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H. E. BARKER  
*Lincolnianā*  
1922 SOUTH HOBART BOULEVARD  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

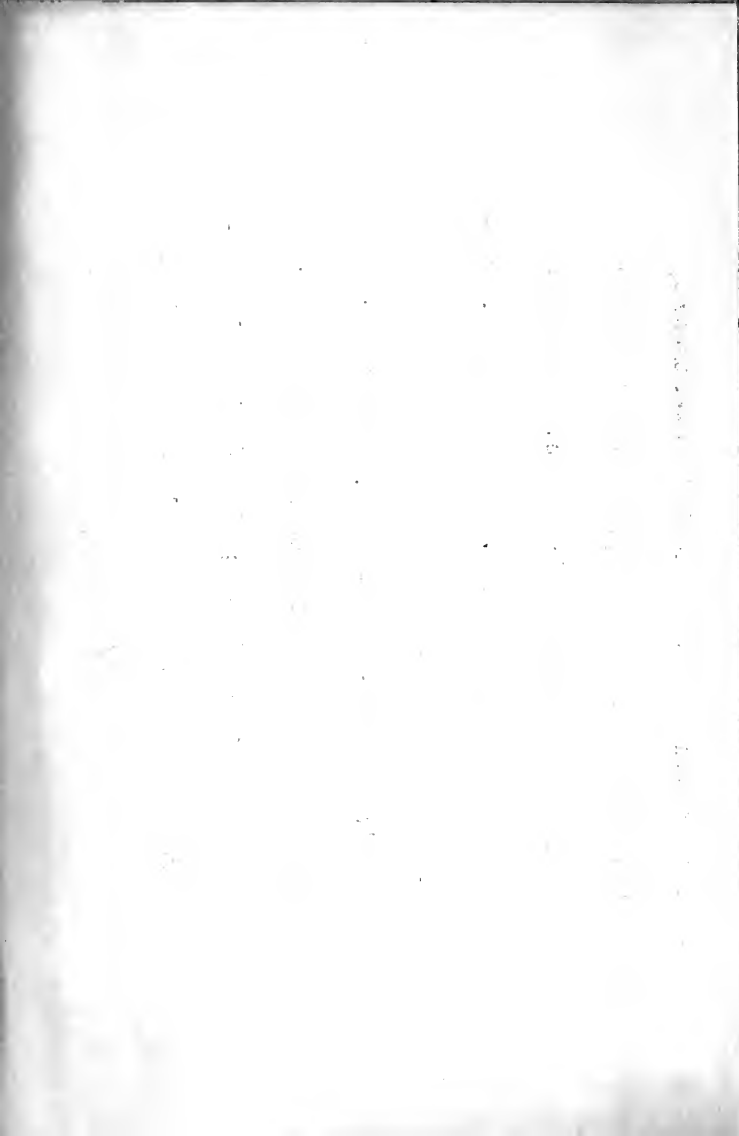


BLAIR'S RHETORIC.

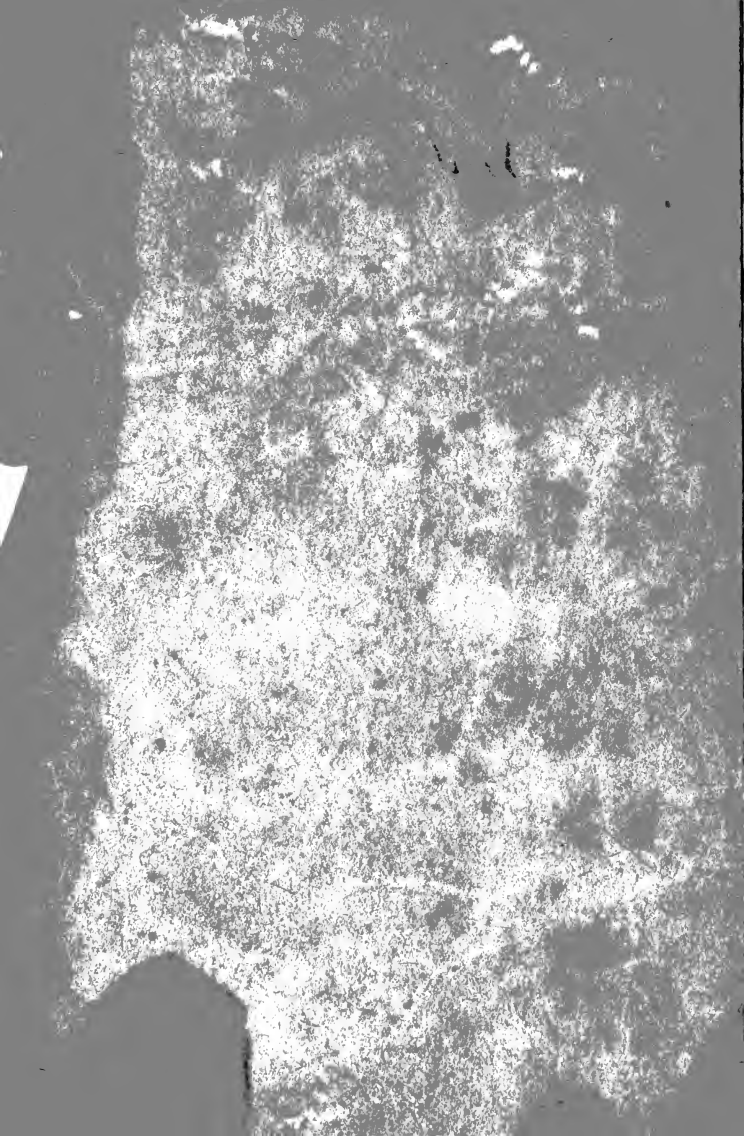
None of Lincoln's biographers make mention of this work as having been read or studied by him, but we have good and sufficient outside testimony that Blair's Rhetoric was familiar to Lincoln.

Henry B. Rankin, in "Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln", states that this was one of the studies in which Mentor Graham coached Lincoln's sweetheart, Ann Rutledge, who was preparing to enter college at Jacksonville, Ills., and in a personal letter to Geo. Hambrecht, Mr. Rankin declares this to have been one of Lincoln's favorite text-books. This information Mr. Rankin obtained from his mother who was intimately acquainted with all members of the Rutledge family at New Salem.

H. E. Barker



Hand



Hannah Browne  
1821

John S. Brown

Baldwin

Mass

Handwritten text at the top of the page, possibly a title or header, which is mostly illegible due to fading and bleed-through.

A valuable book

THE HISTORY OF



AN  
ABRIDGMENT  
OF  
*LECTURES*  
ON  
**RHETORICK.**

—◆—  
BY HUGH BLAIR, D. D.  
—◆—

*REVISED AND CORRECTED.*

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*EXETER :*

PRINTED BY CHARLES NORRIS & Co. FOR WILLIAM SAW-  
YER & Co. BOOKSELLERS, NEWBURYPORT.

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1809.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.



**T**HE want of a system of Rhetorick upon a concise plan, and at an easy price, will, it is presumed, render this little volume acceptable to the publick. To collect knowledge, which is scattered over a wide extent, into a small compass, if it has not the merit of originality, has at least the advantage of being useful. Many, who are terrified at the idea of travelling over a ponderous volume in search of information, will yet set out on a short journey in pursuit of science with alacrity and profit. Those for whom the following Essays are principally intended, will derive peculiar benefit from the brevity with which they are conveyed. To youth, who are engaged in the rudiments of learning; whose time and attention must be occupied by a variety of subjects, every branch of science should be rendered as concise as possible. Hence the attention is not fatigued, nor the memory overloaded.

That a knowledge of Rhetorick forms a very material part of the education of a polite scholar must be universally allowed. Any attempt, therefore, however imperfect, to make so useful an art more generally known, has claim to that praise which is the reward of good intention. With this the Editor will be sufficiently satisfied; since being serviceable to others is the most agreeable method of becoming contented with ourselves.

# Contents.

INTRODUCTION.	PAGE.
<i>On Taste</i>	9
<i>Criticism. Genius. Pleasures of Taste. Sublimity in Objects</i>	14
<i>Sublimity in Writing</i>	24
<i>Beauty and other Pleasures of Taste</i>	33
<i>Origin and Progress of Language</i>	42
<i>Rise and Progress of Language and of Writing</i>	51
<i>Structure of Language</i>	58
<i>Structure of Language. English Tongue</i>	63
<i>Style. Perspicuity and Precision</i>	71
<i>Structure of Sentences</i>	76
<i>The same Subject</i>	82
<i>Structure of Sentences. Harmony</i>	89
<i>Origin and Nature of Figurative Language</i>	96
<i>Metaphor</i>	101
<i>Hyperbole</i>	107
<i>Personification and Apostrophe</i>	109
<i>Comparison, Antithesis, Interrogation, Exclamation, and other Figures of Speech</i>	114
<i>Antithesis</i>	117
<i>Interrogation and Exclamation</i>	118
<i>Vision and Climax</i>	119
<i>General Characters of Style. Diffuse, Concise—Feeble, Nervous—Dry, Plain, Neat, Elegant, Flowery</i>	121
<i>Style. Simple, Affected, Vehement. Directions for forming a proper Style</i>	128
<i>Critical Examination of Mr. Addison's Style in No. 411 of the Spectator</i>	136
<i>Eloquence. Origin of Eloquence. Grecian Eloquence. Demosthenes</i>	146
<i>Roman Eloquence. Cicero. Modern Eloquence</i>	152
<i>Eloquence of Popular Assemblies</i>	159
<i>Eloquence of the Bar</i>	163
<i>Eloquence of the Pulpit</i>	170

	PAGE.
<i>Conduct of a Discourse in all its Parts. Introduction, Division, Narration, and Explication</i>	176
<i>The Argumentative Part of a Discourse, the Pa- thetick part, and the Peroration</i>	183
<i>Pronunciation or Delivery</i>	188
<i>Means of improving in Eloquence</i>	199
<i>Comparative Merit of the Ancients and Moderns</i>	207
<i>Historical Writing</i>	210
<i>Philosophical Writing and Dialogue</i>	215
<i>Epistolary Writing</i>	217
<i>Fictitious History</i>	218
<i>Nature of Poetry. Its Origin and Progress—</i>	
<i>Versification</i>	220
<i>English Versification</i>	222
<i>Pastoral Poetry</i>	224
<i>Lyrick Poetry</i>	230
<i>Didactick Poetry</i>	232
<i>Descriptive Poetry</i>	235
<i>The Poetry of the Hebrews</i>	239
<i>Epick Poetry</i>	244
<i>Homer's Iliad and Odyssey</i>	250
<i>The Æneid of Virgil</i>	254
<i>Lucan's Pharsalia</i>	257
<i>Tasso's Jerusalem</i>	259
<i>The Lusiad of Camoens</i>	262
<i>The Telemachus of Fenelon</i>	264
<i>The Henriade of Voltaire</i>	266
<i>Milton's Paradise Lost</i>	268
<i>Dramatick Poetry. Tragedy</i>	271
<i>Greek Tragedy</i>	284
<i>French Tragedy</i>	286
<i>English Tragedy</i>	287
<i>Comedy</i>	289
<i>Ancient Comedy</i>	293
<i>Spanish Comedy</i>	295
<i>French Comedy</i>	296
<i>English Comedy</i>	297

## Introduction.

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**A** PROPER acquaintance with the circle of Liberal Arts is requisite to the study of Rhetorick and Belles Letters. To extend the knowledge of them must be the first care of those, who wish either to write with reputation, or so to express themselves in publick, as to command attention. Among the ancients it was an essential principle, that the orator ought to be conversant in every department of learning. No art indeed can be contrived which can stamp merit on a composition, rich or splendid in expression, but barren or erroneous in sentiment. Oratory, it is true, has often been disgraced by attempts to establish a false criterion of its value. Writers have endeavoured to supply want of matter by graces of composition; and courted the temporary applause of the ignorant, instead of the lasting approbation of the discerning. But such imposture must be short and transitory. The body and substance of any valuable composition must be formed of knowledge and science. Rhetorick completes the structure, and adds the polish; but firm and solid bodies only are able to receive it.

Among the learned it has long been a contested, and remains still an undecided question, whether Nature or Art contribute most toward excellence in writing and discourse. Various may be the opinions with respect to the manner, in which Art can most effectually furnish aid for such a purpose; and it were presumption to assert, that rhetorical rules, how just soever, are sufficient to form an orator. Private application and study, supposing natural genius to be favourable, are certainly superiour to any system of publick instruction. But, though rules and instructions cannot effect every thing which is requisite, they may be of considerable use. If they cannot inspire genius, they can give it direction and assistance. If they cannot make barrenness fruitful, they can correct redundancy. They present proper models for imitation; they point out the principle beauties which ought to be studied, and the chief faults which ought to be avoided; and consequently tend to enlighten Taste, and to conduct Genius from unnatural deviations into its proper channel. Though they are incapable of producing great excellencies; they may at least serve to prevent considerable mistakes.

In the education of youth, no object has appeared more important to wise men in every age, than to excite in them an early relish for the entertainments of Taste. From these to the discharge of the higher and more important duties of life the transition is natural and easy.

Of those minds, which have this elegant and liberal turn, the most pleasing hopes may be entertained. On the contrary, entire insensibility to eloquence, poetry, or any of the fine arts, may justly be considered as a bad symptom in youth; and supposes them inclined to low gratifications, or capable of being engaged only in the common pursuits of life.

Improvement of Taste seems to be more or less connected with every good and virtuous disposition. By giving frequent exercise to the tender and humane passions, a cultivated taste increases sensibility; yet at the same time it tends to soften the more violent and angry emotions.

*Ingenuas didicisse, fideliter artes*

*Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.*

These polish'd arts have humaniz'd mankind,  
Soften'd the rude, and calm'd the boisterous mind.

Poetry, Eloquence, and History continually exhibit to our view those elevated sentiments and high examples, which tend to nourish in our minds publick spirit, love of glory, contempt of external fortune, and admiration of every thing truly great, noble and illustrious.

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# Lectures on Rhetorick,

ABRIDGED.

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## TASTE.

**T**ASTE is “the power of receiving pleasure or pain from the beauties or deformities of Nature and of Art.” It is a faculty common in some degree to all men. Through the circle of human nature, nothing is more general, than the relish of Beauty of one kind or other; of what is orderly, proportioned, grand, harmonious. new, or sprightly. Nor does there prevail less generally a disrelish of whatever is gross, disproportioned, disorderly, and discordant. In children the rudiments of Taste appear very early in a thousand instances; in their partiality for regular bodies, their fondness for pictures and statues, and their warm attachment to whatever is new or astonishing. The most stupid peasants receive pleasure from tales and ballads, and are delighted with the beautiful appearances of nature in the earth and heavens. Even in the deserts of America, where

human nature appears in its most uncultivated state, the savages have their ornaments of dress, their war and their death songs, their harangues and their orators. ) The principles of Taste must therefore be deeply founded in the human mind. To have some discernment of Beauty is no less essential to man, than to possess the attributes of speech and reason.

Though no human being can be entirely devoid of this faculty, yet it is possessed in very different degrees. In some men only faint glimmerings of Taste are visible; the beauties, which they relish are of the coarsest kind; and of these they have only a weak and confused impression; while in others Taste rises to an acute discernment, and a lively enjoyment of the most refined beauties.

This inequality of Taste among men is to be ascribed undoubtedly in part to the different frame of their natures; to nicer organs, and more delicate internal powers, with which some are endued beyond others; yet it is owing still more to culture and education. Taste is certainly one of the most improveable faculties of our nature. We may easily be convinced of the truth of this assertion by only reflecting on that immense superiority, which education and improvement give to civilized above barbarous nations in refinement of Taste; and on the advantage, which they give in the same nation to those, who have studied the liberal arts, above the rude and illiterate vulgar.



Reason and good sense have so extensive an influence on all the operations and decisions of Taste, that a completely good Taste may well be considered, as a power compounded of natural sensibility to beauty and of improved understanding. To be satisfied of this, we may observe, that the greater part of the productions of Genius are no other than imitations of nature; representations of the characters, actions, or manners of men. Now the pleasure we experience from such imitations or representations is founded on mere Taste; but to judge, whether they be properly executed, belongs to the understanding, which compares the copy with the original.

In reading, for instance, the *Æneid* of Virgil, a great part of our pleasure arises from the proper conduct of the plan or story; from all the parts being joined together with probability and due connexion; from the adoption of the characters from nature, the correspondence of the sentiments to the characters, and of the style to the sentiments. The pleasure, which is derived from a poem so conducted, is felt or enjoyed by Taste, as an internal sense; but the discovery of this conduct in the poem is owing to reason; and the more reason enables us to discover such propriety in the conduct, the greater will be our pleasure.

The constituents of Taste, when brought to its most perfect state, are two, Delicacy and Correctness.

Delicacy of Taste refers principally to the perfection of that natural sensibility, on which Taste is founded. It implies those finer organs or powers, which enable us to discover beauties, that are concealed from a vulgar eye. It is judged of by the same marks, that we employ in judging of the delicacy of an external sense. As the goodness of the palate is not tried by strong flavours, but by a mixture of ingredients, where, notwithstanding the confusion, we remain sensible of each; so delicacy of internal Taste appears by a quick and lively sensibility to its finest, most compounded, or most latent objects.

Correctness of Taste respects the improvement this faculty receives through its connexion with the understanding. A man of correct taste is one, who is never imposed on by counterfeit beauties; who carries always in his own mind that standard of good sense, which he employs in judging of every thing. He estimates with propriety the relative merit of the several beauties, which he meets in any work of genius; refers them to their proper classes; assigns the principles as far as they can be traced, whence their power of pleasing is derived; and is pleased himself precisely in that degree, in which he ought, and no more.

Taste is certainly not an arbitrary principle, which is subject to the fancy of every individual, and which admits no criterion for determining, whether it be true or false. Its foundation is the same in every human mind. It is built upon sentiments and perceptions, which are inseparable from our nature; and which generally operate with the same uniformity, as our other intellectual principles. When these sentiments are perverted by ignorance or prejudice, they may be rectified by reason. Their sound and natural state is finally determined by comparing them with the general Taste of mankind. Let men declaim as much as they please, concerning the caprice and uncertainty of Taste; it is found by experience, that there are beauties, which if displayed in a proper light, have power to command lasting and universal admiration. In every composition, what interests the imagination, and touches the heart, gives pleasure to all ages and nations. There is a certain string, which being properly struck, the human heart is so made, as to accord to it. Hence the universal testimony, which the most improved nations of the earth through a long series of ages have concurred to bestow on some few works of genius; such as the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Æneid* of Virgil. Hence the authority, which such works have obtained, as standards of poetical composition; since by them we are enabled to collect, what the sense of mankind is with respect to those beauties, which give them the highest pleasure, and

which, therefore, poetry ought to exhibit. Authority or prejudice may in one age or country give a short-lived reputation to an indifferent poet, or a bad artist; but when foreigners, or posterity examine his works, his faults are discovered, and the genuine Taste of human nature is seen. Time overthrows the illusions of opinion, but establishes the decisions of nature.

—◆—

CRITICISM. GENIUS. PLEASURES OF TASTE.  
SUBLIMITY IN OBJECTS.

**T**RUE Criticism is the application of Taste and of good sense to the several fine arts. Its design is to distinguish, what is beautiful and what is faulty in every performance. From particular instances it ascends to general principles: and gradually forms rules or conclusions concerning the several kinds of Beauty in works of Genius.

Criticism is an art, founded entirely on experience; on the observation of such beauties, as have been found to please mankind most generally. For example, Aristotle's rules concerning the unity of action in dramattick and epick composition were not first discovered by logical reasoning, and then applied to poetry; but they were deduced from the practice of

Homer and Sophocles. They were founded upon observing the superiour pleasure, which we derive from the relation of an action, which is one and entire, beyond what we receive from the relation of scattered and unconnected facts.

A superiour Genius, indeed, will of himself, uninstructed, compose in such manner, as is agreeable to the most important rules of Criticism; for, as these rules are founded in nature, nature will frequently suggest them in practice. Homer was acquainted with no system of the art of poetry. Guided by Genius alone, he composed in verse a regular story, which all succeeding ages have admired. This, however, is no argument against the usefulness of Criticism. For since no human genius is perfect, there is no writer, who may not receive assistance from critical observations upon the beauties and faults of those, who have gone before him. No rules indeed can supply the defects of genius, or inspire it, where it is wanting; but they may often guide it into its proper channel; they may correct its extravagances, and teach it the most just and proper imitation of nature. Critical rules are intended chiefly to point out the faults, which ought to be avoided. We must be indebted to nature for the production of eminent beauties.

Genius is a word, which in common acceptation extends much farther, than to objects of Taste. It signifies that talent or aptitude, which we receive from nature, in order to excel in any one thing whatever. A man is said

to have a genius for mathematticks as well as a genius for poetry; a genius for war, for politicks, or for any mechanical employment.

Genius may be greatly improved by art and study; but by them alone it cannot be acquired. As it is a higher faculty than Taste, it is ever, according to the common frugality of nature, more limited in the sphere of its operations. There are persons, not unfrequently to be met, who have an excellent Taste in several of the polite arts; such, as musick, poetry, painting, and eloquence; but an excellent performer in all these arts is very seldom found; or rather is not to be looked for. A universal Genius, or one who is equally and indifferently inclined toward several different professions and arts, is not likely to excel in any. Although there may be some few exceptions, yet in general it is true, that, when the mind is wholly directed toward some one object exclusively of others, there is the fairest prospect of eminence in that, whatever it may be. Extreme heat can be produced, only when the rays converge to a single point. Young persons are highly interested in this remark; since it may teach them to examine with care, and to pursue with ardour, that path, which nature has marked out for their peculiar exertions.

The nature of Taste, the nature and importance of Criticism, and the distinction between Taste and Genius, being thus explained; the sources of the Pleasures of Taste shall next be considered. Here a very extensive field is o-

pened ; no less, than all the Pleasures of the Imagination, as they are generally called, whether afforded us by natural objects, or by imitations and descriptions of them. It is not, however, necessary to the purpose of the present work, that all these be examined fully ; the pleasure, which we receive from discourse or writing, being the principal object of them. Our design is to give some opening into the Pleasures of Taste in general, and to insist more particularly upon Sublimity and Beauty.

We are far from having yet attained any system concerning this subject. A regular inquiry into it was first attempted by Mr. Addison, in his Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination. By him these Pleasures are ranged under three heads, Beauty, Grandeur, and Novelty. His speculations on this subject, if not remarkably profound, are very beautiful and entertaining ; and he has the merit of having discovered a track, which was before untrodden. Since his time the advances, made in this part of philosophical criticism, are not considerable ; which is owing, doubtless, to that thinness and subtilty, which are discovered to be properties of all the feelings of Taste. It is difficult to enumerate the several objects, which give pleasure to Taste ; it is more difficult to define all those, which have been discovered, and to range them in proper classes ; and, when we would proceed farther, and investigate the efficient causes of the pleasure, which we receive from such objects, here we find our-

selves at the greatest loss. For example, we all learn by experience that some figures of bodies appear more beautiful than others; on farther inquiry we discover that the regularity of some figures and the graceful variety of others are the foundation of the beauty, which we discern in them; but, when we endeavour to go a step beyond this, and inquire, why regularity and variety produce in our minds the sensation of beauty; any reason, we can assign, is extremely imperfect. Those first principles of internal sensation nature appears to have studiously concealed.

It is some consolation, however, that, altho' the efficient cause is obscure, the final cause of those sensations lies commonly more open; and here we must observe the strong impression which the powers of Taste and Imagination are calculated to give us of the benevolence of our Creator. By these powers he hath widely enlarged the sphere of the pleasures of human life; and those too of a kind the most pure and innocent. The necessary purposes of life might have been answered, though our senses of seeing and hearing had only served to distinguish external objects, without giving us any of those refined and delicate sensations of beauty and grandeur, with which we are now so much delighted.

The pleasure, which arises from sublimity or grandeur, deserves to be fully considered; because it has a character more precise and distinctly marked, than any other of the pleasures



of the imagination, and because it coincides more directly with our main subject. The simplest form of external grandeur is seen in the vast and boundless prospects, presented to us by nature; such as widely extended plains, of which the eye can find no limits; the firmament of heaven; or the boundless expanse of the ocean. All vastness produces the impression of sublimity. Space, however, extended in length, makes not so strong an impression, as height or depth. Though a boundless plain is a grand object; yet a lofty mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower, whence we look down on objects below, is still more so. The excessive grandeur of the firmament arises from its height, added to its boundless extent; and that of the ocean, not from its extent alone, but from the continual motion and irresistible force of that mass of waters. Wherever space is concerned, it is evident that amplitude, or greatness of extent, in one dimension or other, is necessary to grandeur. Remove all bounds from any object, and you immediately render it sublime. Hence infinite space, endless numbers, and eternal duration, fill the mind with great ideas.

The most copious source of sublime ideas seems to be derived from the exertion of great power and force. Hence the grandeur of earthquakes and burning mountains; of great conflagrations; of the boisterous ocean; of the tempestuous storm; of thunder and lightning; and of all the unusual violence of the elements. A

stream, which glides along gently within its banks, is a beautiful object; but, when it rushes down with the impetuosity and noise of a torrent, it immediately becomes a sublime one. A race-horse is viewed with pleasure; but it is the war-horse, "whose neck is clothed with thunder," that conveys grandeur in its idea. The engagement of two powerful armies, as it is the highest exertion of human strength, combines various sources of the sublime; and has consequently been ever considered, as one of the most striking and magnificent spectacles, which can be either presented to the eye, or exhibited to the imagination in description.

All ideas of the solemn and awful kind, and even bordering on the terrible, tend greatly to assist the sublime; such as darkness, solitude, and silence. The firmament, when filled with stars, scattered in infinite numbers and with splendid profusion, strikes the imagination with more awful grandeur, than when we behold it enlightened by all the splendour of the sun. The deep sound of a great bell, or the striking of a great clock, is at any time grand and awful; but when heard amid the silence and stillness of night, they become doubly so. Darkness is very generally applied for adding sublimity to all our ideas of the Deity. "He maketh darkness his pavilion; he dwelleth in the thick cloud." Thus Milton—

————How oft amid  
Thick clouds and dark does heaven's all-ruling Sire  
Choose to reside, his glory unobscur'd;  
And with the majesty of darkness round  
Circles his throne————

Obscurity is favourable to the sublime. The descriptions given us of appearances of supernatural beings, carry some sublimity; though the conception, which they afford us, be confused and indistinct. Their sublimity arises from the ideas, which they always convey, of superior power and might connected with awful obscurity. No ideas, it is evident, are so sublime, as those derived from the Supreme Being, the most unknown, yet the greatest of all objects; the infinity of whose nature and the eternity of whose duration, added to the omnipotence of his power, though they surpass our conceptions, yet exalt them to the highest.

Disorder is also very compatible with grandeur; nay, frequently heightens it. Few things, which are exactly regular and methodical, appear sublime. We see the limits on every side; we feel ourselves confined; there is no room for any considerable exertion of the mind. Though exact proportion of parts enters often into the beautiful, it is much disregarded in the sublime. A great mass of rocks, thrown together by the hand of nature with wildness and confusion, strikes the mind with more grandeur, than if they had been adjusted to each other with the most accurate symmetry.

There yet remains one class of Sublime Objects to be mentioned, which may be termed the Moral or Sentimental Sublime, arising from certain exertions of the mind; from certain affections and actions of our fellow creatures.

These will be found to be chiefly of that class which comes under the name of Magnanimity or Heroism ; and they produce an affect very similar to what is produced by a view of grand objects in nature, filling the mind with admiration and raising it above itself. Wherever in some critical and dangerous situation we behold a man uncommonly intrepid, and resting solely upon himself ; superiour to passion and to fear ; animated by some great principle to contempt of popular opinion, of selfish interest, of dangers, or of death ; we are there struck with a sense of the sublime. Thus Porus, when taken by Alexander after a gallant defence, being asked, in what manner he would be treated ; answered, “ Like a King :” and Cæsar, chiding the pilot, who was afraid to set out with him in a storm, “ Quid times ? Cæsarem vehis,” are good instances of the Sentimental Sublime.

The sublime in natural and in moral objects is presented to us in one view, and compared together, in the following beautiful passage of Akenfide’s Pleasures of the Imagination.

Look then abroad through nature to the range  
 Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,  
 Wheeling, unshaken, thro’ the void immense ;  
 And speak, O Man ! does this capacious scene,  
 With half that kindling majesty, dilate  
 Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose  
 Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar’s fate  
 Amid the crowds of patriots ; and his arm  
 Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,  
 When guilt brings down the thunder, call’d aloud  
 On Tully’s name, and shook his crimson steel,  
 And bade the father of his country hail !  
 For lo ! the tyrant prostrate on the dust ;  
 And Rome again is free——

It has been imagined by an ingenious Author, that terror is the source of the sublime; and that no objects have this character, but such as produce impressions of pain and danger. Many terrible objects are indeed highly sublime; nor does grandeur refuse alliance with the idea of danger. But the sublime does not consist wholly in modes of danger and pain. In many grand objects there is not the least coincidence with terror: as in the magnificent prospect of widely extended plains and of the starry firmament; or in the moral dispositions and sentiments, which we contemplate with high admiration. In many painful and terrible objects, also, it is evident, there is no sort of grandeur. The amputation of a limb, or the bite of a snake, is in the highest degree terrible; but they are destitute of all claim whatever to sublimity. It seems just to allow that mighty force of power, whether attended by terror or not, whether employed in protecting or alarming us, has a better title, than any thing yet mentioned, to be the fundamental quality of the sublime. There appears to be no sublime object, into the idea of which strength and force either enter not directly, or are not at least intimately associated by conducting our thoughts to some astonishing power, as concerned in the production of the object.

