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978-1-108-07414-8 - Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century: Comprizing Biographical Memoirs of William Boywer, Printer, F.S.A., and Many of his Learned Friends: Volume 8

John Nichols

Excerpt

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(1)

LITERARY ANECDOTES

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

ENCOURAGED by the chearing plaudits of numerous Friends, and by the most unequivocal testimony of the former Volumes having not proved unacceptable to the class of Readers for whom they were principally intended ; I venture without hesitation on the task of continuing the Typographical Annals of the **BOWYER PRESS** (for such, I flatter myself, I may be allowed to call it) to a somewhat later period than the death of my Master, my Friend, and generous Benefactor. The plan will be the same as in the preceding Volumes. The principal Books of each year shall be given chronologically ; and Memoirs of the several Authors, as before, either in Notes, or separate Essays.

1774.

“ Letter on the Linen Trade,” and “ Letter on the Russia Trade,” by Edward Forster *, Esq. 8vo.

Dr. Carr’s † “ Rules for Latin Grammar,” 8vo. This little volume was frequently reprinted.

* This truly respectable Merchant (of whom see vol. VI. p. 616.), was at that time one of the Consuls of the Russia Company ; of which, in 1781, he was chosen Governor.

† Of Dr. John Carr, who has been imperfectly noticed in vol. III. p. 168, some particulars shall be given in a future page.

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B

1775.

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LITERARY ANECDOTES

[1775.

1775.

"A Letter to Dr. Samuel Johnson ; occasioned by his late Political Publications. With an Appendix, containing some Observations on a Pamphlet lately published by Dr. Shebbeare," 8vo.

Two Editions of a Poem intituled, "Verses addressed to the Queen, with a New Year's Gift of Irish Manufacture, by Robert-Craggs Nugent Lord Viscount Clare *," 4to.

1776.

"A Description of the Library at Merly House, in Dorsetshire, the seat of Ralph Willett, Esq." Of this little pamphlet 200 copies were printed, for the use of Mr. Willett's friends, before he conceived the

* This Poem escaped the diligent researches of Mr. Park, in his edition of the "Royal and Noble Authors."—Lord Clare, descended from the Nugents of Carlanstown, in the county of Westmeath, was a younger son of Michael Nugent, by Mary daughter of Robert Lord Trimlestown. He was chosen Member of Parliament for St. Mawes, in Cornyall, 1741; appointed comptroller of the Prince of Wales's household, 1747; a lord of the treasury, 1754; one of the vice-treasurers of Ireland, 1759; a lord of trade, 1766; created Baron Nugent and Viscount Clare, 1767; and Earl Nugent, 1776; with remainder to his son-in-law George Grenville Marquis of Buckingham. His Lordship was thrice married; his second wife was Anne, sister and heiress to Secretary Craggs, the friend of Pope and Addison, by whom he acquired a large fortune. He died Oct. 13, 1788, leaving in real estates about 14,000*l.* *per annum*, and in personal fortune near 200,000*l.* He was a man of parts, a poet, and a facetious companion. Almon observes, that his Poems breathe the true Horatian fire, but are more than half unknown. A volume of those Poems was published anonymously by Dodsley, and entitled, "Odes and Epistles, 2d edit. Lond. 1739," 8vo. Several other Poems by his Lordship are printed in "Dodsley's Collection of Poems." and in "The New Foundling Hospital for Wit."—See in Swift's Works, vol. XIV. p. 372, a Letter from Robert Nugent, Esq. to Mrs. White-way, in 1740, requesting her to return to Mr. Pope such letters of his as remained in the possession of Dean Swift; and that Mr. Bindon (then a celebrated painter in Dublin) might send him a picture of Swift, "a head upon a three-quarter cloth, to match one which he had of Mr. Pope." See also vol. XVII. p. 302, an elegant Epistle addressed to Robert Nugent, Esq. by Dr. William Dunkin, "with a Picture of Dr. Swift."

design,

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design, which, in 1785, he put in execution, of having the whole engraved and published in a superb folio.

