

ing of human figures, or in the grouping of large compositions ; and though in flowers and birds their performances are much more admired, yet even in these, some part of the merit is rather to be imputed to the native brightness and excellency of the colours, than to the skill of the painter ; since it is very unusual to see the light and shade justly and naturally handled, or to find that ease and grace in the drawing, which are to be met with in the works of *European* artists. In short, there is a stiffness and minuteness in most of the *Chinese* productions, which are extremely displeasing : And it may perhaps be asserted with great truth, that these defects in their arts are entirely owing to the peculiar turn of the people, amongst whom nothing great or spirited is to be met with.

If we next examine the *Chinese* literature, (taking our accounts from the writers, who have endeavoured to represent it in the most favourable light) we shall find, that on this head their obstinacy and absurdity are most wonderful : For though, for many ages, they have been surrounded by nations, to whom the use of letters was familiar, yet they, the *Chinese* alone, have hitherto neglect to avail themselves of that almost divine invention, and have continued to adhere to the rude and inartificial method of representing words by arbitrary marks ; a method, which necessarily renders the number of their characters too great for human memory to manage, makes writing to be an art that requires prodigious application, and in which no man can be otherwise than partially skilled ; whilst all reading, and understanding of what is written, is attended with infinite obscurity and confusion ; for the connexion between these marks,
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