## SUBLIMITY IN WRITING.

**T**HE foundation of the Sublime in Composition must always be laid in the nature of the object described. Unless it be such an object, as, if presented to our sight, if exhibited to us in reality, would excite ideas of that elevating, that awful, and magnificent kind, which we call Sublime; the description, however finely drawn, is not entitled to be placed under this class. This excludes all objects, which are merely beautiful, gay or elegant. Besides, the object must not only in itself be sublime, but it must be placed before us in such a light, as is best calculated to give us a clear and full impression of it; it must be described with strength, conciseness and simplicity. This depends chiefly upon the lively impression, which the poet or orator has of the object, which he exhibits; and upon his being deeply affected and animated by the sublime idea, which he would convey. If his own feeling be languid, he can never inspire his reader with any strong emotion. Instances, which on this subject are extremely necessary, will clearly show the importance of all these requisites.

It is chiefly among ancient authors, that we are to look for the most striking instances of the sublime. The early ages of the world and the uncultivated state of society were peculiarly favourable to the emotions of sublimity.

The genius of men was then very prone to admiration and astonishment. Meeting continually new and strange objects, their imagination was kept glowing, and their passions were often raised to the utmost. They thought and expressed themselves boldly without restraint. In the progress of society the genius and manners of men have undergone a change more favourable to accuracy, than to strength or sublimity.

Of all writings, ancient or modern, the sacred scriptures afford the most striking instances of the sublime. In them the descriptions of the Supreme Being are wonderfully noble, both from the grandeur of the object, and the manner of representing it. What an assemblage of awful and sublime ideas is presented to us in that passage of the eighteenth Psalm, where an appearance of the Almighty is described! "In my distress I called upon the Lord; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills were moved; because he was wroth. He bowed the heavens, and came down, and darkness was under his feet; and he did ride upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the sky." The circumstances of darkness and terror are here applied with propriety and success for heightening the sublime.

The celebrated instance, given by Longinus, from Moses, "God said, Let there be light; and there was light," belongs to the true sublime; and its sublimity arises from the strong conception, it conveys, of an effort of power producing its effect with the utmost speed and facility. A similar thought is magnificently expanded in the following passage of Isaiah: (chap. xxiv. 24, 27, 28,) "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the Lord, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; that saith to the deep, be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid."

Homer has in all ages been universally admired for sublimity; and he is indebted for much of his grandeur to that native and unaffected simplicity which characterizes his manner. His descriptions of conflicting armies; the spirit, the fire, the rapidity, which he throws into his battles, present to every reader of the Iliad frequent instances of sublime writing. The majesty of his warlike scenes is often heightened in a high degree by the introduction of the gods. In the twentieth book, where all the gods take part in the engagement, according as they severally favour either the Grecians or the Trojans, the poet appears to



put forth one of his highest efforts, and the description rises into the most awful magnificence. All nature appears in commotion. Jupiter thunders in the heavens; Neptune strikes the earth with his trident; the ships, the city, and the mountains shake; the earth trembles to its centre; Pluto starts from his throne, fearing, lest the secrets of the infernal regions should be laid open to the view of mortals. We shall transcribe Mr. Pope's translation of this passage; which, though inferior to the original, is highly animated and sublime.

But, when the powers descending swell'd the fight;  
 Then tumult rose, fierce rage, and pale affright.  
 Now thro' the trembling shores Minerva calls,  
 And now she thunders from the Grecian walls,  
 Mars hov'ring o'er his Troy, his terror shrouds  
 In gloomy tempest, and a night of clouds;  
 Now thro' each Trojan heart he fury pours  
 With voice divine from Ilion's topmost towers;  
 Above the fire of gods his thunder rolls,  
 And peals on peals redoubled rend the poles.  
 Beneath, stern Neptune, shakes the solid ground,  
 The forests wave, the mountains nod around;  
 Thro' all her summits tremble Ida's woods,  
 And from their sources boil her hundred floods:  
 Troy's turrets totter on the rocking plain,  
 And the toss'd navies beat the heaving main.  
 Deep in the dismal region of the dead  
 Th' infernal monarch rear'd his horrid head,  
 Leapt from his throne, lest Neptune's arm should lay  
 His dark dominions open to the day,  
 And pour in light on Pluto's drear abodes,  
 Abhorr'd by men, and dreadful e'en to gods.  
 Such wars th' immortals wage; such horrors rend  
 The world's vast concave, when the gods contend.

Conciseness and simplicity will ever be found essential to sublime writing. Simplicity is properly opposed to studied and profuse ornament;

and conciseness to superfluous expression. It will easily appear, why a defect either in conciseness or simplicity is peculiarly hurtful to the sublime. The emotion excited in the mind by some great or noble object, raises it considerably above its common pitch. A species of enthusiasm is produced, extremely pleasing, while it lasts; but the mind is tending every moment to sink into its ordinary state. When an author has brought us, or is endeavouring to bring us into this state, if he multiply words unnecessarily; if he deck the sublime object on all sides with glittering ornaments; nay, if he throw in any one decoration, which falls in the least below the principal image; that moment he changes the key; he relaxes the tension of the mind; the strength of the feeling is emasculated; the beautiful may remain; but the sublime is extinguished. Homer's description of the nod of Jupiter, as shaking the heavens, has been admired in all ages, as wonderfully sublime. Literally translated, it runs thus: "He spoke, and bending his fable brows, gave the awful nod; while he shook the celestial locks of his immortal head, all Olympus was shaken." Mr. Pope translates it thus:

He spoke; and awful bends his fable brows,  
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,  
The stamp of fate, and sanction of a God;  
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,  
And all Olympus to its centre shook.

The image is expanded, and attempted to be beautified; but in reality it is weakened. The third line—"The stamp of fate, and sanction

of a God," is entirely expletive, and introduced only to fill up the rhyme ; for it interrupts the description, and clogs the image. For the same reason Jupiter is represented, as shaking his locks, before he gives the nod ; "Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod ;" which is trifling and insignificant ; whereas in the original the shaking of his hair is the consequence of his nod, and makes a happy picturesque circumstance in the description.

The boldness, freedom, and variety of our blank verse are infinitely more propitious than rhyme, to all kinds of sublime poetry. The fullest proof of this is afforded by Milton ; an author, whose genius led him peculiarly to the sublime. The first and second books of Paradise Lost are continued examples of it. Take, for instance, the following noted description of Satan, after his fall, appearing at the head of his infernal hosts :

—————He, above the rest,  
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent,  
 Stood, like a tower ; his form had not yet lost  
 All her original brightness, nor appear'd  
 Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess  
 Of glory obscur'd : as when the sun, new risen,  
 Looks through the horizontal misty air,  
 Shorn of his beams ; or, from behind the moon,  
 In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds  
 On half the nations, and with fear of change  
 Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone  
 Above them all th' archangel.

Here various sources of the sublime are joined together : the principal object superlatively great ; a high, superiour nature, fallen indeed, but

raising itself against distress; the grandeur of the principal object heightened by connecting it with so noble an idea, as that of the sun suffering an eclipse; this picture, shaded with all those images of change and trouble, of darkness and terror, which coincide so exquisitely with the sublime emotion; and the whole expressed in a style and versification easy, natural, and simple, but magnificent.

Beside simplicity and conciseness, strength is essentially necessary to sublime writing. Strength of description proceeds in a great measure from conciseness; but it implies something more, namely, a judicious choice of circumstances in the description; such as will exhibit the object in its full and most striking point of view. For every object has several faces, by which it may be presented to us, according to the circumstances with which we surround it; and it will appear superlatively sublime, or not, in proportion as these circumstances are happily chosen, and of a sublime kind. In this, the great art of the writer consists; and indeed the principal difficulty of sublime description. If the description be too general, and divested of circumstances, the object is shewn in a faint light, and makes a feeble impression, or no impression, on the reader. At the time, if any trivial or improper circumstances be mingled, the whole is degraded.

The nature of that emotion, which is aimed at by sublime description, admits no mediocrity, and cannot subsist in a middle state; but must

either highly transport us ; or, if unsuccessful in the execution, leave us exceedingly disgusted. We attempt to rise with the writer ; the imagination is awakened, and put upon the stretch ; but it ought to be supported ; and, if in the midst of its effort it be deserted unexpectedly, it falls with a painful shock. When Milton in his battle of the angels describes them, as tearing up mountains, and throwing them at one another ; there are in his description, as Mr. Addison has remarked, no circumstances, but what are truly sublime :

From their foundations loos'ning to and fro,  
They pluck'd the seated hills with all their load,  
Rocks, waters, woods ; and by the shaggy tops  
Uplifting, bore them in their hands.——

This idea of the giants throwing the mountains, which is in itself so grand, Claudian renders burlesque and ridiculous by the single circumstance of one of his giants with the mountain Ida upon his shoulders, and a river, which flowed from the mountain, running down the giant's back, as he held it up in that posture. Virgil in his description of mount *Ætna*, is guilty of a slight inaccuracy of this kind. After several magnificent images, the poet concludes with personifying the mountain under this figure,

——“*Eructans viscera cum gemitu*”——

“belching up its bowels with a groan ;” which, by making the mountain resemble a sick or drunken person, degrades the majesty of the

description. The debasing effect of this idea will appear in a stronger light, from observing what figure it makes in a poem of Sir Richard Blackmore; who, through an extravagant perversity of taste, selected it for the principal circumstance in his description; and thereby, as Dr. Arbuthnot humorously observes, represented the mountain as in a fit of the cholick.

Ætna and all the burning mountains find  
 Their kindled stores with inbred storms of wind  
 Blown up to rage, and roaring out complain,  
 As torn with inward gripes and torturing pain;  
 Labouring, they cast their dreadful vomit round,  
 And with their melted bowels spread the ground.

Such instances show how much the sublime depends upon a proper selection of circumstances; and with how great care every circumstance must be avoided, which, by approaching in the smallest degree to the mean, or even to the gay or trifling, changes the tone of the emotion.

What is commonly called the sublime style, is for the most part a very bad one, and has no relation whatever to the true Sublime. Writers are apt to imagine that splendid words, accumulated epithets, and a certain swelling kind of expression, by rising above what is customary or vulgar, constitute the sublime; yet nothing is in reality more false. In genuine instances of sublime writing nothing of this kind appears. "God said, let there be light; and there was light." This is striking and sublime; but put it into what is commonly called the sublime style:

“The Sovereign Arbiter of nature, by the potent energy of a single word, commanded the light to exist;” and, as Boileau, justly observed, the style is indeed raised, but the thought is degraded. In general it may be observed, that the sublime lies in the thought, not in the expression; and, when the thought is really noble, it will generally clothe itself in a native majesty of language.

The faults, opposite to the Sublime, are principally two, the Frigid and the Bombast. The Frigid consists in degrading an object or sentiment, which is sublime in itself, by a mean conception of it; or by a weak, low, or puerile description of it. This betrays entire absence, or at least extreme poverty, of genius. The Bombast lies in forcing a common or trivial object out of its rank, and in labouring to raise it into the sublime; or in attempting to exalt a sublime object beyond all natural bounds.



## BEAUTY AND OTHER PLEASURES

### OF TASTE.

**B**EAUTY next to Sublimity affords the highest pleasure to the imagination. The emotion, which it raises, is easily distinguished from that of sublimity. It is of a calmer kind; more gentle and soothing; does not elevate the mind so much, but produces a pleasing serenity.

Sublimity excites a feeling, too violent to be lasting; the pleasure proceeding from Beauty admits longer duration. It extends also to a much greater variety of objects than sublimity; to a variety indeed so great, that the sensations which beautiful objects excite, differ exceedingly, not in degree only, but also in kind, from each other. Hence no word is used in a more undetermined signification than Beauty. It is applied to almost every external object, which pleases the eye or the ear; to many of the graces of writing; to several dispositions of the mind; nay, to some objects of abstract science. We speak frequently of a beautiful tree or flower; a beautiful poem; a beautiful character; and a beautiful theorem in mathematicks.

Colour seems to afford the simplest instance of Beauty. Association of ideas, it is probable, has some influence on the pleasure, which we receive from colours. Green, for example, may appear more beautiful from being connected in our ideas with rural scenes and prospects; white with innocence; blue with the serenity of the sky. Independently of associations of this sort, all that we can farther observe respecting colours is, that those, chosen for Beauty, are commonly delicate, rather than glaring. Such are the feathers of several kinds of birds, the leaves of flowers, and the fine variation of colours, shown by the sky at the rising and setting of the sun.

Figure opens to us forms of Beauty more complex and diversified. Regularity first offers itself as a source of Beauty. By a regular fig-



ure is meant one, which we perceive to be formed according to some certain rule, and not left arbitrary or loose in the construction of its parts. Thus a circle, a square, a triangle, or a hexagon, gives pleasure to the eye by its regularity, as a beautiful figure; yet a certain graceful variety is found to be a much more powerful principal of Beauty. Regularity seems to appear beautiful to us chiefly, if not entirely, on account of its suggesting the ideas of fitness, propriety, and use, which have always a more intimate connection with orderly and proportioned forms, than with those which appear not constructed according to any certain rule. Nature, who is the most graceful artist, hath, in all her ornamental works, pursued variety with an apparent neglect of regularity. Cabinets, doors, and windows are made after a regular form, in cubes and parallelograms, with exact proportion of parts; and thus formed they please the eye; for this just reason, that, being works of use, they are by such figures better adapted to the ends for which they were designed. But plants, flowers, and leaves are full of variety and diversity. A straight canal is an insipid figure, when compared with the meanders of a river. Cones and pyramids have their degree of beauty; but trees, growing in their natural wildness, have infinitely more beauty, than when trimmed into pyramids and cones. The apartments of a house must be disposed with regularity for the convenience of its inhabitants; but a garden, which is intended merely for beauty, would be

extremely disgusting, if it had as much uniformity and order as a dwelling-house.

Motion affords another source of Beauty, distinct from figure. Motion of itself is pleasing; and bodies in motion are, "cæteris paribus," universally preferred to those at rest. Only gentle motion, however, belongs to the Beautiful; for, when it is swift, or very powerful, such as that of a torrent, it partakes of the sublime. The motion of a bird gliding through the air is exquisitely beautiful; but the swiftness with which lightning darts through the sky, is magnificent and astonishing. Here it is necessary to observe, that the sensations of sublime and beautiful are not always distinguished by very distant boundaries; but are capable in many instances of approaching toward each other. Thus a gently running stream is one of the most beautiful objects in nature; but, as it swells gradually into a great river, the beautiful by degrees is lost in the sublime. A young tree is a beautiful object; a spreading ancient oak is a venerable and sublime one. To return, however, to the beauty of motion, it will be found to hold very generally, that motion in a straight line is not so beautiful as in a waving direction; and motion upward is commonly more pleasing than motion downward. The easy, curling motion of flame and smoke is an object singularly agreeable. Hogarth observes very ingeniously, that all the common and necessary motions for the business of life are performed in straight or plain lines; but that all the graceful and orna-

mental movements are made in curve lines ; an observation worthy of the attention of those who study the grace of gesture and action.

Colour, figure, and motion, though separate principles of Beauty, yet in many beautiful objects meet together, and thereby render the beauty greater and more complex. Thus in flowers, trees, and animals, we are entertained at once with the delicacy of the colour, with the gracefulness of the figure, and sometimes also with the motion of the object. The most complete assemblage of beautiful objects, which can be found, is represented by a rich natural landscape, where there is a sufficient variety of objects ; fields in verdure, scattered trees and flowers, running water, and animals grazing. If to these be added some of the productions of art, suitable to such a scene ; as, a bridge with arches over a river, smoke rising from cottages in the midst of trees, and a distant view of a fine building, seen by the rising sun ; we then enjoy in the highest perfection that gay, cheerful, and placid sensation, which characterizes Beauty.

The beauty of the human countenance is more complex than any we have yet examined. It comprehends the Beauty of colour, arising from the delicate shades of the complexion ; and the Beauty of figure, arising from the lines, which constitute different features of the face. But the principal Beauty of the countenance depends upon a mysterious expression, which it conveys of the qualities of the mind ; of

good sense, or good humour ; of candour, benevolence, sensibility, or other amiable dispositions. It may be observed, that there are certain qualities of the mind, which, whether expressed in the countenance, or by words or by actions, always raise in us a feeling similar to that of Beauty. There are two great classes of moral qualities ; one is of the high and the great virtues, which require extraordinary efforts, and is founded on dangers and sufferings ; as, heroism, magnanimity, contempt of pleasures, and contempt of death. These produce in the spectator an emotion of sublimity and grandeur. The other class is chiefly of the social virtues ; and such as are of a softer and gentler kind ; as, compassion, mildness, and generosity. These excite in the beholder a sensation of pleasure, so nearly allied to that excited by beautiful external objects, that, though of a more exalted nature, it may with propriety be classed under the same head.

Beauty of writing in its more definite sense characterizes a particular manner ; signifying a certain grace and amenity in the turn either of style or sentiment, by which some authors are particularly distinguished. In this sense it denotes a manner neither remarkably sublime, nor vehemently passionate, nor uncommonly sparkling ; but such as excites in the reader an emotion of the placid kind, resembling that which is raised by contemplation of beautiful objects in nature ; which neither lifts the mind very high, nor agitates it to excess ; but spreads

over the imagination a pleasing serenity. Addison is a writer of this character, and one of the most proper examples of it. Fenelon, the author of *Telemachus*, is another example. Virgil, also, though very capable of rising occasionally into the sublime; yet generally is distinguished by the character of beauty and grace, rather than of sublimity. Among orators, Cicero has more of the beautiful than Demosthenes, whose genius led him wholly toward vehemence and strength.

So much it is necessary to have said upon the subject of Beauty; since next to sublimity it is the most copious source of the Pleasures of Taste. But objects delight the imagination not only by appearing under the forms of sublime or beautiful; they likewise derive their power of giving it pleasure from several other principles.

Novelty, for example, has been mentioned by Addison, and by every writer on this subject. An object which has no other merit than that of being new, by this quality alone raises in the mind a vivid and an agreeable emotion. Hence that passion of curiosity, which prevails so generally in mankind. Objects and ideas which have long been familiar, make too faint an impression, to give an agreeable exercise to our faculties. New and strange objects rouse the mind from its dormant state, by giving it a sudden and pleasing impulse. Hence, in a great measure, the entertainment we receive from fiction and romance. The emotion, rais-

ed by Novelty is of a more lively and awakening nature, than that produced by Beauty ; but much shorter in its duration. For, if the object have in itself no charms to hold our attention, the gloss, spread over it by Novelty, soon wears off.

Imitation is another source of pleasure to Taste. This gives rise to what Addison terms the Secondary Pleasures of Imagination, which form a very extensive class. For all imitation affords some pleasure to the mind ; not only the imitation of beautiful or sublime objects, by recalling the original ideas of beauty or grandeur, which such objects themselves exhibited ; but even objects which have neither beauty nor grandeur ; nay, some which are terrible or deformed, give us pleasure in a secondary or represented view.

The pleasures of melody and harmony belong also to Taste. There is no delightful sensation, we receive either from beauty or sublimity, which is not capable of being heightened by the power of musical sound. Hence the charm of poetical numbers ; and even of the concealed and looser measures of prose. Wit, humour, and ridicule, open likewise a variety of pleasures to Taste, altogether different from any that have yet been considered.

At present it is not necessary to pursue any farther the subject of the Pleasures of Taste. We have opened some of the general principles ; it is time now to apply them to our chief subject. If it be asked, to what class of those

Pleasures of Taste, which have been enumerated, that pleasure is to be referred, which we receive from poetry, eloquence, or fine writing? The answer is, not to any one, but to them all. This peculiar advantage writing and discourse possess; they encompass a large and fruitful field on all sides, and have power to exhibit in great perfection, not a single set of objects only, but almost the whole of those which give pleasure to taste and imagination; whether that pleasure arise from sublimity, from beauty in its various forms, from design and art, from moral sentiments, from novelty, from harmony, from wit, humour, or ridicule. To which soever of these a person's taste is directed, from some writer or other he has it always in his power to receive the gratification of it.

It has been usual among critical writers to treat of discourse, as the chief of all the imitative arts. They compare it with painting and with sculpture, and in many respects prefer it justly before them. But we must distinguish between imitation and description. Words have no natural resemblance of the ideas or objects which they signify; but a statue or picture has a natural likeness of the original.

As far, however, as a poet or historian introduces into his work persons really speaking, and by words, which he puts into their mouths, represents the conversation which they might be supposed to hold; so far his art may be called imitative; and this is the case in all dramatick composition. But in narrative or descriptive

works it cannot with propriety be so called. Who, for example, would call Virgil's description of a tempest in the first *Æneid* an imitation of a storm? If we heard of the imitation of a battle, we might naturally think of some mock fight, or representation of a battle on the stage; but should never imagine it meant one of Homer's descriptions in the *Iliad*. It must be allowed at the same time, that imitation and description agree in their principal effect, that of recalling by external signs the ideas of things which we do not see. But though in this they coincide, yet it should be remembered, that the terms themselves are not synonymous; that they import different means of producing the same end; and consequently make different impressions on the mind.



#### ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE.

**T**O form an adequate idea of the Origin of Language, we must contemplate the circumstances of mankind in their earliest and rudest state. They were then a wandering, scattered race; no society among them except families; and family society also very imperfect, as their mode of living, by hunting or pasturage, must have separated them frequently from each other. In such a condition, how could any one



set of sounds or words be universally agreed on, as the signs of their ideas? Supposing that a few, whom chance or necessity threw together, agreed by some means upon certain signs; yet, by what authority could these be so propagated among other tribes or families, as to grow up into a language? One would imagine that men must have been previously gathered together in considerable numbers before language could be fixed and extended; and yet on the other hand there seems to have been an absolute necessity of speech previous to the formation of society. For by what bond could a multitude of men be kept together, or be connected in prosecution of any common interest, before by the assistance of speech they could communicate their wants and intentions to each other? So that, how society could subsist previously to language, and how words could rise into language before the formation of society, seem to be points attended with equal difficulty. When we consider farther that curious analogy which prevails in the construction of almost all languages, and that deep and subtle logick on which they are founded; difficulties increase so much upon us on all sides, that there seems to be no small reason for referring the origin of all language to divine inspiration.

But supposing language to have a divine original, we cannot imagine that a perfect system of it was at once given to man. It is much more natural to suppose that God taught our first parents only such language as suited their

present occasions ; leaving them, as he did in other respects to enlarge and improve it as their future necessities should require. Consequently, those rudiments of speech must have been poor and narrow ; and we are at liberty to enquire, in what manner, and by what steps, language advanced to the state in which we now find it.

Should we suppose a period existed before words were invented or known ; it is evident that men could have no other method of communicating their feelings, than by the cries of passion, accompanied by such motions and gestures, as were farther expressive of emotion. These indeed are the only signs which nature teaches all men, and which are understood by all. One, who saw another going into some place, where he himself had been frightened, or exposed to danger, and who wished to warn his neighbour of the danger, could contrive no other method of doing it, than by uttering those cries, and making those gestures, which are the signs of fear ; as two men at this day would endeavour to make themselves understood by each other, if thrown together on a desolate island, ignorant of each other's language. Those exclamations, therefore, by grammarians called interjections, uttered in a strong and passionate manner, were undoubtedly the elements of speech.

When more enlarged communication became requisite, and names began to be applied to objects ; how can we suppose men proceeded in

this application of names, or invention of words? Certainly by imitating, as much as they could, the nature of the object named by the sound of the name given it. As a painter who would represent grass, must employ a green colour; so in the infancy of language, one, giving a name to any thing harsh or boisterous, would of course employ a harsh or boisterous sound. He could not do otherwise, if he desired to excite in the hearer the idea of that object which he wished to name. To imagine words invented, or names given to things, without any ground or reason, is to suppose an effect without a cause. There must always have been some motive which led to one name, rather than another; and we can suppose no motive, which would more generally operate upon men in their first efforts toward language, than a desire to paint by speech the objects which they named in a manner more or less complete, according as it was in the power of the human voice to effect this imitation.

( Wherever objects were to be named, in which sound, noise, or motion was concerned, the imitation by words was sufficiently obvious.) Nothing was more natural, than to imitate by the sound of the voice the quality of the sound or noise which any external object produced; and to form its name accordingly. Thus in all languages we discover a multitude of words, which are evidently constructed on this principle. (A certain bird is called the Cuckoo, from the sound which it emits. When one sort of

wind is said to *whistle*, and another to *roar*; when a serpent is said to *hiss*; a fly to *buzz*; and falling timber to *crash*; when a stream is said to *flow*, and hail to *rattle*;) the resemblance between the word and the thing signified is plainly discernible. (But in the names of objects which address the sight only, where neither noise nor motion is concerned; and still more in terms appropriated to moral ideas, this analogy appears to fail.) Yet many learned men have imagined that, though in such cases it becomes more obscure, it is not altogether lost; and that in the radical words of all languages there may be traced some degree of correspondence with the objects signified.

(This principle however of a natural relation between words and objects, can be applied to language only in its most simple and early state.) Though in every tongue some remains of it may be traced, it were utterly in vain to search for it through the whole construction of any modern language. (As terms increase in every nation, and the vast field of language is filled up, words by a thousand fanciful and irregular methods of derivation and composition deviate widely from the primitive character of their roots, and lose all resemblance in sound of the things signified.) This is the present state of language. (Words, as we now use them, taken in general, may be considered as symbols, not imitations; as arbitrary or instituted, not natural signs of ideas.) But there can be no doubt that language, the nearer we approach to its

rise among men, will be found to partake more of a natural expression.

Interjections, it has been shown, or passionate exclamations, were the elements of speech. Men laboured to communicate their feelings to each other by those expressive cries and gestures, which nature taught them. (After words, or names of objects, began to be invented, this mode of speaking by natural signs could not be all at once disused.) For language in its infancy must have been extremely barren; and there certainly was a period among all rude nations, when conversation was carried on by a very few words, intermixed with many exclamations and earnest gestures. The small stock of words which men then possessed, rendered those helps entirely necessary for explaining their conceptions; and rude, uncultivated individuals, not having always ready even the few words, which they know, would naturally labour to make themselves understood by varying their tones of voice, and by accompanying their tones with the most expressive gesticulations.

To this mode of speaking, necessity gave rise. But we must observe that, (after this necessity had in a great degree ceased, by language becoming in process of time more extensive and copious, the ancient manner of speech still subsisted among many nations; and, what had arisen from necessity, continued to be used for ornament.) (In the Greek and Roman languages, a musical and gesticulating pronunciation was retained in a very high degree.) Without at-

tending to this, we shall be at a loss in understanding several passages of the classics, which relate to the publick speaking and theatrical entertainments of the ancients. Our modern pronunciation would have seemed to them a lifeless monotony. (The declamation of their orators and the pronunciation of their actors upon the stage approached to the nature of recitative in music;) was capable of being marked by notes, and supported by instruments; as several learned men have proved.

With regard to gesture, the case was parallel; for strong tones and animated gestures always go together. The action both of orators and players in Greece and Rome was far more vehement than that to which we are accustomed. (To us, Roscius would appear a madman. Gesture was of such consequence on the ancient stage, that there is reason for believing that on some occasions the speaking and the acting were divided; which, according to our ideas, would form a strange exhibition.) One player spoke the words in the proper tones, while another expressed the corresponding motions and gestures. Cicero tells us, it was a contest between him and Roscius, whether he could express a sentiment in a greater variety of phrases, or Roscius in a greater variety of intelligible significant gestures. (At last, gesture engrossed the stage entirely; for under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, the favourite entertainment of the publick was the Pantomime, which was carried on by gesticulation only.) The people

were moved, and wept at it as much as at tragedies; and the passion for it became so violent, that laws were made for restraining the senators from studying the pantomime art. Now, though in declamations and theatrical exhibitions both tone and gesture were carried much farther than in common discourse; yet publick speaking of any kind must in every country bear some proportion to the manner, which is used in conversation; and such publick entertainments could never be relished by a nation, whose tones and gestures in discourse were as languid as ours.

( The early language of men, being entirely composed of words descriptive of sensible objects, became of necessity extremely metaphorical. ) For, to signify any desire or passion, or any act or feeling of the mind, they had no fixed expression, which was appropriated to that purpose; but were obliged to paint the emotion or passion, which they felt, by alluding to those sensible objects, which had most connexion with it, and which could render it in some degree visible to others.

( But it was not necessity alone, that gave rise to this pictured style. ) ( In the infancy of all societies, fear and surprize, wonder and astonishment are the most frequent passions of men. Their language will necessarily be affected by this character of their minds. They will be disposed to paint every thing in the strongest colours. Even the manner, in which the first tribes of men uttered their words, had considera-

ble influence on their style.) Wherever strong exclamations, tones, and gestures are connected with conversation, the imagination is always more exercised; a greater effort of fancy and passion is excited. Thus the fancy, being kept awake and rendered more sprightly by this mode of utterance, operates upon style, and gives it additional life and spirit.

