowledge in the rudiments of design; for all that could be then obtained were the imported works of foreign artists, or copies of those works made by English engravers, many of which were after the etchings and drawing-books of the old Italian and Flemish masters. Nor can the books upon architecture, which were then published, be considered as original works; the best were translations; others were compilations, or absolute copies from indifferent French works. As the arts were defective, so were also those works of elegance that depend upon design for the success of their decorations and enrichments; and the character, which both Mr. Walpole and Sir Joshua Reynolds have given of the state of the arts, from the accession of George the First to the middle of the succeeding reign, is perfectly well founded.

After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the nation appeared to be roused to a spirit of exertion and improvement in the arts, which had not been known in England before that period, and several institutions or societies were formed, whose avowed intentions were to encourage the talents of their countrymen. Such were the Antigallican and Dilettanti Societies; but especially the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce.

The Antigallican Society, or rather Societies, consisted of several persons of rank and respectability, who formed a resolution of employing British productions, in preference to those imported from France; for nothing was more common at that time than
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than for the artificers and tradesmen to recommend themselves, or the wares in which they dealt, as Parisian; and though it must be confessed that these societies did not direct their attention to the arts in particular, yet their patriotic example greatly stimulated their countrymen to exert their talents in those productions which were before almost unknown in Great Britain.

Of the Dilettanti Society, the Author is not sufficiently informed to give a perfect account, and therefore can only relate the following circumstances. Its original institution was prior to either of those already mentioned. It commenced upon political principles, and, as far as it was then known to the public, was not approved, being considered as rather a disaffected assembly. But they soon changed the object of their meetings, and turned their attention to the encouragement of the arts, and made some attempts to assist in the establishment of a public academy; for which purpose they deputed General Grey, one of their members, to attend the meeting, held by the artificers for that purpose; but this was not productive of the proposed advantage, for the consulting parties could not agree respecting the government of the intended institution.

Although this society has been little known to the public under its present title, yet its silent exertions have been of great importance to the arts; especially as those who are admitted members are persons of the most distinguished reputation for taste.

As, by the rules of the society, they are enabled to accumulate a fund, they have at various times employed the surplus of their subscriptions in the promotion of the arts; and in the year 1775, they
they sent a student to Rome, upon their pension, to complete his studies in painting. They have also at different times supported some very elegant and classical publications of the Antiquities of Greece; and they assisted the editors of the works of the late Mr. James Stuart, in completing the Antiquities of Athens, which, by his death, were left unfinished.

As the society is rather of a private nature, it is not necessary, nor would it be proper, to attempt a farther account of the institutes. It is sufficient to say, that if they should, at some future period, think proper to publish any account of their proceedings, the public will find, that the Dilettanti Society ranks among the most respectable in Britain, and may be considered as a steady, though unostentatious, encourager of the arts.

But the most effectual assistance which the arts have received in this country, has been from the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce.

This noble institution, which was founded by the liberality of a very small number of noblemen and gentlemen in the year 1754, has fully answered the wishes of its first founders.

The original purposes for which it was formed will be clearly explained by the following extracts, which the Author has been liberally permitted to transcribe from the first minutes of the transactions of the society.

"Rawthmell's Coffee-house, Henrietta-street,
"Covent Garden, March 22, 1754.

"At a Meeting of some Noblemen, Clergy, Gentlemen, and Merchants, in order to form a Society for the Encouragement..."
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"couragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, in
"Great Britain:
"It was proposed to consider, whether a reward should not
"be given for the finding of cobalt in this kingdom, as there is
"reason to believe it may be discovered here, if diligently sought
"after. And as arsenic, smalt, and safrir, are prepared from
"cobalt, and all we use of these is imported from foreign parts,
"Mr. Shipley, who acted as Secretary, was directed to search
"the books of entries at the Custom House, to learn what quanti-
ties of each are annually imported, and to make his report
"at the next meeting.
"It was also proposed to consider, whether a reward should
"be given for the cultivation of madder in this kingdom.
"In consequence whereof, the Secretary was directed to in-
"quire, what quantities of madder are annually imported; and
"the Gentlemen present were likewise directed to inform them-
selves, wherefore the cultivation thereof has been neglected in
"this kingdom, and whether it is a great impoverisher of land.
"It was likewise proposed to consider of giving rewards for
"the encouragement of boys and girls in the art of drawing. And
"it being the opinion of all present, that the art of drawing is
"absolutely necessary in many employments, trades, and manu-
"factures, and that the encouragement thereof may prove of
"great utility to the public; it was resolved to bestow premiums
"on a certain number of boys or girls, under the age of sixteen,
"who shall produce the best pieces of drawing, and shew them-
selves most capable when properly examined.
"The farther consideration of these proposals was referred to
"the
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"the next meeting; and after directing that a book of rates
"should be bought for the use of the society, the company
"adjourned to Friday next, March 29.

