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CANOVA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN, BY M. MORGAN, M. D. SURGEON
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*Canova first called to Paris—his Statue of Napoleon Bonaparte,
First Consul.*

At this period he had made the modest of a colossal statue of Ferdinand, King of Naples, and had finished a copy of his Perseus, with some variations, for Pologna; when Caeault, the French Minister at Rome, invited him in the name of the First Consul to Paris, in order to execute there a work of art. But he was so attached to Rome, and so unwilling to change his habits of living, that, for some time, he presented obstacles to leaving there. But being advised by the Pope himself, and others capable of judging of the advantage which might result to him from a compliance with the wishes of the First Consul, he at length consented to the request. His friend, D'Este, told him, "If it should become necessary to write your life, it will be gratifying to see your sepulchre registered and connected with great men and great events. It is well that a great artist should have something of variety and recreation connected with his fame, for readers who are always curious in such matters." He therefore departed for Paris, accompanied by his brother, George Baptiste; and the French Minister presented him with a beautiful carriage for the journey. The Pope gave him letters to his Legate, near the French Republic; and he was furnished with credentials from St. Cloud, of the most generous and liberal kind with regard to his expenses. On his arrival he was treated with the most marked attention and courtesy, and was introduced by the Legate to the Minister of the Interior, who immediately accompanied him to the Palace of St. Cloud. There, by the Secretary Bourrienne and the Governor General, he was presented to Bonaparte, who received him most kindly, and conversed freely and with great complaisance on various topics.

The ingenious artist begged permission to speak to the First Consul with the candour and simplicity which belonged to his character; and went on to explain to him, how Rome languished in indigence and poverty from the unfortunate state of the times, despoiled as she was of her ancient monuments, the palaces of the Popes going to ruin and decay, while the city was without money and without commerce.

"I will restore Rome," said Bonaparte; "I have the good of mankind at heart, and I will promote it. But what then would you have?" "Nothing," replied the sculptor, "but to obey your orders." "Make my statue," said Bonaparte, and took leave of him.

Three days afterwards, Canova returned to St. Cloud with the clay for the model, accompanied by his brother; and they breakfasted with Bonaparte and Josephine. Canova observed that a person having so much to do as the First Consul, would probably be fatigued with the waste of time in sitting for his likeness. "I am not wanting of something to do, indeed," said Bonaparte. Canova then commenced the statue, which in five days was finished in gigantic proportions.

While Canova was working at the model, the First Consul read, or conversed jocularly with Josephine, or talked familiarly with the artist about his particular profession. Among other things they spoke of the taking from Rome of the ancient Greek monuments, and other precious objects of the fine arts. On this subject the artist could not restrain his feelings and his grief, at the great loss and injury to Rome. "Believe me," said he, "this lamentation is not mine alone and that of Italians; the French themselves, who possess such high taste and sense of dignity of the fine arts, participate also in our grief; and a paper has been published here in Paris to this effect by the illustrious Quatremere of Quincy." The conversation afterwards turned on the transportation of the bronze horses from Venice; and Canova said, "Sire, the subversion of that Republic will afflict me with sorrows during life." What ardent love of country, and above all, what sincerity, frankness and feeling, are in all the words of the sculptor.

Bonaparte was pleased with his manner, and indulged in familiarity with him, which he used with no other person, and of which some were jealous. While upon the head of the statue, Canova observed, "It must be confessed that this head is so favourable to sculpture, that finding it among the ancient statues, it would always be taken for that of one of the greatest men of antiquity who are honoured in history. As the likeness of a hero, I shall succeed marvellously; but as such it may not perhaps please so well the tender sex." At this Bonaparte smiled.

The model being finished, the sculptor was entertained in the most magnificent style by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and all

Paris talked of nothing but Canova, the statue, and the attentions bestowed on him by the First Consul.

