

LUIGI LANZI



THE HISTORY OF ITALIAN PAINTING

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When detached or individual histories become so numerous that they can neither be easily collected nor perused, the public interest requires a writer capable of arranging and embodying them in the form of a general historical narrative; not, indeed, by a minute detail of their whole contents, but by selecting from each that which appears most interesting and instructive. Hence it mostly happens, that the diffuse compositions of earlier ages are found to give place to compendiums, and to succinct history. If this desire has prevailed in former times, it has been, and now is, more especially the characteristic of our own. We live in an age highly favourable, in one sense at least, to the cultivation of intellect: the boundaries of science are now extended beyond what our forefathers could have hoped, much less foreseen; and we become anxious only to discover the readiest methods of obtaining a competent knowledge, at least, of several sciences, since it is impossible to acquire them all. On the other hand, the ages preceding ours, since the revival of learning, being more occupied about words than things, and admiring certain objects that now seem trivial to the generality of readers, have produced historical compositions, the separate nature of which demands combination, no less than their prolixity requires abridgment.

If these observations are applicable to other branches of history, they are especially so to the history of painting. Its

materials are found ready prepared, scattered through numerous memoirs of artists of every school which, from time to time, have been given to the public: and additional articles are supplied by dictionaries of art, letters on painting, guides to several cities, catalogues of various collections, and by many tracts relating to different artists, which have been published in Italy. But these accounts, independent of want of connexion, are not useful to the generality of readers. Who, indeed, could form a just idea of painting in Italy by perusing the works of certain historians of latter ages, and some even of our own time, which abound in invectives, and in attempts to exalt favourite masters above the artists of all other schools; and which confer eulogies indiscriminately upon professors of first, second, or third-rate merit?^[2] How few are there who feel interested in knowing all that is said of artists with so much verbosity by Vasari, Pascoli, or Baldinucci; their low jests, their amours, their private affairs, and their eccentricities? What do we learn by being informed of the jealousies of the Florentine artists, the quarrels of the Roman, or the boasts of the Bolognian schools? Who can endure the verbal accuracy with which their wills and testaments are recorded, even to the subscription of the notary, as if the author had been drawing up a legal document; or the descriptions of their stature and physiognomy, more minute than the ancients afford us of Alexander or Augustus?^[3] Not that I object to the introduction of such particulars in the lives of the great luminaries of art: in a Raffaello or a Caracci minute circumstances derive interest from the subject; but how intolerable do they become in the life of an ordinary individual, where the principal incidents are but little interesting? Suetonius has not written the lives of his Cæsars and his grammarians in the same manner: the former he has rendered familiar to the reader; the latter are merely noticed and passed over.

The tastes of individuals, however, are different, and some people delight in minutiae, as it regards both the present and the past; and since it may be of utility to those who may hereafter be inclined to give a very full and perfect history of every thing relating to Italian painting, let us view with indulgence those who have employed themselves in compiling lives so copious, and let those who have time to spare, beguile it with their perusal. At the same time, due regard should be paid to that very respectable class of readers, who, in a history of painting, would rather contemplate the artist than the man; and who are less solicitous to become acquainted with the character of a single painter, whose solitary and insulated history cannot prove instructive, than with the genius, the method, the invention, and the style of a great number of artists, with their characteristics, their merits, and their rank, the result of which is a history of the whole art.

To this object there is no one whom I know who has hitherto dedicated his pen, although it seems to be recommended no less by the passion indulged by princes for the fine arts, than by the general diffusion of a knowledge of them among all ranks. The habit of travelling, rendered more familiar to private persons by the example of many great sovereigns, the traffic in pictures, now become a branch of commerce important to Italy, and the philosophic genius of this age, which shuns prolixity in every study, and requires systematic arrangement, are additional incentives to the task. It is true that very pleasing and instructive biographical sketches of the most celebrated painters have been published by M. d'Argenville, in France; and various epitomes have since appeared, in which the style of painting alone is discussed.^[4] But without taking into account the corruptions of the names of our countrymen in which their authors have indulged, or their omission of celebrated Italians, while they record less eminent artists of

other countries, no work of this sort, and still less any dictionary, can afford us a systematic history of painting: none of these exhibit those pictures, if we may be allowed the expression, in which we may, at a glance, trace the progress and series of events; none of them exhibit the principal masters of the art in a sufficiently conspicuous point of view, while inferior artists are reduced to their proper size and station: far less can we discover in them those epochs and revolutions of the art, which the judicious reader most anxiously desires to know, as the source from which he may trace the causes that have contributed to its revival or its decline; or from which he may be enabled to recollect the series, and the arrangement of the facts narrated. The history of painting has a strong analogy to literary, to civil, and to sacred history; it too requires, from time to time, the aid of certain beacons, some particular distinction in regard to places, times, or events, that may serve to divide it into epochs, and mark its successive stages. Deprive it of these, and it degenerates, like other history, into a chaos of names more calculated to load the memory than to inform the understanding.

