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978-1-107-68541-3 - Second Characters or the Language of Forms:

By the Right Honourable Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury

Edited by Benjamin Rand

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SHAFTESBURY'S
SECOND CHARACTERS

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The Right Honourable Anthony Ashley Cooper,
Earl of Shaftesbury

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SECOND CHARACTERS
OR
THE LANGUAGE OF FORMS

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
ANTHONY, EARL OF SHAFTESBURY
AUTHOR OF *CHARACTERISTICS*

EDITED BY
BENJAMIN RAND, P.H.D.
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
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INTRODUCTION

THE Third Earl of Shaftesbury is best known to the world as the author of the 'Characteristics.' Another work by him was discovered by the present editor in the Record Office in London, and printed in 1900, with the title of 'Philosophical Regimen.' At that time a manuscript volume was also found among the Shaftesbury Papers, containing the plan and fourth treatise of a work intended as a complement to the 'Characteristics,' which was entitled 'Second Characters.' This volume was mostly written in 1712. It appears that owing to declining health Shaftesbury had been compelled to leave England and spend the last year and a half of his life in Italy. On the 3rd of July, 1711, he sailed from Dover, and proceeding slowly through Paris, Turin, and Rome, arrived November 15th, 1711, in Naples. In this city he resided, seeking in vain through the aid of a mild climate to recover his gradually failing strength, until his death, February 15th, 1713. In spite of his contest with disease, and brief as was the period that remained to him of allotted life, his last months spent in Naples were nevertheless replete with large literary activity. Not only did he then complete for the press a second edition of the 'Characteristics' but he likewise carried forward the preparation for intended publication of an entirely new work.

The book was to consist of four treatises. These were: I 'A Letter concerning Design'; II 'A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of The Judgment of Hercules'; III 'An Appendix concerning the Emblem of Cebes'; and IV 'Plastics

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or the Original Progress and Power of Designatory Art.' The 'Letter concerning Design' was printed for the first time in 1732, in the fifth edition of the 'Characteristics.' The 'Judgment of Hercules' was first printed in French, in the *Journal des Sçavans* for November, 1712, a fact which has heretofore strangely escaped the attention of bibliographers. An "original translation" of this treatise appeared in English, separately, in 1713, and was also included in the second edition of the 'Characteristics' in 1714. The 'Appendix concerning the Emblem of Cebes,' so far as known, remained to be written, and the 'Tablet' itself instead is here printed in a new translation. 'Plastics,' regarded by the author as the chief treatise of the four, has never previously been published. The definite grouping of these various treatises in the form of a single work, as intended when written, is also here first made known. Just two centuries have elapsed since Shaftesbury was forced to lay down his pen, until the present editing, for the first time, of his aesthetic work with the title of 'Second Characters,' so far as it is completed.

Concerning the origin and progress of 'Second Characters' considerable information may be gathered from the correspondence of Shaftesbury while in Naples. To Thomas Micklethwayt, his young friend who carried the second edition of the 'Characteristics' through the press after his death, he says in a postscript to a letter of February 2nd, 1712¹: "I must add a word to tell you that if I live and am able to proceed in my virtuoso studies it will follow of necessity (as you may easily conceive) that I shall embrace more objects in my view than simply what I first began upon, and was the cause of my search. Is it possible think you for me to enlarge my conversation, engage in speculative reading and antiquities of this kind and not find in any way many curiosities of which without

¹ An unpublished letter among the Shaftesbury Papers.

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any more trouble and with the same expense of pains and money I may make some improvement?" Here was the inception of a new project in art, born of his surroundings, and made in addition to the preparation of the second edition of the 'Characteristics' with its newly planned emblems. "My own designs," he writes, February 16th, 1712, to his intimate friend, Sir John Cropley, "you know run all on moral emblems and what relates to ancient Roman and Greek history, philosophy and virtue. Of this the modern painters have but little taste. If anything be stirred, or any studies turned this way, it must be I that must set the wheel a going and help to raise the spirit....My charges turn wholly, as you see, towards the raising of art and the improvement of virtue in the living, and in posterity to come¹." Like Plato, Shaftesbury realized that you must surround the citizens with an atmosphere of grace and beauty if you desire to instil noble and true ideas in the mind. And animated by the inspired purpose of reviving and elevating art, particularly in England, his remaining strength was steadfastly applied to the production of 'Second Characters.'

