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978-1-108-07502-2 - The Genuine Works of William Hogarth: Illustrated with Biographical Anecdotes, a Chronological Catalogue, and Commentary: Volume 3

John Nichols and George Steevens

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### The Genuine Works of William Hogarth

This illustrated three-volume catalogue of the works of painter and engraver William Hogarth (1697–1764) was the result of ‘Hogarthomania’, the enthusiasm for all his productions which arose soon after his death. The publisher and author John Nichols (1745–1826), assisted by the collector and literary critic George Steevens, published a life of Hogarth and a list of his works in 1781, and as disputes increasingly arose over the genuineness of some of the prints attributed to him, enlarged versions appeared in 1782 and 1785. This work, published between 1808 and 1817, is the last in the sequence of Nichols’ works on Hogarth, and remains a useful source for art historians and anyone interested in the cultural life of the eighteenth century. Volume 3, published seven years after Volume 2, contains further plates, critical essays, and a ‘key’ to the scenes in Hogarth’s prints allegedly derived from classical sources.

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# The Genuine Works of William Hogarth

*Illustrated with Biographical Anecdotes,  
a Chronological Catalogue, and Commentary*

VOLUME 3

JOHN NICHOLS  
GEORGE STEEVENS



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WILLIAM HOGARTH, Esquire.

*From an Original Drawing on Vellum in the Possession  
of C. Dyer.*

*Published, March 1816, by Nichols & Co*

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THE  
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OF  
WILLIAM HOGARTH;  
WITH  
Biographical Anecdotes,  
*By JOHN NICHOLS, F.S.A. Lond. Edinb. and Perth;*  
AND THE LATE  
*GEORGE STEEVENS, Esq. F.R.S. and F.S.A.*  
—  
IN THREE VOLUMES.  
—  
VOLUME III.  
CONTAINING  
Clavis Hogarthiana,  
AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIVE ESSAYS:  
WITH FIFTY ADDITIONAL PLATES.

—  
LONDON:  
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Volume now presented to the Admirers of HOGARTH originated in the acquisition of the Original Plates of the “ ‘Tour by Land and Water,’ ” with several other neat and faithful Etchings by Mr. Richard Livesay; which were purchased nearly ten years since, more with a view to preserve them from being destroyed, than with any intention of thus offering them to the publick. Other Plates in the mean time were occasionally added to my stores; till at length it occurred to me that many of the Collectors of HOGARTH’S Genuine Works, who already possessed ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY Plates in the size best adapted to the Library (neither too large to admit a corresponding Commentary, nor so small as to require a magnifying-glass) might be willing to add FIFTY others.

Still, however, I hesitated; for, though I had diligently attended to the correction of the Two former Volumes, and had obtained several additional Anecdotes, they did not appear sufficient to form an entire Volume. But the perusal of the admirable Biographical Sketch by Mr. PHILLIPS, which, by that respectable Artist’s permission, introduces the present Volume—and the excellent Essay of Mr. LAMB, which forms another prominent feature in it—determined me no longer to delay the publication. To this I was still

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more strongly urged by the present of an Essay, which, though anonymous, is evidently the production of a Gentleman of profound erudition and refined taste. But the “CLAVIS HOGARTHIANA” will speak sufficiently for itself.

The matchless Exhibitions of Hogarth’s Paintings in 1814, and again in 1817, were additional inducements; and I have given a particular account of them; with an enumeration of such other Paintings and Sketches as I have been able to trace, and of the Sales of such of them as have passed under the hammer of the Auctioneer.

In this article I will not expose myself to the ridicule which the elder Richardson the Painter drew upon himself from Hogarth, respecting his Son—but I may truly say, that *my* Son’s younger eyes have been employed to much more effect than my own could possibly have attained. His zeal too for the honour of Hogarth, and desire to render this Work as perfect as possible, has been very kindly seconded by the active intelligence of Mr. J. T. SMITH, of the British Museum; and by the unreserved and friendly communications of WILLIAM PACKER, Esq. whose Collection of Hogarth’s Prints, in all their Varieties, is certainly unrivalled. Other Friends have kindly afforded him their assistance; and the Volume, such as it is, owes much to the ardent spirit with which he has forwarded my wishes and intentions.

