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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl Of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

Chap. XXII. Architects in the Reign of George II.

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great duke's entrance into Florence, which he also executed with great labour for the empress-queen, who however did not purchase it. The king of Denmark bought the plate of the entry, and retained Toufcher in his service. Mr. Nattier published a well-known book on ancient gems, was fellow of the royal and antiquarian societies, and died of an asthma December 27, 1763, at St. Petersburg, whither he had been invited as principal engraver to the empress. There is a small head of him from a medal executed by himself, in the 2d volume of the Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, 4to, 1780, where also is some account of him.

C H A P. XXII.

Architects in the Reign of GEORGE II.

IT was in this reign that architecture resumed all her rights. Noble publications of Palladio, Jones, and the antique, recalled her to true principles and correct taste; she found men of genius to execute her rules, and patrons to countenance their labours. She found more, and what Rome could not boast, men of the first rank who contributed to embellish their country by buildings of their own design in the purest style of antique composition. Before the glorious close of a reign that carried our arms and victories beyond where Roman eagles ever flew, ardour for the arts had led our travellers to explore whatever beauties of Grecian or Latin taste still subsisted in provinces once subjected to Rome; and the fine editions in consequence of those researches have established the throne of architecture in Britain, while itself languishes at Rome, wantons in tawdry imitations of the French in other parts of Europe, and struggles in vain at Paris to surmount their prepossession in favour of their own errors—for, fickle as we call that nation, their music and architecture prove how long their ears and eyes can be constant to discord and disproportion.

GIACOMO LEONI,

a Venetian, who had been architect to the elector palatine, settled in England,
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and published a fine edition of Palladio in 1742. He was employed in building several houses, and died in 1746.

JOHN NICHOLAS SERVANDONI,

a celebrated architect, resided here some years, though, having various talents, he was best known in his own country as a painter. He executed many scenes for the opera, and painted a staircase (in conjunction with one Andrea) at Mr. Arundel's, the corner of Burlington-street, now Mr. Townshend's. He also gave the design of the theatre of fireworks for the peace in 1746, soon after which he returned to Paris. He was born at Florence May 2, 1695, studied under Paolo Panini and Rossi, and was created a knight of the order of Christ. His genius was particularly turned to theatric machinery, of which he gave proofs at Dresden and Lisbon, and especially at Paris, where he was received into the academy of painting and sculpture, and where he contrived magnificent serious pantomimes in the grande sale des machines, besides fine decorations in several operas. An account of those shows may be seen in the fifth volume of the Dictionnaire des theatres. His capital work was the façade of St. Sulpice; but the enormous masses of stone which he has heaped on the tops of the towers, and which are considerable enough to disfigure the view of the city itself, destroy the result of so superb a frontispiece.

THOMAS RIPLEY

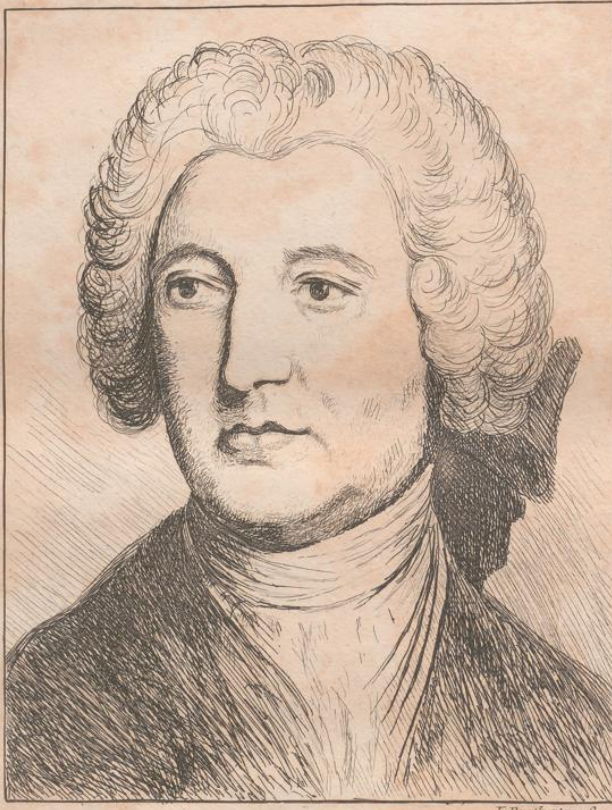
was born in Yorkshire, and executed such considerable works that he must not be omitted, though he wanted taste, and fell under the lash of lasting satire. Pope has twice mentioned him:

Who builds a bridge, that never drove a pile?
Should Ripley venture, all the world would smile.