To supply this hitherto neglected branch of Italian history, to contribute to the advancement of the art, and to facilitate the study of the different styles in painting, were the three objects I proposed to myself when I began the work which I am now about to lay before the indulgent reader. My intention was to form a compendious history of all our schools, in two volumes; adopting, with little variation, Pliny's division of the country into Upper and Lower Italy. It was my design to comprehend in the first volume the schools of Lower Italy; because in it the reviving arts came earlier to maturity; and in the second to include the schools of Upper Italy, which were more tardy in attaining to celebrity. The first part of my work appeared at Florence in 1792: the second I was obliged to defer to another

opportunity, and the succeeding years have so shaken my constitution, that I have scarcely been able to bring it to a conclusion, even with the assistance of many amanuenses and correctors of the press.^[5] One advantage, however, has been derived from this delay; and that is, a knowledge of the opinion of the public, a tribunal from which no writer can appeal; and I have been thus enabled to prepare a new edition conformable to its decision.^[6] I have understood through various channels, that an additional number of names and of notices were necessary to afford satisfaction to the public; and this I have accomplished, without abandoning my plan of a compendious history. Nor does the Florentine edition on this account become useless: it will even be preferred by many to that published at Bassano; the inhabitants, for instance, of Lower Italy will be pleased to possess a work on their most illustrious painters, without concerning themselves about accounts of other places.

To a new work, then, so much more extensive than the former, I prefix a preface almost entirely new. The plan is not wholly my own, nor altogether that of others. Richardson^[7] suggested that some historian should collect the scattered remarks on art, especially on painting, and should point out its progress and decline through successive ages. He has not even omitted to give us a sketch, which he brought down to the time of Giordano. Mengs^[8] accomplished the task more perfectly in the form of a letter, where he judiciously distinguished all the periods of the art, and has thus laid the foundations of a more enlarged history. Were I to follow their example, the chief masters of every school would be considered together, and we should be under the necessity of passing from one country to another, according as painting acquired a new lustre from their talents, or was debased by a wrong use of the great example of those artists. This method might be easily

pursued, if the subject were to be treated in a general point of view, such as Pliny has considered and transmitted it to posterity; but it is not equally adapted to the arrangement of a history so fully particular as Italy seems to require. Besides the styles introduced by the most celebrated painters, such infinite diversities of a mixed character, often united with originality of manner, have arisen in every school, that we cannot easily reduce them to any particular standard: and the same artists at different periods, and in different pictures, have adopted styles so various, that at one time they appear imitators of Titian, at another of Raffaello, or of Correggio. We cannot, therefore, adopt the method of the naturalist, who having arranged the vegetable kingdom, for example, in classes more or less numerous, according to the systems of Tournefort or of Linnæus, can easily reduce a plant, wherever it may happen to grow, to a particular class, adding a name and description, at once precise, characteristic, and permanent. In a complete history it is necessary to distinguish each style from every other: nor do I know any more eligible method of performing this task, than by composing a separate history of each school. In this I follow Winckelmann, the best historian of ancient art in design, who specified as many different schools as the nations that produced them. A similar plan seems to me to have been pursued by Rollin, in his History of Nations, who has thus been enabled to record a prodigious mass of names and events within the compass of a few volumes, in the clearest order.

The method I follow in treating of each school is analogous to that prescribed to himself by Sig. Antonio Maria Zanetti, [9] in his *Pittura Veneziana*, a work of its kind highly instructive, and well arranged. What he has done, in speaking of his own, I have attempted in the other schools of Italy. I accordingly omit the names of living painters, and

do not notice every picture of deceased artists, as it would interrupt the connexion of the narrative, and would render the work too voluminous, but content myself with commending some of their best productions. I first give a general character of each school; I then distinguish it into three, four, or more epochs, according as its style underwent changes with the change of taste, in the same way that the eras of civil history are deduced from revolutions in governments, or other remarkable events. A few celebrated painters, who have swayed the public taste, and given a new tone to the art, are placed at the head of each epoch; and their style is particularly described, because the general and characteristic taste of the age has been formed upon their models. Their immediate pupils, and other disciples of the school, follow their great masters; and without a repetition of the general character, reference is made to what each has borrowed, altered, or added to the style of the founder of the school, or at most such character is cursorily noticed. This method, though not susceptible of a strict chronological order, is, on account of the connexion of ideas, much better adapted to a history of art than an alphabetic arrangement, which too frequently interrupts the notices of schools and eras; or than the method pursued in annals, by which we are often compelled to make mention of the scholar before the master, should he survive the former; or that of separate lives, which introduces much repetition, by obliging the writer to bestow praises on the pupil for the same style which he also commends in the master, and to notice in each individual that which was the general character of the age in which he lived.