*July* 15, 1817.

J. NICHOLS.

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# MEMOIR OF WILLIAM HOGARTH.

By THOMAS PHILLIPS, Esq. R. A.

*Reprinted, by permission, from Dr. REES's "New Cyclopædia."*

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\* \* Many of the particulars contained in the following Pages have been already noticed in various parts of the two preceding Volumes; but I cannot resist laying before the Reader, without mutilation, this very luminous Memoir of Hogarth, written by an eminent living Artist highly qualified for the task.

WILLIAM HOGARTH was one of those few original and extraordinary characters with whom it has pleased Providence occasionally to bless the world; to enlighten mankind, and to carry the arts and sciences necessary for their comfort, pleasure, and improvement, nearer to perfection. It cannot, indeed, be truly said of Hogarth, that he improved the practice of the arts of Painting and Engraving, which he professed; but he merited the praise of having more powerfully exhibited their moral utility than any of his predecessors; and that in a new, and, till then, unthought-of mode, adapted to the feelings and understandings of all orders of men; as it arose from a close observance of the actions and expressions common to all

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under the influence of the passions. Moved by the impulse of genius rather than the tuition of man, he travelled in a path unexplored by any before him, and which yet remains closed to succeeding Artists. Possessing, by early practice, the knowledge of the art of Engraving, he was happily enabled to disseminate, by its means, the ingenious inventions of his mind, in a manner more perfect than those of other Painters have been presented to the world ; or than probably ever again will be done, till another Painter shall be his own Engraver. The love of fame, and the desire of many of his friends, stimulated Hogarth, towards the close of his life, to compose a short history of himself, from whence we shall extract the most essential parts ; and present our readers with some illustration of his works, his character, his pretensions to public favour, and the reception he experienced.

His father's name was Richard : he was a man devoted to Literature ; but his pen did not enable him to do more for his children than to give them education ; and merely, as his son observed, put them in a way of shifting for themselves.

WILLIAM, of whom we now treat, was born in London, in the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, on the 10th of November, 1697. What will those who hold the non-existence of innate genius for peculiar arts, &c. reply to Hogarth's account of the sensations he experienced in his infancy ? *viz.* “ Having naturally a good eye and a fondness for drawing, shows of all sorts gave me uncommon pleasure when a child, and mimicry was remarkable in me.”—“ An early access to a neighbouring Painter drew my attention from play,



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and I was at every possible opportunity employed in making drawings.”—“ My exercises, when at school, were more remarkable for the ornaments which adorned them, than for the exercise itself; in the former, I soon found that blockheads with better memories could much surpass me, but for the latter I was particularly distinguished.”—“ It was therefore very conformable to my own wishes that I was taken from school, and served a long apprenticeship to a silver-plate engraver.” This engraver was Mr. Ellis Gamble, of Cranbourn-alley.

“ I soon found this business in every respect too limited. The Paintings of St. Paul’s Cathedral and Greenwich Hospital, then going on by Sir James Thornhill, ran in my head; and I determined that silver-plate engraving should be followed no longer than necessity obliged me to it. Engraving on copper was, at twenty years of age, my utmost ambition. To attain this, it was necessary that I should learn to draw objects something like Nature, instead of the monsters of Heraldry.” Animated by this desire, he considered how he could, by the shortest way, obtain possession of the knowledge he required; and, spurning the regular mode of academical study, adopted a plan of his own. “ Many reasons,” he says, “ led me to wish that I could find the shorter path; fix forms and characters in my mind; and, instead of copying the lines, try to read the language of the art; and, if possible, find its grammar, by bringing into one form the various observations I had made, and then try how far I could combine them, and apply them to practice.

“ Laying it down first as an axiom, that he who could by any means acquire and retain in his memory perfect ideas of the subjects he meant to draw, would have as clear a knowledge of the figure as a man who can write freely hath of the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, and their infinite combinations (each of these being composed of lines), and would consequently be an accurate designer :—

“ I therefore endeavoured to habituate myself to the exercise of a sort of technical memory ; and, by repeating in my own mind the parts of which objects were composed, I could by degrees combine and put them down in pencil. Thus, with all the drawbacks which resulted from the circumstances in which I was placed, I had one material advantage over my competitors, *viz.* the early habit I thus acquired of retaining in my mind’s eye, without coldly copying it on the spot, whatever I intended to imitate.

