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Hogarth moralized

Hogarth, William

London, 1831

Dr. Trusler's Preface.

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DR. TRUSLER'S PREFACE.

So much having been said, in the course of this work, of Mr. Hogarth's abilities, and excellence; any thing more, on that head, would be deemed tautology. I shall only say, (as to usher a book into the world without a preface, would, in this age, be thought an absurdity) lest I should be condemned for want of taste, and not entering a little more into the spirit and execution of our author's performances, that I never designed to point out that which stands so visible to the world, or, pay the public so ill a compliment, as not to imagine them as capable of judging of beauties and deformities, as one that never made them his study.* My intentions, in giving the following explanations, were to bring some minute objects to view, which lay concealed amid a crowd of larger ones; to hold the painter forth in a

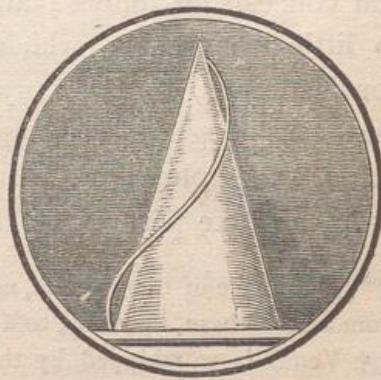
* The first edition of this work offered the means of studying our great artist at one-fifth of the expense of any former one—the striking novelty of bringing so singular a collection into a convenient form, and at a price within the reach of all classes, proved so very acceptable to the public, that a fine copy of the perfect work has produced five times its original cost. The present revival offers all the same facilities, with the advantage of larger prints of many of the principal subjects. Through this medium it is hoped the artist will again speak for himself, far and wide. Fielding has well observed respecting our author, “it hath been thought a vast commendation of a painter to say his figures seem to breathe; but surely it is a much greater and nobler applause that they appear to think.” Smart also in his Poem of the “Hilliad,” says,

“While speaking figures from the canvas start,
And Hogarth stands the Garrick of his art!”

moral light, and convince the age there is more in his design, than to ridicule and lash the follies of it. For the time our author lived, no one could apply himself more than he did, to the service of the public. He stands the foremost in the list of artists, both with respect to execution, and discovery. It was long the opinion of his profession that the standard of beauty was a right line; in consequence of this, *In recto decus*,* became an established maxim. Indeed, of late years, it has, rather, been considered in a moral view; yet, still, it is plain, it took its rise from imagery; for, in the frontispiece of the Universal History, is engraved an upright column, with the above-mentioned motto beneath; a sufficient proof of my assertion. Mr. Hogarth was the first person that contradicted this erroneous notion; he published a treatise,† in order to shew, that the line of beauty is serpentine; agreeing in this with the ancients, who worshipped the goddess of beauty under a conical form, as at Paphos, in the island of Cyprus. The medals struck, when a Roman emperor visited the temple, confirming it; of which Fig. I. is a representation.



No. 1.



No. 2.

* Beauty consists in a right line.

† Analysis of Beauty, 4to. Price 15s.

Simulacrum deæ non effigie humanæ, continuus orbis latiore initio tenuem in ambitum metæ modo exurgens. Et ratio in obscuro. Tacitus Hist. lib. 2. So again, Venus a Paphiis colitur, cujus simulacrum nulli rei magis assimilè, quam albæ pyramidi.† Maximus Tyrius, ann. 157. Hence, it appears, that our author has revived what, for many years, laid buried in oblivion. Now, compare this plate to that beside it, (Fig. 2.) which is a true copy of the precise line of beauty, as it stands in the first explanatory print, in his Analysis, and you will find them extremely similar. Who, then, can doubt the judicious discovery, or hesitate a moment at adopting it; especially, when a view of every one of our author's publications corroborates the fact, they being allowed to charm the eye, which they could not do, were not every group pyramidical, and did not the serpentine line flow very conspicuously throughout?‡ Here, then, is judgment; here, is masterly care! sufficient to perpetuate our author's memory to the end of time. Thus much for the painter; now, for the man. As he must be a faithless biographer, who trumpets forth the perfections of his hero, and conceals his foibles; and as the best of us all are liable to little weaknesses, which we cannot disavow; on these considerations, I flatter myself, I may be allowed to say, that Mr. Hogarth could not avoid the infection of the times, but employed his talents in political matters, a subject none can take part in, be it on which side it will, without*

* The image of the goddess, not of human form, is an orbit, winding from a broad base, upwards, to a point.

† Venus is worshipped by the Paphians, under the similitude of something very much resembling a white pyramid.