For the sake of perspicuity, I have generally separated from historical painters artists in inferior branches, such as painters of portraits, of landscape, of animals, of flowers and of fruit, of sea-pieces, of perspectives, of drolls, and all who merit a place in such classes. I have also taken notice of

some arts which are analogous to painting, and though they differ from it in the materials employed, or the manner of using them, may still be included in the art; for example, engraving of prints, inlaid and mosaic work, and embroidering tapestry. Vasari, Lomazzo, and several other writers on the fine arts, have mentioned them; and I have followed their example; contenting myself with noticing, in each of those arts, only what has appeared most worthy of being recorded. Each might be the subject of a separate work; and some of them have long had their own peculiar historians, and in particular the art of engraving. By this method, in which I may boast such great examples, I am not without hopes of affording satisfaction to my readers. I am, however, more apprehensive in regard to my selection of artists; the number of whom, whatsoever method is adopted, may to some appear by far too limited, and to others too greatly extended. But criticism will not so readily apply to the names of the most illustrious artists, whom I have included, nor to those of very inferior character, whom I trust I have omitted; except a few that have some claim to be mentioned, from their connexion with celebrated masters.^[10] The accusation then of having noticed some, and omitted others, will apply to me only on account of artists of a middle class, that can be neither well reckoned among the senate, the equestrian order, nor vulgar herd of painters; they constitute the class of mediocrity. The adjustment of limits is a frequent cause of legal contention; and the subject of art now under discussion, may be considered like a dispute concerning boundaries. It may often admit of doubt whether a particular artist approaches more nearly to the class of merit or of insignificance; which is, in other words, whether he should or should not obtain a place in a history of the art. Under such uncertainty, which I have several times encountered, I have more usually inclined to the side of lenity than of severity; especially

when the artist has been noticed with a degree of commendation by former authors. We ought to bow to public opinion, which rarely blames us for noticing mediocrity, but frequently for passing it over in silence. Books on painting abound with complaints against Orlandi and Guarienti, for their omissions of certain artists. Still more frequently are authors censured, when the Guide to a city points out some altar-piece by a native artist, who is not named in our Dictionaries of Painting. The describers of collections repeat similar complaints in regard to every painting bearing the signature of an artist whose name appears in no work of art. Collectors of prints do the same when they discover the name of some designer, of whom history is silent, affixed to an engraving. Thus, were we to consult the opinion of the public, the majority would be inclined to recommend copiousness, rather than to express satisfaction at a more discriminating selection of names. Almost all artists and amateurs belonging to every city, would be desirous that I should commemorate as many of their second rate painters as possible; and our selection, therefore, in this respect, nearly resembles the exercise of justice, which is generally applauded as long as it visits only the dwellings of others, but is cried down by each individual when it knocks at his own door. Thus a writer who is bound to observe impartiality towards every city, can scarcely shew great severity to artists of mediocrity in any. This too is not without reason; for to pass mediocrity in silence may be the study of a good orator, but not the office of a good historian. Cicero himself, in his treatise *De claris Oratoribus*, has given a place to less eloquent orators, and it may be observed that, after this example, the literary history of every people does not merely include its most classic writers, and those who approached nearest to them; but it adds short and concise accounts of authors less celebrated; and in the Iliad, which is a history of the heroic age, there are a few eminent leaders, many valiant soldiers, and a

prodigious crowd of others, whom the poet has transiently noticed. In our case, it is still more incumbent on the historian to give mediocrity a place along with the eminent and most excellent. Many books describe that class in terms so vague, and sometimes so discordant, that to form a proper estimate of their claims, we must introduce them among superior artists, as a sort of performers in third-rate parts. Such, however, I am not solicitous to exhibit very minutely, more especially when treating of painters in fresco, and generally of other artists, whose works are now unknown in collections, or add more to the bulk than the ornament of a gallery. Thus also in point of number, my work has maintained the character of a compendium: but if any of my readers, adopting the rigid maxim of Bellori, that, in the fine arts, as in poetry, mediocrity is not to be tolerated,^[11] should disdain the middle class of artists, he must look for the heads of schools, and for the most eminent painters: to these he may dedicate his attention, and turn his regard from the others like one,

"Cui altra cura stringa e morda
Che quella di colui che gli è davante."^[12]

Having described my plan, let us next consider the three objects originally proposed, of which the first was to present Italy with a history that may prove important to her fame. This delightful country is already indebted to Tiraboschi for a history of her literature, but she is still in want of a history of her arts. The history of painting, an art in which she is confessedly without a rival, I propose to supply, or at least to facilitate the attempt. In some departments of literature, and of the fine arts, we are equalled, or even surpassed by foreigners; and in others the palm is yet doubtful: but in painting, universal consent now yields the triumph to Italian genius, and foreigners are the more esteemed in proportion to their approach towards us. It is time then, for the honour