PRESENT:

"Lord Viscount Folkestone,
"Lord Romney,
"Dr. Hales,
"Mr. Goodchild,
"Mr. Lawrence,

"Mr. Messiter,
"Mr. Shipley,
"Mr. Crisp,
"Mr. Baker,
"Mr. Brande."

Their next meeting was in the week following, and the minutes
of their transactions is dated March 29, 1754, from which the
following is an extract:

"The giving rewards for the best drawings by boys and girls
"was taken into consideration, and an advertisement was ordered
"to be worded in the manner following:

"For the best drawings by boys and girls under the age of 14
"years, and proof of their abilities on the 15th day of Jan. 1755,
"£. 15. to be determined that day fortnight.

"Likewise for the best drawings by boys and girls between the
"age of 14 and 17, with like proof of their abilities, on the same
"day, £. 15. to be determined that day fortnight."

Although this society did not wholly confine their encourage-
ment to the promotion of the arts, as may be perceived by the
foregoing minutes, yet they contributed in the most liberal and
effectual
effectual manner to stimulate the exertions of the juvenile artists; for which purpose they annually offered very handsome premiums as rewards to those youths, under a limited age, who should produce the best drawings from different subjects, agreeably to the conditions which they publicly advertised.

Nor did they long confine their attention to the youthful candidate only, but soon extended their patronage to the mature artist of confirmed abilities and established reputation, and offered premiums for historical painting, sculpture, and original designs in architecture; in which departments of the arts, the age of the candidate was not limited.

These patriotic and liberal endeavours to promote the improvement of the arts, were continued by the society for above twenty years, during which period they expended the sum of £7,926. 5s. together with 10 medals of gold, 6 of silver, 17 pallets of gold, and 84, great and small, of silver; all of which were bestowed as rewards, in the departments of painting, sculpture, and architecture.

Under the auspices of this institution, the advancement of the arts was rapid and successful, particularly among the rising generation of that age. Nor did the society in the least diminish their attention to this their favourite subject, until His Majesty, by founding the Royal Academy, rendered their exertions, in favour of the polite arts, less necessary; they then prudently directed their attention to the encouragement of agriculture, chemistry, dyeing, and such other various branches of art and science as might receive improvement under their patronage and assistance.
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It should be observed, that this society owed much of its origin to the spirited exertions of Mr. Wm. Shipley, brother of Dr. Jonathan Shipley, late Bishop of St. Asaph. That gentleman, who had been educated in art, established a drawing school, upon a more enlarged plan than had before been attempted in this country. This school soon rose into reputation, and many young men were sent thither from distant parts of the kingdom; and as these youths were instructed in a manner well adapted to the cultivation of art, several of them were afterwards taken by able artists, as pupils and assistants, some of whom have since risen to considerable rank in their different professions. This school, and the society, may be considered as having at their commencement a kind of connexion, for they were for some time both held under one roof; and the first premium conferred by the Society for the Encouragement of Art, was given to Mr. Richard Cosway, at that time a scholar in Mr. Shipley's school, who has by no means disgraced the honourable distinction which he then received.

The exertions of the society, which were so laudably directed towards stimulating the talents of the rising generation, received very essential aid from the liberality of an individual nobleman of high rank.

* In the year 1758, the society gave their gold medal to Mr. Shipley, with the following compliment, "For his public spirit, which gave life to the society." This gentleman is said to have been a pupil of a person of the name of Phillips, who painted portraits, and resided in Great Queen-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. There is a mezzotinto print by Faber, of a boy blowing a firebrand, marked with the name of Shipley as the painter. He afterwards retired to Maidstone in Kent, where he married and settled. He died in 1804, above ninety years of age, just fifty years after the establishment of the institution, of which he might justly be considered as the principal promoter.

This
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This was the Duke of Richmond, who, soon after his return from his travels, opened an admirable school for the study of painting and sculpture, at his own house, in Privy Garden, Whitehall. It consisted of a gallery or great room, fitted up with every conveniency requisite for the accommodation of students, and furnished with a number of casts, or casts in plaster of Paris, moulded from the most select antique and modern figures at that time at Rome and Florence. To this elegant school, the young artists were invited by a public advertisement.

In consequence of this invitation, several young artists of that time attended the room;* and although his Grace did not exactly fulfil the expectations of Mr. Cipriani and Mr. Wilton, yet the students were permitted to draw there for several years; and it was in this school, that those young men acquired a purer taste in the knowledge of the human form, than had before been cultivated by the artists in England; which improvement was greatly owing to the precepts of Mr. Cipriani and Mr. Wilton, who for several months attended, although in

* The following is a copy of the certificate by which the students were admitted to the gallery:

"This is to certify, that the bearer, E. E. is above twelve years of age; that he is recommended by Mr. Wilton, as a sober, diligent person, who is desirous of drawing from the casts, and has promised to observe the rules of the room. He is therefore to be admitted.