‡ Two right lines, touching the outside of the figures in every group, will be found to meet, above, in a point, forming an angle within.

drawing on his head the malevolence of some. Whether led by principle or interest, I shall not say ; but, the print, below, sufficiently declares, he directed his artillery against the leaders of faction, and, held with the court ; a faithful servant to that master, in whose employment he was.*



This is a fine *caracatura*, and no small likeness of John Wilkes, then, member for the borough of Aylesbury, in the county of Buckingham ; a man, who stood forth as the leader of a party, formed against the administration. The

* Mr. Hogarth was, at that time, serjeant-painter to the king, which place he enjoyed to the day of his death.

views, with which he acted, are, now, publicly known, and, he lies under that disgrace, he gathered for himself. Liberty, he roared out on all occasions, and was the very bell-weather of his flock. With an eye to this, Mr. Hogarth has represented him, as having been twirling the cap of liberty (a fool's-cap) upon the end of a stick; for, a fool's-cap it proved to him, it having banished him his country, entailed upon him beggary, and, made him the laugh of a jeering populace. On the table, beside him, are two papers of the *North Briton*, of which he acknowledged himself the author.* In defence of this man, rose another, † who called himself his friend; one, who indeed, possessed extraordinary talents, as a writer, but, who was as remarkable for a viciousness of character: if he had any discretion, it was that of joining the popular side; but, that can hardly be called a discretion, when, had he lived a few years longer, he would, probably, have experienced an equal fate with his cotemporary, Wilkes. This man, a minister, once, I think, he called himself, though he afterwards wisely laid aside that sacred office, he could only disgrace; this man, I say, took up the pen against Mr. Hogarth, and in an epistle to him, which he published, charged him with envying every man that had any degree of excellence, and with his being a friend to no one: this naturally drew on him Mr. Hogarth's resentment, and was the occasion of his publishing the following print.

* No. 45, and 71, the first of which was burnt by the common hangman.

† Charles Churchill.



In order to enter into the spirit of this print, the reader must be told that the person it was designed to represent, was stout, lusty, and broad-shouldered, equally rough in his person, as his manners, and one who prided himself in being frank, and open; consequently, among the politer part of mankind, was considered as bearish. This, added to the received notion, that robustness proceeds from coarseness of living, and carries with it a stamp of vulgarity, determined our author to hold him forth in the character of a bear, or “a Russian Hercules, (yet, no small likeness of

the man) regaling himself" with a pot of porter, "after having killed the monster Caracatura, that so sorely galled his virtuous friend, the heaven-born WILKES ;"* and has admirably described by his hugging the pot, and the drops falling from his mouth, his secret enjoyment of that delicious drink. He has tied a band about his neck, alluding to his profession ; described it as torn, to intimate his having been in some fray ; and put ruffles about his paws, in order to ridicule his general custom of wearing them. With his left paw, he holds a knotted club, which, by the letters N B, above, he would have us understand to be the North-Briton, a weekly publication he, and his friend, Mr. Wilkes, were engaged in : a production, Mr. Hogarth evidently considered, as containing little else than falsehood, by writing on this club, infamous fallacy, and describing its knots, as so many notorious, injurious lies. By way of enriching the piece, this picture is raised from the floor, on which lie a painter's pallet, and, a graver's tool, emblems of our author's joint profession, by two or three books, on one of which is entituled, *A new way to pay old debts*, a comedy, by Massinger ; on another is written, Great George-street, † *a list of the subscribers to the North-Briton* ; with a begging-box, over it, to intimate their writing that paper merely for support. On one side is Trump, a faithful dog of Mr. Hogarth's, contemptuously treating the epistle that gave rise to this print : on the other, a political painting, to the following purpose : in one place, Mr. Pitt ‡ is represented sitting at his ease, with a millstone hanging over his head, on which is written, 3000l ;§ firing a mortar-piece, levelled at a dove,

* These words, between inverted commas, are Mr. Hogarth's own words, engraved at the bottom of the plate.

† The place where Mr. Wilkes resided.

‡ Since Earl of Chatham.

§ Alluding to his saying, Hanover was a mill-stone round the neck of

bearing an olive-branch, (the symbol of peace) perched on the standard of England. He is attended, on each hand, by the two giants of Guildhall,* with pipes in their mouths, referring to the support he met with from the city of London; particularly, that of a wealthy American.† One of these giants is putting a crown on the hero's head, as if aiming at supreme power; the other is holding in his hand, a shield, containing the Austrian arms, which Mr. Pitt is spurning from his feet. On the other side, is Mr. Hogarth, leading Wilkes and Churchill in a string; the first described as a monkey, riding on a hobby horse, with the cap of liberty on the top of it, and the North-Briton in his hand: the second, as a muzzled bear, ruffled, with a band about his neck, and a laced hat upon his head, ‡ he flogging them, and making them dance to the scrapings of a fiddler, designed to represent a nobleman, § who patronized them in the year 1763, when this print was published, who, for his unmeaning face, has ever been described without a feature. It would be folly to animadvert on the subject of this painting the circumstances being well known, (it being a temporal matter) and now out of date. Suffice it to say, it, at that time, answered our author's purpose, and was much admired by the public. ||

England, on account of the expences attending it; and, his afterwards adding to the public expences, by accepting a pension of 3000*l.* a year.