And again,

And needs no rod but Ripley with a rule.

The truth is, politics and partiality concurred to help on these censures. Ripley was employed by the minister, and had not the countenance of lord Burlington, the patron of Pope. It is no less true, that the admiralty is a most ugly



J. Bretherton, sc.

HENRY HERBERT EARL OF PEMBROKE

ugly edifice, and deservedly veiled by Mr. Adam's handsome screen. Yet Ripley, in the mechanic part, and in the disposition of apartments and conveniences, was unluckily superior to the earl himself. Lord Orford's at Houghton, of which Campbell gave the original design, but which was much improved by Ripley, and lord Walpole's at Woolterton, one of the best houses of the size in England, will, as long as they remain, acquit this artist of the charge of ignorance. I must mention a more barbarous architect before I come to the luminaries of the science. This was

BATTY LANGLEY,

who endeavoured to adapt Gothic architecture to Roman measures; as sir Philip Sidney attempted to regulate English verse by Roman feet. Langley went farther, and (for he never copied Gothic) *invented* five orders for that style. All that his books achieved, has been to teach carpenters to massacre that venerable species, and to give occasion to those who know nothing of the matter, and who mistake his clumsy efforts for real imitations, to censure the productions of our ancestors, whose bold and beautiful fabrics sir Christopher Wren viewed and reviewed with astonishment, and never mentioned without esteem. Batty Langley published some other works, particularly, An accurate description of Newgate, &c. 1724; A design for a new bridge at Westminster, 1736; A reply to Mr. James's tract on the same subject*, and an useful one on the prices of work and materials for building. He also invented an artificial stone, of which he made figures: an art lately brought to great perfection.

HENRY HERBERT EARL OF PEMBROKE.

The soul of Inigo Jones, who had been patronized by his ancestors, seemed still to hover over its favourite Wilton, and to have assisted the muses of arts in the education of this noble person. The towers, the chambers, the scenes which Holbein, Jones and Vandyck had decorated, and which earl Thomas had enriched with the spoils of the best ages, received the last touches of beauty from earl Henry's hand. He removed all that obstructed the views to or from his palace, and threw Palladio's theatric bridge over his river: the present lord has crowned the summit of the hill with the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, and a handsome arch designed by sir William Chambers.

* Vide British Topogr. vol. i. p. 635 and 736.

No man had a purer taste in building than earl Henry, of which he gave a few specimens besides his works at Wilton. The new lodge in Richmond-park, the countess of Suffolk's house at Marble-hill Twickenham, the water-house in lord Orford's park at Houghton, are incontestable proofs of lord Pembroke's taste. It was more than taste, it was passion for the utility and honour of his country, that engaged his lordship to promote and assiduously overlook the construction of Westminster-bridge by the ingenious monsieur Labelye*, a man that deserves more notice than this slight encomium can bestow.

RICHARD BOYLE EARL OF BURLINGTON.

