

QUOTATION

SAMUEL JOHNSON ON PATRONAGE AND SCIENCE

The Sciences having long seen their votaries labouring for the benefit of mankind without reward, put up their petition to Jupiter for a more equitable distribution of riches and honours. Jupiter was moved at their complaints, and touched with the approaching miseries of men, whom the Sciences, wearied with perpetual ingratitude, were now threatening to forsake. . . .

A synod of the celestials was therefore convened, in which it was resolved, that Patronage should descend to the assistance of the Sciences. . . .

She came down with the general acclamation of all the powers that favour learning. Hope danced before her, and Liberality stood at her side, ready to scatter by her direction the gifts which Fortune, who followed her, was commanded to supply. . . .

On Parnassus she fixed her residence, in a palace raised by the Sciences, and adorned with whatever could delight the eye, elevate the imagination, or enlarge the understanding. Here she dispersed the gifts of Fortune with the impartiality of Justice, and the discernment of Truth. Her gate stood always open, and Hope sat at the portal, inviting to entrance, all whom the Sciences numbered in their train. The court was therefore thronged with innumerable multitudes. . . . Those . . . who had solicited her favour without success, generally withdrew from public notice, and either diverted their attention to meaner employments, or endeavoured to supply their deficiencies by closer application.

In time, however, the number of those who had miscarried in their pretensions grew so great, that they became less ashamed of their repulses; and, instead of hiding their disgrace in retirement, began to besiege the gates of the palace, and obstruct the entrance of such as they thought likely to be more caressed. The decisions of Patronage . . . had been sometimes erroneous; and though she always made haste to rectify her mistakes, a few instances of her fallibility encouraged every one to appeal from her judgment to his own and that of his companions, who are always ready to clamour in the common cause, and elate each other with reciprocal applause.

Hope was a steady friend to the disappointed, and Impudence incited them to accept a second invitation, and lay their claim again before Patronage. They were again, for the most part, sent back with ignominy, but found Hope not alienated, and Impudence more resolutely zealous; they therefore contrived new expedients, and hoped at last to prevail by their multitudes, which were always increasing, and their perseverance, which Hope and Impudence forbade them to relax. . . .

Some were . . . heaped by Patronage with the gifts of Fortune; but they were from that time chained to her footstool, and condemned to regulate their lives by her glances and her nods; they seemed proud of their manacles, and seldom complained of any drudgery however servile, or any affront however contemptuous. . . .

Here they mingled again with the tumult, and all, except a few whom experience had taught to seek happiness in the regions of liberty, continued to spend hours, and days, and years, courting the smile of Caprice by the arts of Flattery; till at length new crowds pressed in upon them, and drove them forth at different outlets into the habitations of Disease, and Shame, and Poverty, and Despair, where they passed the rest of their lives in narratives of promises and breaches of faith, of joys and sorrows, of hopes and disappointments.

The Sciences, after a thousand indignities, retired from the palace of Patronage, and having long wandered over the world in grief and distress, were led at last to the cottage of Independence, the daughter of Fortitude; where they were taught by Prudence and Parsimony to support themselves in dignity and quiet.

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Contributed by J. M. Harrison, Department of Psychology, 64 Cummington Street, Boston University, Boston, MA 02215.