To Micklethwayt in a letter of February 23rd, 1712, Shaftesbury writes: "I have a noble virtuoso scheme before me, and design, if I get life this summer, to apply even this great work (the history piece bespoke, and now actually working) to the credit and reputation of Philol....I know that by what I have said I must have highly raised your curiosity, which till next post I am unable to satisfy, and then you shall have it all before you by the copy of the little treatise (which Mr Crell is now actually transcribing from the foul) written, or rather dictated, on this subject of the great piece of history in hand, and which will come within the compass of a sheet of paper. But it being

¹ *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, edited by Benjamin Rand, London, 1900, p. 468-9.

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written in French for the painters use, you cannot have it in its right condition until it be thought over anew and translated anew into its natural English. It will be in Mr Coste's power to make this piece truly *original*, as it now is, by touching it up (as the painters' phrase is) and converting it wholly into pure language with his masterly hand and genius. And in this condition I would willingly consent he should carry it, or send it over to his friend to be inserted in the very next *Bib. Chois.* of his friend's friend Mons. Le Clerc¹." The historical piece, to which reference is here made, was the Choice of Hercules, as related by Prodicus and recorded by Xenophon in the second book of the *Memorabilia*, of which Shaftesbury had undertaken to have a painting made by Paulo de Matthaëis. In order that the painter might have full information in regard to the purpose of the fable and the desired character of the work, the "little treatise" above mentioned was written and was composed in French as he says "from what passed in conversation with my painters, and some other virtuosos with whom I can converse only in that language." On the first appearance of the 'Judgment of Hercules' in French, in the *Journal des Sçavans*, Nov., 1712, he judged an early translation and publication of it in English to be necessary, as he was doubtless mindful of his previous experience in the surreptitious issue of the 'Inquiry concerning Virtue.' "With extreme satisfaction," he writes to Pierre Coste, November 22nd, 1712, "I have just now received the three exemplars of the little dissertation in which your admirable judgment and care has made me not a little proud, so that I am in a manner resolved to naturalize it myself and give it to the public Englished at first hand, rather than suffer it to go to Grub Street by help of those Anglo-Gallish translators, who generally understand neither the one language nor the other²." The English publication of

¹ *Ibid.* p. 472-3.² *Ibid.* p. 523.

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this treatise was also deemed urgent by his friends. "I join with you," he writes to Micklethwayt, December 20th, 1712, "in opinion for instantly printing the 'Judgment of Hercules' as I wrote to you and Sir John just before I fell ill, and having presently made my plan you will receive it from Mr Crell transcribed by the next post that Mr D—y may instantly proceed¹." And in a final letter of January 10th, 1713, to Micklethwayt he concludes: "I hope I may soon by the posts receive from you the return of the models of the title-pages, and perhaps the first sheet of the 'Judgment of Hercules' if you have resolution enough to print at least the 'Notion' by itself, to which singly (as I wrote you) the advertisement I first sent (in mine of December 27) may serve as a preface leaving out only the last words, viz. 'in the letter which is here prefixed'." These letters reveal very clearly the reason and circumstances which led to the separate publication of the 'Judgment of Hercules' in 1712, in anticipation of the completed work of 'Second Characters.' There is, moreover, no evidence of any intention on the part of Shaftesbury ever to print this treatise as part of the 'Characteristics,' and it, with the 'Letter of Design,' has been very properly omitted by Mr J. M. Robertson in his excellent edition of that classic work.

To Lord Somers all the treatises which comprise the 'Characteristics' had been dedicated by Shaftesbury. It was only natural therefore in the gradual development of his new literary project that 'The Notion' should be accompanied by a letter to his esteemed patron. The first reference to this dedicatory epistle is to be found in a letter of March 29th, 1712, to Sir John Cropley. "You have here," he says, "enclosed my letter [of Design] long promised, and (as you see) long since written to our old Lord [Somers]. The little treatise [or 'Judgment of Hercules'] which

¹ *Ibid.* p. 528.