Mr. Willett was great grandson of Henry Willett, Esq. of London, who was of the same family with the celebrated Dr. Andrew Willett*, Prebendary of Ely, well known by his very learned

* Son of Dr. Thomas Willett, rector of Thurstaston, co. Leicester, and Prebendary of Ely in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; who was admitted to a prebend in the church of Ely 1560; officiated as public notary at the consecration of Archbishop Parker at Lambeth chapel, Dec. 17, 1559; and was ordained Deacon by Dr. Grindall, Bishop of London, Jan. 14 following. In Bishop Cox's "Certificatorium" of the state of the Diocese of Ely to the Archbishop, dated Jan. 28, 1560-1, in Benc't College Library, Misc. V. he is returned "Prebendary there, a priest, no graduate, but qualified for preaching, and had a special licence for that purpose from the Bishop of Ely, and resided there with his family." Bishop Cox afterwards presented him to the rectory of Barley, to which he was instituted April 3, 1571; he resigned his prebend July 1587; and dying at Barley April 1598, was there buried.—He was succeeded in his stall by his son Andrew, who was born at Ely, educated in the grammar school there, admitted, first of Peterhouse, and afterwards became Scholar and Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge. At the age of 25 he was presented by the Queen to his father's prebend, and admitted July 22, 1587. The following year, Nov. 12, he was instituted to the rectory of Childerley, co. Cambridge; and in 1597, July 2, to that of Little Grantesden, in the same county. He likewise succeeded his father, though not immediately, in that of Barley, for which he exchanged Grantesden, and was instituted, being then B. D. Jan. 29, 1598-9. He was also chaplain to Prince Henry. He was a person of great industry, piety, and judgment, and accounted one of the best commentators and most celebrated controversial writers of that age; particularly in his "Synopsis Papismi," a noble repository of learning in that controversy. His death was occasioned by breaking his leg, his horse stumbling in the road near Hoddesdon. He died Dec. 4, 1621, and was buried in the chancel at Barley (to the poor of which parish he gave a small tenement, and 40*l.* in money) under a large spotted marble, with the figure of a priest, in his gown, scarf, and square cap, and at his feet the following epitaph:

" Hic jacet Andreas Willet,
Doctor Sacrae Theologiae,
aliquando hujus Ecclesiae minister,
& magnum totius verae Ecclesiae ornamentum.
Ob. ætat. suæ 59, Dec. 4, 1621.

B E

" Vivus

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writings, more particularly by “An Harmony on the First and Second Books of Samuel,” 1613, 1614, with an elegant Latin Epistle prefixed to

“Vivus in hoc tegitur (Lector, mirare,) sepulchro
WILLETTUS; sua post funera vivit adhuc.
Quin ubi nunc habitat cognoscere, consule sumptu
Magnifico structam, scripta polita, domum.
Interea partem hanc ejus quam fata tulerunt
Hic ubi paulisper fleres abire potes.

“Thou that erewhile didst such strong reasons frame,
As yet, great WILLETT, are the Popelin's shame;
Now by this sickness, and by death, hast made
Strong arguments to prove that man's a shade.
Thy life did shew thy deep divinity,
Death only taught us thy humanity.”

Dr. Andrew Willett left a numerous issue.

Henry Willett (who married Martha Robinson, daughter of Thomas Robinson, Esq. and first cousin to Dr. Robinson, Bishop of London) ruined a very respectable fortune of 500*l.* a-year, by adhering to the cause of King Charles I. and taking an active part on his side. Both he and his wife died in 1670. Their son Ralph was driven, with many other Royalists, to seek an asylum in the Island of Barbadoes, a common retreat to the Royalists at that time, and governed by William Lord Willoughby of Parham, whose protection of the unfortunate Royalists was very remarkable and beneficent. Not finding there the success he expected, he retired to the Island of St. Christopher, and there married Anne, daughter of Mr. Estridge, by whom he had a considerable fortune. His eldest son Henry, about 1718, married Elizabeth, daughter of Col. John Stanley, of Nevis, who, by a letter in the possession of the family from the great Earl of Derby, beheaded by Oliver Cromwell, is acknowledged as a near relation. This John Stanley, whose fortunes were ruined by the same attachment as brought his noble relation to the block, took refuge in the Island of Nevis, where he married Deborah, daughter of Col. Hill, at that time Governor of the Island. She died about 1730, at the age of 76.