of Italy, to collect in one point of view, those observations on her painting, scattered through upwards of a hundred volumes, and to embody them in what Horace terms *series et junctura*; without which the work cannot be pronounced a history. I will not conceal, that the author of the "History of Italian Literature" above mentioned, frequently animated me to this undertaking, as a sequel to his own work. He also wished me to subjoin other anecdotes to those already published, and to substitute more authentic documents for the inaccuracies abounding in our Dictionaries of painting. I have attended to both these objects. The reader will here find various schools never hitherto illustrated, and an entire school, that of Ferrara, now first described from the manuscripts of Baruffaldi and of Crespi; and in other schools he will often observe names of fresh artists, which I have either collected from ancient MSS.^[13] and the correspondence of my learned friends, or deciphered on old paintings. Although such pictures are confined to cabinets, it cannot prove useless to extend a more intimate acquaintance with their authors. The reader will also meet with many new observations on the origin of painting, and on its diffusion in Italy, formerly a fruitful subject of debate and contention; and likewise here and there with some original reflections on the masters, to whom various disciples may be traced; a branch of history, the most uncertain of any. Old writers of respectability often mention Raffaello, Correggio, or some other celebrated artist, as the master of a painter, without any better foundation than a similarity of style; just as the credulous heathens imagined one hero to be the son of Hercules, because he was strong; another of Mercury, because he was ingenious; a third of Neptune, because he had performed several long voyages. Errors like these are easily corrected when they are accompanied by some inadvertency in the writer; as for instance, where he has not been aware that the age of the

disciple does not correspond with that of his supposed master. Occasionally, however, their detection is attended with more difficulty; and in particular when the artist, whose reputation is wholly founded upon that of his master, represented himself in foreign parts, as the disciple of men of celebrity, whom he scarcely knew by sight. Of this we have an example in Agostino Tassi, and more recently in certain *soidisant* disciples of Mengs; to whom it scarcely appears that he ever so much as said, "*Gentlemen, how do you do?*"

Finally, the reader will find some less obvious notices relating to the name, the country, and the age of different artists. The deficiency of our Dictionaries in interesting names, together with their inaccuracy, are common subjects of complaint. I can excuse the compilers of these works; I know how easily we may be misled in regard to names which have been often gathered from vulgar report, or even from authors who differ in point of orthography, some giving opposite readings of the same name. But it is quite necessary that such mistakes should once for all be cleared up. The index of this work will form a new Dictionary of Painters, certainly more copious, and perhaps more accurate than usual, although it might be still further improved, especially by consulting archives and manuscripts.^[14]

The second object which I had in view was to advance the interests of the art as much as lay in my power. It was of old observed that examples have a more powerful influence on the arts than any precepts can possess; and this is particularly true in respect to painting. Whoever writes history upon the model of the learned ancients, ought not only to narrate events, but to investigate their secret sources and their causes. Now these will be here developed, tracing the progress of painting as it advanced or declined

in each school; and these causes being invariable, point out the means of its improvement, by shewing what ought to be pursued and what avoided. Such observations are not of importance to the artist alone, but have a reference also to other individuals. In the Roman school, during its second epoch, I perceive that the progress of the arts invariably depends on certain principles universally adopted in that age, according to which artists worked, and the public decided. A general history, by pointing out the best maxims of art, may contribute considerably to make them known and regarded; and hence artists can execute, and others approve or direct, on principles no longer uncertain and questionable, nor deduced from the manner of a particular school, but founded on maxims unerring and established, and strengthened by the uniform practice of all schools and all ages. We may add, that in a history so diversified, numerous examples occur suited to the genius of different students, who have often to lament their want of success from this circumstance alone, that they had neglected to follow the path in which nature had destined them to tread. On the influence of examples I shall add no more: should any one be desirous also of precepts under every school, he will find them given, not indeed by me, but by those who have written more ably on the art, and whom I have diligently consulted with regard to different masters, as I shall hereafter mention.

My third object was to facilitate an acquaintance with the various styles of painting. The artist or amateur indeed, who has studied the manner of all ages and of every school, on meeting with a picture can very readily assign it, if not to a particular master, at least to a certain style, much as antiquarians, from a consideration of the paper and the characters, are enabled to assign a manuscript to a particular era; or as critics conjecture the age and place in which an anonymous author flourished, from his

phraseology. With similar lights we proceed to investigate the school and era of artists; and by a diligent examination of prints, drawings, and other relics belonging to the period, we at length determine the real author. Much of the uncertainty, with regard to pictures, arises from a similitude between the style of different masters: these I collect together under one head, and remark in what one differs from the other. Ambiguity often arises from comparing different works of the same painter, when the style of some of them does not seem to accord with his general manner, nor with the great reputation he may have acquired. On account of such uncertainty, I usually point out the master of each artist, because all at the outset imitate the example offered by their teachers; and I, moreover, note the style formed, and adhered to by each, or abandoned for another manner; I sometimes mark the age in which he lived, and his greater or less assiduity in his profession. By an attentive consideration of such circumstances, we may avoid pronouncing a picture spurious, which may have been painted in old age, or negligently executed. Who, for instance, would receive as genuine all the pictures of Guido, were it not known that he sometimes affected the style of Caracci, of Calvart, or of Caravaggio; and at other times pursued a manner of his own, in which, however, he was often very unequal, as he is known to have painted three or four different pieces in a single day? Who would suppose that the works of Giordano were the production of the same artist, if it were not known that he aspired to diversify his style, by adopting the manner of various ancient artists? These are indeed well known facts, but how many are there yet unnoted that are not unworthy of being related, if we wish to avoid falling into error? Such will be found noticed in my work, among other anecdotes of the various masters, and the different styles.