* Two wooden figures, erected in Guildhall. † Alderman Beckford.

‡ Mr. Churchill, though a clergyman, generally appeared in ruffles, and a laced hat. § Earl Temple.

|| At the bottom of the plate, are the following lines:

— But he had a club, this dragon to drub,
Or he had ne'er don't, I warrant ye.—

DRAGON OF WANTLEY.

* * * For the lines at the bottom of the several plates, Mr. Hogarth was obliged to Dr. Hoadley, son of the bishop of Winchester, and some others.

Permit me, now, to say, during the publication of this work, in numbers, I have been blamed by some, for making the pages breathe so great an air of piety; and censured by others, for here and there an indecent, or unbecoming expression. With respect to both, I endeavoured to avoid them, as far as was consistent with my original plan. While I moralized, I studied to explain; and while I explained, I studied to moralize. Some there are, that can never approve; I address not myself to such, but to the candid reader, who, in censuring, knows how to make allowance, and in condemning, has mercy, sometimes, to acquit. However culpable I may have been, with regard to the charge brought against me, I have taken some pains to do my author justice, having suffered nothing to escape me of moment or importance. I have also, with the approbation of his widow, given the public a complete edition* of the

* "Complete edition." This expression is almost literally correct even to the present day; although since the time of Hogarth, a number of his less interesting works have become more or less familiar to the public, from the hands of other engravers. Of this secondary class, the history is often involved in painful controversy, as the originals neither satisfied patrons or critics, when Hogarth departed from his own truly original line.

Even Wilkes and Churchill, with all their irritation and anger, are candid on this point. "I will do him the justice," says Wilkes, "to say that he possesses the rare talent of gibbeting in colours, and that in most of his works, he has been a very good moral Satirist. His forte is there and he should have kept to it." Churchill alludes as follows to the happier works of his antagonist.

"Where a plain story to the eye is told,
Which we perceive the moment we behold."

The selection made by Dr. Trusler, was in fact very copious, and it may well be pruned of a few subjects, such as do not assort with the main intention of the author; as also one particular set of prints; the

works of that celebrated artist, and that at a price much less than any of the copies have been ever sold for. As a copy, this small edition may claim the preference; for,

re-engraving of which would only perpetuate many cruelties which in the present state of society, are thanks to providence, forgotten; the "Four Stages of Cruelty,"—the subjects of which are too painful for contemplation. On the other hand will be added, "Taste in High Life" and the "Politician" as appearing to be the only ones of his posthumous works, necessary to complete that highest class of Hogarth's productions, which is the most interesting, because the most easily understood.

As this little volume, therefore, will be found to contain every thing by which our great artist is most advantageously known, it may be emphatically styled the *WORKS OF HOGARTH*.

Upon these, as being the chief favourites even of himself, his original genius and invention appear to have been completely poured out; yet such is the interest attached to his name, that it requires the intervention of critical acumen to know where to stop either in admiration or pursuit.

The Priced Catalogues of the most eminent Sales, afford full evidence that a Collector may expend from one to three hundred guineas in the purchase of the original Prints; while such collections have rarely, if ever, been brought to re-sale without enhancing the wealth of their owners. Those, however, who cannot afford so to luxuriate may at the same time console themselves with the following discriminative remarks from the Monthly Review upon Mr. Samuel Ireland's "Graphic Illustrations of Hogarth;" which consist of the mere scraps of Hogarth's portfolio, and copies of the impressions of his engravings on silver plate in his early days. "We shall take our leave of Mr. Ireland with thanking him for the amusement with which he has furnished us. We cannot, however, help observing, that Hogarth's claim to praise and admiration will rest on those of his productions which are most common, and most easily procured; and that our opinion of this incomparable Artists' talents, is not heightened by the specimens presented to us in this Volume." (Vol. XVII. 2d. Series.)

As for the pretensions of the present work, it seems in the first place to offer itself as a strikingly agreeable Travelling Companion. Secondly, as a pleasing Key to a part of the stores of the wealthy Collector—and,

to give the engraver his due, they have great spirit and delicacy: whereas such other impressions as have been hitherto published are of so poor a nature, as to be a disgrace to the memory of Mr. Hogarth, a manifest injustice to his family, and a gross imposition on the public.

lastly, as an economical succedaneum for those, who having but a small library, may have excluded this delightful author on the objection of bulk as well as of expensiveness.

It need only be remarked, that in the present improved state of the Arts, it is hoped to preserve the original spirit and manner of Hogarth, yet more perfectly than ever,—*the whole of the plates being entirely new, and engraved expressly for this edition.*

* * * For the complete List of ENGRAVINGS see the end of the Work.



W. J. Wood, sc.

THE HARLOT'S PROGRESS. — PL. I.

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