Never were protection and great wealth more generously and more judiciously diffused than by this great person, who had every quality of a genius and artist, except envy. Though his own designs were more chaste and classic than Kent's, he entertained him in his house till his death, and was more studious to extend his friend's fame than his own. In these sheets I have mentioned many other instances of the painters and artists he encouraged and rewarded. Nor was his munificence confined to himself and his own houses and gardens. He spent great sums in contributing to public works, and was known to choose that the expence should fall on himself, rather than that his country should be deprived of some beautiful edifices. His enthusiasm for the works of Inigo Jones was so active, that he repaired the church of Covent-garden because it was the production of that great master, and purchased a gateway at Beaufort-garden in Chelsea, and transported the identical stones to Chiswick with religious attachment. With the same zeal for pure architecture he assisted Kent in publishing the designs for Whitehall, and gave a beautiful edition of the antique baths from the drawings of Palladio, whose papers he procured with great cost. Besides his works on his own estate at Lonsborough in Yorkshire, he new fronted his house in Piccadilly, built by his father†, and added the grand colonnade within the court. As we have
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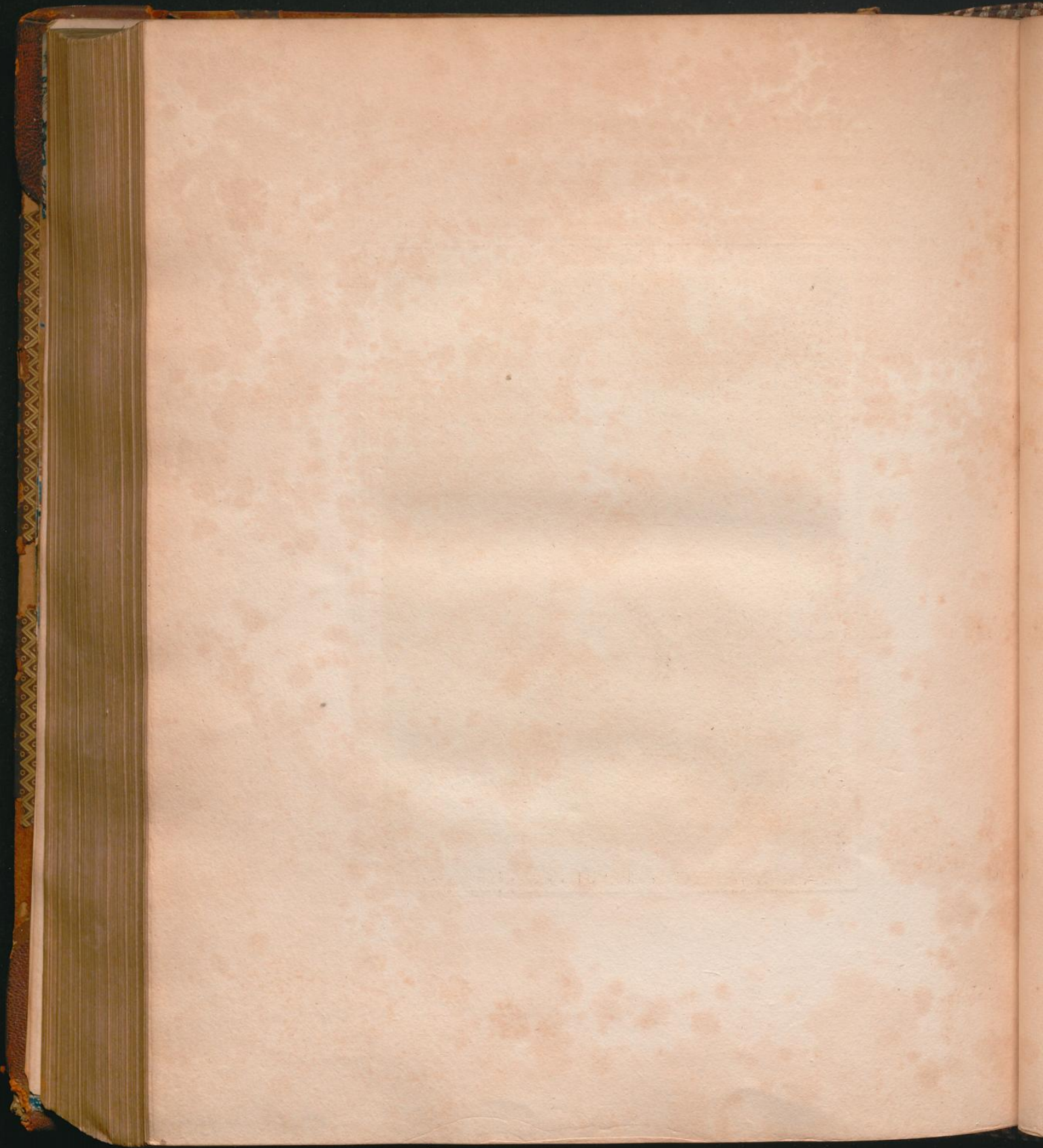
* Charles Labelye died at Paris in the beginning of 1762. I know no particulars of his life: a monument he cannot want while the bridge exists. In Gough's Brit. Topogr. vol. i. p. 474, is mentioned a plan of the intended harbour between Sandwich town and Sandown castle, by

Charles Labelye, as is his description of Westminster-bridge, and his proposals for a fuller account, ib. 739. He was a native of Switzerland, was naturalized in England, but retired to France for his health.

† That lord Burlington being asked, why he built



J. Kneller pinxit *T. Chambers Sculp.*
RICHARD BOYLE EARL of BURLINGTON



few famples of architecture more antique and imposing than that colonnade, I cannot help mentioning the effect it had on myself. I had not only never seen it, but had never heard of it, at least with any attention, when soon after my return from Italy I was invited to a ball at Burlington-house. As I passed under the gate by night, it could not strike me. At day-break looking out of the window to see the sun rise, I was surpris'd with the vision of the colonnade* that fronted me. It seem'd one of those edifices in fairy tales that are rais'd by genii in a night's time.