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accompanies it (and which I hope you will deliver or convey carefully and handsomely sealed up with it) I have also enclosed this post to my cousin Mick¹." On the 12th of April, he writes to Micklethwayt: "And earnestly I long (as you may well believe) to hear of the delivery, reception, and success of my epistle [of Design] and treatise [of Hercules] thereto belonging." Shaftesbury's first intention when he thought of making an English translation of the 'Judgment of Hercules' was to include in its publication the 'Letter of Design.' "Now pray tell me," he writes, November 22nd, 1712, to Sir John Cropley, "which I had better resolve to do? Whether leave it ['Judgment of Hercules'] to the Grub Street translators and retailers to rend in their own game, or whether produce the *original translation* (if I may call it) by itself alone without that which I count the life and spirit of it I mean the recommendatory letter [of Design] to my friend-lord, whose property this is, and to whom it is my chief delight to join myself, in these as in former thoughts and contemplations of my retired and leisured hours. For my own part should the Lord approve the thing I am resolute to send both 'Letter' and 'Notion' without more ado to Darby (suppressing names only), to be printed in the very manner and character as the 'Letter of Enthusiasm'²." Among his last instructions concerning the publication contained in an unpublished manuscript he quotes from a letter to Mr M—t of the 3rd of January, 1713: "If you friends, who are judges of the affair, cannot resolve to print the 'Letter' itself together with the 'Notion, I hope at least you may hold the resolution of printing the 'Notion' to save the abuse of a Grub Street translation." His friends Micklethwayt and Cropley brought out the 'Judgment of Hercules' in 1712, as we have seen, but they did not print the 'Letter of Design.' Doubtless the inclusion of the 'Notion' in

¹ *Ibid.* p. 781-2.² *Ibid.* p. 526-7.

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the second, third, and fourth editions of the 'Characteristics' aroused the desire to have all the treatises of the author then known to exist, in this work, and led to the printing in its fifth edition of the 'Letter of Design' in the incongruous position of a closing treatise. But in the phrase in the present volume, "Observe also if the 'Letter' and 'Notion' be first printed and afterward the whole together under the answerable general title of 'Second Characters'" Shaftesbury looks forward to the publication of this completed work. For the first time therefore the 'Letter of Design' now appears, as intended, at the beginning as a real epistle of dedication to his friend, Lord Somers.

Already in February of 1712 the thoughts of Shaftesbury had turned towards 'The Tablet of Cebes' as capable of somewhat similar artistic and literary treatment to that he had in hand upon the 'Judgment of Hercules.' He expresses the desire at that time that Mr Coste be instructed "to bring with him from Holland the best edition or two (with notes) of Cebes' Table, with the ordinary ugly prints (such as there are) of this beautiful socratic piece, which I shall have time to study at leisure and fit for a companion to this other socratic, but more simple, and (in painting) more exact, natural, and just piece of Prodicus now carrying on, and upon which I have composed my little treatise in French¹." An engraving had been made of the painting of Hercules illustrating the tale of Prodicus and there was a first vague notion that one of Cebes might accompany it for insertion in the 'Characteristics' (vol. II, p. 250) in connection with the reference to Cebes and Prodicus. Later, however, the idea of its proper place as part of a new treatise developed. "And now Cebes," he writes in April to Sir John Cropley, "may follow in due time, if my life goes beyond this summer, and that I live to see the beginning of another." And

¹ *Ibid.* p. 474.

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again to Pierre Coste, who had not yet visited Naples, he says in a letter of July 25th: "Pray if you light on any good edition, private or particular remarks, notes or thoughts on Cebes' Table, pick them up and bring them improved to me by your reflections¹." Shaftesbury did not live to see another summer and probably never wrote the 'Appendix concerning the Emblem of Cebes.' Among his manuscripts in the Record Office, however, there is an English translation of Cebes' 'Tablet' with notes, that has never been published. The translator writes in easy flowing English, unimpeded by the Greek forms of the original text. The accuracy with which every thought of the Greek author is reproduced indicates too that the translator like Shaftesbury was a master of the classics. But the translation is not in Shaftesbury's handwriting and if it were by him must have been dictated. The Notes to the translation might possibly also be by him, as the language and thought bear such a close resemblance to the contents of a letter written to Pierre Coste². It is this translation of the 'Tablet of Cebes' with notes which appears in the present work in lieu of the unwritten 'Appendix' to it.

