

For the Daguerreian Journal.

SCULPTURE.

No art is less understood in this country than that of Sculpture—consequently least appreciated of all others. Nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand, imagine that portrait busts are Plaster Paris casts from heads of different individuals. The error has its origin from two sources.—One from seeing casts taken of remarkable heads by Phrenologists for the aid of science and curiosity, the other from a letter of Thomas Jefferson. When Mr. Jefferson resided in France, he sat to Houdon, the Sculptor, for a bust. As was the custom of that age, Houdon took a Plaster Paris mask of Mr. Jefferson's face, for the purpose of advancing his model previous to a few sittings to complete the work. By that process much time was saved; but the practice was a bad one, for many persons were deterred from having busts when once apprehending they had to mask. In a subsequent letter to a friend, Mr. Jefferson announces the almost breathless event that he came near taking his life when the mask was removed.

The Sculptor must have been very careless, or Mr. Jefferson not a little alarmed; perhaps both. The process is simple when attended with care. The subject is required to lie on his back, his hair combed back and well lathered, then a coat of sweet oil is applied to the face, and hair to prevent the soap from evaporating. A couple of quills, with a little cotton rapped around them, are inserted in the nostrils for respiration. Soiled towels are used to form a dike to prevent the plaster from running further than desired. The Plaster of Paris is mixed with water, about the consistency of thick cream, poured over the face until it is half an inch in thickness. In ten or fifteen minutes it sets hard enough to remove.

The inner surface of the mold is oiled or saturated with dissolved soap (to prevent the adhesion of the plaster poured into it).

The mold is cleaned with a sponge or little raw cotton. The required quantity of plaster is prepared, as before—poured into the mold until it is an inch thick—more—in fifteen or twenty minutes it is ready to chip off the matrix—that is done with a mallet and a few blunt chisels—removed in small pieces—peeling off like the shell of a boiled egg. The vulgar at once exclaim, "That is a Daguerreotype Plaster Paris." Such is not the case. It is not equal to a Daguerreotype; the eyes are closed—the face has no more expression than a *post mortem* cast, or a peel-turnip, or as my old friend, Dr. R—the Transylvania University would say, "A *post mortem* examination after death." The reasons are obvious. When persons with mobile faces lie on their backs, there is a material change—the soft portions of the face are depressed; when several pounds of plaster are poured on, there is still a greater change—say nothing of the fear that haunts the mind during the operation. *Post mortem* casts are produced in the same manner as those from life, for the purpose of painting portraits, or modeling busts from them where nothing of the kind exists. An artist might as well attempt to raise the dead as to reproduce life-like counterfeit. Like stone walls they "look tranquility," and their eyes have "speculation." It is frequently attempted but rarely accomplished. After Mr. Jefferson's death, his numerous letters were published; among them the one relating to his narrow escape from suffocation. Where his letter has been read, the inference is drawn that Sculptors of our own country pursue the same course as Mr. Houdon, and the glorious art of Sculpture is looked on as a mere mechanical process, requiring no genius to imbue his busts or statues with the true Promethian fire. No person has portrayed so well the artist and his creation as Lord Byron:

"Many are poets, but without the name;
For what is poesy but to create
From overfeeling good or ill; and aim

At an external
And be, the
Bestowing
Finding the
And vultur
Who, havi
Lies chained
So be it;
Whose int
Which still
Or lighten
The form
Are bards;
More poes
Than aug
bear;
One noble s
Or deity
With bea
That they v
Break no
there
Transfus
Of poesy w
With th
refle
Can do n
The palm,
Faints o
Despair
Those
mode of
sooner th
that by a
But few
ing stan
fifteen to
at the to
slightly
revolves
dimensi
in the c
placed t
bust.
ways.
good pi
ter—ma
the bas
upper p
for the
inserted
in feng
ened a