The celebrated David became his intimate friend, and entertained him at his house, where he was made acquainted with the most illustrious artists of France, and among them with Gerard, who painted his portrait. Canova was always a firm defender of the exalted merit of these great artists, and spoke well of their works. While visiting the Gallery of Pictures, where, among others, there was one by Gerard representing Belisarius as a beggar, and a Hypolite by Guerin, a young man then of great promise, Canova said publicly that France possessed artists whose merit was superior to their fame.

He was afterwards honourably presented to the National Institute, of which he was made a member; and at Neuilly, the villa of General Murat, he again saw his groupes of Psyche and Love, and worked on them for some time with much effect. Finally he took leave of the First Consul the morning that he received the ambassador from Tunis. Bonaparte said to him, "Commend me to the Pope, and tell him you have heard me recommend the liberty of all christians."

The sculptor made notes of all this at the time, which he left with his brother.

He was announced at quitting Paris as the greatest sculptor in the world, and that the bust of the model was a perfect apotheosis.

On his way home, he lodged at Lyons with the Archbishop, Cardinal de Resch, brother to the mother of the First Consul, a worthy lady, who knew how to conduct herself with equal dignity in the extremes of prosperous and adverse fortune. At Turin, he lodged with the Marquis Prie, and received great honours at Milan from Murat, and from Melzi D'Eril, Vice President of the Republic; and his return was a perfect triumph, such was the disposition to honor him, and in him the Fine Arts.

Having arrived at Florence, he was received with the most enthusiastic applause by the Academy there, and his Majesty, Ludovico, King of Etruria, made him a noble present, which was all the works of the ample museum, with an engraved frontispiece, and a dedication to the sculptor by the King himself.

He thence returned to Rome, where all were eager to employ him, as all Europe desired to possess some of his works. But one man, however laborious, could not gratify all; and he was compelled to decline a monument for the First Consul, at Milan—a statue of Mr. Dundas, for Lord Ferguson, with the offer of three thousand pounds sterling—a statue of Catharine II. for Russia—one of Ferdinand IV. for the city of Catania—and one of the Duke of Bedford, and many other works; having determined to be more indulgent to his liberal genius, rather than restrained by such commissions.

Two great works now occupied him, the Statue of the First Consul, and the Grand Mausoleum to Christina, for Austria.

He finished first the statue of the First Consul, which was done in the heroic costume, much like the statues of the Roman Emperors, placed in one hand a spear, and in the other the world with victory. The likeness was naked, except the military vest, which hung from the shoulders; the sword is abandoned to the side for support, and all the person is seen in front. Denon wrote a strong censure of the work, which was published at the time, on the statue being naked, as a thing contrary to our costume in modern times, which he said should be handed down by the arts to posterity. But a defence was made of it by a famous and learned antiquary, whose knowledge of such matters was respected by every civilized nation, the Great Ennio Quirino Visconti, in which were found irrefutable arguments which demonstrated to Denon and the world the propriety of the costume. The costumes in ancient sculpture are not the true costume used in the times when the likenesses were taken, as the difference between the costumes of the times is evident. Costumes are conventional for the embellishment and perfection of the art. Among the ancient naked likenesses, is Meleagen naked, the Gladiator Borghese naked, the Achilles of the Campidoglio is naked, the Laocoon is naked, Jason is naked. There never was an ancient hunter nor soldier nor hero made but he was naked. The art has chosen nudity as its language. Hence the likenesses and statues of the living were represented naked; whence Pompey, Agrippa, Augustus, Tiberius, Drusus, Germanicus, Claudius, Domitian, Nerva, Adrian, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Veaus, Septimus Severus and Macrinus are all represented naked. No Emperor has the toga on except in the funeral celebrations as Pontiff, when his face is veiled. The toga was only the Roman imperial civic habit. And so in like manner the illustrious Greeks, Pindar, Euripides, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Aristides, have only a large Greek mantle thrown in a picturesque manner over their naked bodies. Thus in the frieze of the Parthenon, where Phidias has given the procession

of Panathenæ, the Athenian nobles are represented either as naked or with short vests. This ever was their costume.