The fourth treatise, that on 'Plastics,' is styled by Shaftesbury the "great one" of 'Second Characters.' It is to be found in a manuscript volume of 'The Shaftesbury Papers' (V. 15) in the London Record Office. At the beginning of this volume there is also outlined the plan and directions for the union of the four treatises here mentioned as composing 'Second Characters.' The date of the proposed scheme of the entire work is April 25th, 1712, which would probably precede a direct accumulation of data for the chief treatise. Writing to Pierre Coste at Amsterdam, July 25th, 1712, concerning the French copy of the 'Judgment of Hercules' he gives a reason for its publication that bears directly upon the larger

¹ *Ibid.* p. 525.² *Ibid.* p. 359.

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project. “If the piece,” he says, “were found valuable I could freely commit it to you, and the author being *for the present* unknown (no matter what happened afterwards) I should be content to see it abroad in any journal. That of Monsieur Le Clerc’s would be too high honour for it perhaps. The reason why I wish this is because I should, from the effect of this when it was read by people of fashion, be able to judge whether or no it would be worth while to turn my thoughts (as I am tempted) towards the further study of design and plastic art, both after the ancient and modern foundations, being able (as I myself) to instil by this means some further thoughts of virtue and honesty, and the love of liberty and mankind, after a way wholly new and unthought of¹.” His friends were always anxious lest these constant labours should destroy any chance he had of recovery, and for this reason he constantly sought to minimize the extent and importance of his work. “As I once told my cousin Mick,” he writes, October 11th, 1712, to Sir John Cropley, “very emphatically, ’tis easier to write Characters than Char-acks. My trifles of virtuosoship are all I should entertain you with, and if this prove not entertaining or profiting (I should hope) some little moral along with them. The mighty treatises [Cebes and Plastics] which you seem to think me intent upon (according to report from cousin Mick) are barely two such poor tracts as the ‘Letter’ and ‘Notion,’ already sent through your heads to our old Lord. Nor have I yet set pen to paper, or dictated one word on either of these intended pieces, only noted a few memorandums, that if I should live over the winter I might employ myself a little during the following summer².” Doubtless the author would not have included in the publication of the book the early “memorandums” which are printed in this text under the ‘Title’ and ‘Idea of the Work’ and ‘Prefatory Anticipatory Thoughts to each piece

¹ *Ibid.* p. 503.² *Ibid.* p. 518.

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severally.’ They throw, however, so much light upon the relation of the ‘Characteristics’ to the ‘Second Characters,’ and give the reader such intimacy with the author in his study, that it is believed their insertion will much enhance the interest and value of the present work.

With unflagging zeal Shaftesbury henceforward applied himself to the completion of his literary task. To Sir John Cropley he writes in an unpublished letter, dated November 8th, 1712: “I have promised to treat him [i.e. Micklethwayt] less like a disciple, and hope that as a friend he will not find the same uneasiness in corresponding with me, especially on the subjects of virtuosoship and the new ornaments of my first offspring (as I have called it) which I had never set about with such application of labour, and time so scarce with me at this time of day, but for his importunity and earnest exhortation ever since I left England. These indeed are now become my only remaining study. Tho perhaps out of these amusements I may raise something which may help still to recommend my former offspring; this being all I meant by the four treatises with which you were so alarmed by my cousin Mick, as taking them to be really four new philosophical pieces in the same strain with Philol. But for such study as that would imply I have (God knows), but very insufficient health and strength. Some memoirs and transactions of affairs, which I once acted in, and characters I well know, might possibly employ my pen at thoughtful hours in the public. And these might be of weight when I am dead, tho at present you tell me men laugh at characters and secrets, and despise what we poor writers may compose. Be it so.” One has only to read the passages in his letters with reference to his now rapidly failing health to discover what bravery was involved in these final efforts. “The more painful my hours grow,” he writes near the close to Micklethwayt, January 3rd, 1713, “and the fewer I have to expect in life, the faster you