Ralph Willett, Esq. son of this Henry Willett, purchased, in 1751, the property at Merly in Dorsetshire, antiently a manor, now a farm in Great Canford tithing, situated about a mile South of Winbourne; where he began in 1752, and finished in 1760, from a design of his own, a noble house on the top of the hill, about half a mile from the old seat of the Constantines (formerly owners of Merly), which stands in the vale below. Mr. Willett was sheriff for the county in 1760, and adorned Mr. Hutchins's “History of Dorsetshire” with an elegant view of his house; and other views and plans of it may be seen in the continuation of the “Vitruvius Britannicus” by Wolfe and Gandon.

To

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each; the former addressed to the Fellows of Christ's College, in which are recounted the Bishops and eminent men who had been of their Society; the

To this house Mr. Willett, in 1772, made considerable additions, by erecting two wings, which, with the ornaments, were also designed by himself. In that on the South-east side is a room for a Library, 84 feet long, 23 wide, and 23 high; 5 feet 6 inches of the height are taken off by a coving; and, that the work in the coving may not be hurt by the projection of a cornice, an impost, very much ornamented, is placed 17 feet 6 inches above the floor. The book-cases, which are of mahogany, and enriched with a complete Ionic order, are 13 feet 4 inches high, and allow a considerable space above them, and below the impost, for busts, &c. Between the busts on each book-case is an ornamental scroll, on which is written the kind of books contained in the case; the lamp of Science, with an inscription, "Non extinguetur," crowning the top of the scroll. On the top of the book-cases over the two chimneys, instead of the lamp, is the crest of the designer, under which is written, "Nullius in verba magistri;" and on the scroll, as the chimneys exclude the possibility of putting books into those cases, his favourite motto, "Intus ut libet, foris ut mos est." The inscription over the other chimney book-case, and on the same parts, are, "Quid utile;" and underneath, "Vixit bene qui latuit bene." The medallions are separated from each other into compartments by terms of young men; they reach from the torus above the impost to the compartments of the flat part of the ceiling, which they are made to support, as well as to part off the medallions; the whole design is executed in stucco. In the variety of religious systems established by mere human policy, the designer hath employed only two, those of Zoroaster and Mahomet. Of these, and all the other designs, engravings were made, in a series of 25 prints, on the best colombier paper, folio size, the figures more than six inches high, accompanied by an ample description, in English and French, of each plate, explaining the intention of the author, inscribed to the King, 1785, and published (from the press of the Author of these Anecdotes) by a subscription of four guineas each set. The subjects of these prints are as follows: 1, 2, 3. In these plates, that may be joined or continued separate, the general arrangement of the whole is exhibited. 4. The ground-plan of the Library, and enrichments in the frames of the great compartments in the flat of the ceiling. 5. One of the book-cases. 6. Zoroaster, the founder of the purest Pagan Theology, in a medallion, supported by a Persic king on one side of it, and by a Persic priest on the other. 7. Mahomet, with the Koran in one hand, and a scymitar in the other, alluding to the manner in which his law was propagated, supported by a Tartar and a Turk. 8. The great Jewish Lawgiver, Moses, with the tables of the Law; on one side of the medallion is Adam, on the other

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latter addressed to his brethren the Dean and Prebendaries of Ely, wherein he recounts within