I am aware that to become critically acquainted with the diversity of styles is not the ultimate object to which the travels and the eager solicitude of the connoisseur aspire. His object is to make himself familiar with the handling of the most celebrated masters, and to distinguish copies from originals. Happy should I be, could I promise to accomplish so much! Even they might consider themselves fortunate, who dedicate their lives to such pursuits, were they enabled to discover any short, general, and certain rules for infallibly determining this delicate point! Many rely much upon history for the truth. But how frequently does it happen that the authority of an historian is cited in favour of a family picture, or an altar-piece, the original of which having been disposed of by some of the predecessors, and a copy substituted in its place, the latter is supposed to be a genuine painting! Others seem to lay great stress on the importance of places, and hesitate to raise doubts respecting any specimen they find contained in royal and select galleries, assuming that they really belong to the artists referred to in the gallery descriptions and catalogues. But here too they are liable to mistake; inasmuch as many private individuals, as well as princes, unable to purchase ancient pictures at any price, contented themselves with such copies of their imitators as approached nearest to the old masters. Some indeed were made by professors purposely despatched by princes in search of them; as in the instance of Rodolph I., who employed Giuseppe Enzo, a celebrated copyist. (See Boschini, p. 62, and Orlandi, on Gioseffo Ains di Berna.) External proofs, therefore, are insufficient, without adding a knowledge of different manners. The acquisition of such discrimination is the fruit only of long experience, and deep reflection on the style of each master: and I shall endeavour to point out the manner in which it may be obtained.^[15]

To judge of a master we must attend to his design, and this is to be acquired from his drawings, from his pictures, or, at least, from accurate engravings after them. A good connoisseur in prints is more than half way advanced in the art of judging pictures; and he who aims at this must study engravings with unremitting assiduity. It is thus his eye becomes familiarized to the artist's method of delineating and foreshortening the figure, to the air of his heads and the casting of his draperies; to that action, that peculiarity of conception, of disposing, and of contrasting, which are habitual to his character. Thus is he, as it were, introduced to the different families of youths, of children, of women, of old men, and of individuals in the vigour of life, which each artist has adopted as his own, and has usually exhibited in his pictures. We cannot be too well versed in such matters, so minute or almost insensible are the distinctions between the imitators of one master, (such as Michelangiolo, for example,) who have perhaps studied the same cartoon, or the same statues, and, as it were, learned to write after the same model.

More originality is generally to be discovered in colouring, a branch of the art formed by a painter rather on his own judgment, than by instruction. The amateur can never attain experience in this branch who has not studied many pictures by the same master; who has not observed his selection of colours, his method of separating, of uniting, and of subduing them; what are his local tints, and what the general tone that harmonizes the colours he employs. This tint, however clear and silvery in Guido and his followers, bright and golden in Titiano and his school, and thus of the rest, has still as many modifications as there are masters in the art. The same remark extends to middle tints and to chiaroscuro, in which each artist employs a peculiar method.

These are qualities which catch the eye at a distance, yet they will not always enable the critic to decide with certainty; whether, for instance, a certain picture is the production of Vinci, or Luini, who imitated him closely; whether another be an original picture by Barocci, or an exact copy from the hand of Vanni. In such cases judges of art approach closer to the picture with a determination to examine it with the same care and accuracy as are employed in a judicial question, upon the recognition of hand-writing. Fortunately for society, nature has granted to every individual a peculiar character in this respect, which it is not easy to counterfeit, nor to mistake [Pg xxviii]for any other person's writing. The hand, habituated to move in a peculiar manner, always retains it: in old age the characters may be more slowly traced, may become more negligent or more heavy; but the form of the letters remains the same. So it is in painting. Every artist not only retains this peculiarity, but one is distinguished by a full charged pencil; another by a dry but neat finish; the work of one exhibits blended tints, that of another distinct touches; and each has his own manner of laying on the colours:^[16] but even in regard to what is common to so many, each has a peculiar handling and direction of the pencil, a marking of his lines more or less waved, more or less free, and more or less studied, by which those truly skilled from long experience are enabled, after a due consideration of all circumstances, to decide who was the real author. Such judges do not fear a copyist, however excellent. He will, perhaps, keep pace with his model for a certain time, but not always; he may sometimes shew a free, but commonly a timid, servile, and meagre pencil; he will not be long able, with a free hand, to keep his own style concealed under the manner of another, more especially in regard to less important points, such as the penciling of the hair, and in the fore- and back-grounds of the picture.^[17] Certain observations on the canvas and

the priming ground may sometimes assist inquiry; and hence some have endeavoured to attain greater certainty by a chemical analysis of the colours. Diligence is ever laudable when exerted on a point so nice as ascertaining the hand-work of a celebrated master. It may prevent our paying ten guineas for what may not be worth two; or placing in a choice collection pictures that will not do it credit; while to the curious it affords scientific views, instead of creating prejudices that often engender errors. That mistakes should happen is not surprising. A true connoisseur is still more rare than a good artist. His skill is the result of only indirect application; it is acquired amidst other pursuits, and divides the attention with other objects; the means of attaining it fall to the lot of few; and still fewer practise it successfully. Among the number of the last I do not reckon myself. By this work I pretend not, I repeat it, to form an accomplished connoisseur in painting: my object is to facilitate and expedite the acquisition of such knowledge. The history of painting is the basis of connoisseurship; by combining it, I supersede the necessity of referring to many books; by abbreviating it I save the time and labour of the student; and by arranging it in a proper manner on every occasion, I present him with the subject ready prepared and developed before him.