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see I ply you (and shall continue to do so) with what alone can give me amusement, and at the same time advance the principal good I shall leave behind me, my brain offspring, so likely to make its way, espoused and honoured as it now is by such judgments and friends appearing in its behalf¹.” Soon after, he was compelled to lay down his pen. His noble spirit passed away February 15th, 1713. Two centuries from the period of its composition his treatise on ‘Plastics’ is here given to the world precisely as it was left². The queries in the text and the footnotes will indicate the various changes or additions that would have been made in the final writing of it for the press. These will be found to relate chiefly to appropriate illustrations or the enlargement of certain topics. For the most part they concern the form rather than the content. It is therefore safe to say that the essential thoughts of ‘Plastics’ are contained in the present publication, for the first time, of this fourth treatise of ‘Second Characters.’

From the foregoing sketch of the production of the several treatises which compose ‘Second Characters’ we turn to outline briefly their content. As already remarked the ‘Letter of Design’ addressed to Lord Somers now assumes its proper place at the beginning of the volume instead of following as heretofore the ‘Judgment of Hercules.’ Of these two treatises Thomas Fowler in his ‘Shaftesbury and Hutcheson’ regards the ‘Letter’ as perhaps the more interesting. It contains an account from Shaftesbury’s own hand of the growth and purpose of his virtuoso work in Italy. Its inception was due, it is said, to a conversation with his noble patron, and its final aim is described as the revival of art, particularly in England. The most striking feature of it is an abiding faith in liberty and in the artistic judgment of the people as the

¹ *Ibid.* p. 529.

² The necessary modernisation of the text and bracketed editorial matter must be excepted.

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true foundation of any revival in liberal arts. Persistent efforts, he argues, must therefore be made, with the growing freedom, to secure the best models, to seek correct standards, and to found academies of instruction, in order to create a cultivated taste in the general public.

In the 'Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules,' Shaftesbury delineates for the benefit of his painter the scene in which Hercules according to Prodicus made a choice between the two goddesses virtue and vice. He formulates in it the rules both of consistency and of the unity of time for the correct representation of such an event in a painting. The position, pose, and habit of the principal figures, which would best maintain the truth alike of appearance and of history in the scene, are fully described. Harmony in the ornamentation is emphasized. In conclusion, a comparison is made between the task of the painter and of the poet. It was this treatise, doubtless in its French original of 1712 as well as in the German translation¹ of 1759, that had such an important influence upon aesthetics on the continent of Europe. According to Professor Howard not only does Shaftesbury present here the fullest treatment of the 'fruitful moment,' before Lessing, but he was the first among all the writers of art to consider "the pictorial value of the various moments in the course of which an action takes place²." He anticipated in it also, it is said, both Diderot and Lessing, in important rules given by them for the guidance of the painter, as likewise in the description of the same subject by literary and pictorial art.

In the allegory of the 'Tablet of Cebes,' with deceit at the gateway leading men astray by a draught of ignorance and error, with fortune, blind, distracted,

¹ In the *Bibliothek der Schönen Wissenschaften und der freien Künste*.

² *Laokoon: Lessing, Herder, Goethe*. Selections edited with an Introduction by William Guild Howard, N. Y., 1910, p. lxxvii.

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and deaf, upon a round stone, her gifts being neither certain nor stable, with true learning, upon a firm square stone as affording alone a solid foundation against error, and with the way to true knowledge rough, rocky, and difficult, in contrast to the opposite path of false knowledge, alike easy and smooth, there are presented materials which would have afforded Shaftesbury opportunities for literary and artistic creation that might have rivalled those he found in the apologue of ‘Hercules at the Cross-roads.’ “For here,” writes Diogenes Laertius, upon whose testimony the authorship by Cebes chiefly depends, “thou hast a fair prospect and view of the life of man even from the cradle to the grave. In these few sheets thou mayest plainly perceive with what joys and trophies a religious man is crowned; and on the contrary with what scorn and derision, infamy and punishment, a foolish and wicked man is most deservedly treated.” The principal doctrines set forth in the ‘Tablet’ are strictly socratic. They embrace the identity of virtue and knowledge, the insufficiency of sense knowledge or opinion, and the advocacy of rigorous definition. If Shaftesbury had lived to write ‘An Appendix concerning the Emblem of Cebes,’ it undoubtedly would have had an exposition of these socratic doctrines as he expressly mentions “after the like moral parts have been explained,” and most probably would also have included similar additional rules and observations upon art to those set forth in the ‘Notion.’ “Dwell upon the things that have been told you until they are habitual” is an instruction in art which in more than one instance is quoted from the ‘Cebes’ Tablet’ in the concluding treatise of this book. *Ἀνέχειν καὶ ἀπέχειν* (to bear and to forbear), based upon the familiar words of Epictetus, was the maxim chosen by him for the proposed treatise and is here used with the discovered translation of the ‘Emblem.’ So constantly is the ‘Tablet of Cebes’ before his mind, and so interwoven is it with the composition of the entire work, that this unpublished