"JOE. WILTON."

"To the Porter of the Statue Room
at Richmond House."
the conclusion, their labour was not productive of any personal emolument.

The following is a List of the Figures in the Gallery, in 1770.

1. Apollo - - Belvidere.
2. Apollo de Medicis.
3. Petus et Aria.
5. Gladiator Moricens.
* 7. Bacchus of Michael Angelo.
8. Antinous Capitolineus.
10. Mercurius.
11. Cupid et Psyche.
12. Idol.
15. Venus extracting a thorn from her foot.
17. Flora of the Capitol.
18. Boxers or Wrestlers.
20. Venus Callipædia.
21. Fawn, with a Kid.

* This is the only cast of the figure in England.
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22. Camillus.
23. Ganymede of Benevenuto Cellini.

Group, of Sampson and Philistines, by J. de Bologna.
Small ditto of Hercules and Antæus, in terra cotta, ditto.

Heads.

Alexander, Seneca, Ariadne, Juno; the heads from the large group of the Rape of the Sabines, by J. de Bologna, which is at Florence.

Basso Relievos.

Rape of the Sabines.
Nova Nupta.
Triumph of Ariadne, from Lorenzo Guiberti.

To these were added a great number of casts from the Trajan Column, and other works of art.

Happily, this valuable collection, the first of the kind in England, was not injured when his Grace's house was burnt, Dec. 21, 1791.

That this gallery was of the highest advantage to those who attended it, will easily be conceived, when it is known, that it was the first school opened in this country, where the beauties of the antique could be studied. Yet, in spite of all the advantages to be derived from it, in a few years it became almost unknown, (and the foundation of the Royal Academy rendered it useless) although the Chartered Society of Artists, being unwilling to receive favours from the Academicians, solicited and obtained his
his Grace's permission to conduct the school for the advantage of their own pupils: but their attention was of short duration, and the place is now sunk almost into total oblivion, except with a few artists who pursued their studies in it with the Author of the following Memoirs, who is proud of this opportunity of acknowledging that he there acquired the elements of all the little knowledge which he possesses in art.

In tracing the encouragement which the arts received by the public spirited and patriotic liberality of several individuals, it should not be forgotten, that the artists themselves contributed greatly to the advancement and cultivation of their profession; and it may with truth be affirmed, that the present Royal Academy in a great measure owes its origin to the exertions of those artists who flourished at the commencement of the last century. But to trace this institution in its regular advancement, from its infantile state to its present maturity, it will be necessary to refer back to a period prior to the establishment of any of the former societies.

**Origin and Foundation of the Royal Academy.**

As it is impossible to acquire any excellence in painting or sculpture without a thorough knowledge of the human form, it has always been found necessary for artists to apply themselves to the examination and imitation of some living model, selected for the purpose of design. But although this study had been long publicly cultivated and encouraged in Italy and France, by national schools or academies, yet in England, during the same period, such seminaries were unknown; and it is therefore extremely
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tremely difficult to trace the origin, or ascertain the period, when
those nurseries of art were first attempted in this country, espe-
cially as every establishment of that kind was of a private and
temporary nature, depending chiefly upon the protection of some
artist of rank and reputation in his day.

The first attempt towards the establishment of an academy, is
mentioned by Mr. Walpole, in his anecdotes of Mr. Vertue, the
Engraver, where it is said, that he drew in the Academy formed
by several artists, with Sir Godfrey Kneller at their head, in the
year 1711.

Afterwards we find, by other accounts in the same author,
which are corroborated by authentic information, that Sir James
Thornhill formed an academy * in his own house, in the Piazza,
Covent Garden. But this was not of long duration, for it com-
menced in 1724, and he died in 1734; which reduced the artists
again to seek some new seminary; for the public of that day
was so little acquainted with the use of such schools, that they
were even suspected of being held for immoral purposes.

After the death of Sir James, some attempts were made to
continue the meetings of the members; but of their conduct or
success, no authentic accounts can now be procured.

But the artists were not long in this unsettled state, for a few of
them (chiefly foreigners) finding themselves without the necessiary

* Mr. Vandergugtch, the engraver, who died in 1778, at the advanced age of 80,
studied in this academy, and frequently placed the model.

Mr. Walpole tells us, that Sir James had before proposed to Lord Halifax,
to obtain the foundation of a Royal Academy at the upper end of the Mews,
with apartments for the Professors, which, by an estimate he had made, would
have cost but £3,139. Vide 4th vol. oct.