His lordship's house at Chiswick, the idea of which is borrowed from a well-known villa of Palladio, is a model of taste, though not without faults, some of which are occasioned by too strict adherence to rules and symmetry. Such are too many correspondent doors in spaces so contracted; chimneys between windows, and, which is worse, windows between chimneys; and vestibules, however beautiful, yet too little secured from the damps of this climate. The trusses that support the ceiling of the corner drawing-room are beyond measure massive, and the ground apartment is rather a diminutive catacomb, than a library in a northern latitude. Yet these blemishes, and lord Hervey's wit, who said *the house was too small to inhabit, and too large to hang to one's watch*, cannot depreciate the taste that reigns in the whole. The larger court, dignified by picturesque cedars, and the classic scenery of the small court that unites the old and new house, are more worth seeing than many fragments of ancient grandeur, which our travellers visit under all the dangers attendant on long voyages. The garden is in the Italian taste, but divested of conceits, and far preferable to every style that reigned till our late improvements. The buildings are heavy, and not equal to the purity of the house. The lavish quantity of urns and sculpture behind the garden-front should be retrenched.

Other works designed by lord Burlington were, the dormitory at Westminster-school, the assembly-room at York, lord Harrington's at Peterham †,

built his house so far out of town? replied, because he was determin'd to have no building beyond him. Little more than half a century has so enclosed Burlington-house with new streets, that it is now in the heart of that part of London.

* Campbell, in his *Vitruvius Britannicus*, as-

fumes to himself the new front of Burlington-house and the gateway; but as he takes no credit for the colonnade, which is in a style very superior to his designs, we may safely conclude it was the earl's own.

† The octagon buildings at each end were afterwards added by Sheperd.

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the duke of Richmond's house at Whitehall, and general Wade's in Cork-street. Both the latter were ill-contrived and inconvenient; but the latter has so beautiful a front, that lord Chesterfield said, *as the general could not live in it to his ease, he had better take a house over against it and look at it.* These are mere details relating to this illustrious person's works*. His genuine praise is better secured in Mr. Pope's epistle to him.

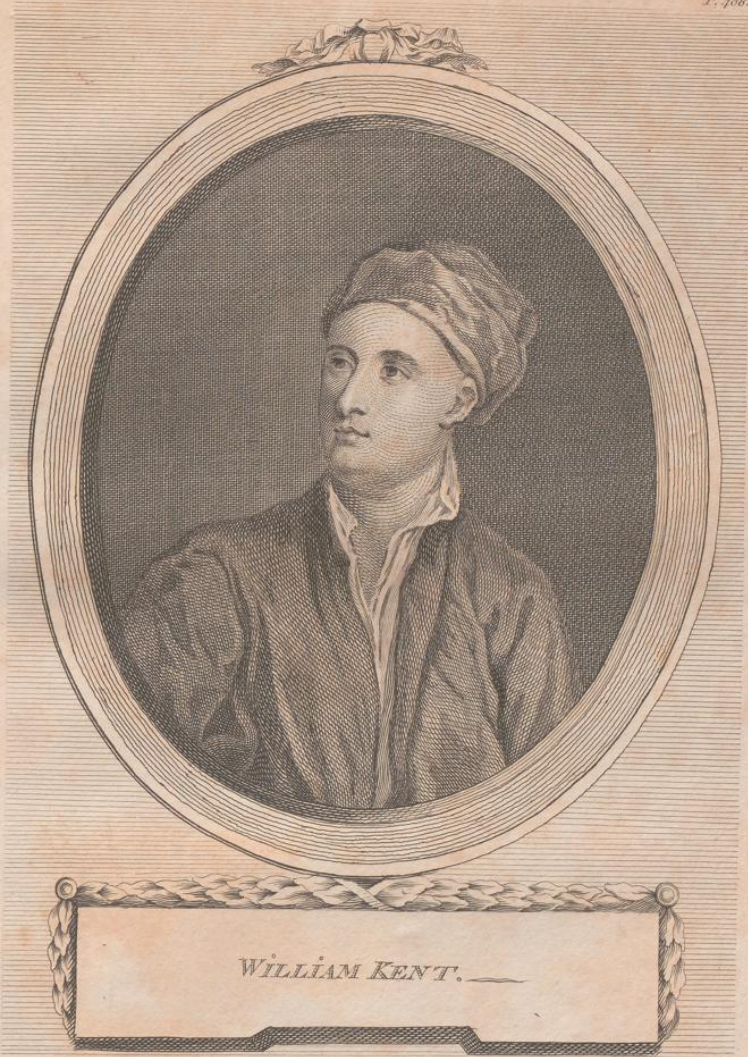
I ought not to omit that his countess, lady Dorothy Saville, had no less attachment to the arts than her lord. She drew in crayons, and succeeded admirably in likenesses, but, working with too much rapidity, did not do justice to her genius. She had an uncommon talent too for caricatura.