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translation of it accompanied by notes among the 'Shaftesbury Papers' is here inserted, we hope justly, in lieu of the unwritten 'Appendix' as the third treatise of 'Second Characters.'

'Plastics or the Original Progress and Power of Designatory Art' is the full title of the fourth and concluding treatise of this book. "Remember still," writes Shaftesbury, "this the idea of the work, viz. quasi, the vehicle of other problems, i.e. the precepts, demonstrations etc. of real ethics. But this hid, not to be said except darkly or pleasantly with raillery upon self, or some such indirect way as in 'Miscellany'." That Shaftesbury's theory of ethics may be readily transformed into a theory of aesthetics has been clearly pointed out by Prof. Fowler in his work on 'Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.' In the 'Characteristics' there is presented the Greek conception that harmony and proportion are the ultimate foundations alike of beauty and of morality. Man is gifted with the innate power to recognise the beautiful alike in works of art and in moral actions. Such a sense applied to external objects is the sense of beauty, and applied to conduct or disposition is the moral sense. Beauty is never in the matter, but solely in the art or design. Art is that which beautifies "so that the beautifying not the beautified is the really beautiful." In the early sections of 'Plastics' a transition is made from aesthetic theory to applied art. The counterpart of 'First Characters' is to be found in 'Second Characters.' The former is speculative, the latter practical. The 'Second Characters' correspond as it were to the underparts of a drama. And through these underparts it is hoped to support those higher. Nevertheless, it is added, no one may presume to criticise the 'Second Characters' who is not already master in the First. 'Second Characters' as here described are also moral. In proof thereof numerous quotations from classic literature are made. Horace's *De Arte Poetica* is most frequently cited. Painting too must be regarded

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as an imitative art. It presents a picture and not reality. Truth in it is not so much a copy of reality as of appearance. Its poetic qualities are best found in an historic painting such as the 'Judgment of Hercules,' where the passions and character of men are represented. In every designatory work of art there is something which answers to history in a truly poetic work. This is its character: "The characteristic still, the truth, the historic is all in all. The thing imitated, the thing specified, is the whole delight, the secret charm of the spectacle." All art thus deals with the typical, or in other words the ideal.

There is next in 'Plastics' a defence of the part played by instinct and natural sagacity as the source of the idea of the beautiful. The corruptions of taste are pointed out. In art as in real life a correct taste must be cultivated. The absence of a classic environment and the substitution of the artificial for the natural are among the discouragements of modern art. Art ideals must to-day be sought chiefly in nature, and in good models found in ancient remains. Among present encouragements to art, however, is the possible training of the public eye owing to the invention of prints, etching, etc. A peculiar interest attaches to the author's criticisms upon ancient and modern painters owing to the time and place in which this work was written. The toil, study, and meditation necessary in the production of a great work of art are emphasized in his remarks upon the education of the painter. The various kinds and subjects of painting are also discussed at considerable length. Under the heading of the 'Revival of Second Characters' Shaftesbury again strikes the keynote of the entire treatise. He says that "politeness always holds proportion with laws and liberty, so that where the one is with a tolerable progress in the first species (viz. 1st Characters), the other (viz. 2nd Characters) will soon prevail, and where it ceases and tyranny prevails, art and 2nd Characters accordingly sink." Invention,

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symmetry, colouring, expression, and composition, which are the five parts of painting as observed by the ancients and followed in the more modern works of Junius and Fréart, are in turn discussed. The nature and value of perspective in art form the underlying theme of several important sections. Plastic truth and decorum are deemed as with Plato the culminating excellence of artistic production. The entire treatise of 'Plastics' confirms the statement which has been based upon the 'Judgment of Hercules,' that there can be applied to Shaftesbury what Lessing says of Raphael, "that he would have been the greatest artistic genius even though unfortunately he had been born without hands."