other Eve: on one side of each of these figures are the seven-branched candlestick, and the table of shewbread, from the arch of Titus at Rome. 9. The venerable Author of our own most excellent Religion; the medallion supported by two angels: on one side of each of those the two symbols of his law, the cup and the font. 10. The human Lawgiver, or Politician, proceeding on the foundations thus made by Religion, prosecutes the great work of civilization. This print represents Alfred, with the harp placed against an oak covered with mistletoe, on one side of the medallion, and the Danish raven flag trampled on by the British lion on the other. 11. Confucius, with the imperial dragon and the plough. 12. Osiris, with the Sphinx and Apis. 13. Manco Capac, with the sun and a Peruvian sheep. These four figures have their respective symbols, expressive of their characters; and refer to the four parts of the world in which they flourished. 14. At this period the Arts and Sciences may be supposed to originate. This plate represents Painting. 15. Sculpture. 16. Geography. 17. Astronomy. 18. The first rudiments of society, such as we find it at Patagonia, &c. 19. The general improvement of it, as it may be seen at Otaheite. 20. The further progress of it in Egypt, under the great Sesostrius. 21. A view of further progress in Greece; Pericles advancing the same great work at Athens; and Socrates conversing with Alcibiades. 22. The completion of this design; the last and most engaging picture of human nature, is reserved for our own Country and its excellent Sovereign, introduced by Britannia into the Temple of Fame, and shewing him the great characters that have adorned this Country. 23. A most excellent Print, from a picture by Mr. Richard Wilson, designed to express the flourishing state of the Arts and of Knowledge at Athens. 24. Another, from a picture by Mr. Solomon Delane, expressive of their ruin, in a view of the same place, now in the hands of the Turks. 25. Contains the basso relievos of the two chimneys: in one of them is the story of Archimedes, slain at the siege of Syracuse; in the other that of Alexander depositing the works of Homer in the rich casket of Darius; as also the angular ornament in the cove of the cieling, and one of the terms that divide the compartments in the cove. The figures on the medallions are four feet six inches high, in mezzo relievo. "In the four angles, which from the irregularity of their form are incapable of any other ornament, the sugar-cane winds its flexible reed and rushy leaf in different folds. Though this plant has no reference to Science, it is the foundation at least of all the compliment the designer has attempted to pay it, and therefore may be allowed a place which it really fills with some beauty. This library contains a capital collection of books in various languages, and every branch of science and literature, in forming which Mr. Willett spared no expence. Amongst them are the earliest

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his own memory no less than three Archbishops and four Bishops, who had either been Dignitaries

earliest printed books after the discovery of that art, as well as many later curious editions. The collection of prints, drawings, and paintings, is also very valuable. To the latter, considerable additions were made from the Orleans Gallery, and Palaces in Rome,

In the Library of the Royal Institution, are the two following curiosities: 1. "A Catalogue of the Books in the Library of Ralph Willett, Esq. at Merly, in the county of Dorset, 1790, 8vo. pp. 176. This (my friend Mr. W. Harris informs me) is a classed Catalogue, and has some additions in MS. to the different classes. 2. "A Description of the Library at Merly," 8vo. pp. 38, without any title-page, but distinct from the Catalogue. Neither of the articles was printed for sale, and both were presented by the late Mr. Willett to Mr. Astle.

The following Lines are copied from the Original, prefixed to a copy of the Catalogue which was lately sold in London:

"Accept this mighty Work, beyond the boast
Of ev'ry other work we value most.
The Scholar's long-sought Philosophic stone,
Beyond my SHAKESPEARE or thy CLARENDON.
The various tastes of every varying mind,
Here each concentre'd, and confess'd, will find.
Hush'd be each other vaunt, each other claim,
And every Critic — here concede the same.
Hence be no ancient, be no modern drest
In the proud title, here bestow'd the best.
Not e'en the Alcoran, the Bible's self,
With all the choicest treasures of the shelf,
Cæsar's own cedar, nor thy column, Paine,
With this could any rivalry maintain.
To this alone by all be yielded hence
Katexochenical Pre-eminence!
For each must own within these leaves who looks,
A Catalogue the only Book of Books! E. P. 1795."