“ My pleasures and my studies thus going on hand in hand, the most striking objects that presented themselves, either comic or tragic, made the strongest impressions on my mind ; but, had I not sedulously practised what I had thus acquired, I should very soon have lost the power of performing it.”—“ Instead of burthening the memory with musty rules, or tiring the eyes with copying dry and damaged pictures, I have ever found studying from Nature the shortest and safest way of attaining knowledge in my art. By adopting this method, I found a redundancy of matter continually occurring. A choice of composition was the next thing to be considered, and my constitutional idleness naturally led me to the use of such materials as I had previously collected ; and to this I was further induced

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by thinking that, if properly combined, they might be made the most useful to society in Painting, although similar subjects had often failed in Writing and Preaching.”

In concurrence, therefore, with this reasoning, Hogarth set about qualifying himself for the pursuit of his object immediately upon the expiration of his apprenticeship, which was about the year 1718; and began to engrave on copper for the Booksellers. This praiseworthy emulation wrought with him as it generally does with those who dare to enter so self-denying a course of existence. He continued to live in industrious indigence for some time, whilst those who had the means of vending his early productions were growing rich by his labours.

It is said of one of those Patrons of the youthful Artist, that he very generously offered him half-a-crown a pound for a finished Plate; and at another time the same person offered to Mr. Major two plain pieces of copper for two engraved ones; with the *generous view* that the youth might not lack the means of exerting his ingenuity!!

Feeling the full weight of this kind of treatment, Hogarth resolved upon publishing on his own account. But in this he had to encounter another enemy in the body of Printsellers, who, upon his publishing, in 1724, his first Plate of “The Taste of the Town, or Burlington Gate,” soon procured copies of it, and sold them at half the price; so that he was obliged to sell the Plate, as their shops were the only places of sale.

“Owing to these kinds of circumstances, till I was near thirty years of age,” he says, “I could do little more than barely maintain myself by engraving.”

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It is probable, that about the time of publishing the above-mentioned Print he commenced Painter; as Mr. John Ireland states, in his account of Hogarth, that he was in possession of a set of Pictures designed for the large Plates he published from Butler's *Hudibras* in 1726. They are executed in somewhat of the style of Hems-kirk\*, and are but indifferent in the promise they hold forth of their Author. From this time he was known as a Painter, and employed in painting portraits, and small pictures of family conversations, as they are called, or groups of family portraits.

In 1729, he married the only daughter of Sir James Thornhill, without the consent of the Knight her father; who probably regarded him as an inferior Artist, and felt degraded by the union, till the designs for the *Harlot's Progress* were laid before him; satisfied then that his daughter had chosen a man of extraordinary merit, though poor in purse, he became reconciled to the match, and lived till his death in terms of intimacy with his son-in-law, and was a constant and generous friend to him.

Hogarth proceeded with success for some time in painting his portraits, "but feeling it (he says) a kind of drudgery, and as I could not act like some of my brethren, and make it a sort of manufactory to be carried on by the help of back-ground and drapery painting, it was not sufficiently profitable to pay the expences of my family. I therefore turned my thoughts to a still more novel mode, in painting and engraving modern moral subjects, a field not broken up in any country or any age.

\* These were purchased by Mr. Twining, at Mr. John Ireland's Sale, in 1810, for fifty-two guineas. EDIT.

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“ The reasons which induced me to adopt this mode of designing were, that I thought both Writers and Painters had, in the historical style, totally overlooked that intermediate species of subjects which may be placed between the sublime and grotesque. I therefore chose to compose Pictures on canvass, similar to representations on the Stage ; and farther hope that they will be tried by the same test, and criticised by the same criterion.

“ In these compositions, those subjects that will both entertain and improve the mind, bid fair to be of the greatest public utility, and must, therefore, be entitled to rank in the highest class.”—“ I have endeavoured to treat my subject as a Dramatic Writer ; my Picture as my Stage, and Men and Women my Players, who, by means of certain actions and gestures, are to exhibit *a dumb show*.