As one proof among many, which might be produced, of the truth of these observations, we shall transcribe a speech from Colden's History of the Five Indian Nations, which was delivered by their Chiefs, when entering on a treaty of peace with us, in the following language. "We  
 "are happy in having buried under ground the  
 "red axe, that has so often been died in the  
 "blood of our brethren. Now in this fort we  
 "inter the axe, and plant the tree of peace.  
 "We plant a tree, whose top will reach the  
 "sun; and its branches spread abroad, so that  
 "it shall be seen afar off. May its growth nev-  
 "er be stifled and choked; but may it shade  
 "both your country and ours with its leaves.  
 "Let us make fast its roots, and extend them  
 "to the utmost of your colonies. If the French  
 "should come to shake this tree, we should  
 "know it by the motion of its roots reaching  
 "into our country. May the Great Spirit al-  
 "low us to rest in tranquillity upon our mats,  
 "and never again dig up the axe, to cut down  
 "the tree of peace! Let the earth be trodden  
 "hard over it, where it lies buried. Let a  
 "strong stream run under the pit, to wash the



“evil away out of our sight and remembrance.  
 “The fire, that had long burned in Albany, is  
 “extinguished. The bloody bed is washed  
 “clean, and the tears are wiped from our eyes.  
 “We now renew the covenant chain of friend-  
 “ship. Let it be kept bright and clean as fil-  
 “ver, and not suffered to contract any rust.  
 “Let not any one pull away his arm from it.”

(As language in its progress grew more copious, it gradually lost that figurative style, which was its early character.) The vehement manner of speaking by tones and gestures became less common. Instead of poets, philosophers became the instructors of men; and in their reasoning on all subjects introduced that plainer and more simple style of composition, which we now call Prose. Thus the ancient metaphorical and poetical dress of Language was at length laid aside in the intercourse of men, and reserved for those occasions only, on which ornament was professedly studied.)



## RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE AND OF WRITING.

(**W**HEN we examine the order, in which the words are arranged in a sentence, we find a very remarkable difference between ancient and modern tongues.) (The consideration of this will serve to unfold farther the genius of

Language, and to shew the causes of those alterations it has undergone in the progress of society. )

To conceive distinctly the nature of this alteration, we must go back, as before, to the earliest period of Language. Let us figure to ourselves a Savage beholding some fruit, which he earnestly desires, and requests another to give him. Suppose him unacquainted with words, (he would strive to make himself understood by pointing eagerly at the object desired, and uttering at the same time a passionate cry.) (Supposing him to have acquired words, the first word, which he would utter, would be the name of that object.) He would not express himself according to our order of construction, "Give me fruit;" but according to the Latin order, "Fruit give me," "Fructum da mihi," (for this plain reason, that his attention was wholly directed toward fruit, the object desired.) Hence we might conclude *a priori*, that this was the order, in which words were most commonly arranged in the infancy of Language; (and accordingly we find in reality, that in this order words are arranged in most of the ancient tongues, as in the Greek and Latin; and it is said likewise in the Russian, Slavonick, Gaëlick, and several American tongues.)

(The modern languages of Europe have adopted a different arrangement from the ancient. In their prose compositions very little variety is admitted in the collocation of words.) (They are chiefly fixed to one order, which may be

(*It is* called the Order of the Understanding.) (They place first in the sentence the person or thing, which speaks or acts; next, its action; and lastly, the object of its action.) Thus an English writer, paying a compliment to a great man, would say, "It is impossible for me to pass over in silence so distinguished mildness, so singular and unheard of clemency, and so uncommon moderation, in the exercise of supreme power." Here is first presented to us the person who speaks, "It is impossible for me;" next, what the same person is to do, "*to pass over in silence*;" and lastly, the object which excites him to action, "the mildness, clemency, and moderation of his patron." Cicero, from whom these words are translated, reverses this order. He begins with the object; places that first, which was the exciting idea in the speaker's mind, and ends with the speaker and his action. "*Tantum mansuetudinem, tam inusitatam inauditamque clementiam, tantumque in summa potestate rerum omnium modum, tacitus nullo modo præterire possum.*" Here, (it must be observed, the Latin order is more animated; the English more clear and distinct.)

(Our language naturally allows greater liberty for transposition and inversion in poetry, than in prose.) Even there however this liberty is confined within narrow limits, in comparison with the ancient languages. (In this respect, modern tongues vary from each other.) (The Italian approaches the nearest in its character to the ancient transposition; the English

has more inverſion than the reſt ; and the French has the leaſt of all. )

( Writing is an improvement upon Speech, and conſequently was poſterior to it in order of time. ) ( Its characters are of two kinds, ſigns of things, and ſigns of words. ) ( Thus the pictures, hieroglyphicks, and ſymbols, employed by the ancients, were of the former ſort ) ; ( the alphabetical characters, now employed by Europeans, of the latter. )

( Pictures were certainly the firſt attempt toward writing. ) Mankind in all ages and in all nations have been prone to imitation. This would ſoon be employed for deſcribing and recording events. Thus, to ſignify that one man had killed another, they painted the figure of one man lying on the ground, and of another ſtanding by him with a hoſtile weapon in his hand. When America was firſt diſcovered, this was the only kind of writing, with which the Mexicans were acquainted. It was however a very imperfect mode of recording facts ; ſince by pictures external events only could be delineated.

Hieroglyphical characters may be conſidered as the ſecond ſtage of the Art of Writing. They conſiſt of certain ſymbols, which are made to ſtand for inviſible objects on account of their ſuppoſed reſemblance of the objects themſelves. Thus an eye repreſented knowledge ; and a circle, having neither beginning nor end, was the ſymbol of eternity. Egypt was the country, where this kind of writing

was most studied, and brought into a regular art. By these characters all the boasted wisdom of their priests was conveyed. They pitched upon animals to be the emblems of moral objects according to the qualities, with which they supposed them to be endued. Thus imprudence was denominated by a fly; wisdom, by an ant; and victory, by a hawk. But this sort of writing was in the highest degree enigmatical and confused; and consequently a very imperfect vehicle of knowledge.

(From hieroglyphicks some nations gradually advanced to simple arbitrary marks, which stood for objects, though without any resemblance of the objects signified.) Of this nature was the writing of the Peruvians. They used small cords of different colours; and, by knots upon these of different sizes, and variously ranged, they invented signs for communicating their thoughts to one another. The Chinese at this day use written characters of this nature. They have no alphabet of letters or simple sounds, of which their words are composed; but every single character, which they use, is expressive of an idea; it is a mark, which signifies some one thing or object. The number of these characters must consequently be immense. They are said indeed to amount to seventy thousand. To be perfectly acquainted with them is the business of a whole life; which must have greatly retarded among them the progress of every kind of science.

[It is evident, that the Chinese characters, like hieroglyphicks, are signs of things, and not of words. For we are told, that the Japanese, the Tonquinese, and the Corceans, who speak different languages from each other, and from the inhabitants of China, use, however, the same written characters with them, and thus correspond intelligibly with one another in writing, though mutually ignorant of each other's language. Our arithmetical figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. are an example of this sort of writing. They have no dependence on words. Each figure represents the number, for which it stands; and consequently is equally understood by all nations, who have agreed in the use of these figures.]

The first step to remedy the imperfection, the ambiguity, and the tediousness of each of the methods of communication, which have been mentioned, was the invention of signs, which should stand not directly for things, but for words, by which things were named and distinguished. An alphabet of syllables seems to have been invented previously to an alphabet of letters. Such an one is said to be retained at this day in Æthiopia, and some countries of India. But at best it must have been imperfect and ineffectual; since the number of characters being very considerable, must have rendered both reading and writing very complex and laborious.

To whom we are indebted for the sublime and refined discovery of letters is not deter-

mined. They were brought into Greece by Cadmus, the Phœnician, who, according to Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology, was contemporary with King David. His alphabet contained only sixteen letters. The rest were afterwards added, according as signs for proper sounds were found to be wanting. The Phœnician, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman alphabets agree so much in the figure, names, and arrangement of the letters, as amounts to demonstration, that they were derived originally from the same source.

The ancient order of writing was from the right hand to the left. This method, as appears from some very old inscriptions, prevailed even among the Greeks. They afterwards used to write their lines alternately from the right to the left, and from the left to the right. The inscription on the famous Sigæan monument is a specimen of this mode of writing, which continued till the days of Solon, the celebrated Legislator of Athens. At length, the motion from the left hand to the right, being found more natural and convenient, this order of writing was adopted by all the nations of Europe.

Writing was first exhibited on pillars and tables of stone; afterwards on plates of the softer metals. As it became more common, the leaves and bark of certain trees were used in some countries; and in others, tablets of wood, covered with a thin coat of soft wax, on which the impresson was made with a sty-

lus of iron. Parchment, made of the hides of animals, was an invention of later times. Paper was not invented before the fourteenth century.



## STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

**T**HE common division of Speech into eight parts, nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, adverbs, prepositions, interjections, and conjunctions, is not very accurate; since under the general term of nouns it comprehends both substantives and adjectives, which are parts of speech essentially distinct. Yet as we are most accustomed to this division, and, as logical exactness is not necessary to our present design, we shall adopt these terms, which habit has made familiar to us.

( Substantive nouns are the foundation of Grammar, and the most ancient part of speech. )  
 ( When men had advanced beyond simple interjections or exclamations of passion, and had begun to communicate their ideas to each other, they would be obliged to assign names to objects by which they were surrounded. ) Wherever a savage looked, he beheld forests and trees. To distinguish each by a separate name would have been endless. Their common qualities, such as springing from a root, and bearing branches and leaves would suggest a gene-



ral idea, and a general name. The genus, *tree*, was afterwards subdivided into its several species of oak, elm, ash, &c. upon experience and observation.

Still however only general terms were used in speech. For oak, elm, and ash, were names of whole classes of objects, each of which comprehended an immense number of undistinguished individuals. Thus, when the nouns man, lion, or tree were mentioned in conversation, it could not be known, which man, lion, or tree was meant, among the multitude comprehended under one name. (Hence arose a very useful contrivance for determining the individual object intended, by mean of that part of speech called the Article.) (In English we have two articles, *a* and *the*; *a* is more general, *the* more definite.) The Greeks had but one, which agrees with our definite article *the*. They supplied the place of our article *a* by the absence of their article; thus *Anthropos* signifies *a* man; *ὁ Anthropos*, *the* man. The Latins had no article; but in the room of it used the pronouns *hic*, *ille*, *iste*. This, however seems a defect in their language; since articles certainly contribute much to perspicuity and precision.

To perceive the truth of this remark, observe the different imports of the following expressions; "The son of a king, the son of the king, a son of the king's." Each of these three phrases has a separate meaning, too obvious to be misunderstood. But, in Latin, "fil-

ius regis" is entirely undetermined; it may bear either of the three senses mentioned.

( Beside this quality of being defined by the article, three affections belong to nouns, number, gender, and case, which deserve to be considered. )

( NUMBER, as it makes a noun significant of one or more, is singular or plural; a distinction found in all tongues, which must have been coeval with the origin of language, ) since there were few things, which men had more frequent necessity of expressing, than the distinction between one and more. ( In the Hebrew, Greek, and some other ancient languages, we find not only a plural, but a dual number; the origin of which may very naturally be accounted for, as separate terms of numbering were yet, undiscovered, and one, two, and many, were all, or at least the principal numeral distinctions, which men at first had any occasion to make. )

( GENDER, which is founded on the distinction of the two sexes, can with propriety be applied to the names of living creatures only. All other nouns ought to be of the neuter gender. ) Yet in most languages the same distinction is applied to a great number of inanimate objects. ) Thus, in the Latin tongue, *ensis*, a sword, is masculine; *sagitta*, an arrow, is feminine; and this assignation of sex to inanimate objects often appears entirely capricious. In the Greek and Latin, however, all inanimate objects are not distributed into masculine and

feminine; but many of them are classed, where all ought to be, under the neuter gender; as *saxum*, a rock; *mare*, the sea. ( But in the French and Italian tongue, the neuter gender is wholly unknown, all their names of inanimate objects being put upon the same footing with those of living creatures, and distributed without reserve into masculine and feminine. ) ( In the English language all nouns, literally used, that are the names of living creatures, are neuter; and ours is perhaps the only tongue, (except the Chinese, which is said to resemble it in this particular,) in which the distinction of gender is philosophically applied. ) ( CASE denotes the state or relation, which one object bears to another, by some variation of the name of that object; generally in the final letters, and by some languages in the initial. ) ( All tongues however do not agree in this mode of expression. ) Declension is used by the Greek and Latin; but in the English, French, and Italian, it is not found; or, at most, it exists in a very imperfect state. ( These languages express the relations of objects by prepositions, which are the names of those relations, prefixed to the names of objects. ) ( English nouns have no case except a sort of genitive, commonly formed by adding the letter *s* to the noun; ) as when we say "Pope's Dunciad," meaning the Dunciad of Pope.

( Whether the moderns have given beauty or utility to language, by the abolition of cases, may perhaps be doubted. ) ( They have, howev-

English & Latin

er, certainly rendered it more simple by removing that intricacy, which arose from different forms of declension, and from the irregularities of the several declensions.) (But in obtaining this simplicity, it must be confessed, we have filled language with a multitude of those little words, called prepositions, which, by perpetually occurring in every sentence, encumber speech; and, by rendering it more prolix, enervate its force.) The sound of modern language is also less agreeable to the ear, being deprived of that variety and sweetness, which arose from the length of words, and the change of terminations, occasioned by cases in the Greek and Latin. (But perhaps the greatest disadvantage, we sustain by the abolition of cases, is the loss of that liberty of transposition in the arrangement of words, which the ancient languages enjoyed.)

(PRONOUNS are the representatives of nouns,) (and are subject to the same modifications of number, gender, and case.) (We may observe, however, that the pronouns of the first and second person, *I* and *thou*, have no distinction of gender in any language; (for, as they always refer to persons present, their sex must be known, and therefore needs not to be marked by their pronouns.) But, as the third person may be absent, or unknown, the distinction of gender there becomes requisite; and accordingly in English it has all three genders, *he, she, it*. (ADJECTIVES, as *strong, weak, handsome, ugly*, are the plainest and most simple in that class

of words, which are termed attributive.) They are common to all languages, and must have been very early invented; since objects could neither be distinguished nor treated of in discourse, before names were assigned to their different qualities.

## STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

### ENGLISH TONGUE.

**O**F all the parts of speech, (VERBS are by far the most complex and useful.) (From their importance we may justly conclude, that they were coeval with the origin of language; though a long time must have been requisite to rear them up to that accuracy, which they now possess.) *yes*

(The tenses were contrived to mark the several distinctions of time.) (We commonly think of no more, than its three great divisions, the past, the present, and the future;) and we might suppose, that, if verbs had been so contrived as merely to express these, no more was necessary. But language proceeds with much greater subtilty. (It divides time into its several moments;) it regards it, as never standing still, but always flowing; things past, as more or less distant; and things future, as more or less remote, by different gradations. Hence the variety of tenses in almost every language.

(The present may indeed be always regarded as one indivisible point, which admits no variety; "I am," "*sum.*") But it is not so with the past. Even the poorest language has two or three tenses to express its varieties. Ours has (four.) 1. A past action may be represented as unfinished by the imperfect tense; "I was walking, *ambulabam.*" 2. As finished by the perfect tense, "I have walked." 3. As finished some time since, the particular time being left undetermined; "I walked, *ambulavi:*" this is what grammarians call an aorist, or indefinite past. 4. As finished before something else, which is also past.) This is the plusquamperfect; "I had walked, *ambulaveram.*" "I had walked, before you called upon me." Our language, we must perceive with pleasure, has an advantage over the Latin, which has only three variations of past time.

(The varieties in future time are two; a simple or indefinite future; "I shall walk, *ambulabo;*" and a future having reference to something else, which is likewise future; "I shall have walked, *ambulavero;* I shall have walked, before he will pay me a visit.")

(Beside tenses verbs admit the distinction of voices, viz. the active and passive; as, "I love" or "I am loved.") (They admit also the distinction of modes, which are intended to express the perceptions and volitions of the mind under different forms.) (The indicative mode simply declares a proposition;) "I write; "I have written." (The imperative requires,

commands, or threatens; “Write thou; let him write.” (The subjunctive expresses a proposition under the form of a condition, or, as subordinate to something, to which reference is made; “I might write; I could write; I should write, if the matter were so.” (This expression of the perceptions and volitions of the mind in so many various forms, together with the distinction of the three persons, *I, thou, and he*, constitutes the conjugation of verbs,) which makes so great a part of the Grammar of all languages.

Conjugation is reckoned most perfect in those languages, which, by varying the termination, or the initial syllable of the verb, express the greatest number of important circumstances, without the help of auxiliary verbs. In the (Oriental) tongues verbs have few tenses; but their modes are so contrived, as to express a great variety of circumstances and relations. In the Hebrew they say in one word, without the aid of an auxiliary, not only, “I taught,” but, “I was taught; I caused to teach; I was caused to teach; I taught myself.” The Greek, which is commonly thought to be the most perfect of all languages, is very regular and complete in the modes and tenses.) The Latin, though formed on the same model, is not so perfect, particularly in the passive voice, which forms most of the tenses by the aid of the auxiliary “*sum*.” In modern European tongues conjugation is very defective. (The two great auxiliary verbs, to *have* and to *be*,

with those other auxiliaries, which we use in English, *do, shall, will, may, and can*, prefixed to a participle, or to another verb in the infinitive mode, supercede, in a great measure, the different terminations of modes and tenses, which formed the ancient conjugations. )

The other parts of speech, as they admit no variation, will require only a short discussion.

( Adverbs are for the most part an abridged mode of speech, expressing by one word, what might by a circumlocution be resolved into two or more words, belonging to other parts of speech. “ Here,” for instance, is the same with, “ in this place.” ) Hence adverbs seem to be less necessary, and of later introduction into speech, than several other classes of words; and accordingly most of them are derived from other words, formerly established in the language.

( Prepositions and conjunctions serve to express the relations, which things bear to one another, their mutual influence, dependence, and coherence; and so to join words together, as to form intelligible propositions. ) ( Conjunctions are commonly employed for connecting sentences, or members of sentences; as, *and, because,* and the like. ) ( Prepositions are used for connecting words; as, *of, from, to, &c.* ) The beauty and strength of every language depend in a great measure on a proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, and those relative pronouns, which serve the same purpose of connecting different parts of discourse.



Having thus briefly considered the Structure of Language in general, we will now enter more particularly into an examination of our own Language.

( The English, which was spoken after the Norman Conquest, and continues to be spoken now, is a mixture of the ancient Saxon and the Norman French, together with such new and foreign words, as commerce and learning have, in a succession of ages, gradually introduced.) From the influx of so many streams, from a junction of so many dissimilar parts, it naturally follows, that the English, like every compounded language, must be somewhat irregular. We cannot expect from it that complete analogy in structure, which may be found in those simpler languages, which were formed within themselves, and built on one foundation. Hence our syntax is short, since there are few marks in the words themselves, which show their relation to each other, or point out either their concordance, or their government in a sentence. ( But, if these be disadvantages in a compound language, they are balanced by the advantages which attend it, particularly by the number and variety of words, by which such a language is commonly enriched.) Few languages are more copious than the English. In all grave subjects, especially historical, critical, political, and moral, no complaint can justly be made of the barrenness of our tongue. We are rich too in the language of poetry. Our poetical style differs widely from prose, not

with respect to numbers only, but in the very words themselves ; which proves what a compass and variety of words we can select and employ, suited to different occasions. Herein we are infinitely superior to the French, whose poetical language, if it were not distinguished by rhyme, would not be known to differ from their ordinary prose. Their language however surpasses ours in expressing whatever is delicate, gay, and amusing. It is perhaps the happiest language for conversation in the known world ; but for the higher subjects of composition, the English is justly considered as far superior to it.

(The flexibility of a language, or its power of becoming either grave and strong, or easy and flowing, or tender and gentle, or pompous and magnificent, as occasions require, is a quality of great importance in speaking and writing.)  
 (This depends on the copiousness of a language ; the different arrangements, of which its words are susceptible ; and the variety and beauty of the sounds of its words.) (The Greek possessed these requisites in a higher degree than any other language. It superadded the graceful variety of its different dialects ; and thereby readily assumed every kind of character an author could wish, from the most simple and familiar, to the most majestic. The Latin, though very beautiful, is inferior in this respect to the Greek. It has more of a fixed character of stateliness and gravity ; and is supported by a certain senatorial dignity, of which it is difficult for a writer to divest it.) (Among

modern tongues the Italian possesses much more flexibility than the French; and seems to be on the whole, the most perfect of all the modern dialects, which have arisen out of the ruins of the ancient. (Our language, though unequal to the Italian in flexibility, is not destitute of a considerable degree of this quality.) Whoever considers the diversity of style in some of our best writers, will discover in our tongue such a circle of expression, such a power of accommodation to the various tastes of men, as redounds much to its honour.

(Our language has been thought to be very deficient in harmony of sound; yet the melody of its versification, its power of supporting poetical numbers without the assistance of rhyme, is a sufficient proof, that it is far from being unharmonious.) Even the hissing sound, of which it has been accused, obtains less frequently, than has been suspected. For in many words, and in the final syllables especially, the letter *s* has the sound of *z*, which is one of the sounds, on which the ear rests with pleasure; as in *has, these, loves, bears, &c.*

It must however be admitted, that smoothness is not the distinguishing property of the English tongue. (Strength and expressiveness, rather than grace and melody, constitute its character. It possesses also the property of being the most simple of all the European dialects in its form and construction.) It is free from the intricacy of cases, declensions, modes, and tenses. Its words are subject to fewer variations

from their original form, than those of any other language. Its nouns have no distinction of gender, except what is made by nature; and but one variation in case. Its adjectives admit no change, except what expresses the degree of comparison. Its verbs, instead of the varieties of ancient conjugation, admit only four or five changes in termination. A few prepositions and auxiliary verbs effect all the purposes of significancy; while the principal words for the most part preserve their form unaltered. Hence our language acquires a simplicity and facility, which are the cause of its being frequently written and spoken with inaccuracy. We imagine, that a competent skill in it may be acquired without any study; and, that in a syntax so narrow and limited as ours, there is nothing, which requires attention. But the fundamental rules of syntax are common to the English, and to the ancient tongues; and regard to them is absolutely requisite for writing or speaking with propriety.

Whatever be the advantages or defects of our language, it certainly deserves, in the highest degree, our study and attention. The Greeks and Romans, in the meridian of their glory, bestowed the highest cultivation on their respective languages. The French and Italians have employed much study upon theirs; and their example is worthy of imitation. For, whatever knowledge may be gained by the study of other languages, it can never be communicated with advantage, unless by those, who

can write and speak their own language with propriety. Let the matter of an author be ever so good and useful, his compositions will always suffer in the publick esteem, if his expression be deficient in purity or propriety. At the same time the attainment of a correct and elegant style is an object, which demands application and labour. ( If any one suppose he can catch it merely by the ear, or acquire it by a perusal of some of our good authors, he will be much disappointed.) The many grammatical errors, the many impure expressions, which are found in authors, who are far from being contemptible, demonstrate, that a careful study of our language is previously requisite for writing it with propriety, purity, and elegance.

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### STYLE, PERSPICUITY, AND PRECISION.

**STYLE** is the peculiar manner, in which a man expresses his thoughts by words. It is a picture of the ideas in his mind, and of the order, in which they there exist.

The qualities of a good style may be ranged under two heads, perspicuity and ornament. It will readily be admitted, that perspicuity is the fundamental quality of a good style. Without this the brightest ornaments only glimmer through the dark, and perplex instead of pleasing the reader. If we be forced to follow a

writer with much care; to pause, and to read over his sentences a second time, in order to understand them fully, he will not please us long. Men are too indolent to relish so much labour. Though they may pretend to admire an author's depth, after they have discovered his meaning, they will seldom be inclined to look a second time into his book.

Perspicuity requires attention, first to single words and phrases, and then to the construction of sentences. When considered with respect to words and phrases, it requires these three qualities, *purity*, *propriety*, and *precision*.

Purity and propriety of language are often used indiscriminately for each other; and indeed they are very nearly allied. A distinction however obtains between them. Purity is the use of such words and constructions, as belong to the idiom of a particular language, in opposition to words and phrases, which are imported from other languages, or which are obsolete, or newly coined, or employed without proper authority. Propriety is the choice of such words, as the best and most established usage has appropriated to those ideas, which we intend to express by them. It implies a correct and happy application of them, in opposition to vulgar or low expressions, and to words and phrases less significant of the ideas we intend to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may be strictly English without Scotticisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical expressions of any kind, and yet be deficient in propriety. The words

may be illy selected; not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's meaning. He took them indeed from the general mass of English words; but his choice was made without skill. But style cannot be proper without being pure. It is the union of purity and propriety, which renders it graceful and perspicuous.

The exact meaning of precision may be learnt from the etymology of the word. It is derived from "*præcidere*," to cut off; and signifies retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression in such manner, as to exhibit neither more nor less, than the ideas intended to be conveyed.

Words, employed to express ideas, may be faulty in three respects. They may either not express the ideas, which the author means, but some others, which are only related; or they may express those ideas, but not completely; or they may express them together with something more than he intends. Precision is opposed to these three faults; but particularly to the last, into which feeble writers are very apt to fall. They employ a multitude of words to make themselves understood, as they think, more distinctly; but they only confound the reader. The image, as they place it before you, is always seen double. When an author tells us of his hero's *courage*, in the day of battle; the expression is precise, and we understand it fully. But if, from a desire of multiplying words, he praise his *courage* and *fortitude*; at

the moment he joins these words together, our idea begins to waver. He intends to express one quality more strongly; but he is in fact expressing two. *Courage* resists danger; *fortitude* supports pain. The occasions of exerting these qualities are different; and, being led to think of both together, when only one of them should engage attention, our view is rendered unsteady, and our conception of the object indistinct.

( The great source of a loose style, the opposite of precision, is the injudicious use of words called synonymous. ) ( Scarcely in any language are there two words, that convey precisely the same idea; and a person, perfectly acquainted with the propriety of the language, will always <sup>may</sup> be able to observe something, by which they are distinguished. In our language many instances may be given of difference in meaning among words reputed synonymous; and, as the subject is important, we shall point out a few of them. )

( *Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded.* We are surprised at what is new or unexpected; we are astonished at what is vast or great; we are amazed at what is incomprehensible; we are confounded by what is shocking or terrible. )

*Pride, vanity.* ( Pride makes us esteem ourselves; vanity makes us desire the esteem of others. )

*Haughtiness, disdain.* ( Haughtiness is founded on a high opinion of ourselves; disdain on a low opinion of others. )



*To weary, to fatigue.* ( Continuance of the same thing wearies us ; labour fatigues us.) A man is wearied by standing ; he is fatigued by walking.

*To abhor, to detest.* ( To abhor imports simply strong dislike ; to detest imports likewise strong disapprobation. ) We abhor being in debt ; we detest treachery.

*To invent, to discover.* ( We invent things which are new ; we discover what is hidden. ) Galilæo invented the telescope ; Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood.

*Entire, complete.* ( A thing is entire, when it wants none of its parts ; complete, when it wants none of the appendages, which belong to it. ) A man may occupy an entire house ; though he have not one complete apartment.

*Enough, sufficient.* ( Enough relates to the quantity, which we wish to have of a thing. Sufficient relates to the use, that is to be made of it. ) Hence enough commonly signifies a greater quantity than sufficient does. The covetous man never has enough ; though he has what is sufficient for nature.

These are a few among many instances of words in our language, which by careless writers are apt to be mistaken for synonymous. The more the distinction in the meaning of such words is regarded, the more accurately and forcibly shall we speak and write.

## STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

**A** PROPER construction of sentences is of such importance in every species of composition, that we cannot be too strict or minute in our attention to it. For, whatever be the subject, if the sentences be constructed in a clumsy, perplexed, or feeble manner, the work cannot be read with pleasure, nor even with profit. But by attention to the rules, which relate to this part of style, we acquire the habit of expressing ourselves with perspicuity and elegance; and, if a disorder happen to arise in some of our sentences, we immediately see where it lies, and are able to rectify it.

The properties most essential to a perfect sentence are the four following. (1. Clearness. 2. Unity. 3. Strength. 4. Harmony.)

Ambiguity is opposed to clearness, and arises from two causes; (either from a wrong choice of words, or a wrong collocation of them.) Of the choice of words, as far as regards perspicuity, we have already spoken. Of the collocation of them we are now to treat. From the nature of our language, a capital rule in the arrangement of our sentences is (that words or members most nearly related, should be placed as near to each other as possible, that their mutual relation may clearly appear.) This rule is frequently neglected even by good writers. A few instances will show both its importance and application.

In the position of adverbs, which are used to qualify the signification of something, which either precedes or follows them, a good deal of nicety is to be observed. "By greatness," says Addison, "I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view." Here the place of the adverb *only* makes it limit the verb *mean*. "I do not only mean." The question may be asked, What does he more than mean? Had it been placed after *bulk*, still it would have been wrong, for it might then be asked, What is meant beside the *bulk*? Is it the colour, or any other property? Its proper place is after the word *object*: "By greatness I do not mean the bulk of any single object *only*" for then, when it is asked, What does he mean more than the bulk of a single object? The answer comes out precisely as the author intends, "the largeness of a whole view." "Theism," says Lord Shaftesbury, "can only be opposed to polytheism or atheism." It may be asked then, "Is theism capable of nothing else, except being *opposed* to polytheism or atheism?" This is what the words literally mean, through the improper collocation of *only*. He ought to have said, ("Theism can be opposed *only* to polytheism or atheism.") Inaccuracies of this kind, occasion little ambiguity in common discourse, because the tone and emphasis, used by the speaker, generally make the meaning perspicuous. But in writing, where a person speaks to the eye, he ought to be more accurate; and so to connect adverbs

with the words they qualify, that his meaning cannot be mistaken on the first inspection.