Mr. Willett contributed to the illustration of our National Antiquities, by communicating to the Society of Antiquaries, of which he was elected a Fellow in 1763, a Memoir of British Naval Architecture, printed in their *Archæologia*, vol. XI p. 154; and another, on the Origin of Printing, in the same volume, p. 267; in which last he refers, p. 270, to a former memoir by him presented to the Society. He married, first Mrs. Annabella Robinson, who died 1779. He took to his second wife, 1786, the relict of Samuel Strutt, Esq. assistant clerk of the Parliament. On his death, Jan. 13, 1795, in his 75th year, this estate, with the rest of his fortune, devolved by his will to his maternal cousin, John Willett Adye, Esq. who has since taken the name of Willett. Mr. Willett was buried in his parish church at Canford, with the following epitaph, on an elegant tablet of white marble, on the South side of the chancel:

"Annabella

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of that Church, or bred up at Ely school, which in his time was in so flourishing a state that he remembers above 300 scholars at once; and observes, that near twenty Masters in the University of Cambridge had been Deans or Prebendaries of Ely.

“A new Method of finding Time by equal Altitudes, by Alexander Aubert*, Esq.” 4to.; extracted from the Philosophical Transactions.

A small part of “A Treatise on Optics, by George Atwood†, Esq.” which that gentleman’s engagements in public business prevented his completing.

“Annabella Willett,
uxor Rodolphi Willett, de Merly,
cessit fatis 10^{mo} Decembris 1779, æt. 61^{mo},
Quadraginta annis in amore mutuo,
et indies crescente, feliciter exactis.
Quid luges? Conviva satur, cede.
Cedo lubens;
ENS ENTIVM! miserere nostrum.
RODOLPHUS WILLETT, Armiger,
obiit 13^{mo} Januarii 1795, ætat. 75.”

Many alterations have since been made in the house and grounds; and the plantations, which have thriven beyond expectation, have been much improved by the present owner, who has made the approach to the house by a serpentine road through a wood.

* Alexander Aubert, Esq. of Highbury House, Islington, was a gentleman well known in the literary world in general, but more particularly by his attention to Astronomical pursuits; for which purpose he had erected a noble Observatory in the garden of his delightful villa, and stored it with the choicest instruments. He was elected F. R. S. in 1772; and contributed to the Philosophical Transactions, “Observations of the Transit of Venus, June 3, 1769,” vol. LIX. p. 378; and “A new Method of finding Time by equal Altitudes,” vol. LXVI. p. 92. He was elected F. S. A. and was for some time one of the Vice-Presidents of that Society. He was also a Governor of the London Assurance Company. He died Oct. 19, 1805, in his 70th year, at the house of John Lloyd, Esq. of Wygfair, near St. Asaph, where he had arrived on the preceding Monday on a visit, apparently in good health; a few hours after his arrival he complained of violent pain in his ears; and in a day or two this was succeeded by apoplexy. His Library and Astronomical Instruments were soon after sold by Leigh and Sotheby.

† This eminent Mathematician was born in 1746; admitted at Westminster school 1759; elected thence to Trinity College, Cambridge 1765; B. A. 1769; M. A. 1772. He was for some time

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“An Account of some Remains of Roman and other Antiquities in or near the County of Brecknock in South Wales, by John Strange *, Esq.” 4to.

time a Tutor, and for many years a Fellow of that College, and read to the whole University Lectures upon several branches of Experimental Philosophy, part of which he published under the title of “An Analysis of a Course of Lectures on the Principles of Natural Philosophy, read in the University of Cambridge, by George Atwood, M. A. F. R. S. late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, 1784,” 8vo. These Lectures were much attended and justly admired. The Right Hon. William Pitt, having been one of his auditors, was induced to form a more intimate acquaintance with him; and discovering that his talents might be eminently useful in the public service, bestowed upon him the office of Patent Searcher of the Customs, London, that he might be enabled to devote a larger portion of his time to financial calculations, in which Mr. Pitt employed him, not more to his own satisfaction than to the advantage of the Revenue. He continued in this employment, under that eminent Statesman, until his declining health rendered him incapable of intense application. In 1784 he also published “A Treatise on the Rectilinear Motion and Rotation of Bodies, with a description of original experiments relative to the subject,” 8vo. “A Review of the Statutes and Ordinances of Assize, which have been established in England, from the Fourth Year of King John, 1202, to the Thirty-seventh Year of his present Majesty; 1801,” 4to. and “A Dissertation on the Construction and Proportion of Arches, with seven Plates, 1801,” 4to; occasioned by a Plan and Proposal for constructing a magnificent Iron bridge of one Arch over the River Thames. He contributed several papers to the Philosophical Transactions, and was honoured, on one occasion, with the Copleian medal. Mr. Atwood, who was justly esteemed by a numerous list of friends, and by the friends of science, died at his house in Westminster, July 1807, and was interred in St. Margaret’s church.—In Mr. Lunn’s Catalogue for 1813, were, 1. “A Disquisition on the Stability of Ships, read before the Royal Society March 8, 1798,” with marginal Observations in MS. 2. Mr. Atwood’s “Remarks, in MS. on “Chapman’s Observations on the relative Height at which Vessels of different Sections may carry their Lading without danger of overturning;”—both which were purchased by my worthy friend Charles Derrick, Esq. of the Navy Pay Office; whose interesting “Memoirs of the Rise and Progress of the Royal Navy,” published in 1806, have thrown more light on that important national subject than is to be found in any other publication.