“ In pursuing my studies, I made all possible use of the technical memory which I have before described, by observing, and endeavouring to retain in my mind lineally, such objects as best suited my purpose ; so that be where I would, while my eyes were open, I was continually at my studies, and acquiring something useful to my profession. A redundancy of matter being by this means acquired, it is natural to suppose I introduced it into my works on every occasion that I could.

“ By this *idle* way of proceeding, I grew so profane as to admire Nature beyond the first productions of Art ; and acknowledged I saw, or fancied, delicacies in the life so far surpassing the utmost efforts of imitation, that, when I drew the comparison in my mind, I could not help uttering blasphemous expressions against the divinity of

Raphael, Correggio, and Michael-Angelo. For this, though my brethren have most unmercifully abused me, I hope to be forgiven. I confess to have frequently said, that I thought the style of Painting which I had adopted, admitting that my powers were not equal to doing it, might one time or other come into better hands, and be made more entertaining, and more useful, than the eternal blazoning, and tedious repetition, of hackneyed beaten subjects, either from the Scriptures, or the old ridiculous stories of Heathen Gods: as neither the religion of the one or the other requires promoting among Protestants, as it formerly did in Greece, and at a later period in Rome.”

In using language of this nature Hogarth was accused of vanity, and of enviously endeavouring to under-rate what he was unable to execute. And certainly with much justice the remarks appear to have been made; for, previously to his adopting the line of conduct in Painting which was so suitable to his peculiar genius, he attempted several Pictures in the grand historical style, and in all failed most woefully. It is apparent that he at no time of his life understood the object or character of that species of art, and was, therefore, ill qualified to judge of its value. But probably he was urged to the strong declarations in which he indulged, by seeing the success of infamous dealers in bad copies; and continually hearing bad originals exalted beyond all rational bounds, because they are supposed, by presuming Connoisseurs, to be the productions of this or that man of genius; while, in fact, they may be the inferior labours of some mongrel imitator. What, however, but the extreme of vanity,

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could induce a man, so ill trained in art, to think of contending with Poussin and Correggio in historical painting, and with Vandyke in portraiture? He asserted himself equal to either in their way, and in both proved himself grossly defective. In his own original manner, and in that alone, distinct from every one, he was super-excellent; conceiving his subjects with most consummate intelligence, and executing them with appropriate character and style.

After some time he felt the effect of the remarks of his adversaries (though he never acknowledged his incapacity); and, almost entirely abandoning portraiture and serious history, wisely adhered to his judicious choice of subject and manner; for the adoption of which he felt such powerful reasons as are mentioned above.

He had, however, in the interim, favoured the world with various productions of that kind, which were, and still are, and probably for ever will be, highly esteemed. In 1733 he published his first great work, “The Harlot’s Progress;” and in 1735, it was followed by its counterpart, “The Rake’s Progress.” The very extraordinary merit of these productions, and the favourable reception they met with, soon induced the Printsellers to be guilty of the base and mean conduct of having copies made of them, and thus rob the ingenious author of his well-earned reward.

To prevent this nefarious practice from continuing, Hogarth, in conjunction with Vertue and five other Artists, in the year 1735, applied, by petition to the Legislature, for a Bill to protect their property, similar to that for the security of copy-right in Literary

productions. A Bill was consequently passed, to secure the property of an engraved Plate to the original possessor of it for fourteen years from the first day of its publication ; which was to be specified on the Print. From this time, and owing more to this circumstance than to any other, Prints have become a very considerable article of commerce in this country. Our Artist commemorated the circumstance, by an emblematical Engraving, with an inscription expressive of the subject ; impressions from which he issued at various times ; and on the publication of one of his electioneering Prints in the following year, he made it the Subscription Ticket.

Upon the security of this Act, Hogarth employed himself with alacrity, and produced other works, which, while taste and good sense prevail in the world, will ensure the admiration of all who possess those useful qualities, by their ingenuity, and the force of their satire. In 1736 he published “ The Sleeping Congregation ;” “ The Distressed Poet ;” and some others of less note. In 1738 “ The Four Parts of the Day ; Morning, Noon, Evening, and Night ;” “ Strolling Actresses dressing in a Barn ;” &c. In 1741, “ The Enraged Musician ;” and in this and three following years, he appears to have laboured hard at a number of minor productions, and in preparing the Plates of his most celebrated work, “ The Marriage-à-la-mode,” of which he had given notice in 1743. He had projected a counter-part to this subject, of “ A Happy Marriage,” to be treated likewise in six Prints ; but one only of the Designs for it was completed, and that was never engraved.