A true virtuoso was Shaftesbury. In the 'Characteristics' he himself delights to draw a parallel between the philosophers and the virtuosi. "To philosophize," he says, "in a just signification is but to carry good breeding a step higher. For the accompaniment of breeding is to learn whatever is decent in company, or beautiful in arts; and the sum of philosophy. In this latter general denomination we include the real fine gentleman, the lovers of art and ingenuity, such as have seen the world, and informed themselves of the manners and customs of the several nations of Europe, searched into their antiquities and records, considered their police laws, and constitutions, observed the strength and ornaments of their cities, their principal arts, studies and ornaments, their architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and their taste in poetry, learning, language and conversation." What is here described as the "sum of philosophy" in the artistic realm found an actual fulfilment in the closing drama of Shaftesbury's life when he was engaged in writing the 'Second Characters.' But the highest examples of art belonged as he believed to the classical period. The ancients best provided the consummate models in art, suitable for any age. That is one secret of his adverse criticism of the "Gothic" and the

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modern. The literature of the classical authors had entered too most deeply into the warp and woof of his life. His was no mere imitation, however, of Greek and Roman thought, for he was thoroughly original both in thinking and writing. Not since the days of Plato has there been such an eloquent expression as that in the 'Characteristics', of the true, the beautiful, and the good. "What is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true is of consequence agreeable and good." Philosophy and aesthetics nevertheless meant more to him than mere theoretical systems. They must be carried over into the life of the community. The knowledge and practice of art must penetrate every province of public activity. "Where then is beauty or harmony to be found? How is this symmetry to be discovered and applied? Is it any other art than that of philosophy, or the study of universal numbers and proportions, which can exhibit this in life?" Through 'Second Characters' he would emphasize the necessity that the subtle influence of beauty and art must pervade the state if its citizens would possess right ideas and exhibit noble conduct. The artistic should also permeate the whole nature of the individual. Only in this way can human achievement be glorified. Beauty is in the creator and not in the created. And beautiful products of art best serve to inspire the state of mind which the original artist experienced in creating them. Shaftesbury himself indeed was a great artist, for his whole being was permeated by the artistic temperament. He embodied the classical ideals in his own person. In outward appearance the painting of Closterman is a true portrait of him. He is the greatest Greek of modern times. It is no wonder that he appealed to the best spirits of the eighteenth century. Herder speaks of him as the "virtuoso of

¹ Vol. III, p. 182.² *Ibid.* III, p. 184.

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humanity." Montesquieu says that "the four great poets are Plato, Malebranche, Shaftesbury, Montaigne." Lessing also was a student of his works to which he had been guided by the philosopher Mendelssohn. Leibnitz too recognised in his doctrines the similarity to those he promulgated¹, and was charmed by the eloquence of his utterance. In future generations wherever there is refinement and true culture the influence of this modern classical philosopher must likewise be felt. He embodied his philosophy in a life. This philosophy finds expression in the personal meditations of the 'Philosophical Regimen,' in the moral and aesthetic doctrines of the 'Characteristics,' and in the support given to this chief work by an application of its theoretical principles to the realm of art in 'Second Characters.'

The name of Shaftesbury has been honoured in the past by the genius and the services of three distinguished members of this noble family. The first Earl was a great statesman, the third Earl an eminent philosopher, and the seventh a broad-minded philanthropist. It is a pleasure therefore to dedicate this work by permission to the present Earl, who also "has proven true to his own and his family motto, LOVE, SERVE."

¹ Their relation is best set forth in Armand Bacharach's *Shaftesbury's Optimismus und sein Verhältnis zum Leibnizschen*, Thann, 1912.

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SECOND CHARACTERS

OR

THE LANGUAGE OF FORMS

IN

FOUR TREATISES

viz.

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II. A NOTION OF THE HISTORICAL
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III. AN APPENDIX CONCERNING THE
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