When a circumstance is interposed in the middle of a sentence, it sometimes requires attention to place it in such manner, as to divest it of all ambiguity. For instance, “Are these designs,” says Lord Bolingbroke, “which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow?” Here we are in doubt whether the phrases, “*in any circumstances,*” “*in any situation,*” be connected with “a man born in Britain;” or with that man’s “avowing his designs.” If the latter, as seems most likely, was intended to be the meaning, the arrangement ought to be this, “Are these designs, which any man, who is born a Briton, ought to be ashamed or afraid, in any circumstances, in any situation, to avow?”

Still more attention is requisite to a proper disposition of the relative pronouns, *who, which, what, whose*; and of all those particles, which express the connexion of the parts of speech. As all reasoning depends upon this connexion, we cannot be too accurate with regard to it. A small error may obscure the meaning of a whole sentence; and even where the meaning is apparent, yet, if these relatives be misplaced, we always find something awkward and disjointed in the structure of the period. The following passage in Bishop Sherlock’s Sermons will exemplify these observations: “It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the acci-

“dents of life, by heaping up treasures, (which)  
 “nothing can protect us against, but the good  
 “providence of our heavenly Father.” *Which*  
 grammatically refers to the immediately preceding  
 noun, which here is “treasures;” and this  
 would convert the whole period into nonsense.  
 The sentence should have been thus construct-  
 ed: (“It is folly to pretend, by heaping up  
 “treasures, to arm ourselves against the acci-  
 “dents of life, against which nothing can pro-  
 “tect us, but the good providence of our heav-  
 “enly Father.”)

We now proceed to the second quality of  
 a well arranged sentence, which we termed its  
 Unity. This is a capital property. (The very  
 nature of a sentence implies one proposition to  
 be expressed. It may consist of parts; but these  
 parts must be so closely bound together, as to  
 make an impression of one object only upon  
 the mind. )

(To preserve this unity, we must observe, that  
 during the course of the sentence the subject  
 should be changed as little as possible.) There  
 is generally in every sentence some person or  
 thing, which is the governing word. This  
 should be continued so, if possible, from the be-  
 ginning to the end of it. Should a man express  
 himself in this manner: “After we came to  
 “anchor, they put me on shore, where I was  
 “saluted by all my friends, who received me  
 “with the greatest kindness”—Though the ob-  
 jects in this sentence are sufficiently connected;  
 yet, by shifting so often the subject and person,

*we, they, I, and who*, they appear in so disunited a view, that the sense and connexion are nearly lost. The sentence is restored to its proper unity by constructing it thus; "Having come to anchor, I was put on shore, where I was saluted by all my friends, who received me with the greatest kindness."

(The second rule is, never crowd into one sentence ideas, which have so little connexion, that they might well be divided into two or more sentences.) Violation of this rule never fails to displease a reader. Its effect indeed is so disgusting, that of the two it is the safest extreme, to err rather by too many short sentences, than by one, that is overloaded and confused. The following sentence from a translation of Plutarch will justify this opinion: "Their march," says the author, speaking of the Greeks, "was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unfavoury by reason of their continual feeding upon sea fish." Here the subject is repeatedly changed. The march of the Greeks, the description of the inhabitants, through whose country they passed, the account of their sheep, and the reason of their sheep being disagreeable food, make a jumble of objects, slightly related to each other, which the reader cannot without considerable difficulty comprehend in one view.

(The third rule for preserving the unity of a sentence is, keep clear of parentheses in the

middle of it.) These may on some occasions have a spirited appearance, as prompted by a certain vivacity of thought, which can glance happily aside, as it is going along. But in general their effect is extremely bad; being a perplexed method of disposing of some thought, which a writer has not art enough to introduce in its proper place. It is needless to produce any instances, as they occur so frequently among incorrect writers.

(The fourth rule for the unity of a sentence is, bring it to a full and perfect close.) It needs not to be observed, that an unfinished sentence is no sentence with respect to grammar. But sentences often occur, which are more than finished. When we have arrived at what we expected to be the conclusion; when we are come to the word, on which the mind is naturally led to rest; unexpectedly some circumstance is added, which ought to have been omitted, or disposed of elsewhere. Thus, for instance, in the following sentence from Sir William Temple, the adjection to the sentence is entirely foreign to it. Speaking of Burnet's Theory of the Earth, and Fontenelle's Plurality of Worlds; "The first," says he, "could not end his learned treatise without a panegyrick of modern learning, in comparison of the ancient; and the other falls so grossly into the censure of the old poetry, and preference of the new, that I could not read either of these strains without some indignation, which no

“quality among men is so apt to raise in me, as self sufficiency.” The word “indignation,” concludes the sentence; for the last member is added after the proper close.



### STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

**W**E now proceed to the third quality of a correct sentence, which we termed Strength. (By this is meant such a disposition of the several words and members, as will exhibit the sense to the best advantage; as will render the impression, which the period is intended to make, most full and complete; and give every word and every member its due weight and force. To the production of this effect, perspicuity and unity are absolutely necessary; but more is requisite.) For a sentence may be clear; it may also be compact, or have the requisite unity; and yet, by some unfavourable circumstance in the structure, it may fail in that strength or liveliness of impression, which a more happy collocation would produce.

The first rule for promoting the strength of a sentence is, (take from it all redundant words.) Whatever can be easily supplied in the mind, is better omitted in the expression; thus, “Content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it,” is better than “being content with deserving a triumph, he refused the



“honour of it.” It is one of the most useful exercises, on reviewing what we have written, to contract that circuitous mode of expression, and to cut off those useless excrescences, which are usually found in a first draught. (But we must be cautious of pruning so closely, as to give a hardness and dryness to the style.) Some leaves must be left to shelter and adorn the fruit.

As sentences should be cleared of superfluous words, so also of superfluous members. Opposed to this is the fault we frequently meet, the last member of a period being only a repetition of the former in a different dress. For example, speaking of beauty, “The very first discovery of it,” says Addison, “strikes the mind with inward joy, and spreads delight through all its faculties.” ¶ In this instance scarcely any thing is added by the second member of the sentence, to what was expressed in the first. Though the flowing style of Addison may palliate such negligence, yet it is generally true, that language divested of this prolixity is more strong and beautiful.

¶ The second rule for promoting the strength of a sentence is, pay particular attention to the use of copulatives, relatives, and particles, employed for transition and connexion.) Some observations on this subject, which appear useful, shall be mentioned.

¶ What is termed splitting of particles, or separating a preposition from the noun, which it governs, is ever to be avoided.) For example,

“ Though virtue borrows no assistance from, yet it may often be accompanied by, the advantages of fortune.” In such instances we suffer pain from the violent separation of two things, which by nature are closely united.

( The strength of a sentence is much injured by an unnecessary multiplication of relative and demonstrative particles. ) If a writer say “ there is nothing which disgusts me sooner, than the empty pomp of language,” he expresses himself less forcibly, than if he had said, “ nothing disgusts me sooner than the empty pomp of language.” The former mode of expression in the introduction of a subject, or in laying down a proposition, to which particular attention is demanded, is very proper ; but in ordinary discourse the latter is far preferable.

With regard to the relative we shall only observe, that in conversation and epistolary writing it may be omitted ; but in compositions of a serious or dignified kind it should constantly be inserted.

On the copulative particle *and*, which occurs so often, several observations are to be made. ( It is evident, that an unnecessary repetition of it enfeebles style. ) By omitting it we often make a closer connexion, a quicker succession of objects, than when it is inserted between them. “ *Veni, vidi, vici,*” expresses with more spirit the rapidity of conquest, than if connecting particles had been used. ( When, however, we wish to prevent a quick transition from one object to another ; and when enumerating ob-

jects, which we wish to appear as distinct from each other as possible; copulatives may be multiplied with peculiar advantage.) Thus Lord Bolingbroke says with propriety, "Such a man might fall a victim to power; but truth, and reason, and liberty, would fall with him."

The third rule for promoting the strength of a sentence is, dispose of the principal word or words in that part of the sentence, where they will make the most striking impression. Perspicuity ought first to be studied; and the nature of our language allows no great liberty of collocation. (In general the important words are placed at the beginning of a sentence.) Thus Mr. Addison: "The pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense; nor so refined as those of the understanding." This order seems to be the most plain and natural. Sometimes, however, when we propose giving weight to a sentence, it is useful to suspend the meaning a little, and then to bring it out fully at the close. "Thus," says Pope, "on whatever side we contemplate Homer, what principally strikes us is his wonderful invention."

The fourth rule for promoting the strength of sentences is, make the members of them go on rising in their importance one above another. (This kind of arrangement is called a climax, and is ever regarded as a beauty in composition.) Why it pleases is sufficiently evident. In all things we love to advance to what is

more and more beautiful rather than to follow a retrograde order. Having viewed some considerable object, we cannot without pain descend to an inferior circumstance. "*Cavendum est,*" says Quintilian, "*ne decrescat oratio, et fortior subjungatur aliquid infirmius.*" A weaker assertion should never follow a stronger one; and, (when a sentence consists of two members, *first* the longest should in general be the concluding one.) Periods, thus divided, are pronounced more easily; and, the shortest member being placed first, we carry it more readily in our memory, as we proceed to the second, and see the connexion of the two more clearly. Thus to say; "When our passions have forsaken us, we flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken them," is both more graceful and more perspicuous, than to begin with the longest part of the proposition: "We flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken our passions, when they have forsaken us."

The fifth rule for constructing sentences with strength is, avoid concluding them with an adverb, a preposition, or any insignificant word. By such conclusions style is always weakened and degraded. Sometimes, indeed, where the strains and significancy rest chiefly upon words of this kind, they ought to have the principal place allotted them. No fault, for example, can be found with this sentence of Bolingbroke: "In their prosperity my friends shall never hear of me; in their adversity always;" where *never* and *always*, being emphatical words, are

fo placed as to make a strong impreflion. But, when thefe inferiour parts of fpeech are introduced, as circumftances, or as qualifications of more important words, they fhould always be difpofed of in the leaft confpicuous parts of the period.

We fhould always avoid concluding a fentence or member with any of thofe particles which diftinguifh the cafes of nouns; *as, of, to, from, with, by.* Thus it is much better to fay, “Avarice is a crime, of which wife men are often guilty,” than to fay, “Avarice is a crime which wife men are often guilty of.” This is a phrafeology which all correct writers fhun.

{ A complex verb, compounded of a fimple verb and a fubfequent prepoftion, is alfo an ungraceful conclufion of a period; *as, bring about, clear up, give over,* and many others of the fame kind; inftead of which, if a fimple verb be employed, it will terminate the fentence with more ftrength. Even the pronoun *it*, efpecially when joined with fome of the prepoftions, *as, with it, in it, to it*, cannot without violation of grace be the conclufion of a fentence. Any phrafe, which expreffes a circumftance only, cannot conclude a fentence without great inelegance. Circumftances indeed are like unfhapely ftones in a building, which try the fkill of an artift where to place them with the leaft offence. We fhould not crowd too many of them together; but rather interperfe them in different parts of the fentence, joined with the principal words

on which they depend. Thus, for instance, when Dean Swift says, “What I had the honour of mentioning to your Lordship some time ago in conversation, was not a new thought;” these two circumstances, *some time ago* and *in conversation*, which are joined, would have been better separated thus: “What I had the honour some time ago of mentioning to your Lordship in conversation.”

¶ The sixth and last rule concerning the strength of a sentence is this, in the members of it, where two things are compared or contrasted; where either resemblance or opposition is to be expressed; some resemblance in the language and construction ought to be observed.) The following passage from Pope’s preface to his Homer beautifully exemplifies this rule. “Homer was the greater genius; Virgil the better artist; in the one we admire the man; in the other the work. Homer hurries us with a commanding impetuosity; Virgil leads us with an attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion; Virgil bestows with a careful munificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a sudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a constant stream. When we look upon their machines, Homer seems like his own Jupiter in his terrors, shaking Olympus, scattering lightnings, and firing the heavens. Virgil like the same power in his benevolence, counselling with the gods, laying plans for empires, and ordering his whole creation.” Periods, thus con-

fructed, when introduced with propriety, and not too frequently repeated, have a sensible beauty. But, if such a construction be aimed at in every sentence, it betrays into a disagreeable uniformity, and produces a regular jingle in the period, which tires the ear, and plainly discovers affectation.

### STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES. HARMONY.

**H**AVING considered sentences with regard to their meaning under the heads of Perspicuity, Unity, and Strength; we shall now consider them with respect to their sound.

In the harmony of periods two things are to be considered. First, agreeable sound or modulation in general, without any particular expression. Next, the sound so ordered as to become expressive of the sense. The first is the more common; the second the superiour beauty.

The beauty of musical construction depends upon the choice and arrangement of words. Those words are most pleasing to the ear, which are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, in which there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants without too many harsh consonants, or too many open vowels in succession. Long words are generally more pleasing to the ear than monosyllables; and those are the most musical, which are not wholly composed of

long and short syllables, but of an intermixture of them ; such as *delight, amuse, velocity, celerity, beautiful, impetuosity*. If the words, however, which compose a sentence, be ever so well chosen and harmonious ; yet, if they be unskilfully arranged, its musick is entirely lost. As an instance of a musical sentence, we may take the following from Milton : “ We shall conduct you  
 “ to a hill side, laborious indeed at the first ascent ; but else, so smooth, so green, so full of  
 “ goodly prospects and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not  
 “ more charming.” Every thing in this sentence conspires to render it harmonious. The words are well chosen ; *laborious, smooth, green, goodly, melodious, charming* ; and so happily arranged, that no alteration can be made without injuring the melody.

There are two things on which the musick of a sentence principally depends ; these are, the proper distribution of the several members of it, and the close or cadence of the whole.

First, the distribution of the several members should be carefully regarded. Whatever is easy to the organs of speech, is always grateful to the ear. While a period advances, the termination of each member forms a pause in the pronunciation ; and these pauses should be so distributed, as to bear a certain musical proportion to each other. This will be best illustrated by examples. “ This discourse concerning the easiness of God’s commands does all along suppose  
 “ and acknowledge the difficulties of the first



“entrance upon a religious course ; except only  
 “in those persons who have had the happiness  
 “to be trained up to religion by the easy and  
 “insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous  
 “education.” This sentence is far from being  
 harmonious, owing chiefly to this, that there is  
 but one pause in it, by which it is divided into  
 two members ; each of which is so long as to  
 require a considerable stretch of breath in pro-  
 nouncing it. On the contrary, let us observe  
 the grace of the following passage from Sir  
 William Temple, in which he speaks sarcastically  
 of man. “But, God be thanked, his pride is  
 “greater than his ignorance ; and what he  
 “wants in knowledge he supplies by sufficien-  
 “cy. When he has looked about him as far  
 “as he can, he concludes there is no more to  
 “be seen ; when he is at the end of his line, he  
 “is at the bottom of the ocean ; when he has  
 “shot his best, he is sure none ever did, or even  
 “can shoot better, or beyond it. His own reas-  
 “on he holds to be the certain measure of  
 “truth ; and his own knowledge, of what is  
 “possible in nature.” Here every thing is at  
 once easy to the breath, and grateful to the  
 ear. We must however observe, that if com-  
 position abound with sentences, which have too  
 many rests, and these placed at intervals ap-  
 parently measured and regular, it is apt to fav-  
 our of affectation.

The next thing which demands attention, is  
 the close or cadence of the period. The only  
 important rule, which can here be given, is

this, when we aim at dignity or elevation, the sound should increase to the last; the longest members of the period, and the fullest and most sonorous words should be reserved for the conclusion. As an instance of this the following sentence of Addison may be given. "It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas; converses with its objects at the greatest distance; and continues the longest in action without being tired or fatiated with its proper enjoyments." Here every reader must be sensible of beauty in the just distribution of the pauses, and in the manner of rounding the period, and of bringing it to a full and harmonious close.

It may be remarked, that little words in the conclusion of a sentence are as injurious to melody, as they are inconsistent with strength of expression. A musical close in our language seems in general to require either the last syllable, or the last but one, to be a long syllable. Words which consist chiefly of short syllables, as *contrary*, *particular*, *retrospect*, seldom terminate a sentence harmoniously, unless a previous run of long syllables have rendered them pleasing to the ear.

Sentences, however, which are so constructed as to make the sound always swell toward the end, and rest either on the last or penult syllable, give a discourse the tone of declamation. If melody be not varied, the ear is soon cloyed with it. Sentences constructed in the same manner, with the pauses at equal intervals,

should never succeed each other. Short sentences must be blended with long and swelling ones, to render discourse sprightly as well as magnificent.

We now proceed to treat of a higher species of harmony; the sound adapted to the sense. Of this we may remark two degrees. First, the current of sound suited to the tenor of a discourse. Next a peculiar resemblance effected between some object and the sounds that are employed in describing it.

Sounds have in many respects an intimate correspondence with our ideas; partly natural, partly produced by artificial associations. Hence any one modulation of sound continued, stamps on style a certain character and expression. Sentences, constructed with Ciceronian fullness, excite an idea of what is important, magnificent, and sedate. But they suit no violent passion, no eager reasoning, no familiar address. These require measures brisker, easier, and often more abrupt. It were as absurd to write a panegyrick and an invective in a style of the same cadence, as to set the words of a tender love-song to the tune of a warlike march.

Beside the general correspondence of the current of sound with the current of thought, a more particular expression of certain objects by resembling sounds may be attempted. In poetry this resemblance is chiefly to be sought. It obtains sometimes indeed in prose composition; but there in an inferiour degree.

The sounds of words may be employed for representing chiefly three classes of objects ; first, other sounds ; secondly, motions ; and thirdly, the emotions and passions of the mind.

In most languages the names of many particular sounds are so formed, as to bear some resemblance of the sound which they signify ; as with us the *whistling* of winds, the *buzz* and *hum* of insects, the *hiss* of serpents, and the *crash* of falling timber ; and many other instances, where the name is plainly adapted to the sound it represents. A remarkable example of this beauty may be taken from two passages in Milton's *Paradise Lost* ; in one of which he describes the sound, made by the opening of the gates of hell ; in the other, that made by the opening of the gates of heaven. The contrast between the two exhibits to great advantage the art of the poet. The first is the opening of hell's gates ;

—————On a sudden open fly  
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound  
Th' infernal doors ; and on their hinges grate  
Harsh thunder.—————

Observe the smoothness of the other ;

—————Heaven open'd wide  
Her ever during gates, harmonious sound !  
On golden hinges turning.—————

In the second place the sound of words is frequently employed to imitate motion ; as it is swift or slow, violent or gentle, uniform or interrupted, easy or accompanied with effort. Between sound and motion there is no natural affinity ; yet in the imagination there is a strong

one ; as is evident from the connexion between musick and dancing. The poet can therefore give us a lively idea of the kind of motion he would describe, by the help of sounds which in our imagination correspond with that motion. Long syllables naturally excite an idea of slow motion ; as in this line of Virgil,

Olli interfese magna vi brachia tollunt.

A succession of short syllables gives the impression of quick motion ; as,

Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus.

The works of Homer and Virgil abound with instances of this beauty ; which are so often quoted and so well known, that it is unnecessary to produce them.

The third set of objects, which the sound of words is capable of representing, consists of emotions and passions of the mind. Between sense and sound there appears to be no natural resemblance. But if the arrangement of syllables by their sound alone recall one set of ideas more readily than another, and dispose the mind for entering into that affection which the poet intends to raise ; such arrangement may with propriety be said to resemble this sense. Thus, when pleasure, joy, and agreeable objects are described by one who feels his subject, the language naturally runs in smooth, liquid, and flowing numbers.

—Namque ipsa decoram  
Cæsariem nato genetrix, lumenque juventæ  
Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflarat honores.

Brisk and lively sensations exact quicker and more animated numbers.

——— *Juvenum manus emicat ardens*  
Littus in Hesperium.

Melancholy and gloomy subjects are naturally connected with slow measures and long words.

In those deep solitudes and awful cells,  
Where heavenly pensive contemplation dwells.

Abundant instances of this kind are suggested by a moderate acquaintance with good poets, either ancient or modern.



## ORIGIN AND NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

**F**IGURES may be described to be that language, which is prompted either by the imagination or passions. They are commonly divided by rhetoricians into two great classes, figures of words, and figures of thought. The former are commonly called tropes, and consist in a word's being used to signify something different from its original meaning. Hence, if the word be changed the figure is destroyed. Thus, for instance, "light ariseth to the upright in darknes." Here the trope consists in "light and darknes" not being taken literally, but substituted for comfort and adversity; to which conditions of life they are supposed to bear some

resemblance. The other class, termed figures of thought, supposes the figure to consist in the sentiment only, while the words are used in their literal sense; as in exclamations, interrogations, apostrophes, and comparisons; where, though the words be varied, or translated from one language into another, the same figure is still preserved. This distinction however is of small importance; as practice cannot be assisted by it; nor is it always very perspicuous.

Tropes are derived in part from the barrenness of language; but principally from the influence, which the imagination has over all language.

The imagination never contemplates any one idea or object as single and alone, but as accompanied by others, which may be considered as its accessories. These accessories often operate more forcibly upon the mind, than the principal idea itself. They are perhaps in their nature more agreeable, or more familiar to our conceptions; or remind us of a greater variety of important circumstances. Hence the name of the accessory or correspondent idea is substituted; although the principal has a proper and well known name of its own. Thus, for example, when we design to point out the period, in which a state enjoyed most reputation and glory, we might easily employ the proper words for expressing this; but as this in our imagination is readily connected with the flourishing period of a plant or tree, we prefer this correspondent idea and say, "The Roman

Empire flourished most under Augustus." The leader of a faction is a plain expression; but, because the head is the principal part of the human body, and is supposed to direct all the animal operations; resting on this resemblance, we say, "Catiline was the head of his party."

We shall now examine, why tropes and figures contribute to the beauty and grace of style. By them language is enriched, and made more copious. Hence words and phrases are multiplied for expressing all sorts of ideas; for describing even the smallest differences; the nicest shades and colours of thought; which by proper words alone cannot possibly be expressed. They also give dignity to style, which is degraded by the familiarity of common words. Figures have the same effect on language, that a rich and splendid apparel has on a person of rank and dignity. In prose compositions assistance of this kind is often requisite; to poetry it is essential. To say, "the sun rises," is common and trite; but it becomes a magnificent image, as expressed by Thompson:

But yonder comes the powerful king of day  
Rejoicing in the east——

Figures furnish the pleasure of enjoying two objects, presented at the same time to our view, without confusion; the principal idea together with its accessory, which gives it the figurative appearance. When, for example, instead of "youth," we say, "the morning of life;" the fancy is instantly entertained with all the corresponding circumstances between these two



objects. At the same instant we behold a certain period of human life, and a certain time of the day so connected; that the imagination plays between them with delight, and views at once two similar objects without embarrassment.

Figures are also attended with the additional advantage of giving us a more clear and striking view of the principal object, than if it were expressed in simple terms and freed from its accessory idea. They exhibit the object, on which they are employed, in a picturesque form; they render an abstract conception in some degree an object of sense; they surround it with circumstances, which enable the mind to lay hold of it steadily, and to contemplate it fully. By a well adapted figure, even conviction is assisted, and a truth is impressed upon the mind with additional liveliness and force. Thus in the following passage of Dr. Young: "When we dip too deep in pleasure, we always stir a sediment, that renders it impure and noxious." When an image presents such a resemblance between a moral and sensible idea, it serves like an argument from analogy, to enforce what the author advances, and to induce belief.

All tropes being founded on the relation which one object bears to another, the name of the one may be substituted for that of the other; and by this the vivacity of the idea is generally increased. The relation between a cause and its effect is one of the first and most obvious. Hence the cause is sometimes figura-

tively put for the effect. Thus Mr. Addison, writing of Italy, says,

Blossoms, and fruits, and flowers together rise,  
And the whole year in gay confusion lies.

Here the "whole year" is plainly meant to signify the productions of the year. The effect is also often put for the cause; as "grey hairs" for "old age," which produces grey hairs; and "shade," for the "trees," which cause the shade. The relation between the container and the thing contained is so intimate and apparent, as naturally to give rise to tropes.

—————Ille impiger hausit  
Spumantem pateram, et pleno se proluit auro.

Where it is obvious, that the cup and gold are put for the liquor, contained in the golden cup. The name of a country is often used to signify its inhabitants. To pray for the assistance of Heaven is the same with praying for the assistance of God, who is in heaven. The relation between a sign and the thing signified is another source of tropes. Thus,

Cedant arma togæ; concedat laurea linguæ.

Here the "toga," which is the badge of the civil professions, and the "laurel," that of military honours, are each of them put for the civil and military characters themselves. Tropes, founded on these several relations of cause and effect, container and contained, sign and thing signified, are called by the name of metonymy.

When a trope is founded on the relation between an antecedent and its consequent, it is called a metalepsis; as in the Roman phrase,

“fuit,” or “vixit,” to signify that one was dead. “Fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teucrum” expresses that the glory of Troy is no more.

When the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole ; a genus for a species, or a species for a genus ; the singular number for the plural, or the plural for the singular ; in general, when any thing less, or any thing more, is put for the precise object meant ; the figure is then termed a synecdoche. We say, for instance, “A fleet of so many sail,” instead of so many “ships ;” we frequently use the “head” for the “person,” the “pole” for the “earth,” the “waves” for the “sea.” An attribute is often used for its subject ; as, “youth and beauty” for the “young and beautiful ;” and sometimes a subject for its attribute. But the relation by far the most fruitful of tropes, is similitude, which is the sole foundation of metaphor.



### METAPHOR.

**M**ETAPHOR is founded entirely on the resemblance which one object bears to another. It is therefore nearly allied to simile or comparison ; and is indeed a comparison in an abridged form. When we say of a great minister, “he upholds the state, like a pillar, which supports the weight of an edifice,” we evidently make a comparison ; but, when

we say of him, he is "the pillar of the state," it becomes a metaphor.

Of all the figures of speech none approaches so near to painting, as metaphor. It gives light and strength to description; makes intellectual ideas in some degree visible, by giving them colour, substance, and sensible qualities. To produce this effect, however, a delicate hand is requisite; for by a little inaccuracy we may introduce confusion instead of promoting perspicuity. Several rules therefore must be given for the proper management of metaphors.

The first rule respecting metaphors is, they must be suited to the nature of the subject; neither too numerous, nor too gay, nor too elevated for it; we must neither attempt to force the subject by the use of them into a degree of elevation, not congruous to it; nor on the contrary suffer it to fall below its proper dignity. Some metaphors are beautiful in poetry, which would be unnatural in prose; some are graceful in orations, which would be highly improper in historical or philosophical composition. Figures are the dress of sentiment. They should consequently be adapted to the ideas which they are intended to adorn.

The second rule respects the choice of objects, whence metaphors are to be drawn. The field for figurative language is very wide. All nature opens her stores and allows us to collect them without restraint. But we must beware of using such allusions as raise in the mind dis-

agreeable, mean, low, or dirty ideas. (To render a metaphor perfect, it must not only be apt, but pleasing; it must entertain as well as enlighten.) Dryden therefore can hardly escape the imputation of a very unpardonable breach of delicacy, when he observes to the Earl of Dorset, that "some bad poems carry their "owners' marks about them; some brand or "other on this *buttock*, or that *ear*; that it is "notorious who are the owners of the cattle." The most pleasing metaphors are derived from the frequent occurrences of art and nature, or from the civil transactions and customs of mankind. Thus, how expressive, yet at the same time how familiar, is the image which Otway has put into the mouth of Metellus in his play of Caius Marius, where he calls Sulpicius.

That mad wild bull, whom Marius lets loose  
On each occasion, when he'd make Rome feel him,  
To toss our laws and liberties in the air.

In the third place a metaphor should be founded on a resemblance, which is clear and striking, not far fetched, nor difficult to be discovered. Harsh or forced metaphors are always displeasing, because they perplex the reader, and instead of illustrating the thought, render it intricate and confused. Thus, for instance, Cowley, speaking of his mistress, expresses himself in the following forced and obscure verses:

Wo to her stubborn heart; if once mine come  
Into the self-same room,  
'Twill tear and blow up all within,  
Like a grenado, shot into a magazine.

Then shall love keep the ashes and torn parts  
 Of both our broken hearts;  
 Shall out of both one new one make;  
 From her's the alloy, from mine the metal take;  
 For of her heart he from the flames will find  
 But little left behind;  
 Mine only will remain entire;  
 No dross was there, to perish in the fire.

Metaphors, borrowed from any of the sciences, especially from particular professions, are almost always faulty by their obscurity.

In the fourth place, we must never jumble metaphorical and plain language together; never construct a period so, that part of it must be understood metaphorically, part literally; which always produces confusion. The works of Ossian afford an instance of the fault we are now censuring. "Trothal went forth with the stream of his people, but they met a rock; for Fingal stood unmoved; broken, they rolled back from his side. Nor did they roll in safety; the spear of the king pursued their flight." The metaphor at the beginning is beautiful; the "stream," the "unmoved rock," the "waves rolling back broken," are expressions in the proper and consistent language of figure; but in the end, when we are told "they did not roll in safety, because the spear of the king pursued their flight," the literal meaning is injudiciously mixed with the metaphor; they are at the same moment presented to us as waves that *roll*, and as men that may be *pursued* and *wounded by a spear*.