* John Strange, Esq. LL. D. F. R. S. F. S. A. and of the Academies of Bologna, Florence, and Montpellier, and the Academia Leopoldina Curiosorum Naturæ; only son of Sir John Strange, Master of the

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[1776.]

“ A Sermon preached before the Lords Spiritual

the Rolls ; was educated at Clare Hall, Cambridge, where he proceeded M. A. 1775. He was British Resident at Venice 1773, whence he thus wrote to the late Dean Milles, Nov. 17, 1774 : “ We have now wintering with us the curious Mr. Montague, in his Levantine dress, which I fancy he hardly intends to quit, as he proposes retiring to his favourite East in the spring. He leads a regular, retired, and very studious life, though he seems not inclined to employ the press in his life-time, which I am sorry for, as he is full of good observation. It is to be hoped, however, that the fruits of his retirement and speculations will not be ever lost to the world.” Mr. Strange married Sarah, daughter of David Gould, and sister of Sir Henry Gould, Justice of the Common Pleas, who died in 1783. He published several papers in the “ *Archæologia* ;” viz. “ Account of some Remains of Roman and other Antiquities in and near the Town of Brecknock, South Wales,” I. 292 ; “ Account of some ancient Roman Inscriptions lately discovered in the Provinces of Istria and Dalmatia, with Remarks,” III. 337 ; “ Farther Account of Antiquities in South Wales,” IV. 1 ; of others in Monmouthshire, V. 33 ; “ Farther Account of Roman Inscriptions in Istria and Dalmatia, *ibid.* 169 ; “ Remarks on Mr. Harris’s Observations on Antique Monuments, with an Account of some curious Remains of Antiquity in Glamorganshire, VI. 6.—In the *Philosophical Transactions*, LIX. p. 50, is Mr. Strange’s account of the origin of natural Paper found near Cortona in Tuscany ; *ibid.* p. 195, an account of several Roman sepulchral inscriptions and figures in bas relief, discovered in 1755 at Bonn in Lower Germany ; LX. p. 179, account of some specimens of Sponges from Italy ; LXV. p. 5, of two Giants Causeways or groupes of prismatic basaltine columns, and other curious volcanic concretions, in the Venetian State in Italy, with some remarks on the characters of these and other similar bodies, and of the physical geography of the countries in which they are found ; *ibid.* p. 418, of a curious Giant’s Causeway, or groupe of angular columns, newly discovered in the Euganean hills near Padua ; LXVII. p. 144, of the tides in the Adriatic. While at Venice, by his taste and indefatigable diligence, he formed one of the best collections of pictures (particularly of the Venetian school) now in England. His Library also was most extensive and splendid. As a Naturalist, Antiquary, and general friend and promoter of the Arts and Sciences, his cabinet was always considered as one of the choicest in the kingdom. He died March 19, 1799, at Ridge, near Barnet, Middlesex, after a long and painful illness, aged 67. By his will he directed the whole of his collections to be sold — his pictures under the direction of Mr. Wilson, of the European Museum, by private contract, after being publicly exhibited ; his books by Messrs. Leigh and Sotheby ; his prints, drawings, busts, coins, medals, bronzes, and antiquities, by Mr. Christie;