It remains, in the last place, that I should give some account of myself; of the criticisms that I, who am not an artist, have ventured to pass upon each painter: and, indeed, if the professors of the art had as much leisure and experience in writing as they have ability, every author might resign to them the field. The propriety of technical terms, the abilities of artists, and the selection of specimens of art, are usually better understood, even by an indifferent artist, than by the learned connoisseur: but since those occupied in painting have not sufficient leisure to write, others, assisted by them, may be permitted to undertake the office.^[18]

By the mutual assistance which the painter has afforded to the man of letters, and the man of letters to the artist, the history of painting has been greatly advanced. The merits of the best painters are already so ably discussed that a modern historian can treat the subject advantageously. The criticisms I most regard are those that come directly from professors of the art. We meet with few from the pen of Raphael, of Titian, of Poussin, and of other great masters; such as exist, however, I regard as most precious, and deserving the most careful preservation; for, in general, those who can best perform can likewise judge the best. Vasari, Lomazzo, Passeri, Ridolfi, Boschini, Zanotti, and Crespi, require, perhaps, to be narrowly watched in some passages where they allowed themselves to be surprised by a spirit of party: but, on the whole, they have an undoubted right to dictate to us, because they were themselves painters. Bellori, Baldinucci, Count Malvasia, Count Tassi, and similar writers, hold an inferior rank; but are not wholly destitute of authority: for though mere *dilettanti*, they have collected both the opinions of professors and of the public. This will at present suffice, with regard to the historians of the art: we shall notice each of them particularly under the school which he has described.

In pronouncing a criticism upon each artist I have adopted the plan of Baillet, the author of a voluminous history of works on taste, where he does not so frequently give his own opinion as that of others. Accordingly, I have collected the various remarks of connoisseurs, which were scattered through the pages of history; but I have not always cited my authorities, lest I should add too much to the dimensions of my book;^[19] nor have I regarded their opinion when they seemed to me to have been influenced by prejudice. I have availed myself of the observations of some approved critics, like Borghini, Fresnoy, Richardson, Bottari, Algarotti, Lazzarini, and Mengs; with others who have rather criticised

our painters than written their lives. I have also respected the opinions of[Pg xxxiii] living critics, by consulting different professors in Italy: to them I have submitted my manuscript; I have followed their advice, especially when it related to design, or any other department of painting, in which artists are almost the only adequate judges. I have conversed with many connoisseurs, who, in some points, are not less skilful than the professors of the art, and are even consulted by artists with advantage; as, for instance, on the suitableness of the subject, on the propriety of the invention and the expression, on the imitation of the antique, on the truth of the colouring. Nor have I failed to study the greatest part of the best productions of the schools of Italy; and to inform myself in the different cities what rank their least known painters hold among their connoisseurs; persuaded, as I am, that the most accurate opinion of any artist is formed where the greatest number of his works are to be seen, and where he is most frequently spoken of by his fellow citizens and by strangers. In this way, also, I have been enabled to do justice to the merits of several artists who had been passed over, either because the historian of their school had never beheld their productions, or had merely met with some early and trivial specimens in one city, being unacquainted with the more perfect and mature specimens they had produced elsewhere.

Notwithstanding my diligence I do not presume to offer this as a work to which much might not be added. It has never happened that a history, embracing so many objects, is at once produced perfect; though it may gradually be rendered so. The history earliest in point of time, becomes, in the end, the least in authority; and its greatest merit is in having paved the way to more finished performances. Perfection is still less to be expected in a compendium. The reader is here presented with the names of many artists and authors; but many others might have been admitted, whom

want of leisure or opportunity, but not of respect, has obliged us to omit. Here he will find a variety of opinions; but to these many others might have been added. There is no man, of whom all think alike. Baillet, just before mentioned, is a proof of this, with regard to writers on literary subjects; and he who thinks the task worthy of his pains might demonstrate it much more fully with respect to different painters. Each judges by principles peculiar to himself: Bonarruoti stigmatized as drivelling, Pietro Perugino and Francia, both luminaries of the art; Guido, if we may credit history, was disapproved of by Cortona; Caravaggio by Zuccherò; Guercino by Guido; and, what seems more extraordinary, Domenichino by most of the artists who flourished at Rome, when he painted his finest pictures.^[20] Had these artists written of their rivals they either would have condemned them, or spoken less favourably of them than unprejudiced individuals. Hence it is that connoisseurs will frequently be found to approach nearer the truth, in forming their estimate, than artists; the former adopt the impartial feelings of the public, while the latter allow themselves to be influenced by motives of envy or of prejudice. Innumerable similar disputes are still maintained concerning several artists, who, like different kinds of aliment, are found to be disagreeable or grateful to different palates. To hold the happy mean, exempted from all party spirit, is as impossible as to reconcile the opinions of mankind, which are as multifarious as are the individuals of the species.