In the fifth place, take care not to make two different metaphors meet on the same

object. This, which is called mixed metaphor, is one of the grossest abuses of this figure. Shakespeare's expression, for example, "to take arms against a sea of troubles," makes a most unnatural medley, and entirely confounds the imagination. More correct writers than Shakespeare, are sometimes guilty of this error. Mr. Addison says, "There is not a single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to extinguish the seeds of pride." Here a *view* is made to *extinguish*, and to *extinguish seeds*.

In examining the propriety of metaphors it is a good rule to form a picture of them, and to consider how the parts agree, and what kind of figure the whole presents, when delineated with a pencil.

Metaphors, in the sixth place, should not be crowded together on the same object. Though each of them be distinct, yet, if they be heaped on one another, they produce confusion. The following passage from Horace will exemplify this observation :

Motum ex Metello consule civicum  
 Bellique causas, et vitia, et modos,  
 Ludumque fortunæ, gravesque  
 Principum amicitias, et arma  
 Nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus,  
 Periculosæ plenum opus alexæ,  
 Tractas, et incedis per ignes  
 Suppositos cineri doloso.

This passage, though very poetical, is rendered harsh and obscure by three distinct metaphors crowded together. First, "*arma uncta*

“*cruoribus nondum expiatis:*” next, “*opus plenum periculosaæ aleæ;*” and then, “*incedis per ignes suppositos cineri doloso.*”

The last rule concerning metaphors is, they should not be too far pursued. For, when the resemblance, which is the foundation of the figure, is long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumstances, an allegory is produced instead of a metaphor; the reader is wearied, and the discourse becomes obscure. This is termed straining a metaphor. Dr. Young, whose imagination was more distinguished by strength, than delicacy, is often guilty of running down his metaphors. Speaking of old age, he says, it should

Walk thoughtful on the silent, solemn shore  
Of that vast ocean, it must sail so soon;  
And put good works on board; and wait the wind  
That shortly blows us into worlds unknown.

The two first lines are uncommonly beautiful; but, when he continues the metaphor by “putting good works on board, and waiting the wind,” it is strained, and sinks in dignity.

Having treated of metaphor, we shall conclude this chapter with a few words concerning allegory.

An allegory is a continued metaphor; as it is the representation of one thing by another that resembles it. Thus Prior makes Emma describe her constancy to Henry in the following allegorical manner:



Did I but purpose to embark with thee  
 On the smooth surface of a summer's sea,  
 While gentle zephyrs play with prosperous gales,  
 And fortune's favour fills the swelling sails;  
 But would forsake the ship, and make the shore,  
 When the winds whistle, and the tempests roar?

The same rules that were given for metaphors, may be applied to allegories on account of the affinity between them. The only material difference beside the one being short and the other prolonged is, that a metaphor always explains itself by the words that are connected with it in their proper and literal meaning; as, when we say, "Achilles was a lion;" "an able minister is the pillar of the state." Lion and pillar are here sufficiently interpreted by the mention of Achilles and the minister, which are joined to them; but an allegory may be allowed to stand less connected with the literal meaning; the interpretation not being so plainly pointed out, but left to our own reflection.

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### HYPERBOLE.

**H**YPERBOLE consists in magnifying an object beyond its natural bounds. This figure occurs very frequently in all languages, even in common conversation. As swift as the wind; as white as snow; and our usual forms of compliment are in general extravagant hyperboles. From habit, however, these exagger-

ated expressions are seldom considered, as hyperbolical.

Hyperboles are of two kinds; such as are employed in description, or such as are suggested by passion. Those are far best which are the effect of passion; since it not only gives rise to the most daring figures, but often renders them just and natural. Hence the following passage in Milton, though extremely hyperbolical, contains nothing but what is natural and proper. It exhibits the mind of Satan agitated by rage and despair.

Me miserable! Which way shall I fly  
 Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?  
 Which way I fly is hell: myself am hell:  
 And in the lowest depth, a lower deep  
 Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,  
 To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

In simple description, hyperboles must be employed with more caution. When an earthquake or storm is described, or when our imagination is carried into the midst of a battle, we can bear strong hyperboles without displeasure. But, when only a woman in grief is presented to our view, it is impossible not to be disgusted with such exaggeration, as the following, in one of our dramattick poets:

————— I found her on the floor  
 In all the storm of grief, yet beautiful,  
 Pouring forth tears at such a lavish rate,  
 That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd  
 The wrath of heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.

This is mere bombast. The person herself who laboured under the distracting agitations

of grief, might be permitted to express herself in strong hyperbole; but the spectator, who describes her, cannot be allowed equal liberty. The just boundary of this figure cannot be ascertained by any precise rule. Good sense and an accurate taste must ascertain the limit, beyond which, if it pass, it becomes extravagant.



### PERSONIFICATION AND APOSTROPHE.

WE proceed now to those figures which lie altogether in the thought, the words being taken in their common and literal sense. We shall begin with personification, by which life and action are attributed to inanimate objects. All poetry, even in its most humble form, abounds in this figure. From prose it is far from being excluded; nay, even in common conversation, frequent approaches are made to it. When we say, the earth *thirsts* for rain, or the fields *smile* with plenty; when ambition is said to be *restless*, or a disease to be *deceitful*; such expressions show the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things inanimate, or abstract conceptions.

There are three different degrees of this figure; which it is requisite to distinguish, in order to determine the propriety of its use. The first is, when some of the properties of living,

creatures are ascribed to inanimate objects ; the second, when those inanimate objects are described as acting like such as have life ; and the third, when they are exhibited either as speaking to us, or as listening to what we say to them ;

(The first and lowest degree of this figure, which consists in ascribing to inanimate objects some of the qualities of living creatures, raises the style so little, that the humblest discourse admits it without any force.) Thus “ a raging storm, a deceitful disease, a cruel disaster,” are familiar expressions. This indeed is so obscure a degree of personification, that it might perhaps be properly classed with simple metaphors which almost escape our observation. The second degree of this figure is, when we represent inanimate objects acting like those that have life. Here we rise a step higher, and the personification becomes sensible. According to the nature of the action which we ascribe to those inanimate objects, and to the particularity with which we describe it, is the strength of the figure. When pursued to a considerable length, it belongs only to studied harangues ; when slightly touched, it may be admitted into less elevated compositions. Cicero, for example, speaking of the cases where killing a man is lawful in self-defence, uses the following expressions : “ *Aliquando nobis gladius ad occidentum hominem ab ipsius porrigitur legibus.*” Here the laws are beautifully personified as reaching forth their hand to give us a sword for putting a man to death. In poetry, personifications of

this kind are extremely frequent, and are indeed the life and soul of it. In the descriptions of a poet, who has a lively fancy, every thing is animated. Homer, the father of poetry, is remarkable for the use of this figure. War, peace, darts, rivers, every thing in short, is alive in his writings. The same is true of Milton and Shakespeare. No personification is more striking, or introduced on a more proper occasion, than the following of Milton upon Eve's eating the forbidden fruit :

So saying, her rash hand in evil hour  
 Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck'd, she ate !  
 Earth felt the wound ; and nature from her seat,  
 Sighing thro' all her works, gave signs of wo,  
 That all was lost.

The third and highest degree of this figure is yet to be mentioned ; when inanimate objects are represented, not only as feeling and acting, but as speaking to us or listening, while we address them. This is the boldest of all rhetorical figures ; it is the style of strong passion only ; and therefore should never be attempted, except when the mind is considerably heated and agitated. Milton affords a very beautiful example of this figure in that moving and tender address, which Eve makes to Paradise immediately before she is compelled to leave it.

O unexpected stroke, worse than of death !  
 Must I thus leave thee, Paradise ? Thus leave  
 Thee, native soil ; these happy walks and shades,  
 Fit haunt of gods ; where I had hope to spend  
 Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day,  
 Which must be mortal to us both ? O flowers !

That never will in other climate grow,  
 My early visitation, and my last  
 At even, which I bred up with tender hand  
 From your first opening buds, and gave you names;  
 Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank  
 Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount ?

This is the real language of nature and of female passion.

In the management of this sort of personification two rules are to be observed. First, never attempt it, unless prompted by strong passion, and never continue it when the passion begins to subside. The second rule is, never personify an object which has not some dignity in itself, and which is incapable of making a proper figure in the elevation to which we raise it. To address the body of a deceased friend is natural; but to address the clothes which he wore introduces low and degrading ideas. So likewise, addressing the several parts of the body, as if they were animated, is not agreeable to the dignity of passion. For this reason the following passage in Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* is liable to censure.

Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd,  
 Nor pass these lips, in holy silence seal'd.  
 Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,  
 Where, mix'd with God's, his lov'd idea lies;  
 O, write it not, my hand!—his name appears  
 Already written—blot it out, my tears.

Here the name of *Abelard* is first personified; which, as the name of a person often stands for the person himself, is exposed to no objection.

Next, Eloisa personifies her own heart ; and, as the heart is a dignified part of the human frame, and is often put for the mind, this also may pass without censure. But, when she addresses her hand, and tells it not to write his name, this is forced and unnatural. Yet the figure becomes still worse, when she exhorts her tears to blot out what her hand had written. The two last lines are indeed altogether unfuitable to the tenderness which breathes through the rest of that inimitable poem.

(APOSTROPHE is an address to a real person ; but one who is either absent or dead, as if he were present, and listening to us.) (This figure is in boldness a degree lower than personification ; since it requires less effort of imagination to suppose persons present who are dead or absent, than to animate insensible beings, and direct our discourse to them.) The poems of Ossian abound in beautiful instances of this figure. “ Weep on the rocks of roaring winds,  
 “ O Maid of Inistore. Bend thy fair head over  
 “ the waves, thou fairer than the ghost of the  
 “ hills, when it moves in a sun-beam at noon  
 “ over the silence of Morven. He is fallen !  
 “ Thy youth is low ; pale beneath the sword  
 “ of Cuchullin.”

COMPARISON, ANTITHESIS, INTERROGATION, EXCLAMATION, AND OTHER FIGURES OF SPEECH.

**A** COMPARISON or simile is, when the resemblance between two objects is expressed in form, and usually pursued more fully than the nature of a metaphor admits. As when we say, "The actions of princes are like those great rivers, the course of which every one beholds, but their springs have been seen by few." This short instance will show that a happy comparison is a sort of sparkling ornament, which adds lustre and beauty to discourse.

All comparisons may be reduced under two heads *explaining* and *embellishing* comparisons. For, when a writer compares an object with any other thing, it always is, or ought to be, with a view to make us understand that object more clearly, or to render it more pleasing. Even abstract reasoning admits explaining comparisons. For instance, the distinction between the powers of sense and imagination is in Mr. Harris's *Hermes* illustrated by a simile: "As wax," says he, "would not be adequate to the purpose of signature, if it had not the power to retain as well as to receive the impression: the same holds of the soul with respect to sense and imagination. Sense is its receptive power, and imagination its retentive. Had it sense without imagination, it



“ would not be as wax, but as water ; where, though all impressions be instantly made, yet as soon as they are made, they are lost.” In comparisons of this kind, perspicuity and usefulness are chiefly to be studied.

But embellishing comparisons are those which most frequently occur. Resemblance, it has been observed, is the foundation of this figure. Yet resemblance must not be taken in too strict a sense for actual similitude. Two objects may raise a train of concordant ideas in the mind, though they resemble each other, strictly speaking, in nothing. For example, to describe the nature of soft and melancholy musick, Ossian says, “ The musick of Carryl was, like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul.” This is happy and delicate ; yet no kind of musick bears any resemblance to the memory of past joys.

We shall now consider when comparisons may be introduced with propriety. Since they are the language of imagination, rather than of passion, an author can hardly commit a greater fault, than in the midst of passion to introduce a simile. Our writers of tragedies often err in this respect. Thus Addison in his *Cato* makes Portius, just after Lucia had bid him farewell forever, express himself in a studied comparison.

Thus o'er the dying lamp the unsteady flame  
Hangs quivering on a point, leaps off by fits,  
And falls again, as loth to quit its hold.  
Thou must not go ; my soul still hovers o'er thee,  
And can't get loose,

As comparison is not the style of strong passion, so when designed for embellishment, it is not the language of a mind totally unmoved. Being a figure of dignity, it always requires some elevation in the subject, to make it proper. It supposes the imagination to be enlivened, though the heart is not agitated by passion. The language of simile lies in the middle region between the highly pathetick and the very humble style. It is however a sparkling ornament; and must consequently dazzle and fatigue, if it recur too often. Similes, even in poetry, should be employed with moderation; but in prose much more so; otherwise the style will become disgustingly luscious, and the ornament lose its beauty and effect.

We shall now consider the nature of those objects from which comparisons should be drawn.

In the first place, they must not be drawn from things which have too near and obvious a resemblance of the object with which they are compared. The pleasure we receive from the act of comparing, arises from the discovery of likenesses among things of different species, where we should not at first sight expect a resemblance.

But, in the second place, as comparisons ought not to be founded on likenesses too obvious, much less ought they to be founded on those which are too faint and distant. These, instead of assisting, strain the fancy to comprehend them, and throw no light upon the subject.

In the third place, the object from which a comparison is drawn, ought never to be an unknown object, nor one of which few people can have a clear idea. Therefore similes, founded on philosophical discoveries, or on any thing, with which persons of a particular trade only, or a particular profession, are acquainted, produce not their proper effect. They should be drawn from those illustrious and noted objects, which most readers have either seen, or can strongly conceive.

In the fourth place, in compositions of a serious or elevated kind, similes should never be drawn from low or mean objects. These degrade and vilify; whereas similes are generally intended to embellish and dignify. Therefore, except in burlesque writings, or where an object is meant to be degraded, mean ideas should never be presented.

ANTITHESIS is founded on the contrast or opposition of two objects. By contrast, objects opposed to each other, appear in a stronger light. Beauty, for instance never appears so charming as when contrasted with ugliness. Antithesis therefore may, on many occasions, be used advantageously to strengthen the impression which we propose that any object should make. Thus Cicero, in his oration for Milo, representing the improbability of Milo's designing to take away the life of Clodius, when every thing was unfavourable to such design, after he had omitted many opportunities of effecting such a purpose, heightens our con-

viction of this improbability by a skilful use of this figure. “ *Quem igitur cum omnium gratia interficere noluit ; hunc voluit cum aliquorum querela ? Quem jure, quem loco, quem tempore, quem impune, non est ausus ; hunc injuria, iniquo loco, alieno tempore, periculo capitis, non dubitavit occidere ?*” Here the antithesis is rendered complete by the words and members of the sentence, expressing the contrasted objects, being similarly constructed, and made to correspond with each other.

We must however acknowledge that frequent use of antithesis, especially where the opposition in the words is nice and quaint, is apt to make style unpleasing. A maxim or moral saying very properly receives this form ; because it is supposed to be the effect of meditation, and is designed to be engraven on the memory, which recalls it more easily by the aid of contrasted expressions. But where several such sentences succeed each other ; where this is an author’s favourite and prevailing mode of expression ; his style is exposed to censure.

INTERROGATIONS and Exclamations are passionate figures. The literal use of interrogation is to ask a question ; but, when men are prompted by passion, whatever they would affirm, or deny with great earnestness, they naturally put in the form of a question ; expressing thereby the firmest confidence of the truth of their own opinion ; and appealing to their hearers for the impossibility of the contrary. Thus in scripture ; “ **God is not a man,**

“ that he should lie ; nor the Son of Man,  
 “ that he should repent. Hath he said it ? And  
 “ shall he not do it ? Hath he spoken it ? And  
 “ shall he not make it good ? ”

Interrogations may be employed in the prosecution of close and earnest reasoning ; but exclamations belong only to stronger emotions of the mind ; to surprise, anger, joy, grief, and the like. These, being natural signs of a moved and agitated mind, always, when properly employed, make us sympathize with those who use them, and enter into their feelings. Nothing, however, has a worse effect, than frequent and unseasonable use of exclamations. Young, inexperienced writers suppose, that by pouring them forth plenteously they render their compositions warm and animated. But the contrary follows ; they render them frigid to excess. When an author is always calling upon us to enter into transports, which he has said nothing to inspire, he excites our disgust and indignation.

Another figure of speech, fit only for animated composition, is called VISION ; when, instead of relating something that is past, we use the present tense, and describe it as if passing before our eyes. Thus Cicero in his fourth oration against Catiline : “ *Videor enim mihi hanc*  
 “ *urbem videre, lucem orbis terrarum atque arcem*  
 “ *omnium gentium, subito uno incendia concidentum ;*  
 “ *cerno animo sepulta in patria miseros atque infep-*  
 “ *ultos acervos civium ; versatur mihi ante oculos*  
 “ *aspectus Cethegi, et furor, in vestra cæde bacchan-*

“*tis.*” This figure has great force when it is well executed, and when it flows from genuine enthusiasm. Otherwise, it shares the same fate with all feeble attempts toward passionate figures; that of throwing ridicule upon the author, and leaving the reader more cool and uninterested than he was before.

The last figure which we shall mention, and which is of frequent use among all publick speakers, is CLIMAX. It consists in an artful exaggeration of all the circumstances of some object or action which we wish to place in a strong light. It operates by a gradual rise of one circumstance above another, till our idea is raised to the highest pitch. We shall give an instance of this figure from a printed pleading of a celebrated lawyer in a charge to the jury in the case of a woman, who was accused of murdering her own child. “Gentlemen, if  
 “one man had any how slain another; if an  
 “adversary had killed his opposer; or a woman  
 “occasioned the death of her enemy; even  
 “these criminals would have been capitally  
 “punished by the Cornelian law. But, if this  
 “guiltless infant, who could make no enemy,  
 “had been murdered by its own nurse, what  
 “punishments would not the mother have de-  
 “manded? With what cries and exclamations  
 “would she have stunned your ears? What  
 “shall we say then, when a woman, guilty of  
 “homicide; a mother, of the murder of her  
 “innocent child, hath comprised all those mis-  
 “deeds in one single crime; a crime, in its own

“ nature detestable ; in a woman prodigious ;  
 “ in a mother incredible ; and perpetrated a-  
 “ gainst one whose age called for compassion ;  
 “ whose near relation claimed affection ; and  
 “ whose innocence deserved the highest fav-  
 “ our ?” Such regular climaxes, however,  
 though they have great beauty, yet at the same  
 time have the appearance of art and study ;  
 and, therefore, though they may be admitted  
 into formal harangues, yet they are not the  
 language of passion which seldom proceeds by  
 steps so regular.



GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE. DIF-  
 FUSE, CONCISE—FEEBLE, NERVOUS—DRY,  
 PLAIN, NEAT, ELEGANT, FLOWERY.

**T**HAT different subjects ought to be  
 treated in different kinds of style, is a position  
 so obvious, that it requires no illustration.  
 Every one knows that treatises of philosophy  
 should not be composed in the same style with  
 orations. It is equally apparent, that different  
 parts of the same composition require a varia-  
 tion in the style. Yet amid this variety, we  
 still expect to find in the compositions of any  
 one man some degree of uniformity in manner ;  
 we expect to find some prevailing character of  
 style impressed on all his writings, which will

mark his particular genius and turn of mind. The orations in Livy differ considerably in style, as they ought to do, from the rest of his history. The same may be observed in those of Tacitus. Yet in the orations of both these historians, the distinguished manner of each may be clearly traced; the splendid fullness of the one, and the sententious brevity of the other. Wherever this is real genius, it prompts to one kind of style, rather than to another. Where this is wanting; where there is no marked nor peculiar character in the compositions of an author; we are apt to conclude, and not without cause, that he is a vulgar and trivial author, who writes from imitation, and not from the impulse of genius.

One of the first and most obvious distinctions in style arises from an author's expending his thoughts more or less. This distinction forms what are termed the diffuse or concise styles. A concise writer compresses his ideas into the fewest words; he employs none but the most expressive; he lops off all those which are not a material addition to the sense. Whatever ornament he admits, is adopted for the sake of force, rather than of grace. The same thought is never repeated. The utmost precision is studied in his sentences; and they are generally designed to suggest more to the reader's imagination than they express.

A diffuse writer unfolds his idea fully. He places it in a variety of lights, and gives the reader every possible assistance for understand-



ing it completely. He is not very anxious to express it at first in its full strength because he intends repeating the impression; and, what he wants in strength, he endeavours to supply by copiousness. His periods naturally flow into some length, and, having room for ornament of every kind, he gives it free admittance.

Each of these styles has its peculiar advantages; and each becomes faulty, when carried to the extreme. Of conciseness, carried as far as propriety will allow, perhaps in some cases farther, Tacitus the historian and Montesquieu in "l'Esprit de Loix" are remarkable examples. Of a beautiful and magnificent diffuseness, Cicero is undoubtedly the noblest instance which can be given. Addison also and Sir William Temple may be ranked in the same class. In determining when to adopt the concise, and when the diffuse manner, we must be guided by the nature of the composition.

Discourses that are to be spoken, require a more diffuse style than books which are to be read. In written compositions a proper degree of conciseness has great advantages. It is more lively; keeps up attention; makes a stronger impression on the mind; and gratifies the reader by supplying more exercise to his thoughts. Description, when we wish to have it vivid and animated, should be concise. Any redundant words or circumstances encumber the fancy and render the object we present to it, confused and indistinct. The strength and vivacity of description, whether in prose or

poetry, depend much more upon a happy choice of one or two important circumstances, than upon the multiplication of them. When we desire to strike the fancy, or to move the heart, we should be concise; when to inform the understanding, which is more deliberate in its motions, and wants the assistance of a guide, it is better to be full. Historical narration may be beautiful either in a concise or diffuse manner, according to the author's genius. Livy and Herodotus are diffuse; Thucydides and Sallust are concise; yet they are all agreeable.

The nervous and the feeble are generally considered as characters of style of the same import with the concise and the diffuse. Indeed they frequently coincide; yet this does not always hold; since there are instances of writers, who, in the midst of a full and ample style, have maintained a considerable degree of strength. Livy is an instance of the truth of this observation. The foundation of a nervous or weak style is laid in an author's manner of thinking. If he conceive an object strongly, he will express it with energy; but, if he have an indistinct view of his subject, it will clearly appear in his style. Unmeaning words and loose epithets will escape him; his expressions will be vague and general; his arrangements indistinct; and our conception of his meaning will be faint and confused. But a nervous writer, be his style concise or extended, gives us always a strong idea of his meaning. His mind being full of his subject,

his words are always expressive; every phrase and every figure renders the picture which he would set before us, more striking and complete.

It must, however, be observed, that too great study of strength is apt to betray writers into a harsh manner. Harshness proceeds from uncommon words, from forced inversions in the construction of a sentence, and from neglect of smoothness and ease. This is reckoned the fault of some of our earliest classics; such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Bacon, Hooker, Herrington, Cudworth, and other writers of considerable reputation in the days of Queen Elizabeth, James I. and Charles I. These writers had nerves and strength in a high degree; and are to this day distinguished by this quality in style. But the language in their hands was very different from what it is now, and was indeed entirely formed upon the idiom and construction of the Latin in the arrangement of sentences. The present form of our language has in some degree sacrificed the study of strength to that of ease and perspicuity. Our arrangement is less forcible, but more plain and natural; and this is now considered as the genius of our tongue.

Hitherto style has been considered under those characters which regard its expressiveness of an author's meaning. We shall now consider it with respect to the degree of ornament employed to embellish it. Here the style of different authors seems to rise in the following

gradation ; a dry, a plain, a neat, an elegant, a flowery manner.

A dry manner excludes every kind of ornament. Content with being understood, it aims not to please either the fancy or the ear. This is tolerable only in pure didactick writing ; and even there, to make us bear it, great solidity of matter and entire perspicuity of language are required.

A plain style rises one degree above a dry one. A writer of this character employs very little ornament of any kind, and rests almost entirely upon his sense. But, though he does not engage us by the arts of composition, he avoids disgusting us like a dry and a harsh writer. Beside perspicuity, he observes propriety, purity, and precision in his language, which form no inconsiderable degree of beauty. Liveliness and force are also compatible with a plain style ; and therefore such an author, if his sentiments be good, may be sufficiently agreeable. The difference between a dry and a plain writer is this ; the former is incapable of ornament ; the latter goes not in pursuit of it. Of those who have employed the plain style, Dean Swift is an eminent example.

A neat style is next in order ; and here we are advanced into the region of ornament ; but not of the most sparkling kind. A writer of this character shows by his attention to the choice of words, and to their graceful collocation, that he does not despise the beauty of language. His sentences are always free from

the incumbrance of superfluous words; of a moderate length; inclining rather to brevity, than a swelling structure; and closing with propriety. There is variety in his cadence; but no appearance of studied harmony. His figures, if he use any, are short and accurate, rather than bold and glowing. (Such a style may be attained by a writer, whose powers of fancy or genius are not great, by industry and attention.) This sort of style is not unsuitable to any subject whatever. A familiar epistle, or a law paper on the driest subject, may be written with neatness; and a sermon, or a philosophical treatise in a neat style, is read with satisfaction.

An elegant style implies a higher degree of ornament than a neat one; possessing all the virtues of ornament without any of its excesses or defects. Complete elegance implies great perspicuity and propriety; purity in the choice of words; and care and skill in their arrangement. It implies farther the beauties of imagination spread over style as far as the subject permits; and all the illustration which figurative language adds, when properly employed. An elegant writer in short, is one who delights the fancy and the ear, while he informs the understanding; who clothes his ideas in all the beauty of expression, but does not overload them with any of its misplaced finery.

A florid style implies excess of ornament. In a young composer it is not only pardonable, but often a promising symptom. But, although it may be allowed to youth in their first essays,

it must not receive the same indulgence from writers of more experience. In them judgment should chasten imagination, and reject every ornament which is unsuitable or redundant. That tinsel splendour of language which some writers perpetually affect, is truly contemptible. With such it is a luxuriance of words, not of fancy. They forget that unless founded on good sense and solid thought, the most florid style is but a childish imposition on the publick.



STYLE. SIMPLE, AFFECTED, VEHEMENT.  
DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING A  
PROPER STYLE.

**S**IMPLICITY, applied to writing, is a term very commonly used; but, like many other critical terms, often used without precision. The different meanings of the word simplicity are the chief cause of this inaccuracy. It is therefore necessary to show, in what sense simplicity is a proper attribute of style. There are four different acceptations, in which this term is taken.

The first is simplicity of composition, as opposed to too great a variety of parts. This is the simplicity of plan in tragedy, as distinguished from double plots and crowded incidents; the simplicity of the Iliad in opposition to the

digressions of Lucan ; the simplicity of Grecian architecture in opposition to the irregular variety of the Gothick. Simplicity in this sense is the same with unity.

The second sense is simplicity of thought in opposition to refinement. Simple thoughts are those which flow naturally ; which are suggested by the subject or occasion ; and which, when once suggested, are easily understood by all. Refinement in writing means a less obvious and natural train of thought, which, when carried too far, approaches to intricacy, and displeases us by the appearance of being far sought. Thus Parnell is a poet of much greater simplicity in his turn of thought than Cowley. In these two senses simplicity has no relation to style.

The third sense of simplicity regards style, and is opposed to too much ornament, or pomp of language. Thus we say Mr. Locke is a simple, Mr. Harvey a florid writer. A simple style, in this sense, coincides with a plain or neat style.

The fourth sense of simplicity also respects style ; but it regards not so much the degree of ornament employed, as the easy and natural manner, in which our language expresses our thoughts. In this sense simplicity is compatible with the highest ornament. Homer, for example, possesses this simplicity in the greatest perfection ; and yet no writer has more ornament and beauty. This simplicity is opposed not to ornament, but to affectation of ornament ; and is a superiour excellence in composition.

A simple writer has no marks of art in his expression; it appears the very language of nature. We see not the writer and his labour, but the man in his own natural character. He may be rich in expression; he may be full of figures and of fancy; but these flow from him without effort; and he seems to write in this manner, not because he had studied it, but because it is the mode of expression most natural to him. With this character of style a certain degree of negligence is not inconsistent; for too accurate an attention to words is foreign to it. Simplicity of style, like simplicity of manners, shows a man's sentiments and turn of mind without disguise. A more studied and artificial mode of writing, however beautiful, has always this disadvantage, that it exhibits an author in form, like a man at court, where splendour of dress and the ceremonial of behaviour conceal those peculiarities which distinguish one man from another. But reading an author of simplicity is like conversing with a person of rank at home and with ease, where we see his natural manners and his real character.

With regard to simplicity in general, we may observe, that the ancient original writers are always most eminent for it. This proceeds from a very obvious cause; they wrote from the dictates of genius, and were not formed upon the labours and writings of others.

Of affectation, which is opposed to simplicity of style, we have a remarkable example in Lord Shaftesbury. Though an author of considerable



merit, he expresses nothing with simplicity. He seems to have thought it vulgar and beneath the dignity of a man of quality to speak like other men. Hence he is ever in buskins; full of circumlocutions and artificial elegance. In every sentence we see marks of labour and art; nothing of that ease which expresses a sentiment coming natural and warm from the heart. He abounds with figures and ornament of every kind; is sometimes happy in them; but his fondness for them is too visible; and, having once seized some metaphor or allusion, that pleased him, he knows not how to part with it. He possessed delicacy and refinement of taste in a degree that may be called excessive and sickly; but he had little warmth of passion; and the coldness of his character suggested that artificial and stately manner which appears in his writings. No author is more dangerous to the tribe of imitators than Shaftesbury; who amid several very considerable blemishes, has many dazzling and imposing beauties.