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example of a living model, formed a small society, and established their regular meetings of study in a convenient apartment in Greyhound Court, Arundel-street. The principal conductor of this seminary was Mr. G. Michael Moser. †

Here they were visited by some of their contemporary artists, ‡ who were so well pleased with the propriety of their conduct, and so thoroughly convinced of the utility of the institution, that a general union took place; and the members thereby becoming numerous, they required and sought for a more convenient situation and accommodation for their school.

How long they remained in Greyhound Court cannot now be known; but at length they removed to a very convenient situation for their purpose, in Peter's Court, St. Martin's Lane; and it can be ascertained that they were settled there before the year 1739.

In this situation, the study of the human figure was carried on till the year 1767, when they removed to Pall Mall, for better accommodation.

But a permanent and conspicuous establishment, comprehending other advantages, was still wanting. On this account the principal artists held several meetings, to which they afterwards invited their brethren to meet them, and assist in forming a public academy.

* In the house of Mr. Peter Hyde, a painter, who afterwards went as a missionary with a party of Moravians to Philadelphia.

† When the Royal Academy was established he was appointed Keeper.

‡ Mr. Hogarth, Mr. Wills, and Mr. Ellis.
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For this purpose, the following printed letter was circulated:

"Academy of Painting, Sculpture, &c. in St. Martin’s Lane, Tuesday, Oct. the 23d, 1753.

"There is a scheme set on foot for erecting a public academy, for the improvement of the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture; and as it is thought necessary to have a certain number of professors, with proper authority, in order to the making regulations, taking in subscriptions, erecting a building, instructing the students, and concerting all such measures as shall be afterwards thought necessary; Your Company is desired at the Turk’s Head, in Greek-street, Soho, on Thursday the 15th of November, at five in the evening, precisely, to proceed to the election of thirteen painters; three sculptors, one chaser, two engravers, and two architects; in all twenty-four, for the purposes aforesaid.

"Francis Milner Newton, Secretary."

"P. S. Please to bring the enclosed list, marked with a cross before the names of thirteen painters, three sculptors, one chaser, two engravers, and two architects, as shall appear to you the most able artists in their several professions, and in all other respects the most proper for conducting this design. If you cannot attend, it is expected that you will send your list, sealed and enclosed in a cover, directed to me at the Turk’s Head in Greek-street, Soho, and that you will write your name
"name in the cover, without which no regard will be paid " to it.

"The lift, in that case, will be immediately taken out of the " cover, and mixed with the other lifts, so that it shall not be " known from whom it came; all imaginable methods being " concerted for carrying on this election without any favour or " partiality.

"If you know of any artist of sufficient merit to be elected as " a professor, and who has been overlooked, in drawing out the " enclosed lift, be pleased to write his name, according to his " place in the alphabet, with a cross before it."

"To Mr. P— S——." *

In consequence of this invitation, a meeting † was held at the place appointed; but as there are no records of the transactior, or resolutions of the artists who assembled upon that occasion, it can only be ascertained, that nothing was done towards attaining the object of their wishes, and they remained at their former private situation, in St. Martin’s Lane, for above fourteen years, where they pursued their studies in a very respectable manner, with no other support than the individual subscriptions of their own members.

* The printed original, which is supposed to be unique, is in the possession of Paul Sandby, Esq; R. A. to whom it was addressed.

† In consequence of this meeting, some satirical prints were published, in which the ridicule was pointed at those who proposed to form the society; but few of these are now to be found, except in the possession of curious collectors.

Although
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Although these endeavours of the artists had not succeeded, they were far from being so discouraged as not to continue their meetings, as well as their studies; and the next effort they made, towards acquiring the attention of the public, was connected with the Foundling Hospital.

This institution, so humane in its primitive intention, whatever may be thought of its effects, was incorporated by Charter, dated 1739. A few years after that period, the present building was erected; but as the income of the charity could, with no propriety, be expended upon decorations, many of the principal artists of that day voluntarily exerted their talents for the purpose of ornamenting several of the apartments of the Hospital, which otherwise must have remained without decoration. The pictures thus produced, and generously given, were permitted to be seen by any visitor, upon proper application. The spectacle was so new, that it made a considerable impression upon the public, and the favourable reception these works experienced, impressed the artists with an idea of forming a public Exhibition, which scheme was carried into full effect in the following manner.

As that public spirited society, which had then been some time established, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, possessed large, convenient, and elegant accommodations,

* Some years before this period, the society had attended to the solicitations of the artists, as may be seen by the following extract from their minutes:

"A plan
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dations, the principal artists united, and petitioned the society to allow them the use of their great room, which request was very liberally granted; and the first exhibition opened April the 21st, 1760. To this the public were admitted gratis, the catalogues being sold at the price of six-pence to those who required them.

The success of this first public display of art was more than equal to general expectation. Yet there were some circumstances, consequent to the arrangement of the pictures, with which the artists were very justly dissatisfied: they were occasioned by the following improprieties.