Amid such discrepancy of opinion I have judged it expedient to avoid the most controverted points; in others, to subscribe to the decision of the majority; to allow to each his particular opinion;^[21] but not, if possible, to disappoint the reader, desirous of learning what is most authentic and generally received. Ancient writers appear to have pursued this plan when treating of the professors of any art, in which

they themselves were mere amateurs; nor could it arise from any other circumstance that Cicero, Pliny, and Quintilian, express themselves upon the Greek artists in the same manner. Their opinions coincide, because[Pg xxxvii] that of the public was unanimous. I am aware that it is difficult to obtain the opinion of the public concerning the more modern artists, but it is not difficult with regard to those on whom much has been already written. I am also aware that public opinion accords not at all times with truth, because "it often happens to incline to the wrong side of the question." This, however, is a rare occurrence in the fine arts,^[22] nor does it militate against an historian who aims more at fidelity of narrative, and impartiality of public opinion, than the discussion of the relative merit or correctness of tastes.

My work is divided into six volumes; and I commence by treating in the two first volumes of that part of Italy, which, through the genius of Da Vinci, Michelangiolo, and Raffaello, became first conspicuous, and first exhibited a decided character in painting. Those artists were the ornaments of the Florentine and Roman schools, from which I proceed to two others, the Sienese and Neapolitan. About the same time Giorgione, Tiziano, and Coreggio, began to flourish in Italy; three artists, who as much advanced the art of [Pg xxxviii]colouring, as the former improved design; and of these luminaries of Upper Italy I treat in the third and fourth volumes; since the number of the names of artists, and the many additions to this new impression, have induced me to devote two volumes to their merits. Then follows the school of Bologna, in which the attempt was made to unite the excellences of all the other schools: this commences the fifth volume; and on account of proximity it is succeeded by that of Ferrara, and Upper and Lower Romagna. The school of Genoa, which was late in acquiring celebrity, succeeds, and we conclude with that of Piedmont, which, though it

cannot boast so long a succession of artists as those of the other states, has merits sufficient to entitle it to a place in a history of painting. Thus the five most celebrated schools will be treated of in the order in which they arose; in like manner as the ancient writers on painting began with the Asiatic school, which was followed by the Grecian, and this last was subdivided into the Attic and Sicyonian; to which in process of time succeeded the Roman school.^[23] The sixth and last volume contains an ample index to the whole, quite indispensable to render the work more extensively useful, and to give it its full advantage. In assigning artists to any school I have paid more regard to other circumstances than the place of their nativity; to their education, their style, their place of residence in particular, and the instruction of their pupils: circumstances, indeed, which are sometimes found so blended and confused, that several cities may contend for one painter, as they are said to have done for Homer. In such cases I do not pretend to decide; the object of my labours being only to trace the vicissitudes of the art in various places, and to point out those artists who have exercised an influence over them; not to determine disputes, unpleasant in themselves, and wholly foreign to my undertaking.

[2] See Algarotti, *Saggio sopra la Pittura*, in the chapter *Della critica necessaria al Pittore*.

[3] For this fault, which the Greeks used to call *Acribia*, Pascoli has been sharply reproved. He has, in fact, informed us which among the several artists could boast a becoming and proportionate nose, which had it short or long, aquiline or snubbed, very sharp or very hollow. He most generally observes that such an artist was neither tall nor large of stature, neither handsome nor plain in his physiognomy; and who would have thought it worth his while to inquire about it? The sole utility that can possibly attend such inquiries is, the chance of detecting some impostor, who might attempt to palm upon us for a genuine portrait the likeness of some other individual. Engravings, however, are the best security against similar impositions.

[4] In the *Magasin Encyclopédique* of Paris, (An. viii. tom. iv. p. 63), there is a work in two volumes, edited in the German language at Gottingen, announced as well as commended. The first volume is dated 1798, the second 1801, from

the pen of note the learned Sig. Florillo, the title of which we insert in the second index. It consists of a history of painting upon the plan of the present one; but there is some variation in the order of the schools.

[5] It was finished in the year 1796, and it is now given, with various additions and corrections throughout. Many churches, galleries, and pictures, are here mentioned which are no longer in existence; but this does not interfere with its truth, inasmuch as the title of the work is confined to the beforementioned year. Numerous friends have lent me their assistance in the completion of this edition, and in particular the cavalier Gio. de' Lazara, a gentleman of Padua, who possesses a rich collection, both in books and MSS., and displays the utmost liberality in affording others the use of them. To this merit, in regard to the present work, he has likewise added that of revising and correcting it through the press, a favour which I could not have more highly estimated from any other hand, deeply versed as he is in the history of the fine arts.