It is very possible, however, for an author to write with simplicity, and yet without beauty; He may be free from affectation, and not have merit. Beautiful simplicity supposes an author to possess real genius; and to write with simplicity, purity, and brilliancy of imagination in this case, the simplicity of his manner is the crowning ornament; it heightens every beauty; it is the dress of nature, which all beauties are imperfect. But, in the absence of affectation were sufficient to

tute beauty of style, weak and dull writers might often lay claim to it. A distinction therefore must be made between that simplicity which accompanies true genius and is entirely compatible with every proper ornament of style; and that which is the effect of carelessness.

Another character of style, different from those already mentioned, is vehemence. This always implies strength; and is not in any respect incompatible with simplicity. It is distinguished by a peculiar ardour; it is the language of a man whose imagination and passions are glowing and impetuous; who, neglecting inferior graces, pours himself forth with the rapidity and fulness of a torrent. This belongs to the higher kinds of oratory; and is rather expected from a man who is speaking, than from one who is writing in his closet. Demosthenes is the most full and perfect example of this kind of style.

Having explained the different characters of style, we shall conclude our observations with a few directions for attaining a good style in general.

The first direction is, study clear ideas of the subject on which you are to write or speak. When we conceive clearly and feel strongly, we naturally express with clearness and strength. You should therefore think closely on the subject

Of till we have attained a full and distinct knowledge of the matter which we are to clothe in style; till we become warm and interested in

it; then, and then only, shall we find expression begin to flow.

Secondly, to the acquisition of a good style, frequency of composing is indispensably necessary. But it is not every kind of composing that will improve style. By a careless and hasty habit of writing, a bad style will be acquired; more trouble will afterward be necessary to unlearn faults, than to become acquainted with the rudiments of composition. In the beginning therefore we ought to write slowly and with much care. Facility and speed are the fruit of practice. (We must be cautious, however, not to retard the course of thought, nor cool the ardour of imagination, by pausing too long on every word.) On certain occasions a glow of composition must be kept up, if we hope to express ourselves happily, though at the expense of some inaccuracies. A more severe examination must be the work of correction. What we have written should be laid by some time, till the ardour of composition be past; till partiality for our expressions be weakened, and the expressions themselves be forgotten; and then, reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye as if it were the performance of another, we shall discover many imperfections which at first escaped us.

Thirdly, acquaintance with the style of the best authors is peculiarly requisite. Hence a just taste will be formed, and a copious fund of words supplied on every subject. No exercise perhaps will be found more useful for acquiring

a proper style, than translating some passage from an eminent author into our own words. Thus to take, for instance, a page of one of Addison's Spectators, and read it attentively two or three times, till we are in full possession of the thoughts it contains ; then to lay aside the book ; to endeavour to write out the passage from memory as well as we can ; and then to compare what we have written with the style of the author. Such an exercise will shew us our defects ; will teach us to correct them ; and, from the variety of expression which it will exhibit, will conduct us to that which is most beautiful.

Fourthly, caution must be used against servile imitation of any author whatever. Desire of imitating hampers genius, and generally produces stiffness of expression. They who follow an author closely, commonly copy his faults as well as his beauties. No one will ever become a good writer or speaker, who has not some confidence in his own genius. We ought carefully to avoid using any author's peculiar phrases, and of transcribing passages from him. Such a habit will be fatal to all genuine composition. It is much better to have something of our own, though of moderate beauty, than to shine in borrowed ornaments which will at last betray the poverty of our genius.

Fifthly, always adapt your style to the subject, and likewise to the capacity of your hearers, if you are to speak in publick. To attempt

a poetical style, when it should be our business only to reason, is in the highest degree awkward and absurd. To speak with elaborate pomp of words before those who cannot comprehend them, is equally ridiculous. When we are to write or speak, we should previously fix in our minds a clear idea of the end aimed at ; keep this steadily in view, and adapt our style to it.

Lastly, let not attention to style engross-us so much as to prevent a higher degree of attention to the thoughts. This rule is more necessary, since the present taste of the age is directed more to style than to thought. It is much more easy to dress up trifling and common thoughts with some beauty of expression, than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and useful sentiments. The latter requires genius ; the former may be attained by industry. Hence the crowd of writers who are rich in style, but poor in sentiment. Custom obliges us to be attentive to the ornaments of style, if we wish our labours to be read and admired. But he is a contemptible writer, who looks not beyond the dress of language ; who lays not the chief stress upon his matter, and employs not such ornaments of style to recommend it, as are manly, not foppish.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MR. ADDISON'S  
STYLE IN No. 411 OF THE SPECTATOR.

**H**AVING fully insisted on the subject of language, we shall now commence a critical analysis of the style of some good author. This will suggest observations, which we have not hitherto had occasion to make, and will show in a practical light the use of those which have been made.

Mr. Addison, though one of the most beautiful writers in our language, is not the most correct; a circumstance which makes his composition a proper subject of criticism. We proceed therefore to examine No. 411, the first of his celebrated essays on the pleasures of the imagination, in the sixth volume of the Spectator. It begins thus:

*Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses.*

This sentence is clear, precise and simple. The author in a few plain words lays down the proposition, which he is going to illustrate. A first sentence should seldom be long, and never intricate.

He might have said, *our sight is the most perfect and the most delightful*. But in omitting to repeat the particle *the*, he has been more judicious; for, as between *perfect* and *delightful* there is no contrast, such a repetition is unnecessary. He proceeds:

*It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments.*

This sentence is remarkably harmonious, and well constructed. It is entirely perspicuous. It is loaded with no unnecessary words. That quality of a good sentence, which we termed its unity, is here perfectly preserved. The members of it also grow, and rise above each other in sound, till it is conducted to one of the most harmonious closes which our language admits. It is moreover figurative without being too much so for the subject. There is no fault in it whatever, except this, the epithet *large*, which he applies to *variety*, is more commonly applied to extent than to number. It is plain, however, that he employed it to avoid the repetition of the word *great*, which occurs immediately afterward.

*The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours; but, at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects.* But is not every sense confined as much as the sense of feeling, to the number, bulk, and distance of its own objects? The turn of expression is also very inaccurate, requiring the two words, *with regard*, to be inserted after the word *operations*, in order to make the sense clear and intelligible. The epithet *particular* seems to be used instead of *peculiar*; but these words,

though often confounded, are of very different import. *Particular* is opposed to *general*; *peculiar* stands opposed to what is possessed in *common with others*.

*Our sight seems designed to supply all these defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of touch that spreads itself over an infinite multitude of bodies, comprehends the largest figures, and brings into our reach some of the most remote parts of the universe.*

This sentence is perspicuous, graceful, well arranged and highly musical. Its construction is so similar to that of the second sentence, that, had it immediately succeeded it, the ear would have been sensible of a faulty monotony. But the interposition of a period prevents this effect.

*It is this sense which furnishes the imagination with its ideas; so that, by the pleasures of the imagination or fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean such as arise from visible objects, either when we have them actually in our view, or when we call up their ideas into our minds by paintings, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion.*

The parenthesis in the middle of this sentence is not clear. It should have been, *terms which I shall use promiscuously*; since the verb *use* does not relate to the pleasures of the imagination, but to the terms, *fancy* and *imagination*, which were meant to be synonymous. To call a painting or a statue *an occasion* is not accurate; nor is it very proper to speak of *calling up ideas by occasions*. The common phrase *any such means*, would have been more natural.



*We cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy, that did not make its first entrance through the sight ; but we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision, that are most agreeable to the imagination ; for, by this faculty, a man in a dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with scenes and landscapes more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole compass of nature.*

In one member of this sentence there is an inaccuracy in syntax. It is proper to say, *altering and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision.* But we cannot with propriety say, *retaining them into all the varieties ;* yet the arrangement requires this construction. This error might have been avoided by arranging the passage in the following manner : “ We have the power of retaining those images which we have once received ; and of altering and compounding them into all the varieties of picture and vision ” The latter part of the sentence is clear and elegant.

*There are few words in the English language, which are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense than those of the fancy and the imagination.*

Except when some assertion of consequence is advanced, these little words, *it is* and *there are*, ought to be avoided, as redundant and enfeebling. The two first words of this sentence therefore should have been omitted. The article

prefixed to *fancy and imagination* ought also to have been omitted, since he does not mean the powers of *the fancy and the imagination*, but the words only. The sentence should have run thus: "Few words in the English language are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense than fancy and imagination."

*I therefore thought it necessary to fix and determine the notion of these two words, as I intend to make use of them in the thread of my following speculations, that the reader may conceive rightly what is the subject which I proceed upon.*

The words *fix* and *determine*, though they may appear so, are not synonymous. We *fix* what is loose; we *determine* what is *uncircumscribed*. They may be viewed, therefore, as applied here with peculiar delicacy.

The *notion of these words* is rather harsh, and is not so commonly used, as the *meaning of these words*. *As I intend to make use of them in the thread of my speculations* is evidently faulty. A sort of metaphor, improperly mixed with words in their literal sense. *The subject which I proceed upon* is an ungraceful close of a sentence; it should have been, *the subject upon which I proceed*.

*I must therefore desire him to remember, that by the pleasures of imagination, I mean only such pleasures as arise originally from sight, and that I divide these pleasures into two kinds.*

This sentence begins in a manner too similar to the preceding. *I mean only such pleasures*—the adverb *only* is not in its proper place. It is not intended here to qualify the verb *mean*, but

*such pleasures* ; and ought therefore to be placed immediately after the latter.

*My design being, first of all, to discourse of those primary pleasures of the imagination, which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes ; and, in the next place, to speak of those secondary pleasures of the imagination, which flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things, that are either absent or fictitious.*

Neatness and brevity are peculiarly requisite in the division of a subject. This sentence is somewhat clogged by a tedious phraseology. *My design being, first of all to discourse—in the next place to speak of—such objects as are before our eyes—things that are either absent or fictitious.* Several words might have been omitted, and the style made more neat and compact.

*The pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense, nor so refined as those of the understanding.*

This sentence is clear and elegant.

*The last are indeed more preferable, because they are founded on some new knowledge or improvement of the mind of man ; yet it must be confessed, that those of the imagination are as great and as transporting as the other.*

The phrase, *more preferable*, is so palpable an inaccuracy, that we wonder how it could escape the observation of Mr. Addison. The proposition, contained in the last member of this sentence, is neither clearly nor elegantly expressed.

*It must be confessed, that those of the imagination are as great and as transporting as the other.* In the beginning of this sentence he had called the pleasures of the understanding *the last*; and he concludes with observing, that those of the imagination are as great and transporting as *the other*. Beside that *the other* makes not a proper contrast with *the last*, it is less doubtful whether by *the other* are meant the pleasures of the understanding, or the pleasures of sense; though without doubt it was intended to refer to the pleasures of the understanding only.

*A beautiful prospect delights the soul as much as a demonstration; and a description in Homer has charmed more readers than a chapter in Aristotle.*

This is a good illustration of what he had been asserting, and is expressed with that elegance, by which Mr. Addison is distinguished.

*Beside, the pleasures of the imagination have this advantage over those of the understanding, that they are more obvious, and more easy to be acquired.*

This sentence is unexceptionable.

*It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters.*

Though this is lively and picturesque, yet we must remark a small inaccuracy. A scene cannot be said to enter; an actor enters, but a scene appears or presents itself.

*The colours paint themselves on the fancy, with very little attention of thought or application of mind in the beholder.*

This is beautiful and elegant, and well suited to those pleasures of the imagination of which the author is treating.

*We are struck, we know not how, with the symmetry of any thing we see; and immediately assent to the beauty of an object, without inquiring into the particular causes and occasions of it.*

We assent to the truth of a proposition; but cannot with propriety be said to assent to the beauty of an object. In the conclusion, *particular* and *occasions* are superfluous words; and the pronoun *it* is in some measure ambiguous.

*A man of a polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures that the vulgar are not capable of receiving.*

The term *polite* is oftner applied to manners, than to the imagination. The use of *that* instead of *which* is too common with Mr. Addison. Except in cases where it is necessary to avoid repetition *which* is preferable to *that*, and is undoubtedly so in the present instance.

*He can converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue. He meets with a secret refreshment in a description; and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in every thing he sees; and makes the most rude uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasure: so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind.*

This sentence is easy, flowing, and harmonious. We must, however, observe a slight inaccuracy. *It gives him a kind of property*—to this *it* there is no antecedent in the whole para-

graph. To discover its connexion, we must look back to the third sentence preceding, which begins with *a man of a polite imagination*. This phrase, *polite imagination*, is the only antecedent to which *it* can refer; and even this is not a proper antecedent, since it stands in the genitive case as the qualification only of *a man*.

*There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; every diversion they take, is at the expense of some one virtue or another, and their very first step out of business is into vice or folly.*

This sentence is truly elegant, musical and correct.

*A man should endeavour, therefore, to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with safety, and find in them such a satisfaction as a wise man would not blush to take.*

This also is a good sentence and exposed to no objection.

*Of this nature are those of the imagination, which do not require such a bent of thought as is necessary to our more serious employments; nor, at the same time, suffer the mind to sink into that indolence and remissness, which are apt to accompany our more sensual delights; but like a gentle exercise to the faculties, awaken them from sloth and idleness, without putting them upon any labour or difficulty.*

The beginning of this sentence is incorrect. *Of this nature, says he, are those of the imagination.* It might be asked, of what nature? For

the preceding sentence had not described the nature of any class of pleasures. He had said, that it was every man's duty to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as extensive, as possible, that within this sphere he might find a safe retreat and laudable satisfaction. The transition therefore is loosely made. It would have been better, if he had said, "This advantage we gain," or "this satisfaction we enjoy," by means of the pleasures of the imagination. The rest of the sentence is correct.

*We might here add, that the pleasures of the fancy are more conducive to health than those of the understanding, which are worked out by dint of thinking, and attended with too violent a labour of the brain.*

*Worked out by dint of thinking* is a phrase, which borders too nearly on the style of common conversation, to be admitted into polished composition.

*Delightful scenes, whether in nature, painting, or poetry, have a kindly influence on the body, as well as the mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the imagination, but are able to disperse grief and melancholy, and to set the animal spirits in pleasing and agreeable motions. For this reason, Sir Francis Bacon, in his essay upon health, has not thought it improper to prescribe to his reader a poem or a prospect, where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtle disquisitions, and advises him to pursue studies, that fill the mind with splendid and illustrious objects, as histories, fables, and contemplations of nature.*

In the latter of these two periods a member is out of its place. *Where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtle disquisitions ought to precede has not thought it improper to prescribe, &c.*

*I have in this paper, by way of introduction, settled the notion of those pleasures of the imagination, which are the subject of my present undertaking, and endeavoured by several considerations to recommend to my readers the pursuit of those pleasures; I shall in my next paper examine the several sources from whence these pleasures are derived.*

These two concluding sentences furnish examples of proper collocation of circumstances. We formerly showed, that it is difficult so to dispose them as not to embarrass the principal subject. Had the following incidental circumstances, *by way of introduction—by several considerations—in this paper—in the next paper*, been placed in any other situation, the sentence would have been neither so neat, nor so clear, as it is on the present construction.

ELOQUENCE.      ORIGIN OF ELOQUENCE.

GRECIAN ELOQUENCE.      DEMOSTHENES.

**E**LOQUENCE is the art of persuasion. Its most essential requisites are solid argument, clear method, and an appearance of sincerity in the speaker, with such graces of style and ut-



terance, as command attention. Good sense must be its foundation. Without this, no man can be truly eloquent ; since fools can persuade none but fools. Before we can persuade a man of sense, we must convince him. Convincing and persuading, though sometimes confounded, are of very different import. Conviction affects the understanding only ; persuasion the will and the practice. It is the business of a philosopher to convince us of truth ; it is that of an orator to persuade us to act conformably to it by engaging our affections in its favour. Conviction is, however, one avenue to the heart ; and it is that which an orator must first attempt to gain ; for no persuasion can be stable, which is not founded on conviction. But the orator must not be satisfied with convincing ; he must address himself to the passions ; he must paint to the fancy, and touch the heart. Hence, beside solid argument and clear method, all the conciliating and interesting arts of composition and pronounciation enter into the idea of eloquence.

Eloquence may be considered, as consisting of three kinds or degrees. The first and lowest is that which aims only to please the hearers. Such in general is the eloquence of panegyrics, inaugural orations, addresses to great men, and other harangues of this kind. This ornamental sort of composition may innocently amuse and entertain the mind : and may be mixed at the same time with very useful sentiments. But it must be acknowl-

edged, that, where the speaker aims only to shine and to please, there is great danger of art being strained into ostentation, and of the composition becoming tiresome and insipid.

The second degree of eloquence is, when the speaker aims, not merely to please, but also to inform, to instruct, to convince; when his art is employed in removing prejudices against himself and his cause; in selecting the most proper arguments, stating them with the greatest force, arranging them in the best order, expressing and delivering them with propriety and beauty: thereby disposing us to pass that judgment, or favour that side of the cause, to which he seeks to bring us. Within this degree chiefly is employed the eloquence of the bar.

The third and highest degree of eloquence is that, by which we are not only convinced, but interested, agitated, and carried along with the speaker; our passions rise with his; we share all his emotions; we love, we hate, we resent, as he inspires us; and are prompted to resolve, or to act with vigour and warmth. Debate in popular assemblies opens the most extensive field to this species of eloquence; and the pulpit also admits it.

This high species of eloquence is always the offspring of passion. By passion we mean that state of mind, in which it is agitated and fired by some object in view. Hence the universally acknowledged power of enthusiasm in publick speakers for affecting their audience. Hence

all studied exclamation and laboured ornaments of style, which show the mind to be cool and unmoved, are inconsistent with persuasive eloquence.) Hence every kind of affectation in gesture and pronunciation detracts so much from the weight of a speaker. Hence the necessity of being, and of being believed to be, disinterested and in earnest in order to persuade.

In tracing the origin of eloquence it is not necessary to go far back into the early ages of the world, or to search for it among the monuments of Eastern or Egyptian antiquity. In those ages, it is true, there was a certain kind of eloquence; but it was more nearly allied to poetry, than to what we properly call oratory.

While the intercourse of men was infrequent, and force was the principal mean employed in deciding controversies, the arts of oratory and persuasion, of reasoning and debate, could be little known. The first empires were of the despotick kind. A single person, or at most, a few, held the reins of government. The multitude were accustomed to blind obedience; they were driven, not persuaded. Consequently none of those refinements of society, which make publick speaking an object of importance, were introduced.

Before the rise of the Grecian Republicks, we perceive no remarkable appearances of eloquence, as the art of persuasion; and these gave it such a field, as it never had before, and perhaps has never had again since that time. Greece was divided into many little

states. These were governed at first by kings ; who being for their tyranny successively expelled from their dominions, there sprung up a multitude of democratical governments, founded nearly upon the same plan, animated by the same high spirit of freedom, mutually jealous, and rivals of each other. Among these Athens was most noted for arts of every kind, but especially for eloquence. We shall pass over the orators, who flourished in the early period of this republick, and take a view of the great Demosthenes, in whom eloquence shone with unrivalled splendour. Not formed by nature either to please or to persuade, he struggled with, and surmounted, the most formidable impediments. He shut himself up in a cave, that he might study with less distraction. He declaimed by the sea shore, that he might be used to the noise of a tumultuous assembly ; and with pebbles in his mouth, that he might correct a defect in his speech. He practised at home with a naked sword hanging over his shoulder, that he might check an ungraceful motion, to which he was subject. Hence the example of this great man affords the highest encouragement to every student of eloquence ; since it shows how far art and application availed for acquiring an excellence, which nature appeared willing to deny.

No orator had ever a finer field than Demosthenes in his Olynthiacks and Philippicks, which are his capital orations ; and undoubtedly to the greatness of the subject, and to that

integrity and publick spirit, which breathe in them, they owe much of their merit. The object is to rouse the indignation of his countrymen against Philip of Macedon; the publick enemy of the liberties of Greece; and to guard them against the insidious measures, by which that crafty prince endeavoured to lay them asleep to danger. To attain this end, we see him using every proper mean to animate a people, distinguished by justice, humanity, and valour; but in many instances become corrupt and degenerate. He boldly accuses them of venality, indolence, and indifference to the publick cause; while at the same time he reminds them of the glory of their ancestors, and of their present resources. His cotemporary orators, who were bribed by Philip, and persuaded the people to peace, he openly reproaches, as traitors to their country. He not only prompts to vigorous measures, but lays down the plan of execution. His orations are strongly animated, and full of the impetuosity and fire of publick spirit. His composition is not distinguished by ornament and splendour. It is energy of thought, peculiarly his own, which forms his character, and sets him above all others. He seems not to attend to words, but to things. We forget the orator, and think of the subject. He has no parade; no studied introductions; but is like a man full of his subject, who, after preparing his audience by a sentence or two for hearing plain truths, enters directly on business.

The style of Demosthenes is strong and concise, though sometimes harsh and abrupt. His words are very expressive, and his arrangements firm and manly. Negligent of little graces, he aims at that sublime, which lies in sentiment. His action and pronunciation were uncommonly vehement and ardent. His character is of the austere, rather than of the gentle kind. He is always grave, serious, passionate; never degrading himself, nor attempting any thing like pleasantry. If his admirable eloquence be in any respect faulty, it is in this, he sometimes borders on the hard and dry. He may be thought to want smoothness and grace; which is attributed to his imitating too closely the manner of Thucydides, who was his great model for style, and whose history he transcribed eight times with his own hand. But these defects are more than compensated by that masterly force of masculine eloquence, which, as it overpowered all who heard it, cannot in the present day be read without emotion.



ROMAN ELOQUENCE. CICERO.

MODERN ELOQUENCE.

**H**AVING treated of eloquence among the Greeks, we now proceed to consider its progress among the Romans; where we shall find one model at least of eloquence in its most

splendid form. The Romans derived their eloquence, poetry, and learning, from the Greeks, and were far inferiour to them in genius for all these accomplishments. They had neither their vivacity, nor sensibility; their passions were not so easily moved, nor their conceptions so lively; in comparison with them they were a phlegmatick people. Their language resembled their character; it was regular, firm and stately; but wanted that expressive simplicity, that flexibility to suit every different species of composition, by which the Greek tongue is peculiarly distinguished. Hence we always find in Greek productions more native genius; in Roman, more regularity and art.

As the Roman government, during the republick, was of the popular kind, publick speaking early became the mean of acquiring power and distinction. But in the unpolished times of the state, their speaking hardly deserved the name of eloquence. It was but a short time before the age of Cicero, that the Roman orators rose into any reputation. Crassus and Antonius seem to have been the most eminent; but, as none of their works are extant, nor any of Hortensius's, who was Cicero's rival at the bar, it is not necessary to transcribe what Cicero said of them, and of the character of their eloquence.

The object most worthy of our attention is Cicero himself; whose name alone suggests every thing splendid in oratory. With his life

and character in other respects we are not at present concerned. We shall view him only as an eloquent speaker ; and endeavour to mark both his virtues and defects. His virtues are eminently great. In all his orations art is conspicuous. He begins commonly with a regular exordium, and with much address prepossesses the hearers, and studies to gain their affections. His method is clear, and his arguments arranged with great propriety. In clearness of method he has advantage over Demosthenes. Every thing is in its proper place : he never attempts to move before he has endeavoured to convince ; and in moving, particularly the softer passions, he is very successful. No one ever knew the force of words better than Cicero. He rolls them along with the greatest beauty and pomp ; and in the structure of his sentences is eminently curious and exact. He is always full and flowing ; never abrupt. He amplifies every thing ; yet, though his manner is on the whole diffuse, it is often happily varied, and suited to the subject. When a great publick object roused his mind, and demanded indignation and force, he departs considerably from that loose and declamatory manner, to which he at other times is addicted, and becomes very forcible and vehement.

This great orator, however, is not without defects. In most of his orations there is too much art. He seems often desirous of obtaining admiration, rather than of operating conviction. He is sometimes therefore showy,



rather than solid ; and diffuse, where he ought to be urgent. His periods are always round and sonorous ; they cannot be accused of monotony, for they possess variety of cadence ; but, from too great fondness for magnificence, he is sometimes deficient in strength. Though the services, which he performed for his country, were very considerable, yet he is too much his own panegyrist. Ancient manners, which imposed fewer restraints on the side of decorum, may in some degree excuse, but cannot entirely justify his vanity.

Whether Demosthenes or Cicero were the most perfect orator is a question, on which critics are not agreed. Fenelon, the celebrated Archbishop of Cambray, and author of *Telemachus*, seems to have stated their merits with great justice and perspicuity. His judgment is given in his reflections on rhetorick and poetry. We shall translate the passage, though not, it is feared, without losing much of the spirit of the original. "I do not hesitate to declare," says he, "that I think Demosthenes superiour to Cicero. I am persuaded, no one can admire Cicero more than I do. He adorns whatever he attempts. He does honour to language. He disposes of words in a manner peculiar to himself. His style has great variety of character. Whenever he pleases, he is even concise and vehement ; for instance, against Catiline, against Verres, against Anthony. But ornament is too visible in his writings. His art is wonderful, but it is perceived. When

“ the orator is providing for the safety of the  
 “ republick, he forgets not himself, nor permits  
 “ others to forget him. Demosthenes seems  
 “ to escape from himself, and to see nothing  
 “ but his country. He seeks not elegance  
 “ of expression ; unfought, he possesses it. He  
 “ is superiour to admiration. He makes use of  
 “ language as a modest man does of dress, only  
 “ to cover him. He thunders, he lightens. He is  
 “ a torrent, which carries every thing before it.  
 “ We cannot criticise, because we are not our-  
 “ selves. His subject enchains our attention,  
 “ and makes us forget his language. We lose  
 “ him from our sight ; Philip alone occupies  
 “ our minds. I am delighted with both these  
 “ orators ; but I confess that I am less affected  
 “ by the infinite art and magnificent eloquence  
 “ of Cicero, than by the rapid simplicity of De-  
 “ mosthenes.”

The reign of eloquence among the Romans  
 was very short. It expired with Cicero. Nor  
 can we wonder at this ; for liberty was no  
 more, and the government of Rome was deliv-  
 ered over to a succession of the most execrable  
 tyrants, that ever disgraced and scourged the  
 human race.

In the decline of the Roman Empire the in-  
 troduction of Christianity gave rise to a new  
 kind of eloquence in the apologies, sermons, and  
 pastoral writings of the fathers. But none of  
 them afforded very just models of eloquence.  
 Their language, as soon as we descend to the  
 third or fourth century, becomes harsh ; and

they are generally infected with the taste of that age, a love of swollen and strained thoughts, and of the play of words.

As nothing in the middle ages deserves attention, we pass now to the state of eloquence in modern times. Here it must be confessed, that in no European nation publick speaking has been valued so highly, or cultivated with so much care, as in Greece or Rome. The genius of the world appears in this respect to have undergone some alteration. The two countries, where we might expect to find most of the spirit of eloquence, are France and Great Britain; France, on account of the distinguished turn of its inhabitants toward all the liberal arts, and of the encouragement, which more than a century past these arts have received from the publick; Great Britain, on account of its free government, and the liberal spirit and genius of its people. Yet in neither of these countries has oratory risen nearly to the degree of its ancient splendour.

Several reasons may be given, why modern eloquence has been so confined and humble in its efforts. In the first place, it seems, that this change must in part be ascribed to that accurate turn of thinking, which has been so much cultivated in modern times. Our publick speakers are obliged to be more reserved than the ancients, in their attempts to elevate the imagination, and warm the passions; and by the influence of prevailing taste, their own genius is chastened perhaps in too great a degree. It is

probable also, that we ascribe to our correctness and good sense, what is chiefly owing to the phlegm and natural coldness of our disposition. For the vivacity and sensibility of the Greeks and Romans, especially of the former, seem to have been much superiour to ours, and to have given them a higher relish for all the beauties of oratory.

Though the Parliament of Great Britain is the noblest field which Europe at present affords to a publick speaker, yet eloquence has ever been there a more feeble instrument than in the popular assemblies of Greece and Rome. Under some foreign reigns the iron hand of arbitrary power checked its efforts; and in later times ministerial influence has generally rendered it of small importance. At the bar our disadvantage in comparison with the ancients is great. Among them the judges were commonly numerous; the laws were few and simple; the decision of causes was left in a great measure to equity and the sense of mankind. Hence the field for judicial eloquence was ample. But at present the system of law is much more complicated. The knowledge of it is rendered so laborious, as to be the study of a man's life. Speaking is therefore only a secondary accomplishment, for which he has little leisure.

With respect to the pulpit it has been a great disadvantage, that the practice of reading sermons instead of repeating them has prevailed so universally in England. This indeed may

have introduced accuracy ; but eloquence has been much enfeebled. Another circumstance too has been prejudicial. The sectaries and fanaticks before the restoration used a warm, zealous, and popular manner of preaching ; and their adherents afterwards continued to distinguish themselves by similar ardour. Hatred of these sects drove the established church into the opposite extreme of a studied coolness of expression. Hence from the art of persuasion, which preaching ought ever to be, it has passed, in England, into mere reasoning and instruction.



## ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES.

**T**HE foundation of every species of eloquence is good sense and solid thought. It should be the first study of him, who means to address a popular assembly, to be previously master of the business on which he is to speak ; to be well provided with matter and argument ; and to rest upon these the chief stress. This will give to his discourse an air of manliness and strength, which is a powerful instrument of persuasion. Ornament, if he have genius for it, will succeed of course ; at any rate, it deserves only secondary regard.

