

eminence this country has produced who was indebted to foreign travel for his improvement and advancement in painting. Some use, indeed, he appears to have made of foreign productions; and he did not neglect to improve himself in the language of the art—the art of imitation—but aided his progress by closely observing and imitating some of the masters of the Flemish school, who are, undoubtedly, the greatest in that particular and necessary branch of it. He frequently made copies of Rubens, Teniers, and Vandyke, which it would be no disgrace to the most accurate con-

Hardcastle's *Somerset House Gazette*, shows how accurate Gainsborough was in his execution:—“There resided in the same neighbourhood with Gainsborough's father a respectable clergyman, named Coyte. With the sons of this clergyman young Gainsborough and his brothers passed much of their time. . . . The parson's garden having been plundered of a great quantity of wall fruit, much pains were taken, but without effect, to discover the thief. Young Gainsborough having, one summer morning, risen at an early hour, and walked into the garden to make a sketch from an old elm, seated himself in an obscure corner, and had just taken out his chalk to begin, when he observed a fellow's head peeping over the wall of the garden next the road, apparently to 'see if the coast was clear.' Upon a rough board he made a sketch of the head of

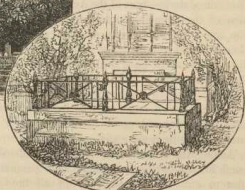


KEW CHURCH—EXTERIOR.

noisseurs to mistake for original pictures at first sight. What he thus learned he did not, however, servilely use, but applied it to imitate nature in a manner entirely his own.

The subjects he chose for representation were generally very simple, to which his own excellent taste knew how to give expression and value. In his landscapes, a rising mound, and a few figures seated upon or near it, with a cow or some sheep grazing, and a slight marking of distance, sufficed for the objects; their charm was the purity of tone in the colour, the freedom and clearness of the touch, together with an agreeable combination of the forms; and with these simple materials, which appear so easy as to be within every one's grasp, but which constantly elude the designer who is not gifted with his feeling and taste, does he always produce a pleasing picture. In his fancy pictures the same taste prevailed. A cottage girl, a shepherd's boy, a woodman, with very slight materials in the background, were treated by him with so much character and elegance that they never fail to delight.

The following anecdote, taken from Ephraim



GAINSBOROUGH'S TOMB.

the man; and so accurate was the likeness that he was instantly known to be a man from a neighbouring village, who, on closer inquiry, proved to be the very fellow who had robbed the garden."

Gainsborough was a man of great generosity. If he took as model an infant from a cottage, all the family generally participated in the profits of the picture, and some of them frequently found a home in his house. Needy relatives and unfortunate friends always received help from him. There were other traits in his personal character less amiable. He was very capricious in his manners, and rather fickle and unsteady in his social connections. This was sufficiently evinced by his general conduct towards the Royal Academy, and by his whimsical behaviour to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Soon after he settled in London, Sir Joshua thought himself bound in