The society, in the same year, had offered premiums for the best painting of history, and landscape; and it was one of the conditions, that the pictures produced by the candidates should remain in their great room for a certain time; consequently, they were blended with the rest, and formed part of the exhibition. As it was soon known which performances had obtained the premiums, it was naturally supposed, by such persons who were deficient in judgment, that those pictures were the best in the room, and consequently deserved the chief attention. This partial, though unmerited selection, gave displeasure to the artists in general. Nor were they pleased with the mode of admitting the spectators, for every member of the society had the discretionary privilege of introducing as many persons as he

"A plan for an Academy for Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, was presented by Mr. Cherie, and read, for which thanks were ordered, and a correspondence with the said Academy desired."

"Feb. 19, 1755."
chose, by means of gratuitous tickets; and consequently the company was far from being select, or suited to the wishes of the exhibitors. These circumstances, together with the interference of the society in the concerns of the exhibition, determined the principal artists to withdraw themselves, which they did in the next year.

Encouraged by the success of their first attempt, they engaged the great room in Spring Garden; and their first exhibition at that place opened on the 9th of May, 1761. Here they found it necessary to change their mode of admission, which they did by the following method. The catalogue was the ticket of admission; consequently, one catalogue would admit a whole family in succession, for a shilling, which was its price. But this mode of admissittance was still productive of crowd and disorder, and it was therefore altered the next year.

This exhibition, which was the second in this country, contained several works of the best English artists, among which, many of the pictures were equal to any masters then living in Europe; and so strikingly conspicuous were their merits, and so forcible was the effect of this display of art, that it drew from the pen of Roubiliac, the sculptor, the following lines, which were stuck up in the exhibition room, and were also printed in the St. James’s Chronicle, May 14, 1761.

Pretendu Connoisseur qui sur l’Antique glose,
Idolatrant le hom, sans Connoitre la Chose,
Vrai Peete des beaux Arts, sans Gout sans Equité,
Quitez ce ton pedant, ce mepris affecté,
Pour tout ce que le temps n’a pas encore gaté.
Ne peux tu pas, en admirant;
Les Maitres de la Grece, & ceux de l'Italie
Rendre justice également;
A ceux qu'a nourris ta Patrie?

Vois ce Salon, et tu perdras,
Cette prevention injuste.
Et bien etonné Conviendras
Qu'il ne faut pas qu'un Mecenas
Pour revoir Le Siccle d' Auguste.

In the following season they opened on May 17th, and they ventured to fix the price of admission at one shilling each person, but had the precaution to affix a conciliatory preface* to their catalogue, which was given gratis.

This

* "The public may justly require to be informed of the nature and extent of every design for which the favour of the public is openly solicited. The artists who were themselves the first promoters of an exhibition in this nation, and who have now contributed to the following Catalogue, think it therefore necessary to explain their purpose, and justify their conduct. An exhibition of the works of art being a spectacle new in this kingdom, has raised various opinions and conjectures among those who are unacquainted with the practice in foreign nations. Those who set their performances to general view, have been too often considered as the rivals of each other; as men actuated, if not by avarice, at least by vanity, and contending for superiority of fame, though not for a pecuniary prize. It cannot be denied or doubted, that all who offer themselves to criticism are desirous of praise; this desire is not only innocent but virtuous, while it is unbefited by artifice, and unpolluted by envy; and of envy or artifice those men can never be accused, who, already enjoying all the honours and profits of their profession,
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This mode of admittance was found to answer all the wished-for purposes, and the visitors, who were highly respectable, were also perfectly

"are content to stand candidates for public notice, with genius yet unexperienced, and diligence yet unrewarded; who, without any hope of increasing their own reputation or interest, expose their names and their works, only that they may furnish an opportunity of appearance to the young, the diffident, and the neglected. The purpose of this exhibition is not to enrich the artist, but to advance the art; the eminent are not flattered with preference, nor the obscure insulted with contempt; whoever hopes to deserve public favour, is here invited to display his merit. Of the price put upon this exhibition some account may be demanded. Whoever sets his work to be shewn, naturally desires a multitude of spectators; but his desire defeats its own end, when spectators assemble in such numbers as to obstruct one another.

"Though we are far from wishing to diminish the pleasures, or depreciate the sentiments of any class of the community, we know, however, what every one knows, that all cannot be judges or purchasers of works of art. Yet we have already found by experience, that all are desirous to see an exhibition. When the terms of admission were low, our room was throng'd with such multitudes, as made access dangerous, and frightened away those, whose approbation was most desired.

