

**A MEMOIR OF THE LIFE
AND WORKS OF
WILLIAM WYON, CHIEF
ENGRAVER OF THE MINT**

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A Memoir of the Life and Works of William Wyon, Chief Engraver of the Mint by Nicholas Carlisle

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NICHOLAS CARLISLE

**A MEMOIR OF THE LIFE
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WILLIAM WYON, CHIEF
ENGRAVER OF THE MINT**

A
MEMOIR
OF
THE LIFE AND WORKS
OF
WILLIAM WYON, Esq., A. R. A.,

CHIEF ENGRAVER OF THE ROYAL MINT.

— This glorious and still unrivalled Country, to which
all our Hearts are bound by a Thousand indissoluble ties.

Bishop Porteus, Lett. xlii.

1837.

TO

LIEUTENANT GENERAL

SIR HERBERT TAYLOR, G. C. H.,

&c. &c. &c.

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

Sir,

I am most grateful for Your obliging permission to dedicate this MEMOIR to You,—a favour, which is the more agreeable, as it affords me the Opportunity of publickly expressing the deep sense of my Obligation, for the high Honour of my Appointment, in 1812, through Your kind intervention, to the Office of ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN, in THE ROYAL LIBRARY at BUCKINGHAM PALACE;—an auspicious event, which placed me so happily amidst that splendid Collection of Science and Literature,—the “Perpetual Monument of the Munificence, Judgement, and liberal Taste,” as it was the accumulated Delight, of Our late venerable and beloved Sovereign, GEORGE THE THIRD,—

DEDICATION.

And, may I be allowed to add, the fortunate occasion also of that uniform Goodness and friendly Disposition, which I have so invariably experienced from You.

With sentiments of the sincerest Respect and Esteem, I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Sir,

Your most truly obliged,

and faithful Servant,

NICHOLAS CARLISLE.

Somerset Place, London,
29th of January, 1837.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are few Persons of refined Taste, who have not some favourite Pursuit, which they cultivate with singular delight. But our Tastes, like our Intimacies, are the most rational, when directed to those Qualifications in the object, which are calculated at once to entertain and to improve our Minds.

The Amusements of Life, which are resorted to, in order to prevent the Mind from falling into Idleness or Vice, are of various kinds. Some Persons are inclined to the pleasure which Musick, Painting, or Sculpture affords,—and which, indeed, to persons who have no relish for such Amusements, must seem like another sense beneficently super-added,—Books are also never failing sources of Happiness, it being with them, as with a well-chosen Friend, that the mind never unbends so agreeably as in such elegant intercourse.

In commendable Pursuits such as these, how many persons occupy their leisure hours!—and,

from silent Admirers of Works of Art, or Possessors of a few subjects of Taste, imperceptibly increase the store, until their treasures gradually become important,—and, hence, attest the refinement of their Owners, and the inestimable value of their Collections.

But whatever may be the Pride or the Pleasure in accumulated Works of Excellence, it is certain, that the Encouragement of NATIVE ART affords the most pleasing Indulgence, as it furnishes an Amusement that embodies a Patriotic Principle in an honourable and useful gratification.

Whatever Praise is, therefore, due to the Collectors of Books, Pictures, or Statues, a similar share of it may reasonably be extended to those, who show their Partiality for COINS,—especially, if the contents of their Cabinets be distinguished by the number and beauty of the Works of their Countrymen. Few Persons have either Fortune or Opportunity to collect the splendid Gems of Antient Skill,—but most of those, who partake of this captivating Study, may indulge their Taste in securing some of the Productions of living Artists.

Influenced by this conviction, I shall endeavour to enumerate all the COINS, MEDALS, and SEALS, of an Engraver, who has done honour to ENGLAND, by the exquisite specimens of his Science and

Taste,—and, by so doing, I may enable Collectors to know with certainty, when their Cabinets are complete, and that too within reasonable bounds.

In an attempt of this kind, we have the example of MR. VERTUE to guide us, in his Collection “of the Works of that great Artist, THOMAS SIMON, so much admired for their Excellency and Rarity,”—And, whilst a Design, like this, is attainable, let us gratefully resolve, that the elaborate Works of our eminent Contemporary, WILLIAM WYON, Esq., shall in like manner be perpetuated to the latest Posterity.

The principal impediment that seems to interpose, is the delicacy of delineating the Biography of an unassuming Artist, who is still surrounded with a happy circle of admiring Friends, and who shrinks from that applause, which universally accompanies his unrivalled exertions.

For, in writing a Narrative of a living Individual, it may be suspected, that fondness for the friend, or partiality to his talents, may transgress the limits of strict fidelity,—But let it be remembered, that if a Life be delayed until Interest and Envy are at an end, “we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence,—for the incidents which give excellence to Biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape

the Memory, and are rarely transmitted by Tradition."

Whilst, then, we have the satisfaction of the Artist's Presence, we are freed from all uncertainty of Conjecture, and enjoy that greatest qualification of an Historian, the direct knowledge of the Truth.

The skill to which MR. WYON has attained, by long and unwearied Perseverance, should therefore be transmitted in all it's particulars to future Ages,—that his Successors may be ashamed to fall below him, and that no Artist may hereafter, in excuse of his Ignorance, have to plead the want of a correct Example.

It may not, however, be improper, first to take a concise view of the state of the Coinage in the reigns of several of our Monarchs, and of the Solicitude shown by some of them for the beauty and improvement of it,—And, in so doing, the "ANNALS" of my sincerely lamented friend, the late Reverend ROGERS RUDING, present a luminous Series, from whence an historical Summary may safely be made.

So early as the reign of King HENRY the First, and about the year 1125, the English Goldsmiths seem to have been eminent for the excellence of their Workmanship, and to have been sometimes