

The strong, the mean, and the delicate style of building cannot be fixed at any other terms, than nearly at those observable in the Grecian orders; since, if you were to begin the progression much above what they have established, it would destroy their very mechanical principles and distinctions; for if instead of 8: 10: 12, which the author of this treatise has ventured to assign, you take 12: 15: 18, diameters for the entire altitudes; in these two last terms, either the columns would run into an excess of height, or the entablature into an unwarrantable heaviness; both the appearance and mechanism of such constructions must be rejected upon the slightest examination; but the nearer you approach the true terms assigned, as the best moderns have done, the errors gradually become less sensible: yet why should we seek after any other equivocal measures when we can obtain the most desirable characters and quantities from indisputably authentic Attic models.

C H A P. II.

Of the Orders, Definition, the Rise and gradual Improvements of their Characters. Of Modules. Tables of Altitudes and Proportions. Of the Principal Members. Of Mouldings and Ornaments. Of Profile.

IN every edifice, whether public or private, great or small, the conveniency, strength and beauty of its (a) architecture, can only arise from a proper intelligence of the orders: The word (b) order, in contradistinction to confusion, signifies a regular assemblage and arrangement of the several proportions and ornaments of an entire column, with its entire entablature. The trunks of trees left standing or set up an end, and others laid across them to sustain the covering, gave the first hint of an order, a supposition too natural and too obvious to be rejected. These rough materials were afterwards wrought into better form by the workman's skill; the first statues, as well as buildings, were of (c) wood, before stone and marble came into use; for the arts which depend upon design, had their beginnings, like all other inventions, in the necessary; then they proceeded gradually to the beautiful, and at last they fell into the superfluous and extreme: these are the three principal degrees of art. Sculpture and Painting advanced faster towards perfection than architecture, because this last has not any determined object in nature for imitation towards a complete design; it is founded upon more general rules and the combination of several proportions.

The three Grecian orders as afterwards established, seem as if they were intended to represent three manners of building, the strong, the mean, and the delicate. Many structures have been and can be made without columns, perhaps only with a cornice, or some part of an entablature: Edifices of such a construction are called after the order, whereof they bear any of the special marks; thus the front of the Farnese palace at Rome is quite plain, but finishes with a Corinthian Cornice; therefore such a front is called Corinthian, and so of others.

(a) Architectura autem constat ex ordinatione, quæ Græcè, taxis dicitur, & ex dispositione, hanc autem Græci diatheaia vocant, Eurythmia & symmetria & decore & distributione, quæ Græcè œconomia dicitur.

b Ordinatio est modica membrorum operis commoditas separatim, univærsæque proportionis ad symmetriam comparatio. Lib. I. c. 2.

(c) Ita una quæque res & Locum & Genus & Ordinem proprium tuetur, e quibus rebus & a materiâ fabrici, in lapideis & marmoreis ædium sacrarum ædificationibus artifices dispositiones eorum sculpturis sunt imitati, & eas inventiones persequendas putaverunt: ideo quod antiqui fabri quodam in loco ædificantes, cum ita ab interioribus parietibus ad extremas partes signa prominentia habuissent collocata, inter signa struxerunt, supraque coronas & fastigia venustiore specie fabricibus operibus ornaverunt. Lib. IV. c. 2.