"Yet because it is seldom believed that money is got but for the love of money, we shall tell the use which we intend to make of our expected profits. Many artists of great abilities are unable to sell their works for their due price; to remove this inconvenience, an annual sale* will be appointed, to which every man may send his works, and send them, if he will, without his name. These works will be reviewed by the committee that conduct the exhibition; a price will be secretly set on every piece, and registered by the secretary; if the piece exposed is sold for more, the whole price shall be the artist's; but if the purchasers value it at less than the committee, the artist

* This proposal was tried a short time afterwards, and a sale by auction was made of the works of many of the then living artists, at Langford's room in the Piazza, Covent Garden; but the success of the scheme was not answerable to the wishes of its promoters, and therefore it was never after repeated.
perfectly gratified with the display of art, which, for the first time, they beheld with ease and pleasure to themselves.

The exhibition, thus established, continued at the Spring Garden Room, under the direction and management of the principal artists by whom it was first promoted, and they were soon after joined by many of those who had continued to exhibit in the Strand; which party being mostly composed of young men, and others who chose to become candidates for the premiums given by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, thought it prudent to remain under their protection. But the society finding that those who continued with them began to diminish in their numbers and that the exhibition interfered with their own concerns, no longer indulged them* with the use of their room, and the exhibitions at that place terminated in 1764.

The

"shall be paid the deficiency from the profits of the exhibition."—The preface was written of Dr. Johnson.

* The artists, who were mostly the younger part of the profession at that time, were too exurred from the situation they had formerly occupied in the Strand, a large room in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, belonging to a person of the it, where they exhibited for two successive fairs (namely 1765 and 1766), as the situation not being favourable, they engaged with Mr. Christie, in building a house near Cumberland House, Pall Mall, and the agreement was, that should last for their use during one month every year, in the spring. Here they intended to support a feeble exhibition for eight years (till the year 1774), when the engagements interfering with Mr. Christie's auctions, he purchased their share of the premises, and they made their last removal to a room in St. Alban's Street, where they exhibited the next season, but never after attempted to attract public notice. It must be observed, that while this society continued, there were annually three exhibitions of the works of English artists, namely, the Royal Academy; the Chartered Society; and that which is mentioned in this note, the members of which styled themselves The Free Society of Artists. Their exhibition was considerably inferior to those of their rivals.
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The artists who formed the exhibition at the Spring Garden Room, finding themselves possessed of property by the profits of their exhibitions, thought themselves authorised to endeavour to obtain a legal establishment; for which purpose they solicited and obtained a charter, which his Majesty was graciously pleased to confirm to them by his signature on the 26th of January 1765.

Having obtained the charter, it might naturally be supposed that the society would be placed in a situation, and furnished with the means of cultivating their mutual interests to the best advantage; but, unfortunately, they were scarcely collected when dissensions arose, which in the course of three years caused an irreparable breach, and in the end a total dissolution of the incorporated society.

This event was in a great degree occasioned by the loose and unguarded manner in which the charter was composed; for it did not provide against the admission of those who were distinguished neither by their talents as artists, nor by their good conduct as men.

In consequence of this indiscriminate admission of persons, many of the inferior practitioners were no sooner seated as members of the society, but they began to cavil at the conduct of the Directors, though they were the original founders and chief supporters of the society; and a party was soon formed, by whom it was resolved to exclude several of the principal Directors from their official situation, although they had no complaint to allege against them.

For the purpose of carrying this project into effect, a few of the refractory members, to the number of seven, met at a tavern, and
and issued the following printed letter, which was circulated to the members:

"Sir,

"At the last General Quarterly Meeting of the Society of Artists, a law was proposed, and carried by a great majority, to secure the election of eight new Directors annually. This proposition for a law being referred to the Directors, has since been returned with their absolute refusal, notwithstanding the Attorney General's opinion, that the society has full power, by their charter, to make such law, and to which opinion the Directors had previously determined to abide; and, as a further aggravation, it must be observed, that the Directors were not satisfied with this use of their power, but added to it most reproachful reflections on the Fellows of the society.

"This is therefore to desire your attendance on Thursday next, at fix o'clock, at the Castle Tavern, Henrietta-street, Covent Garden, to meet the rest of the Fellows of the society, in order to consider of the proper persons to serve as Directors for the year ensuing, whereby it is hoped, that such persons will be named who will consider the general interests of the society.

"We are," &c.

"Castle Tavern, Henrietta-street,
8 o'clock, Oct. 8. 1768."

In consequence of this invitation, a meeting was held, and the factious party, with gross impropriety, insisted, that all who were there assembled should vote at the ensuing election agreeably to the
the resolutions which should be then passed by the majority of that meeting. This proposition was resisted by many, and much confusion and disorder took place.

Not content with this arbitrary proceeding, one of the party took upon himself to call upon every member who had attended the Castle Tavern Meeting, and requested to see his balloting list, which request was made for the purpose of putting a private mark, by which it might be known, at the future scrutiny, who had voted according to their influence, and who had failed. The result of these violent proceedings was what might easily have been foreseen by the factious cabal—no less than a sudden defection of the most respectable artists, chiefly those who had been the founders of the exhibition, and the supporters of the private academy.