To become a persuasive speaker in a popular assembly, it is a capital rule, that a man should

always be persuaded of whatever he recommends to others. Never, if it can be avoided, should he espouse that side of an argument, which he does not believe to be the right. All high eloquence must be the offspring of passion.

This makes every man persuasive, and gives a force to his genius, which it cannot otherwise possess.

Debate in popular assemblies seldom allows a speaker that previous preparation, which the pulpit always, and the bar sometimes, admits. A general prejudice prevails, and not an unjust one, against set speeches in publick meetings.

At the opening of a debate they may sometimes be introduced with propriety; but, as the debate advances, they become improper; they lose the appearance of being suggested by the business that is going on. Study and ostentation are apt to be visible; and, consequently, though admired as elegant, they are seldom so persuasive as more free and unconstrained discourses.

This, however, does not forbid premeditation, on what we intend to speak. With respect to the matter we cannot be too accurate in our preparation; but with regard to words and expressions it is very possible so far to overdo, as do render our speech stiff and precise. Short notes of the substance of the discourse are not only allowable, but of considerable service, to those especially, who are beginning to speak in publick. They will teach them a degree of accuracy, which, if they speak frequently, they

are in danger of losing. They will accustom them to distinct arrangement, without which, eloquence, however great, cannot produce entire conviction.

Popular assemblies give scope for the most animated manner of publick speaking. Passion is easily excited in a great assembly, where the movements are communicated by mutual sympathy between the orator and the audience. That ardour of speech, that vehemence and glow of sentiment, which proceed from a mind animated and inspired by some great and publick object, form the peculiar character of popular eloquence in its highest degree of perfection.

The warmth, however, which we express, must be always suited to the subject; since it would be ridiculous to introduce great vehemence into a subject of small importance, or which by its nature requires to be treated with calmness. We must also be careful not to counterfeit warmth without feeling it. The best rule is, to follow nature; and never to attempt a strain of eloquence, which is not prompted by our own genius. A speaker may acquire reputation and influence by a calm, argumentative manner. To reach the pathetick and sublime of oratory requires those strong sensibilities of mind, and that high power of expression, which are given to few.

Even when vehemence is justified by the subject, and prompted by genius; when warmth is felt, not feigned; we must be cautious, lest impetuosity transport us too far. If the speaker

lose command of himself, he will soon lose command of his audience. He must begin with moderation, and study to warm his hearers gradually and equally with himself. For, if their passions be not in unison with his, the discord will soon be felt. Respect for his audience should always lay a decent restraint upon his warmth, and prevent it from carrying him beyond proper limits. When a speaker is so far master of himself, as to preserve close attention to argument, and even to some degree of accurate expression; this self command, this effort of reason in the midst of passion, contributes in the highest degree both to please and to persuade. The advantages of passion are afforded for the purposes of persuasion without that confusion and disorder which are its usual attendants.

In the most animated strain of popular speaking we must always regard what the publick ear will receive without disgust. Without attention to this, imitation of ancient orators might betray a speaker into a boldness of manner, with which the coolness of modern taste would be displeas'd. It is also necessary to attend with care to the decorums of time, place and character. No ardour of eloquence can atone for neglect of these. No one should attempt to speak in publick without forming to himself a just and strict idea of what is suitable to his age and character; what is suitable to the subject, the hearers, the place, and the occasion. On this idea he should adjust the whole train and manner of his speaking.



What degree of conciseness or diffuseness is suited to popular eloquence, it is not easy to determine with precision. A diffuse manner is generally considered as most proper. There is danger, however, of erring in this respect; by too diffuse a style publick speakers often lose more in point of strength, than they gain by fulness of illustration. Excessive conciseness indeed must be avoided. We must explain and inculcate; but confine ourselves within certain limits. We should never forget that, however we may be pleased with hearing ourselves speak, every audience may be tired; and the moment they grow weary, our eloquence becomes useless. It is better in general, to say too little, than too much; to place our thought in one strong point of view, and rest it there, than by showing it in every light, and pouring forth a profusion of words upon it, to exhaust the attention of our hearers, and leave them languid and fatigued.

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## ELOQUENCE OF THE BAR.

**T**HE ends of speaking at the bar and in popular assemblies are commonly different. In the latter the orator aims principally to persuade; to determine his hearers to some choice or conduct, as good, fit, or useful. He therefore, applies himself to every principle of

action in our nature ; to the passions and to the heart, as well as to the understanding. But at the bar conviction is the principal object. There the speaker's duty is not to persuade the judges to what is good or useful, but to exhibit what is just and true ; and consequently his eloquence is chiefly addressed to the understanding.

At the bar speakers address themselves to one, or to a few judges, who are generally persons of age, gravity, and dignity of character. There those advantages, which a mixed and numerous assembly affords for employing all the arts of speech, are not enjoyed. Passion does not rise so easily. The speaker is heard with more coolness ; he is watched with more severity ; and would expose himself to ridicule by attempting that high and vehement tone, which is suited only to a multitude. Beside, at the bar, the field of speaking is confined within law and statute. Imagination is fettered. The advocate has always before him the line, the square, and the compass. These it is his chief business to be constantly applying to the subjects under debate.

Hence the eloquence of the bar is of a much more limited, more sober and chastised kind, than that of popular assemblies ; and consequently the judicial orations of the ancients must not be considered as exact models of that kind of speaking which is adapted to the present state of the bar. With them strict law was much less an object of attention, than it is with us. In the days of Demosthenes and Cicero the

municipal statutes were few, simple and general; and the decision of causes was left in a great measure to the equity and common sense of the judges. Eloquence, rather than jurisprudence, was the study of pleaders. Cicero says that three months' study would make a complete civilian; nay, it was thought that a man might be a good pleader without any previous study. Among the Romans there was a set of men, called *Pragmatici*, whose office it was to supply the orator with all the law knowledge his cause required; which he disposed in that popular form, and decorated with those colours of eloquence which were most fitted for influencing the judges.

It may also be observed, that the civil and criminal judges in Greece and Rome were more numerous than with us, and formed a kind of popular assembly. The celebrated tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens consisted of fifty judges at least. In Rome the *Judices Selecti* were always numerous, and had the office and power of judge and jury. In the famous cause of Milo, Cicero spoke to fifty-one *Judices Selecti*, and thus had the advantage of addressing his whole pleading, not to one or a few learned judges of the point of law, as is the case with us, but to an assembly of Roman citizens. Hence those arts of popular eloquence, which he employed with such success. Hence certain practices, which would be reckoned theatrical by us, were common at the Roman bar; such as introducing not only the accused person

dressed in deep mourning, but presenting to the judges his family and young children, endeavouring to excite pity by their cries and tears.

The foundation of a lawyer's reputation and success must be laid in a profound knowledge of his profession. If his abilities, as a speaker, be ever so eminent; yet if his knowledge of the law be superficial, few will choose to engage him in their defence. Beside previous study and an ample stock of acquired knowledge, another thing inseparable from the success of every pleader, is a diligent and painful attention to every cause with which he is entrusted; to all the facts and circumstances with which it is connected. Thus he will in a great measure be prepared for the arguments of his opponent; and, being previously acquainted with the weak parts of his own cause, he will be able to fortify them in the best manner against the attack of his adversary.

Though the ancient popular and vehement manner of pleading is now in a great measure superseded, we must not infer that there is no room for eloquence at the bar, and that the study of it is superfluous. There is perhaps no scene of public speaking, where eloquence is more requisite. The dryness and subtlety of subjects usually agitated at the bar, require, more than any other, a certain kind of eloquence, in order to command attention; to give weight to the arguments employed, and to prevent what the pleader advances from passing

unregarded. The effect of good speaking is always great. There is as much difference in the impression made by a cold, dry and confused speaker, and that made by one who pleads the same cause with elegance, order and strength, as there is between our conception of an object, when presented in twilight, and when viewed in the effulgence of noon.

Purity and neatness of expression is in this species of eloquence chiefly to be studied; a style perspicuous and proper, not needlessly overcharged with the pedantry of law terms, nor affectedly avoiding these, when suitable and requisite. Verbosity is a fault, of which men of this profession are frequently accused; into which the habit of speaking and writing hastily, and with little preparation, almost unavoidably betrays them. It cannot therefore be too earnestly recommended to those, who are beginning to practice at the bar, that they early guard against this, while they have leisure for preparation. Let them form themselves to the habit of a strong and correct style; which will become natural to them afterward, when compelled by multiplicity of business to compose with precipitation. Whereas, if a loose and negligent style have been suffered to become familiar, they will not be able, even upon occasions when they wish to make an unusual effort, to express themselves with force and elegance.

Distinctness in speaking at the bar is a capital property. It should be shown first in stat-

ing the question ; in exhibiting clearly the point in debate ; what we admit ; what we deny ; and where the line of division begins between us and the adverse party. Next, it should appear in the order and arrangement of all the parts of the pleading. A clear method is of the highest consequence in every species of oration ; but in those intricate cases, which belong to the bar, it is infinitely essential.

Narration of facts should always be as concise as the nature of them will admit. They are always very necessary to be remembered ; consequently unnecessary minuteness in relating them overloads the memory. Whereas, if a pleader omit all superfluous circumstances in his recital, he adds strength to the material facts ; gives a clearer view of what he relates, and makes the impression of it more lasting. In argumentation, however, a more diffuse manner seems requisite at the bar than on some other occasions. For in popular assemblies, where the subject of debate is often a plain question, arguments gain strength by conciseness. But the intricacy of law points frequently requires the arguments to be expanded and placed in different lights, in order to be fully apprehended. Candour in stating the arguments of his adversary cannot be too much recommended to every pleader. If he disguise them, or place them in a false light, the artifice will soon be discovered ; and the judge and the hearers will conclude, that he either wants discernment to perceive, or fairness to admit the

strength of his opponent's reasoning. But if he state with accuracy and candour the arguments used against him, before he endeavour to combat them, a strong prejudice is created in his favour. He will appear to have entire confidence in his cause, since he does not attempt to support it by artifice or concealment. The judge will therefore be inclined to receive more readily the impressions made upon him by a speaker, who appears both fair and penetrating.

Wit may sometimes be serviceable at the bar, particularly in a lively reply, by which ridicule is thrown on what an adversary has advanced. But a young pleader should never rest his strength on this dazzling talent. His office is not to excite laughter, but to produce conviction; nor perhaps did any one ever rise to an eminence in his profession by being a witty lawyer.

Since an advocate personates his client, he must plead his cause with a proper degree of warmth. He must be cautious however of prostituting his earnestness and sensibility by an equal degree of ardour on every subject. There is a dignity of character, which it is highly important for every one of this profession to support. An opinion of probity and honour in a pleader is his most powerful instrument of persuasion. He should always, therefore, decline embarking in causes, which are odious and manifestly unjust; and, when he supports a doubtful cause, he should lay the chief stress upon those arguments, which appear

to him to be most forcible ; reserving his zeal and indignation for cases where injustice and iniquity are flagrant.

### ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

**H**AVING treated of the eloquence of popular assemblies, and that of the bar, we shall now consider the strain and spirit of that eloquence which is suited to the pulpit. This field of publick speaking has several advantages peculiar to itself. The dignity and importance of its subjects must be allowed to be superiour to any other. They admit the highest embellishment in description, and the greatest warmth and vehemence of expression. In treating his subject the preacher has also peculiar advantages. He speaks not to one or a few judges, but to a large assembly. He is not afraid of interruption. He chooses his subject at leisure ; and has all the assistance of the most accurate premeditation. The disadvantages, however, which attend the eloquence of the pulpit, are not inconsiderable. The preacher, it is true, has no contention with an adversary ; but debate awakens genius, and excites attention. His subjects, though noble, are trite and common. They are become so familiar to the publick ear, that it requires no ordinary genius in the preacher to fix attention. Nothing is more difficult than to bestow on



what is common the grace of novelty. Besides, the subject of the preacher usually confines him to abstract qualities, to virtues and vices; whereas, that of other popular speakers leads them to treat of persons; which is generally more interesting to the hearers, and occupies more powerfully the imagination. We are taught by the preacher to detest only the crime; by the pleader to detest the criminal. Hence it happens that, though the number of moderately good preachers is great, so few have arrived at eminence. Perfection is very distant from modern preaching. The object, however, is truly noble and worthy of being pursued with zeal.

To excel in preaching, it is necessary to have a fixed and habitual view of its object. This is to persuade men to become good. Every sermon ought therefore to be a persuasive oration. It is not to discuss some abstruse point, that the preacher ascends the pulpit. It is not to teach his hearers something new, but to make them better; to give them at once clear views and persuasive impressions of religious truths.

The principal characteristics of pulpit eloquence, as distinguished from the other kinds of public speaking, appear to be these two, gravity and warmth. It is neither easy nor common to unite these characters of eloquence. The grave, when it is predominant, becomes a dull, uniform solemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, borders on the light and theatrical. A proper union of the two, forms that

character of preaching, which the French call *Onction* ; that affecting, penetrating, and interesting manner, which flows from a strong sense in the preacher of the importance of the truths he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

A sermon, as a particular species of composition, requires the strictest attention to unity. By this we mean that there should be some main point, to which the whole tenor of the sermon shall refer. It must not be a pile of different subjects heaped upon each other ; but one object must predominate through the whole. Hence, however, it must not be understood, that there should be no divisions or separate heads in a discourse ; nor that one single thought only should be exhibited in different points of view. Unity is not to be understood in so limited a sense ; it admits some variety ; it requires only that union and connexion be so far preserved, as to make the whole concur in some one impression on the mind. Thus, for instance, a preacher may employ several different arguments to enforce the love of God ; he may also inquire into the causes of the decay of this virtue ; still one great object is presented to the mind. But if because his text says, “ He that loveth God, must love his brother also,” he should therefore mix in the same discourse arguments for the love of God and for the love of our neighbour, he would grossly offend against unity, and leave a very confused impression on the minds of his hearers.

Sermons are always more striking, and generally more useful, the more precise and particular the subject of them is. Unity can never be so perfect in a general, as in a particular subject. General subjects, indeed, such as the excellency or the pleasures of religion, are often chosen by young preachers, as the most showy, and the easiest to be handled; but these subjects produce not the high effects of preaching. Attention is much more commanded by taking some particular view of a great subject, and employing on that the whole force of argument and eloquence. To recommend some one virtue, or inveigh against a particular vice, affords a subject not deficient in unity or precision. But if that virtue or vice be considered as assuming a particular aspect in certain characters or certain situations in life, the subject becomes still more interesting. The execution is more difficult, but the merit and the effect are higher.

A preacher should be cautious not to exhaust his subject; since nothing is more opposite to persuasion, than unnecessary and tedious fulness. There are always some things which he may suppose to be known, and some which require only brief attention. If he endeavour to omit nothing which his subject suggests, he must unavoidably encumber it and diminish its force.

To render his instructions interesting to his hearers should be the grand object of every preacher. He should bring home to their hearts the truths which he inculcates, and make each suppose himself particularly address-

ed. He should avoid all intricate reasonings; avoid expressing himself in general, speculative propositions; or laying down practical truths in an abstract, metaphysical manner. A discourse ought to be carried on in the strain of direct address to the audience; not in the strain of one writing an essay, but one speaking to a multitude, and studying to connect what is called application, or what immediately refers to practice, with the doctrinal parts of the sermon.

It is always highly advantageous to keep in view the different ages, characters, and conditions of men, and to accommodate directions and exhortations to each of these different classes. Whenever you advance what touches a man's character, or is applicable to his circumstances, you are sure of his attention. No study is more necessary for a preacher, than the study of human life, and of the human heart. To discover a man to himself in a light, in which he never saw his character before, produces a wonderful effect. Those sermons, though the most difficult in composition, are not only the most beautiful, but also the most useful, which are founded on the illustration of some peculiar character, or remarkable piece of history in the sacred writings; by pursuing which we may trace, and lay open, some of the most secret windings of the human heart. Other topicks of preaching are become trite; but this is an extensive field which hitherto has been little explored, and possesses all the advantages of

being curious, new, and highly useful. Bishop Butler's sermons on the *character of Balaam* is an example of this kind of preaching.

Fashion, which operates so extensively on human manners, has given to preaching at different times a change of character. This however is a torrent, which swells to-day and subsides to-morrow. Sometimes poetical preaching is fashionable; sometimes philosophical. At one time it must be all pathetick; at another all argumentative; as some celebrated preacher has set the example. Each of these modes is very defective; and he who conforms himself to it, will both confine and corrupt his genius. Truth and good sense are the sole basis, on which he can build with safety. Mode and humour are feeble and unsteady. No example should be fervilely imitated. From various examples the preacher may collect materials for improvement; but servility of imitation extinguishes all genius, or rather proves entire want of it.



CONDUCT OF A DISCOURSE IN ALL  
ITS PARTS. INTRODUCTION, DIVISION,  
NARRATION, AND EXPLICATION.

**H**AVING already considered what is peculiar to each of the three great fields of public speaking, popular assemblies, the bar, and the pulpit, we shall now treat of what is com-

mon to them all, and explain the conduct of a discourse or oration in general.

The parts which compose a regular oration are these six; the exordium or introduction; the state or the division of the subject; narration or explication; the reasoning or arguments; the pathetick part; and the conclusion. It is not necessary that each of these enter into every publick discourse, nor that they always enter in this order. There are many excellent discourses, in which some of these parts are omitted. But, as they are the constituent parts of a regular oration, and as in every discourse some of them must occur, it is agreeable to our present purpose to examine each of them distinctly.

The design of the introduction is to conciliate the good will of the hearers; to excite their attention; and to render them open to persuasion. When a speaker is previously secure of the good will, attention, and docility of his audience; a formal introduction may be omitted. Respect for his hearers will in that case require only a short exordium, to prepare them for the other parts of his discourse.

The introduction is a part of a discourse, which requires no small care. It is always important to begin well; to make a favourable impression at first setting out, when the minds of the hearers, as yet vacant and free, are more easily prejudiced in favour of the speaker. We must add, also, that a good introduction is frequently found to be extremely difficult,

Few parts of a discourse give more trouble to the composer, or require more delicacy in the execution.

An introduction should be easy and natural. It should always be suggested by the subject. The writer should not plan it before he has meditated in his own mind the substance of his discourse. By taking the opposite course, and composing in the first place an introduction, the writer will often find that he is either led to lay hold of some common-place topic, or that instead of the introduction being accommodated to the discourse, he is under the necessity of accommodating the discourse to the introduction.

In this part of a discourse correctness of expression should be carefully studied. This is peculiarly requisite on account of the situation of the hearers. At the beginning they are more disposed to criticise, than at any other period; they are then occupied by the subject and the arguments; their attention is entirely directed to the speaker's style and manner. Care therefore is requisite to prepossess them in his favour; though too much art must be cautiously avoided, since it will then be more easily detected, and will derogate from that persuasion, which the other parts of the discourse are intended to produce.

Modesty is also an indispensable characteristic of a good introduction. If the speaker begin with an air of arrogance and ostentation, the self-love and pride of his hearers will be

presently awakened, and follow him with a very suspicious eye through the rest of his discourse. His modesty should appear not only in his expression but in his whole manner ; in his looks, in his gestures, and in the tone of his voice. Every audience is pleased with those marks of respect and awe which are paid by the speaker. The modesty however of an introduction should betray nothing mean or abject. Together with modesty and deference to his hearers, the orator should show a certain sense of dignity, arising from persuasion of the justice or importance of his subject.

Particular cases excepted, the orator should not put forth all his strength at the beginning ; but it should rise and grow upon his hearers, as his discourse advances. The introduction is seldom the place for vehemence and passion. The audience must be gradually prepared, before the speaker venture on strong and passionate sentiments. Yet, when the subject is such that the very mention of it naturally awakens some passionate emotion ; or when the unexpected presence of some person or object in a popular assembly inflames the speaker ; either of these will justify an abrupt and vehement exordium. Thus the appearance of Catiline in the senate renders the violent opening of Cicero's first oration against him very natural and proper. " *Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientiâ nostrâ?*" Bishop Atterbury, preaching from this text, " Blessed is he, who-  
" soever shall not be offended in me," ventures



on this bold exordium: "And can any man then be offended in thee, blessed Jesus?" Which address to our Saviour he continues, till he enters on the division of his subject. But such introductions should be attempted by very few, since they promise so much vehemence and ardour through the rest of the discourse, that it is extremely difficult to satisfy the expectation of the hearers.

An introduction should not anticipate any material part of the subject. When topics or arguments, which are afterward to be enlarged upon, are hinted at, and in part exhibited in the introduction; they lose, upon their second appearance, the grace of novelty. The impression, intended to be made by any capital thought, is always made with greatest advantage, when it is made entire, and in its proper place.

An introduction should be proportioned in length and kind to the discourse which follows it. In length, as nothing can be more absurd than to erect a large portico before a small building; and in kind, as it is no less absurd to load with superb ornaments the portico of a plain dwelling-house; or to make the approach to a monument as gay as that to an arbour.

After the introduction, the proposition or enunciation of the subject, commonly succeeds; concerning which we shall only observe, that it should be clear and distinct, and expressed without affectation, in the most concise and simple manner. To this generally succeeds the

division, or laying down the method of the discourse; in the management of which the following rules should be carefully observed.

First, The parts, into which the subject is divided, must be really distinct from each other. It were an absurd division, for example, if a speaker should propose to explain first the advantages of virtue, and next those of justice or temperance; because the first head plainly comprehends the second, as a genus does the species. Such a method of proceeding involves the subject in confusion.

Secondly, We must be careful always to follow the order of nature; beginning with the most simple points; with such as are most easily understood, and necessary to be first discussed; and proceeding to those which are built upon the former, and suppose them to be known. The subject must be divided into those parts into which it is most easily and naturally resolved.

Thirdly, The members of a division ought to exhaust the subject; otherwise the division is incomplete; the subject is exhibited by pieces only, without displaying the whole.

Fourthly, Let conciseness and precision be peculiarly studied. A division always appears to most advantage, when the several heads are expressed in the clearest, most forcible, and fewest words possible. This never fails to strike the hearers agreeably; and contributes also to make the divisions more easily remembered.

Fifthly, Unnecessary multiplication of heads should be cautiously avoided. To divide a subject into many minute parts, by endless divisions and subdivisions, produces a bad effect in speaking. In a logical treatise this may be proper; but it renders an oration hard and dry, and unnecessarily fatigues the memory. A sermon may admit from three to five or six heads, including subdivisions; seldom are more allowable.

The next constituent part of a discourse is narration or explication. These two are joined together, because they fall nearly under the same rules, and because they generally answer the same purpose; serving to illustrate the cause, or the subject, of which one treats, before proceeding to argue on one side or the other; or attempting to interest the passions of the hearers.

To be clear and distinct, to be probable, and to be concise, are the qualities which critics chiefly require in narration. Distinctness is requisite to the whole of the discourse, but belongs especially to narration, which ought to throw light on all that follows. At the bar, a fact, or a single circumstance, left in obscurity, or misunderstood by the judge, may destroy the effect of all the argument and reasoning which the pleader employs. If his narration be improbable, it will be disregarded; if it be tedious and diffuse, it will fatigue and be forgotten. To render narration distinct, particular attention is requisite in ascertaining clearly the names, dates, places, and every other important cir-

cumstance of the facts recounted. In order to be probable in narration, it is necessary to exhibit the characters of the persons of whom we speak, and to show that their actions proceeded from such motives as are natural, and likely to gain belief. To be as concise as the subject will admit, all superfluous circumstances must be rejected; by which the narration will be rendered more forcible and more clear.

In sermons, explication of the subject to be discoursed on occupies the place of narration at the bar, and is to be conducted in a similar manner. It must be concise, clear, and distinct; in a style correct and elegant, rather than highly adorned. To explain the doctrine of the text with propriety; to give a full and clear account of the nature of that virtue or duty, which forms the subject of discourse, is properly the didactic part of preaching; on the right execution of which much depends. In order to succeed, the preacher must meditate profoundly on the subject; so as to place it in a clear and striking point of view. He must consider what light it may derive from other passages of scripture; whether it be a subject nearly allied to some other, from which it ought to be distinguished; whether it can be advantageously illustrated by comparing or opposing it to some other thing; by searching into causes, or tracing effects; by pointing out examples, or appealing to the hearts of the hearers; that thus a precise and circumstantial view may be afforded of the doctrine inculcated. By distinct and apt illustrations of the

known truths of religion, a preacher may both display great merit, as a composer, and, what is infinitely more valuable, render his discourses weighty, instructive, and useful.



THE ARGUMENTATIVE PART OF A DISCOURSE, THE PATHETICK PART, AND THE PERORATION.

**A**S the great end, for which men speak on any serious occasion, is to convince their hearers that something is true, or right, or good, and thus to influence their practice; reason and argument must constitute the foundation of all manly and persuasive eloquence.

With regard to arguments, three things are requisite. First, invention of them; secondly, proper disposition and arrangement of them; and thirdly, expressing them in the most forcible manner. Invention is undoubtedly the most material, and the basis of the rest. But in this, art can afford only small assistance. It can aid a speaker however in arranging and expressing those arguments, which his knowledge of the subject has discovered.

Supposing the arguments properly chosen, we must avoid blending those together that are of a separate nature. All arguments whatever are intended to prove one of these three things; that something is true; that it is right or fit;

or that it is profitable and good. Truth, duty, and interest are the three great subjects of discussion among men. But the arguments employed upon either of them are generally distinct; and he who blends them all under one topick, which he calls his argument, as in sermons is too frequently done, will render his reasoning indistinct and inelegant.

With respect to the different degrees of strength in arguments, the common rule is, to advance in the way of climax from the weakest to the most forcible. This method is recommended when the speaker is convinced that his cause is clear, and easy to be proved. But this rule must not be universally observed. If he distrust his cause and have but one material argument, it is often proper to place this argument in the front; to prejudice his hearers early in his favour, and thus dispose them to pay attention to the weaker reasons, which he may afterward introduce. When amid a variety of arguments there is one or two more feeble than the rest, though proper to be used, Cicero advises to place them in the middle, as a situation less conspicuous, than either the beginning or end of the train of reasoning.

When arguments are strong and satisfactory, the more they are separated the better. Each can then bear to be introduced alone, placed in its full light, amplified and contemplated. But, when they are of a doubtful or presumptive nature, it is safer to crowd them together, to form

them into a phalanx, that, though individually weak, they may mutually support each other.

Arguments should never be extended too far, nor multiplied too much. This serves rather to render a cause suspicious, than to increase its strength. A needless multiplicity of arguments burdens the memory, and diminishes the weight of that conviction, which a few well chosen arguments produce. To expand them also beyond the bounds of reasonable illustration is always enfeebling. When a speaker endeavours to expose a favourable argument in every light possible, fatigued by the effort, he loses the spirit, with which he set out; and ends with feebleness, what he began with force.

Having attended thus far to the proper arrangement of arguments, we proceed to another essential part of a discourse, the pathetick; in which, if any where, eloquence reigns and exerts its power. On this head the following directions appear useful.

Consider carefully whether the subject admit the pathetick, and render it proper; and, if it do, what part of the discourse is most fit for it. To determine these points belongs to good sense. Many subjects admit not the pathetick; and even in those that are susceptible of it, an attempt to excite the passions in a wrong place may expose an orator to ridicule. It may in general be observed, that, if we expect any emotion which we raise, to have a lasting effect, we must secure in our favour the understanding and judgment. The hearers must be satisfied

that there are sufficient grounds for their engaging in the cause with zeal and ardour. When argument and reasoning have produced their full effect, the pathetick is admitted with the greatest force and propriety.

A speaker should cautiously avoid giving his hearers warning that he intends to excite their passions. Every thing of this kind chills their sensibility. There is also a great difference between telling the hearers that they ought to be moved, and actually moving them. To every emotion or passion nature has adapted certain corresponding objects ; and without setting these before the mind, it is impossible for an orator to excite that emotion. We are warmed with gratitude, we are touched with compassion, not when a speaker shows us that these are noble dispositions, and that it is our duty to feel them ; nor when he exclaims against us for our indifference and coldness. Hitherto he has addressed only our reason or conscience. He must describe the kindness and tenderness of our friend ; he must exhibit the distress suffered by the person for whom he would interest us. Then, and not before, our hearts begin to be touched, our gratitude or compassion begins to flow. The basis, therefore, of all successful execution in pathetick oratory, is to paint the object of that passion, which we desire to raise, in the most natural and striking manner ; to describe it with such circumstances as are likely to awaken it in the minds of others,



To succeed in the pathetick, it is necessary to attend to the proper language of the passions. This, if we consult nature, we shall ever find is unaffected and simple. It may be animated by bold and strong figures, but it will have no ornament, nor finery. There is a great difference between painting to the imagination and to the heart. The one may be done with deliberation and coolness; the other must always be rapid and ardent. In the former, art and labour may be suffered to appear; in the latter, no proper effect can be produced, unless it be the work of nature only. Hence all digressions should be avoided, which may interrupt or turn aside the swell of passion. Hence comparisons are always dangerous, and commonly quite improper in the midst of the pathetick. It is also to be observed, that violent emotions cannot be lasting. The pathetick therefore should not be prolonged too much. Due regard should always be preserved to what the hearers will bear; for he who attempts to carry them farther in passion than they will follow him, frustrates his purpose. By endeavouring to warm them too much, he takes the surest method of freezing them completely.