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The very excellent and admired series of Prints just alluded to, were followed, in 1747, by those of the “Industrious and Idle Apprentices;” works whose moral utility is felt and acknowledged by all. It is said, that the spirited gallantry of Gay’s “Macheath in the Beggar’s Opera,” has too often dazzled the understandings of youth, and seduced many into a vicious course of life. In these Prints the pencil has perhaps exhibited a more operative force in a contrary direction; and probably effected much more good by a plain intelligible exhibition of an unvarnished tale, directly pointed to the most common intellects, than Lectures or Sermons of the utmost eloquence could produce. The impression they made at the time is now almost incredible.

Hogarth’s own account of the motives which induced him to publish these two series do him infinite honour, and shew the nobleness of his views. “These twelve Prints were calculated for the instruction of young people, and every thing addressed to them is fully described in words as well as figures,” &c.—“Considering the persons they were intended to serve, I have endeavoured to render them intelligible, and as cheap as possible. Fine engraving is not necessary for such subjects, if, what is infinitely more material, character and expression is properly preserved.”—“These Prints I have always found sell much more rapidly at Christmas than at any other time.”

Soon after the treaty of Aix la Chapelle, Hogarth, in search after character and matter for the employment of his pencil, went over to France; but, allowing his natural inclination to get the better of his

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judgment, and seduce him to draw “ The Gate of Calais,” of which he, after his return, published the humourous Print under that title, he was prevented, by imprisonment in his lodgings, from proceeding beyond that town ; and soon after compelled to go on board a ship, and return to England.

In 1745, finding that, however great the success of his Prints might be, the publick were not inclined to take his Pictures off his hands, he was induced to offer some of them, and those of the best he had then produced, for disposal by way of auction ; but after a plan of his own, *viz.* by keeping open a book to receive biddings from the first day of February to the last day of the same month, at 12 o’clock. The ticket of admission to the sale was his Print of “ The Battle of the Pictures ;” a humourous production, in which he ingeniously upheld his assertions concerning the preference so unfairly given to old Pictures, and the tricks of the dealers in them. See Nichols’s and Ireland’s Account of Hogarth.

The Pictures thus disposed of were,

The six of the Harlot’s Progress, for	-	-	-	£.88	4	0
Eight of the Rake’s Progress	-	-	-	184	16	0
Morning	-	-	-	-	21	0 0
Noon	-	-	-	-	38	17 0
Evening	-	-	-	-	39	18 0
Night	-	-	-	-	27	6 0
Strolling Players dressing in a Barn	-	-	-	27	6	0

In 1746, having finished his Picture of “ The March of the Guards towards Finchley,” he offered proposals for a Print from

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and a scheme to dispose of the Picture itself, by a Lottery of chances, at so low a price as three shillings, in addition to 7*s.* 6*d.* subscribed for a Print. Having disposed of 1843 chances, he gave his remaining numbers, amounting to 157, to the Foundling Hospital, one of which, when the Plate was finished, and the Lottery drawn, in the year 1750, was fortunate, and that very extraordinary and ingenious production thus became the property of that Institution; within whose walls it yet remains, with several other of his productions; particularly an excellent portrait of Captain Thomas Coram, Founder of the Hospital, and an historical Picture of “Moses brought before Pharaoh’s Daughter.”

By this scheme, Hogarth obtained 300*l.* for the Picture, observing, “that it was his only chance of being paid for his time:” such was the patronage of the Arts at that period in England; now happily very highly increased, to the credit of the publick, and the advancement of the practical part of the art at least.

In the year in which the above-mentioned Print was published, Hogarth was employed by the Benchers of Lincoln’s Inn to paint a picture for their Hall, in consequence of their having been bequeathed 200*l.* by Lord Wyndham, Chancellor of Ireland, for the purpose of ornamenting that room as they thought proper. On the proposal of Lord Mansfield, the voice of the Members was given for a Picture by our Artist; and, unhappily for his reputation, he chose a subject of an elevated and serious nature, “St. Paul before Felix.”