WILLIAM KENT.

Under the auspices of lord Burlington and lord Pembroke, architecture, as I have said, recovered its genuine lustre. The former, the Apollo of arts, found a proper priest in the person of Mr. Kent. As I mean no panegyric on any man, beyond what he deserved, or what, to the best of my possibly erroneous judgment, I think he deserved, I shall speak with equal impartiality on the merits and faults of Kent, the former of which exceedingly preponderated. He was a painter, an architect, and the father of modern gardening. In the first character, he was below mediocrity; in the second, he was a restorer of the science; in the last, an original, and the inventor of an art that realizes painting, and improves nature. Mahomet imagined an Elysium, but Kent created many.

He was born in Yorkshire, and put apprentice to a coach-painter; but feeling the emotions of genius he left his master without leave, and repaired to London; where he studied a little, and gave indications enough of abilities to excite a generous patronage in some gentlemen of his own country, who raised a contribution sufficient to send him to Rome, whither he accompanied Mr. Talman in 1710. In that capital of the arts he studied under cavalier Luti, and in the academy gained the second prize of the second class; still without suspecting that there was a sifter art within his reach, more congenial

* Lord Burlington being consulted by the citizens for a proper person to carve the bas-relief in the pediment of the Mansion-house, his lordship replied, any body could do well enough for such a building.



WILLIAM KENT.

A. Bannerman Sculp.

to his talents. Though his first resources were exhausted, he still found friends. Another of his countrymen, sir William Wentworth, allowed him 40*l.* a year for seven years. But it was at Rome that his better star brought him acquainted with lord Burlington, whose sagacity discovered the rich vein of genius that had been hid from the artist himself. On their return to England in 1719, lord Burlington gave him an apartment in his own house, and added all the graces of favour and recommendation. By that noble person's interest Kent was employed in various works, both as a painter of history and portrait; and yet it must be allowed that in each branch partiality must have operated strongly to make his lordship believe he discovered any merit in his friend. His portraits bore little resemblance to the persons that sat for them; and the colouring was worse, more raw and undetermined than that of the most errant journeymen to the profession. The whole lengths at *Esler* are standing evidences of this assertion. In his ceilings, Kent's drawing was as defective as the colouring of his portraits, and as void of every merit. I have mentioned Hogarth's parody, if I may call it so, of his picture at *St. Clement's*. The hall at *Wanstead* is another proof of his incapacity. Sir Robert Walpole, who was persuaded to employ him at *Houghton*, where he painted several ceilings and the stair-case, would not permit him however to work in colours, which would have been still more disgraced by the presence of so many capital pictures, but restrained him to *chiaro scuro*. If his faults are thence not so glaring, they are scarce less numerous. He painted a stair-case in the same way for lord *Townshend* at *Rainham*.

To compensate for his bad paintings, he had an excellent taste for ornaments, and gave designs for most of the furniture at *Houghton*, as he did for several other persons. Yet chaste as these ornaments were, they were often unmeasurably ponderous. His chimney-pieces, though lighter than those of *Inigo*, whom he imitated, are frequently heavy; and his constant introduction of pediments and the members of architecture over doors, and within rooms, was disproportioned and cumbrous. Indeed I much question whether the Romans admitted regular architecture *within* their houses. At least the discoveries at *Herculaneum* testify, that a light and fantastic architecture, of a very Indian air, made a common decoration of private apartments. Kent's style however predominated authoritatively during his life; and his oracle was so much consulted by all who affected taste, that nothing was thought

complete without his assistance. He was not only consulted for furniture, as frames of pictures, glasses, tables, chairs, &c. but for plate, for a barge, for a cradle. And so impetuous was fashion, that two great ladies prevailed on him to make designs for their birth-day gowns. The one he dressed in a petticoat decorated with columns of the five orders; the other like a bronze, in a copper-coloured satin with ornaments of gold. He was not more happy in other works in which he misapplied his genius. The gilt rails to the hermitage at Richmond were in truth but a trifling impropriety; but his celebrated monument of Shakespeare in the abbey was preposterous. What an absurdity to place busts at the angles of a pedestal, and at the bottom of that pedestal! Whose choice the busts were I do not know; but though queen Elizabeth's head might be intended to mark the æra in which the poet flourished, why were Richard II. and Henry V. selected? Are the pieces under the names of those princes two of Shakespeare's most capital works? or what reason can be assigned for giving them the preference?