At the next festival of St. Luke, the day specified by the charter for the election of Officers and Directors, it was found, upon scrutinizing the votes, that nearly two-thirds of the primitive Directors were excluded: among which Mr. Hayman was dispossessed of the chair, and Mr. Kirby elected in his place; Mr. Newton, the Secretary, was also removed, and other changes were made; but eight of the former Directors were retained. This resolution introduced several very inferior artists into the places of the most respectable of those from whom the society, together with the private academy and the exhibition, received their origin and support. This sudden revolution of the order by which the affairs of the society had been directed, satisfied no one except those of the cabal with whom the order originated; yet it was vainly hoped that peace might be restored, and that
the new Directors would unite to accomplish that desirable acquisition; but the first meeting that was held by the new Directors, when they took their seats, convinced the considerate part of the society, that private pique and the thirst of power were the only motives which directed their conduct, and occasioned their clamour for what they called reform.

The majority of the new Directors, being the persons who composed the party which clamoured for the law to exclude, annually, eight Directors, still continued their former demands, and, far from endeavouring to restore the peace of the society, did, by their improper conduct, only increase the disgust of those who had before received sufficient provocation, from their illiberal treatment.

The consequence was, that those eight gentlemen of the former Directors, who remained in the new arrangement, were so much disgusted with the behaviour of their new colleagues in office, that they retired from the society, and formally signified their resignation by the following letter, addressed to the President:

"Sir,

"Though we had the strongest objections to the unwarrantable manner in which most of the present Directors of the society were elected, yet our affection for the community was such, that we had, in spite of every motive to the contrary, resolved to keep possession of our directorships. But finding the majority of the present Directors bent upon measures which we think repugnant to our charter, and tending to the destruction of the society, we judge it no longer safe to keep possession of our
"our employments; therefore do hereby resign them, that no
part of the blame, which will naturally follow the measures
now pursuing, may, in any shape, be laid upon us.
From the motions and insinuations of the last meeting, we
clearly see what plan is to be pursued; and we likewise clearly
perceive, that however odious and hurtful such a plan may be,
we shall find it utterly impossible to prevent it.
We would not, however, by any means be understood to
object to every remaining Director. You, Sir, and some
others, we have the highest esteem for, as you have been elected
into your offices without taking part in any intrigue, and, being
men of honour and ability in your professions, are extremely
proper to fill the places you occupy. We are, therefore,

Your and their
Most obedient humble Servants,

Jos\h Wilton. Wm Chambers.
Edw\d Penny. G. M. Moser.
Rich\d Wilso\n. Paul Sandby.
Benj\n West. F. M. Newton."

Nov. 10th, 1768.
To Joshua Kirby, Esq.
President of the Society of Artists of Great Britain."

The sentiments contained in this letter, and, above all, the res-
ignations of the eight gentlemen whose names were subscribod to
it, formed an event which the refractory part of the society neither expec-
ted, nor were prepared to meet, and they were not a little exasperated, especially as they began to discover that an institu-
tion
tion was forming which would very soon supersede, both in honour and public utility, all that their own endeavours could possibly achieve; this was no less than the establishment of a Royal Academy, under the immediate protection of his Majesty, in which themselves would bear no part.

As such an establishment had long been the wish of the most respectable artists of the kingdom, so it was also an object of attention with his Majesty. These considerations inspired the principal gentlemen, who had received such improper treatment from the majority of the Charterced Society, with the resolution of addressing the Sovereign with a petition, soliciting his patronage and protection to such an institution: This petition was signed by Mr. F. Cotes, Mr. Moser, Mr. B. West, and Mr. Chambers, the architect, who had the honour of receiving his Majesty’s ready assent to their request.

Authorized by this encouragement, Mr. Chambers undertook the task of digesting the plan or form of the intended institution, together with the laws necessary for its government, all of which were arranged under the immediate inspection of his Majesty, and, when completed, received his signature, constituting the Royal Academy of Great Britain; immediately after which the members held their first meeting on the 10th of December 1768, when Sir Joshua Reynolds delivered a very sensible and appropriate discourse.

Thus, after many fruitless attempts which had been made by the most considerable artists of the kingdom for near sixty years, a Royal Academy was founded under the patronage and immediate protection of "a Monarch, who, knowing the value of
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"Science and of elegant studies, thinks every art worthy of his notice that tends to soften and humanize the mind." Vide Sir Joshua's 1st Discourse.

But this school of art, though thus firmly established, was yet under the necessity of remaining for some time confined to accommodations by no means suitable to its importance, being first held pro tempore in some large apartments which had been built for auction rooms, opposite to Market Lane, Pall Mall; and here the first lecture was delivered Oct. 6, 1769, by Dr. Wm. Hunter, who was the first Professor of Anatomy.