From one who presumed to smile at the high estimation in which the real works of the renowned Artists of Italy were held, and

boasted of his power to rival them, the world had a right to expect much. Instead of answering such expectation, he totally failed. In every requisite for such a work, it must be owned by his best friends, this Picture is wretchedly defective. It still occupies its original situation, and exhibits an useful lesson to those who place too high a value on their natural talents; and teaches them not to waste their powers on matters for which previous education has not prepared them; nor too readily to under-rate those of others, exerted in a different manner. Every branch of the Art of Painting requires its appropriate studies, and no man can combine materials with which he is unacquainted. Hogarth, employed to earn his bread from the first, had not the time, or the means, in this country, to inform himself properly of what was grand and impressive in the art. That which was expressive in common life he felt, and delineated with great force, but with common-place effect. Selection of beauty, of dignity, and grandeur, which this subject required, he evidently knew nothing of; and consequently failed in his attempt to inspire his figures with such qualities.

Whether he felt this himself when the Picture was completed may be doubted; but he certainly attempted to parry criticism, by satirising his own work, and published a ludicrous print of the subject, nearly of the same composition, but attempted to throw the effect upon Rembrandt's manner of etching. Upon advertising a Print of the real Picture, he adds, "On the first payment a receipt will be given, which receipt will contain a new Print (*in the true Dutch taste*) of 'Paul before Felix;' which, after the subscription is over, will not be sold at a less price than one guinea each."

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At the same time he advertised for sale his most beautiful series of pictures before mentioned, “The Marriage-à-la mode,” by a manner of bidding peculiar to himself; from which he excluded all dealers in pictures. The mode he adopted was by written tickets, on which Subscribers wrote their names and the price they would give. This was kept open for the space of one month. But either the publick were not alive to the beauties and excellences of these incomparable works, or his manner of proceeding displeased them: for the fact is, there were few competitors, and they were sold at the low price of 120 guineas, with their frames, to Mr. John Lane, of Hillingdon; on whose death they became the property of his nephew, Colonel Cawthorne. Being offered at auction by Mr. Christie, in 1792, the proprietor bought them in at 900 guineas. Five years afterwards they were bought by Mr. Angerstein, at the price of £.1381, and with him they still remain, justly and deservedly admired for their fulness of character and expression, and their beauty of composition, colouring, and execution, and are a complete falsification of Mr. Walpole’s assertion, “that Hogarth was no Painter.”

In the following year, 1751, he published his moral and instructive Prints of “Beer-street,” “Gin-lane,” and “The four Stages of Cruelty.” The generous and truly humane motives which induced him to make the four last designs he himself has thus described: “These Prints were engraved with the hope of, in some measure, correcting that barbarous treatment of animals, the very sight of which renders the streets of our metropolis so distressing to every feeling mind. If they have had this effect, I am more proud

of having been the author, than I should be of having painted Raphael's cartoons."

During the time of which we have been treating concerning Hogarth's practice and studies, he continued occasionally to paint Portraits; but it was not his *forte*. He produced, indeed, several acknowledged strong likenesses, but without any elevation of sentiment or character.

He now thought it proper, in order to justify and enforce many points upon which he had disagreed and contended with other Artists, to turn author. He had, in the year 1745, painted his own Portrait with his dog; before him lay a palette spread with colours, and on it was drawn a waving line, which he entitled "The Line of Beauty." In this, Hogarth had a design. It appeared an enigma; and he himself relates, that "no Egyptian hieroglyphic ever amused for a time more than it did. Painters and Sculptors came to me to know the meaning of it, being as much puzzled with it as other people, till it came to have some explanation; then, and not till then, some found it out to be an old acquaintance of theirs."—"Others denied that there could be such a rule either in Art or Nature, &c." See preface to the work, which, in 1753, he thought fit to publish under the title of "*The Analysis of Beauty*, written with a view of fixing the fluctuating ideas of *Taste*." Its object is to shew that waving lines are the source of beauty; and that grace is superadded, when that line is twisted to a certain degree, and becomes serpentine. In it are numerous references to various objects represented in two Prints, which he etched and published with the