As Kent's genius was not universal, he has succeeded as ill in Gothic. The King's-bench at Westminster, and Mr. Pelham's house at Esler, are proofs how little he conceived either the principles or graces of that architecture. Yet he was sometimes sensible of its beauties, and published a print of Wolfey's noble hall at Hampton-court, now crowded and half hidden by a theatre. Kent gave the design for the ornaments of the chapel at the prince of Orange's wedding, of which he also made a print*.

Such of the drawings as he designed for Gay's Fables have some truth and nature; but whoever would search for his faults will find an ample crop in a very favourite work of his, the prints for Spenser's Fairy queen. As the drawings were exceedingly cried up by his admirers, and disappointed the public in proportion, the blame was thrown on the engraver—but so far unjustly, that, though ill executed, the wretchedness of drawing, the total ignorance of perspective, the want of variety, the disproportion of the buildings, and the awkwardness of the attitudes, could have been the faults of the inventor only. There are figures issuing from cottages not so high as their shoulders, castles in which the towers could not contain an infant, and knights

* His vignettes to the large edition of Pope's works are in a good taste.

who hold their spears as men do who are lifting a load sideways. The landscapes are the only tolerable parts, and yet the trees are seldom other than young beeches, to which Kent as a planter was accustomed.

But in architecture his taste was deservedly admired; and without enumerating particulars, the stair-case at lady Isabella Finch's in Berkeley-square is as beautiful a piece of scenery, and, considering the space, of art, as can be imagined. The temple of Venus at Stowe has simplicity and merit, and the great room at Mr. Pelham's in Arlington-street is as remarkable for magnificence. I do not admire equally the room ornamented with marble and gilding at Kensington. The stair-case there is the least defective work of his pencil; and his ceilings in that palace from antique paintings, which he first happily introduced, show that he was not too ridiculously prejudiced in favour of his own historic compositions.

Of all his works, his favourite production was the earl of Leicester's house at Holkham in Norfolk. The great hall, with the flight of steps at the upper end, in which he proposed to place a colossal Jupiter, was a noble idea. How the designs of that house, which I have seen an hundred times in Kent's original drawings, came to be published under another name*, and without the slightest mention of the real architect, is beyond comprehension. The bridge, the temple, the great gateway, all built, I believe, the two first certainly, under Kent's own eye, are alike passed off as the works of another; and yet no man need envy or deny him the glory of having oppressed a triumphal arch with an Egyptian pyramid. Holkham has its faults; but they are Kent's faults, and marked with all the peculiarities of his style.

As I intend to consider him as the inventor of modern gardening in a chapter by itself, I will conclude this account of him with the few remaining circumstances of his life. By the patronage of the queen, of the dukes of Grafton and Newcastle, and Mr. Pelham, and by the interest of his constant friend, he was made master carpenter, architect, keeper of the pictures, and, after the death of Jervas, principal painter to the crown; the whole, includ-

* "The plan and elevations of the late earl of Leicester's house at Holkham were engraved and published, Lond. 1761, fol. by Mr. Brettingham, Brit. Topogr. vol. ii. p. 25. it was built after the design of Kent." Gough's

ing a pension of 100*l.* a year, which was given him for his works at Kenfington, producing 600*l.* a year. In 1743 he had a disorder in his eyes that was thought paralytic, but recovered. But in March 1748 he had an inflammation both in his bowels and foot, which turned to a general mortification, and put an end to his life at Burlington-house, April 12, 1748, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. He was buried in a very handsome manner in lord Burlington's vault at Chifwick. His fortune, which with pictures and books amounted to about ten thousand pounds, he divided between his relations, and an actress with whom he had long lived in particular friendship*.

* Henry Flitcroft was an artist much employed about this period. He built the church of St. Giles in the fields, the steeple of which too much resembled that of St. Martin. His too was the church of St. Olave, Southwark, reckoned the best of the new erections; but the tower was not finished, from the deficiency of the allotted fund. Flitcroft is buried in the churchyard at Teddington; and against the church is a small tablet with a Latin inscription, which may be read from the road,

ADDENDA.