The ancient artists used vestments for decency in their representations of women and their goddesses, unless when Venus was coming from the bath or nymphs coming out of the lakes, beyond this they used them for ornament and as emblematic characteristics. But we cannot represent our clothes as the ancients did theirs, in consequence of their angular shape rendering them unfavourable to and unfitting for use in sculpture. They are contrary to the beautiful and graceful compositions of the art, nor is it proper that such things should be seen from side views. "An artist," concludes Visconti, "might well represent an eastern person with the feet and legs bare, although wrapped in a magnificent robe and covered with a turban and adorned with precious jewels; but a French likeness in an embroidered habit with naked legs, would be excessively ridiculous." The same arguments were urged by Cicognara, when he says that the heroic habit was only a convention adopted to express a quality of the mind, and to use metaphysical entities corresponding with the relations of the arts. This also corresponds with the opinion of Mengs, when he says the Greeks remembered that the arts were made by man, and that their first model was the human figure.

The artist consecrates his works to all people and to all ages, and calls upon posterity to be the judges, and says with Zeuxis, "I paint for eternity."

The figures of the poets are metaphor-- comparison---hyperbole. Poetry is full of them, because they give more energy to language. So the other arts use metaphorical expressions: and nudity, for example, is the metaphor of sculpture. The ancients knew the wants and conveniences of the arts, and permitted to sculpture the habitual use of a metaphor, without which the art would cease to be imitative. It is a convention of the ideal style. Nudity is the practical part of the art—the external part: as much so as the art itself. And thus a state of exalted merit belongs to every age—as it is proper to all times—and transports or gives to physical man that general existence which fame gives to the moral man.

But the censures of the French critics were not confined to the nudity of the statue. The Minister Marescalchi, who was intimate with the sculptor, informed him that the statue was thought too colossal, and that it would have been better liked if it had possessed the form of Apollo rather than the limbs of Hercules; that the muscles of the right side of the breast had too much relief; and that the back showed more of the attitude than the hero. He finished however by saying, "Continue to work for eternity, which alone can judge of you rightly, and let the crows caw!"

The sculptor was always loth to assume his own defence, and was disposed to answer in a more general way by new and beautiful works of his mind and hand; but on this occasion he answered triumphantly with his pen. He showed the absurdity of speaking of it being too colossal, as one might be made of seventy feet if the proportions were properly observed: and to call it too athletic was equally erroneous as it regarded the style; and he refuted the artists who said the head did not correspond with the rest, which seemed too heroic.

The colossal figures of Monte Cavallo are of more marked forms than that of Napoleon. His heroes are always demi-gods. And if you confront it with the statues of the Roman emperors, every objection on this account will vanish.

The learned and accomplished Quatremetre, after impartially examining the work, pronounced it the boldest and grandest that could be produced by a sculptor.

The Academy of Venice published a solemn demonstration of the high estimation in which they held the head of this statue, and their admiration of its elegance; in which they said, "It would be impossible to commend enough the skill exhibited in preserving the lineaments and characteristics, translating it into the spacious dimensions, as well as the choice of the moment of animation. It is without low perturbation; and the features indicate vast understanding—penetration, perspicacity and firmness of mind, magnanimous ardour, promptness of action, with all those marks which come pouring down upon us from antiquity in the likeness of those whom Providence with parsimonious hand has from time to time given to make the most striking epochs in the history of nations."

The noble and sustained grandeur exhibited and corresponding in all its parts; the happy conjunction of its modulations, and the harmony of its terminations, stamped it as a work to endure as long as the art.

"The Annals of Literature and the Arts" of Austria contained also a notice of it, and it was celebrated in Latin and Italian verse; but, above all, there was a beautiful encomium on it by David the Painter, who told the sculptor "he had done for posterity as much