

THE FINE ARTS

DURING THE

REIGN OF GEORGE III.

A NATION (says an elegant anonymous writer) may be considered great by its achievements in arms or in commerce: but can never be said to be truly polished, till it fosters the polite arts, the acquisition of which sinks every other merely human pursuit into comparative insignificance. They open a sixth sense upon every one who successfully cultivates them. The savage eats his food, and falls asleep: the man of mere wealth does little more; but, in those who seek pleasure in cultivating a taste for the fine arts, the pleasures of sense hold but a subordinate place.

The Reign of George the Third presents no event perhaps more worthy the notice of the historian, than the remarkable progress which was made during it in the fine arts. Before his majesty's accession, we had no native artists of celebrity either in painting or in sculpture, Hogarth alone excepted in the former: and some writers have advanced it gravely as a fact, that the English climate is incapable of fostering or maturing genius. Many of the arts of life had advanced among us to a state of great perfection; our literature had reached a height, beyond which no age had passed: but painting, sculpture, and architecture, were suffered to be neglected. No sooner, however, did the august patronage of the sovereign manifest itself in behalf of those arts, than a general feeling for them ran through the kingdom. Every order of the state was forward to encourage them: and the impulse thus given to the arts pro-