[6] "Ut enim pictores, et qui signa faciunt, et vero etiam poetæ suum quisque opus à vulgo considerari vult, ut si quid reprehensum sit à pluribus id corrigatur... sic aliorum judicio permulta nobis et facienda et non facienda, et mutanda et corrigenda sunt." Cicero De Officiis, ii. c. 41.

[7] Treatise on Painting, tom. ii. p. 166.

[8] Opere, tom. ii. p. 108.

[9] A learned Venetian, skilled in the practice of design and of painting. He must not be confounded with Antonio Maria Zanetti, an eminent engraver, who revived the art of taking prints from wooden blocks with more than one colour, which was invented by Ugo da Carpi, but afterwards lost. He also wrote works, serviceable to the fine arts; and several of his letters may be seen in the second volume of *Lettere Pittoriche*. They are subscribed *Antonio Maria Zanetti, q. Erasmo*; but this is an error of the editor: it ought to be *q. Girolamo*, to distinguish him from the other, who was called *del q. Alessandro*. This mistake was detected by the accurate Vianelli, in his *Diario della Carriera*, p. 49.

[10] An amateur, who happens to be unacquainted with the fact, that there were various artists of the same name, as the Vecelli, Bassani, and Caracci, will never become properly acquainted with these families of painters; neither will he be competent to judge of certain pictures, which only attract the regard of the vulgar, because they truly boast the reputation of a great name.

[11] I do not admit this principle. Horace laid it down for the art of poetry alone, because it is a faculty that perishes when it ceases to give delight. Architecture, on the other hand, confers vast utility when it does not please, by presenting us with habitations; and painting, and sculpture, by preserving the features of men, and illustrious actions. Besides, let us recollect, that Horace denounces the production of inferior verses, because there is not space enough for them; "Non concessere columnæ," but it is not so with paintings of mediocrity. In any country Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, may be read, and he who has never read a poor poet, will write better than if he had read a hundred. But it is not every one

who can boast either in the houses or temples of his country, of possessing the works of good artists; and for purposes of worship or of ornament, the less excellent ones may suffice; wherefore these also produce some advantage.

[12] Like one who thinks of some other person than he that is before him.

[13] For the improvement of my latest edition, I am greatly indebted to the Prince Filippo Ercolani, who, having purchased from the heirs of Signor Marcello Oretti fifty-two manuscript volumes, which that indefatigable amateur, in the course of his studies, journeys, and observations, had compiled respecting the professors of the fine arts, their eras, and their labours, allowed materials to be drawn from them for various notes, by the Sig. Lazara, who superintended the edition. To the devoted attachment of these gentlemen to the fine arts, the public are indebted for much information, either wholly new, or hitherto little known.

[14] Vasari, from whom several epochs are taken, is full of errors in dates, as may be every where perceived. See Bottari's note on tom. ii. p. 79. The same observation applies generally to other authors, as Bottari remarks in a note on *Lettere Pittoriche*, tom. iv. p. 366. A similar objection is made to the Dictionary of P. Orlandi in another letter, tom. ii. p. 318, where it is termed "a useful work, but so full of errors, that one can derive no benefit from it without possessing the books there quoted." After three editions of this work, a fourth was printed in Venice, in 1753, corrected and enlarged by Guarienti, "but enough still remains to be done after his additions, even to increase it twofold." Bottari, *Lett. Pitt.* tom. iii. p. 353. See also Crespi *Vite de' Pittori Bolognesi*, p. 50. No one, who has not perused this book, would believe how often he defaces Orlandi in presuming to correct him; multiplying artists for every little difference with which authors wrote the name of the same man. Thus Pier Antonio Torre, and Antonio Torri, are with him two different men. Many of the articles, however, added by him, relating to artists unknown to P. Orlandi, are useful; so that this second Dictionary ought to be consulted with caution, not altogether rejected. The last edition, printed at Florence, in two volumes, contains the names of many painters, either lately dead, or still living, and often of very inferior merit, and on this account is little noticed in my history. This Dictionary, moreover, affords little satisfaction to the reader concerning the old masters, unless he possess a work printed at Florence in twelve volumes, entitled *Serie degli Uomini più illustri in Pittura*, to which the articles in it often refer. The *Dizionario Portatile*, by Mr. La Combe, is also a book of reference, not very valuable to those who look for exact information. We give a single instance of his inaccuracy in regard to the elder Palma; but our emendations have been chiefly directed towards the writers of Italy, from whom foreigners have, or ought to have borrowed, in writing respecting our artists.

[15] See Mr. Richardson's *Treatise on Painting*, tom. ii. p. 58; and M. D'Argenville's *Abrégé de la Vie des plus fameux Peintres*, tom. i. p. 65.

[16] "Some made use of pure colours, without blending one with the other; a practice well understood in the age of Titiano: others, as Coreggio, adopted a