In this situation they remained till the year 1771, when his Majesty was graciously pleased, Jan. 14, to grant them the use of the royal apartments at Old Somerset Palace, where the establishment was fixed to nearly its full extent. Here the lectures were regularly delivered, and the library was opened for the use of the students. In 1773, the Keeper was also accommodated with apartments, where he fixed his residence. But they were still obliged to continue their exhibitions at their old room in Pall Mall.

When it was determined to remove some of the offices of government to the spot where the old palace of Somerset House stood*, his Majesty was graciously pleased to order, that the Royal Society, the Antiquarian Society, and the Royal Academy, should all be united under one roof; and when those premises

* In 1774, an Act of Parliament passed for embanking of the River Thames before Somerset House, &c.; for building upon the ground thereof various offices specified in the Act; together with such other public offices and buildings as his Majesty should think fit.
were fit for their reception they were settled in their present situation, at Somerset Buildings in the Strand; and the Royal Academy opened their first exhibition at that place May 1st, 1780; at which time the Keeper and Secretary were both settled in suitable apartments, and the library was soon after opened with considerable improvements. The lectures also commenced October the 23d of the same year. Thus the establishment of a Royal Academy in England, so long the desideratum of the British artists, was completely effected, with every accommodation suitable to the rank of the Royal Founder, and in the highest degree honourable to the country.

Having thus briefly stated the foundation of the Royal Academy, it will be proper to give some account of the conduct of the remaining members of the Incorporated Society.

These turbulent gentlemen, finding themselves unexpectedly forsaken by those they had endeavoured to control, were most highly provoked, and immediately proceeded to institute a private academy* for themselves; but fearing his Majesty might take offence at their conduct, they very prudently presented a petition, through the means of Mr. Kirby, their President, who soon after delivered his Majesty's answer, which was to the following purport: "The Society had his Majesty's protection; that he did "not mean to encourage one set of men more than another;

* The place of their meeting was at a large room, behind the premises at that time, and which had been for many years, over the famous cyder cellar in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden. Here they fitted up convenient accommodations for an academy; but the party who managed the business were rather too young and too unstable in their conduct, and the meetings insensibly dissolved in little more than two years.

"that
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"that having extended his favour to the society by his royal
charter, he had also encouraged the new petitioners; that
his intention was to patronize the arts; that the society might
reliably assure his royal favour should be equally extended to
both, and that he should visit their exhibitions as usual."

His Majesty accordingly visited their next exhibition, which
was, as before, at the Great Room, Spring Garden, and presented
the society with one hundred pounds; but this was the last time
he favoured them by such honourable distinction.

This society continued their exhibitions at the Spring Garden
Room until the year 1771, when, having resolved to build a room
for themselves, they, in their catalogue of that year's exhibition,
gave the following notice:—

"The Society of Artists of Great Britain take the present
opportunity of acquainting the public, that this is the last exhi-
bition they shall have at the room they now occupy in Spring
Gardens, having purchased a spot of ground in a situation
more commodious and central to the inhabitants of this great
metropolis, on which to erect an Academy, Exhibition
Room, &c. and with which the public shall in due time be
made acquainted."

The same year they also published a pamphlet, containing ac-
cusations against the gentlemen, members of the Royal Academy,
whom they affectedly boasted to have expelled; meaning those
gentlemen who had voluntarily retired from their society.

The next year they removed to the edifice which they had
erected for themselves, agreeably to their former advertisement.

This
This building was no less than the large room, now called the Lyceum, in the Strand; * the construction of which, together with the purchase of the ground, nearly exhausted the whole of their finances. Here they remained until they found their fund too much diminished to support the expences of their establishment; and, perceiving that those who had exhibited with them began to diminish in their numbers, the Directors relinquished their room, and engaged another in Piccadilly, which had been built for an auction room by a person of the name of Phillips, a woollen-draper, near the Black Bear Inn. Here they exhibited for two years, and until this time they had contrived to exhibit regularly every year; but afterwards their exhibitions were very irregular and uncertain, the next being at Spring Garden Room in the year 1780. They then returned to the Lyceum in the Strand, where they exhibited in 1783, though they had long before disposed of those premises.

After this, they made no farther attempts until the year 1790; when they again tried to introduce themselves to public notice, and subjoined a preface to the catalogue of their exhibition. The next year they repeated their feeble efforts in the same room; but the articles they had then collected were very insignificant, most of which could not be considered as works of art; such as pieces of needle-work, subjects in human hair, cut paper, and such similar productions, as deserve not the recommendation of a public exhibition.

* It was built under the direction of Mr. James Paine, senior, the architect, and was well calculated for the purpose. Being desirous of opening this room with some eclat, they employed the Rev. Evan Lloyd to write an Ode, which was set to music by Mr. Hook, and performed in the room, a few days before their exhibition opened.