Concerning the peroration or conclusion of a discourse, a few words will be sufficient. Sometimes the whole pathetick part comes in most properly at the conclusion. Sometimes, when the discourse has been altogether argumentative, it is proper to conclude with summing up the arguments, placing them in one

view, and leaving the impresson of them full and strong on the minds of the hearers. For the great rule of a conclusion, and what nature obviously suggests, is, place that last, on which you choose to rest the strength of your cause.

In every kind of publick speaking it is important to hit the precise time of concluding; to bring the discourse just to a point; neither ending abruptly and unexpectedly, nor disappointing the expectation of the hearers, when they look for the end of the discourse.

The speaker should always close with dignity and spirit, that the minds of the hearers may be left warm, and that they may depart with a favourable impresson of the subject and of himself.

### PRONUNCIATION OR DELIVERY.

**T**HE great objects, to which every publick speaker should direct his attention in forming his delivery, are, first, to speak so as to be fully and easily understood by his hearers; and next, to express himself with such grace and energy as to please and to move them.

To be fully and easily understood, the chief requisites are, a due degree of loudness of voice, distinctness, slowness, and propriety of pronunciation.

To be heard is undoubtedly the first requisite. The speaker must endeavour to fill with

his voice the space occupied by the assembly. Though this power of voice is in a great measure a natural talent, it may receive considerable assistance from art. Much depends on the proper pitch and management of the voice. Every man has three pitches in his voice; the high, the middle, and the low. The high is used in calling aloud to some one at a distance; the low approaches to a whisper; the middle is that which is employed in common conversation, and which should generally be used in publick speaking. For it is a great error to suppose that the highest pitch of the voice is requisite to be well heard by a great assembly. This is confounding two things materially different, loudness or strength of sound with the key or note on which we speak. The voice may be rendered louder without altering the key; and the speaker will always be able to give most body, most persevering force of sound, to that pitch of voice to which in conversation he is accustomed. Whereas, if he begin on the highest key he will fatigue himself and speak with pain; and, wherever a man speaks with pain to himself, he is always heard with pain by his audience. Give the voice therefore full strength and swell of sound; but always pitch it on your ordinary speaking key; a greater quantity of voice should never be uttered than can be afforded without pain, and without any extraordinary effort. To be well heard, it is useful for a speaker to fix his eye on some of the most distant persons in the as-

fembly and to confider himfelf as fpeaking to them. We naturally and mechanically utter our words with fuch ftrength, as to be heard by one to whom we addrefs ourfelves, provided he be within the reach of our voice. This is the cafe in publick fpeaking, as well as in common converfation. But it muft be remembered, that fpeaking too loudly is peculiarly offensive. The ear is wounded when the voice comes upon it in rumbling, indiftinct mafles ; befide, it appears as if affent were demanded by mere vehemence and force of found.

To being well heard and clearly underftood, diftinctnefs of articulation is more conducive, perhaps, than mere loudnefs of found. The quantity of found requisite to fill even a large fpace, is lefs than is commonly fupposed ; with diftinct articulation a man of a weak voice will make it extend farther than the ftrongeft voice can reach without it. This therefore demands peculiar attention. The fpeaker muft give every found its due proportion and make every fyllable, and even every letter, be heard diftinctly. To fucceed in this, rapidity of pronounciation muft be avoided. A lifelefs drawling method, however, is not to be indulged. To pronounce with a proper degree of flownefs, and with full and clear articulation cannot be too induftrioufly ftudied, nor too earneftly recommended. Such pronounciation gives weight and dignity to a difcoufe. It affifts the voice by the pauses and refts, which it allows it more eafily to make ; and it enables the fpeak-

er to swell all his sounds with more energy and more musick. It assists him also in preserving a due command of himself; whereas a rapid and hurried manner excites that flutter of spirits, which is the greatest enemy to all right execution in oratory.

To propriety of pronunciation nothing is more conducive than giving to every word which we utter, that sound which the most polite usage appropriates to it, in opposition to broad, vulgar, or provincial pronunciation. On this subject, however, written instructions avail nothing. But there is one observation which it may be useful to make. In our language every word of more syllables than one, has one accented syllable. The genius of the language requires the voice to mark that syllable by a stronger percussion, and to pass more slightly over the rest. The same accent should be given to every word in publick speaking and in common discourse. Many persons err in this respect. When they speak in publick and with solemnity, they pronounce differently from what they do at other times. They dwell upon syllables, and protract them; they multiply accents on the same word, from a false idea that it gives gravity and force to their discourse, and increases the pomp of publick declamation. But this is one of the greatest faults which can be committed in pronunciation; it constitutes what is termed a theatrical or mouth-ing manner, and gives an artificial, affected air to speech, which detracts greatly from its agreeableness and its impression.

We shall now treat of those higher parts of delivery, by studying which a speaker endeavours not merely to render himself intelligible, but to give grace and force to what he utters. These may be comprehended under four heads, emphasis, pauses, tones, and gestures.

By emphasis is meant a fuller and stronger sound of voice, by which we distinguish the accented syllable of some word, on which we intend to lay particular stress, and to show how it affects the rest of the sentence. To acquire the proper management of emphasis, the only rule is, study to acquire a just conception of the force and spirit of those sentiments which you are to deliver. In all prepared discourses it would be extremely useful if they were read over or rehearsed in private, with a view of ascertaining the proper emphasis, before they were pronounced in publick; marking at the same time the emphatical words in every sentence, or at least in the most important parts of the discourse, and fixing them well in memory. A caution, however, must be given against multiplying emphatical words too much. They become striking, only when used with prudent reserve. If they recur too frequently; if a speaker attempt to render every thing which he says of high importance, by a multitude of strong emphases, they will soon fail to excite the attention of his hearers.

Next to emphasis, pauses demand attention. They are of two kinds; first, emphatical pauses; and secondly, such as mark the distinctions of

sense. An emphatical pause is made after something has been said of peculiar moment, on which we wish to fix the hearers attention. Sometimes a matter of importance is preceded by a pause of this nature. Such pauses have the same effect with strong emphases, and are subject to the same rules; especially to the caution just now given, of not repeating them too frequently. For, as they excite uncommon attention and consequently raise expectation, if this be not fully answered, they occasion disappointment and disgust.

But the most frequent and the principal use of pauses is, to mark the divisions of the sense, and at the same time to permit the speaker to draw his breath; and the proper management of such pauses is one of the most nice and difficult articles in delivery. A proper command of the breath is peculiarly requisite. To obtain this, every speaker should be very careful to provide a full supply of breath for what he is to utter. It is a great mistake to suppose that the breath must be drawn only at the end of a period, when the voice is allowed to fall. It may easily be gathered at the intervals of a period; when the voice suffers only a momentary suspension. By this management a sufficient supply may be obtained for carrying on the longest period without improper interruptions.

Pauses in publick discourse must be formed upon the manner in which we express ourselves in sensible conversation, and not upon the stiff, artificial manner, which we acquire from per-

ing books according to common punctuation. Punctuation in general is very arbitrary; often capricious and false; dictating a uniformity of tone in the pauses, which is extremely unpleasing. For it must be observed, that, to render pauses graceful and expressive, they must not only be made in the right places, but also be accompanied by proper tones of voice; by which the nature of these pauses is intimated much more than by their length, which can never be exactly measured. Sometimes only a slight and simple suspension of the voice is proper; sometimes a degree of cadence is requisite; and sometimes that peculiar tone and cadence which mark the conclusion of a period. In all these cases, a speaker is to regulate himself by the manner in which he speaks, when engaged in earnest discourse with others.

In reading or reciting verse, there is a peculiar difficulty in making the pauses with propriety. There are two kinds of pauses, which belong to the music of verse; one at the end of a line, and the other in the middle of it. Rhyme always renders the former sensible, and compels observance of it in pronunciation. In blank verse it is less perceivable; and when there is no suspension of the sense, it has been doubted, whether in reading such verse any regard should be paid to the close of a line. On the stage, indeed, where the appearance of speaking in verse should be avoided, the close of such lines as make no pause in the sense should not be rendered perceptible to the ear. On other



occasions we ought, for the sake of melody, to read blank verse in such manner as to make each line sensible to the ear. In attempting this, however, every appearance of sing-song and tone must be cautiously avoided. The close of a line, where there is no pause in the meaning, should be marked only by so slight a suspension of sound, as may distinguish the passage from one line to another, without injuring the sense.

The pause in the middle of the line falls after the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th syllable, and no other. When this pause coincides with the slightest division in the sense, the line may be read with ease; as in the two first verses of Pope's *Messiah* :

Ye nymphs of Solyma, begin the song,  
To heavenly themes sublimer strains belong.

But if words, that have so intimate a connexion, as not to admit even a momentary separation, be divided from each other by this caesural pause; we then perceive a conflict between the sense and sound, which renders it difficult to read such lines gracefully. In such cases it is best to sacrifice sound to sense. For instance, in the following lines of Milton :

—————What in me is dark,  
Illumine; what is low, raise and support.

The sense clearly dictates the pause after "illumine," which ought to be observed; though, if melody only were to be regarded, "illumine" should be connected with what follows, and no pause made before the 4th, or 6th.

syllable. So also in the following line of Pope's Epistle to Arbuthnot :

I fit ; with sad civility I read.

The ear points out the pause as falling after "sad," the fourth syllable. But to separate "sad" and "civility" would be very bad reading. The sense allows no other pause than after the second syllable, "fit ;" which therefore is the only one to be observed.

We proceed to treat of tones in pronunciation, which are different both from emphases and pauses ; consisting in the modulation of the voice, the notes or variations of sound, which are employed in publick speaking. The most material instruction, which can be given on this subject, is to form the tones of publick speaking upon the tones of animated conversation. Every one who is engaged in speaking on a subject which interests him nearly, has an eloquent or persuasive tone and manner. But, when a speaker departs from his natural tone of expression, he becomes frigid and unconvincing. Nothing is more absurd than to suppose that as soon as a speaker ascends a pulpit, or rises in a publick assembly, he is instantly to lay aside the voice with which he expresses himself in private, and to assume a new, studied tone, and a cadence altogether different from his natural manner. This has vitiated all delivery, and has given rise to cant and tedious monotony. Let every publick speaker guard against this error. Whether he speak in private, or in

a great assembly, let him remember that he still speaks. Let him take nature for his guide, and she will teach him to express his sentiments and feelings in such manner, as to make the most forcible and pleasing impression upon the minds of his hearers.

It now remains to treat of gesture, or what is called action in publick discourse. The best rule is, attend to the looks and gesture in which earnestness, indignation, compassion, or any other emotion, discovers itself to most advantage in the common intercourse of men; and let these be your model. A publick speaker must, however, adopt that manner which is most natural to himself. His motions and gestures ought all to exhibit that kind of expression, which nature has dictated to him; and, unless this be the case, no study can prevent their appearing stiff and forced. But, though nature is the basis on which every grace of gesture must be founded, yet there is room for some improvements of art. The study of action consists chiefly in guarding against awkward and disagreeable motions, and in learning to perform such as are natural to the speaker, in the most graceful manner. Numerous are the rules which writers have laid down for the attainment of a proper gesticulation. But written instructions on this subject can be of little service. To become useful, they must be exemplified. A few of the simplest precepts, however, may be observed with advantage. Every speaker should study to preserve as much dig-

nity as possible in the attitude of his body. He should generally prefer an erect posture; his position should be firm, that he may have the fullest and freest command of all his motions. If any inclination be used, it should be toward the hearers, which is a natural expression of earnestness. The countenance should correspond with the nature of the discourse; and, when no particular emotion is expressed, a serious and manly look is always to be preferred. The eyes should never be fixed entirely on any one object, but move easily round the audience. In motion, made with the hands, consists the principal part of gesture in speaking. It is natural for the right hand to be employed more frequently than the left. Warm emotions require the exercise of them both together. But, whether a speaker gesticulate with one, or with both his hands, it is important that all his motions be easy and unrestrained. Narrow and confined movements are usually ungraceful; and consequently motions made with the hands, should proceed from the shoulder, rather than from the elbow. Perpendicular movements are to be avoided. Oblique motions are most pleasing and graceful. Sudden and rapid motions are seldom good. Earnestness can be fully expressed without their assistance.

We cannot conclude this subject without earnestly admonishing every speaker to guard against affectation, which is the destruction of good delivery. Let his manner, whatever it be, be his own; neither imitated from another,

nor taken from some imaginary model, which is unnatural to him. Whatever is native, though attended by several defects, is likely to please, because it shows us the man; and because it has the appearance of proceeding from the heart. To attain a delivery extremely correct and graceful, is what few can expect; since so many natural talents must concur in its formation. But to acquire a forcible and persuasive manner, is within the power of most persons. They need only to dismiss bad habits, follow nature, and speak in publick as they do in private, when they speak in earnest and from the heart.



#### MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

**T**O those who are anxious to excel in any of the higher kinds of oratory, nothing is more necessary than to cultivate habits of the several virtues, and to refine and improve their moral feelings. A true orator must possess generous sentiments, warm feelings, and a mind turned toward admiration of those great and high objects, which men are by nature formed to venerate. Connected with the manly virtues, he should possess strong and tender sensibility to all the injuries, distresses, and sorrows of his fellow creatures.

Next to moral qualifications, what is most requisite for an orator, is a fund of knowledge. There is no art by which eloquence can be taught in any sphere, without a sufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that sphere. Attention to the ornaments of style can only assist an orator in setting off to advantage the stock of materials which he possesses; but the materials themselves must be derived from other sources than from rhetoric. A pleader must make himself completely acquainted with the law; he must possess all that learning and experience which can be useful for supporting a cause, or convincing a judge. A preacher must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals and of human nature; that he may be rich in all topics of instruction and persuasion. He who wishes to excel in the supreme council of the nation, or in any publick assembly; should be thoroughly acquainted with the business that belongs to such assembly; and should attend with accuracy to all the facts which may be the subject of question or deliberation.

Beside the knowledge peculiar to his profession, a publick speaker should be acquainted with the general circle of polite literature. Poetry he will find useful for embellishing his style, for suggesting lively images, or pleasing illusions. History may be still more advantageous; as the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the course of human affairs, finds place on many occasions. Deficiency of knowledge, even in

subjects not immediately connected with his profession, will expose a publick speaker to many disadvantages, and give his rivals, who are better qualified, a decided superiority.

To every one who wishes to excel in eloquence, application and industry cannot be too much recommended. Without this it is impossible to excel in any thing. No one ever became a distinguished pleader, or preacher, or speaker in any assembly, without previous labour and application. Industry indeed is not only necessary to every valuable acquisition, but it is designed by Providence as the seasoning of every pleasure, without which life is doomed to languish. No enemy is so destructive both to honourable attainments, and to the real and spirited enjoyments of life, as that relaxed state of mind, which proceeds from indolence and dissipation. He who is destined to excel in any art, will be distinguished by enthusiasm for that art; which, firing his mind with the object in view, will dispose him to relish every necessary labour. This was the characteristic of the great men of antiquity; and this must distinguish moderns who wish to imitate them. This honourable enthusiasm should be cultivated by students in oratory. If it be wanting to youth, manhood will flag exceedingly.

Attention to the best models contributes greatly to improvement in the arts of speaking and writing. Every one indeed should endeavour to have something that is his own,

that is peculiar to himself, and will distinguish his style. Genius is certainly depressed, or want of it betrayed, by slavish imitation. Yet no genius is so original, as not to receive improvement from proper examples in style, composition, and delivery. They always afford some new ideas, and serve to enlarge and correct our own. They quicken the current of thought and excite emulation.

In imitating the style of a favourite author, a material distinction should be observed between written and spoken language. These are in reality two different modes of communicating ideas. In books we expect correctness, precision, all redundancies pruned, all repetitions avoided, language completely polished. Speaking allows a more easy, copious style, and less confined by rule; repetitions may often be requisite; parentheses may sometimes be ornamental; the same thought must often be placed in different points of view; since the hearers can catch it only from the mouth of the speaker, and have not the opportunity, as in reading, of turning back again, and of contemplating what they do not entirely comprehend. Hence the style of many good authors would appear stiff, affected, and even obscure, if transferred into a popular oration. How unnatural, for instance, would Lord Shaftesbury's sentences found in the mouth of a publick speaker? Some kinds of publick discourse indeed, such as that of the pulpit, where more accurate preparation and more studied style are allowable, would ad-



mit such a manner better than others, which are expected to approach nearer to extemporaneous speaking. But still there is generally such a difference between a composition, intended only to be read, and one proper to be spoken, as should caution us against a close and improper imitation.

The composition of some authors approaches nearer to the style of speaking than that of others, and they may therefore be imitated with more safety. In our own language, Swift and Bolingbroke are of this description. The former, though correct, preserves the easy and natural manner of an unaffected speaker. The style of the latter is more splendid; but still it is the style of speaking, or rather of declamation.

Frequent exercise both in composing and speaking is a necessary mean of improvement. That kind of composition is most useful, which is connected with the profession, or sort of publick speaking, to which persons devote themselves. This they should ever keep in view, and gradually inure themselves to it. At the same time they should be cautious not to allow themselves to compose negligently on any occasion. He, who wishes to write or speak correctly, should in the most trivial kind of composition, in writing a letter, or even in common conversation, study to express himself with propriety. By this we do not mean that he is never to write or speak, but in elaborate and artificial language. This would introduce stiff-

ness and affectation, infinitely worse than the greatest negligence. But we must observe, that there is in every thing a proper and becoming manner; and on the contrary, there is also an awkward performance of the same thing. The becoming manner is often the most light, and seemingly most careless; but taste and attention are requisite to seize the just idea of it. That idea, when acquired, should be kept in view, and upon it should be formed, whatever we write or speak.

Exercises in speaking have always been recommended to students; and, when under proper regulation, must be of great use. Those publick and promiscuous societies, in which numbers are brought together, who are frequently of low stations and occupations; who are connected by no common bond of union, except a ridiculous rage for publick speaking, and have no other object in view than to exhibit their supposed talents; are institutions not only useless, but injurious. They are calculated to become seminaries of licentiousness, petulance, and faction. Even the allowable meetings, into which students of oratory may form themselves, need direction in order to render them useful. If their subjects of discourse be improperly chosen; if they support extravagant or indecent topics; if they indulge themselves in loose and flimsy declamation; or accustom themselves without preparation to speak pertly on all subjects, they will unavoidably acquire a very faulty and vicious

taste in speaking. It should therefore be recommended to all those, who are members of such societies, to attend to the choice of their subjects ; to take care that they be useful and manly, either connected with the course of their studies, or related to morals and taste, to action and life. They should also be temperate in the practice of speaking ; not to speak too often, nor on subjects of which they are ignorant ; but only when they have proper materials for a discourse, and have previously considered and digested the subject. In speaking they should be cautious always to keep good sense and persuasion in view, rather than a show of eloquence. By these means they will gradually form themselves to a manly, correct, and persuasive manner of speaking.

It may now be asked of what use will the study of critical and rhetorical writers be to those who wish to excel in eloquence ? They certainly ought not to be neglected ; and yet perhaps very much cannot be expected from them. It is, however, from the original ancient writers that the greatest advantage may be derived ; and it is a disgrace to any one, whose profession calls him to speak in publick, to be unacquainted with them. In all the ancient rhetorical writers there is indeed one defect ; they are too systematical. They aim at doing too much ; at reducing rhetorick to a perfect art, which may even supply invention with materials on every subject ; so that one would suppose they expected to form an orator by

rule, as they would form a carpenter. But in reality all that can be done is to assist and enlighten taste, and to point out to genius the course it ought to hold.

Aristotle was the first who took rhetorick out of the hands of the sophists, and founded it on reason and solid sense. Some of the profoundest observations, which have been made on the passions and manners of men, are to be found in his Treatise on Rhetorick ; though in this, as in all his writings, his great conciseness often renders him obscure. The Greek rhetoricians who succeeded him, most of whom are now lost, improved on his foundation. Two of them still remain, Demetrius Phalerius, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Both wrote on the construction of sentences, and deserve to be consulted ; particularly Dionysius, who is a very accurate and judicious critick.

To recommend the rhetorical writings of Cicero is superfluous. Whatever on the subject of eloquence is suggested by so great an orator, must be worthy of attention. His most extensive work on this subject is that *De Oratore*. None of his writings are more highly finished than this treatise. The dialogue is polite ; the characters are well supported, and the management of the whole is beautiful and pleasing. The *Orator ad M. Brutum* is also a valuable treatise ; and indeed through all Cicero's rhetorical works are displayed those sublime ideas of eloquence, which are calculated to form a just taste, and to inspire that enthusiasm for the art, which is highly conducive to excellence.

But of all ancient writers on the subject of oratory, the most instructive and most useful is Quintilian. His institutions abound with good sense, and discover a taste in the highest degree just and accurate. Almost all the principles of good criticism are found in them. He has well digested the ancient ideas concerning rhetorick, and has delivered his instructions in elegant and polished language.



#### COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANCIENTS AND MODERNS.

**A** VERY curious question has been agitated with regard to the comparative merit of the ancients and moderns. In France, this dispute was carried on with great heat between Boileau and Madame Dacier for the ancients, and Perrault and La Motte for the moderns. Even at this day, men of letters are divided on the subject. A few reflections upon it may be useful.

To decry the ancient classics is a vain attempt. Their reputation is established upon too solid a foundation to be shaken. Imperfections may be traced in their writings; but to discredit their works in general can belong only to peevishness or prejudice. The approbation of the publick through so many centuries establishes a verdict in their favour, from which there is no appeal.

In matters of mere reasoning, the world may be long in error; and systems of philosophy often have a currency for a time, and then die. But in objects of taste there is no such fallibility; as they depend not on knowledge and science, but upon sentiment and feeling. Now the universal feeling of mankind must be right; Homer and Virgil therefore must continue to stand upon the same ground which they have so long occupied.

Let us guard however against blind veneration for the ancients, and institute a fair comparison between them and the moderns. If the ancients had the preeminence in genius, yet the moderns must have some advantage in all arts which are improved by the natural progress of knowledge.

Hence in natural philosophy, astronomy, chymistry, and other sciences, which rest upon observation of facts, the moderns have a decided superiority over the ancients. Perhaps too in precise reasoning, philosophers of modern ages are superiour to those of ancient times; as a more extensive literary intercourse has contributed to sharpen the faculties of men. The moderns have also the superiority in history and in political knowledge; owing to the extension of commerce, the discovery of different countries, the superiour facility of intercourse, and the multiplicity of events and revolutions which have taken place in the world. In poetry likewise some advantages have been gained in point of regularity and accuracy. In dra-

mattick performances, improvements have certainly been made upon the ancient models. The variety of characters is greater; greater skill has been displayed in the conduct of the plot; and a happier attention to probability and decorum. Among the ancients we find higher conceptions, greater simplicity, and more original fancy. Among the moderns there is more of art and correctness, but less genius. But though this remark may in general be just, there are some exceptions from it; Milton and Shakespeare are inferiour to no poets in any age.

Among the ancients were many circumstances favourable to the exertions of genius. They travelled much in search of learning, and conversed with priests, poets, and philosophers. They returned home full of discoveries, and fired by uncommon objects. Their enthusiasm was greater; and few being stimulated to excel as authors, their fame was more intense and flattering. In modern times good writing is less prized. We write with less effort. Printing has so multiplied books, that assistance is easily procured. Hence mediocrity of genius prevails. To rise beyond this, and to soar above the crowd, is given to few.

In epick poetry, Homer and Virgil are still unrivalled; and orators, equal to Demosthenes and Cicero, we have none. In history, we have no modern narration so elegant, so picturesque, so animated, and interesting, as those of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus and Sal-

lust. Our dramas, with all their improvements, are inferiour in poetry and sentiment to those of Sophocles and Euripides. We have no comic dialogue that equals the correct, graceful, and elegant simplicity of Terence. The elegies of Tibullus, the pastorals of Theocritus, and the lyric poetry of Horace, are still unrivalled. By those, therefore, who wish to form their taste, and nourish their genius, the utmost attention must be paid to the ancient classics, both Greek and Roman.

After these reflections on the ancients and moderns, we proceed to a critical examination of the most distinguished kinds of composition, and of the characters of those writers, whether ancient or modern, who have excelled in them. Of orations and publick discourses much has already been said. The remaining prose compositions may be divided into historical writing, philosophical writing, epistolary writing, and fictitious history.



## HISTORICAL WRITING.

**H**ISTORY is a record of truth for the instruction of mankind. Hence the great requisites in a historian are impartiality, fidelity, and accuracy.

In the conduct of historical detail, the first object of a historian should be, to give his work all possible unity. History should not consist



of unconnected parts. Its portions should be united by some connecting principle, which will produce in the mind an impression of something that is one, whole and entire. Polybius, though not an elegant writer, is remarkable for this quality.

A historian should trace actions and events to their sources. He should therefore be well acquainted with human nature and politicks. His skill in the former will enable him to describe the characters of individuals; and his knowledge of the latter to account for the revolutions of government, and the operation of political causes on publick affairs. With regard to political knowledge, the ancients wanted some advantages which are enjoyed by the moderns. In ancient times there was less communication among neighbouring states; no intercourse by established posts, nor by ambassadors at distant courts. Larger experience too of the different modes of government has improved the modern historian beyond the historian of antiquity.

It is however in the form of narrative, and not by dissertation, that the historian is to impart his political knowledge. Formal discussions expose him to suspicion of being willing to accommodate his facts to his theory. They have also an air of pedantry, and evidently result from want of art. For reflections, whether moral, political, or philosophical, may be insinuated in the body of a narrative.

Clearness, order, and connexion are primary

virtues in historical narration. These are attained when the historian is complete master of his subject; can see the whole at one view; and comprehend the dependence of all its parts. History being a dignified species of composition, it should also be conspicuous for gravity. There should be nothing mean nor vulgar in the style; no quaintness, no smartness, no affectation, no wit. A history should likewise be interesting; and this is the quality which chiefly distinguishes a writer of genius and eloquence.

To be interesting, a historian must preserve a medium between rapid recital and prolix detail. He should know when to be concise, and when to enlarge. He should make a proper selection of circumstances. These give life, body, and colouring to his narration. They constitute what is termed historical painting.

In all these virtues of narration, particularly in picturesque description, the ancients eminently excel. Hence the pleasure of reading Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. In historical painting there are great varieties. Livy and Tacitus paint in very different ways. The descriptions of Livy are full, plain, and natural; those of Tacitus are short and bold.

One embellishment, which the moderns have laid aside, was employed by the ancients. They put orations into the mouths of celebrated personages. By these, they diversified their history, and conveyed both moral and political instruction. Thucydides was the first who adop-

ted this method ; and the orations with which his history abounds, are valuable remains of antiquity. It is doubtful, however, whether this embellishment should be allowed to the historian ; for they form a mixture, unnatural to history, of truth and fiction, The moderns are more chaste when on great occasions the historian delivers in his own person the sentiments and reasonings of opposite parties.

Another splendid embellishment of history is the delineation of characters. These are considered as exhibitions of fine writing ; and hence the difficulty of excelling in this province. For characters may be too shining and laboured. The accomplished historian avoids here to dazzle too much. He is solicitous to give the resemblance in a style equally removed from meanness and affectation. He studies the grandeur of simplicity.

Sound morality should always reign in history. A historian should ever show himself on the side of virtue. It is not, however, his province to deliver moral instructions in a formal manner. He should excite indignation against the designing and the vicious ; and by appeals to the passions, he will not only improve his reader, but take away from the natural coolness of historical narration.

In modern times historical genius has shone most in Italy. Acuteness, political sagacity, and wisdom are all conspicuous in Machiavel, Guicciardin, Davila, Bentivoglio, and Father Paul. In Great-Britain history has been fashionable

only a few years. For, though Clarendon and Burnet are considerable historians, they are inferior to Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon.

The inferior kinds of historical composition are annals, memoirs, and lives. Annals are a collection of facts in chronological order; and the properties of an annalist are fidelity and distinctness. Memoirs are a species of composition, in which an author pretends not to give a complete detail of facts, but only to record what he himself knew, or was concerned in, or what illustrates the conduct of some person, or some transaction which he chooses for his subject. It is not therefore expected of such a writer, that he possess the same profound research, and those superior talents which are requisite in a historian. It is chiefly required of him that he be sprightly and interesting. The French during two centuries have poured forth a flood of memoirs; the most of which are little more than agreeable trifles. We must, however, except from this censure the memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, and those of the Duke of Sully. The former join to a lively narrative, great knowledge of human nature. The latter deserve very particular praise. They approach to the usefulness and dignity of legitimate history. They are full of virtue and good sense; and are well calculated to form both the heads and hearts of those who are designed for publick business and high stations in the world.

Biography is a very useful kind of composition; less stately than history; but perhaps not

less instructive. It affords full opportunity of displaying the characters of eminent men, and of entering into a thorough acquaintance with them. In this kind of writing, Plutarch excels; but his matter is better than his manner; he has no peculiar beauty nor elegance. His judgment and accuracy also are sometimes taxed. But he is a very humane writer, and fond of displaying great men in the gentle lights of retirement.

Before we conclude this subject, it is proper to observe, that of late years a great improvement has been introduced into historical composition. More particular attention than formerly, has been given to laws, customs, commerce, religion, literature, and to every thing that shows the spirit and genius of nations. It is now conceived that a historian ought to illustrate manners as well as facts and events. Whatever displays the state of mankind in different periods; whatever illustrates the progress of the human mind, is more useful than details of sieges and battles.



## PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING AND DIALOGUE.

**O**F philosophy, the professed design is instruction. With the philosopher therefore style, form and dress are inferiour objects. But they must not be wholly neglected. The same truths

and reasonings, delivered with elegance, will strike more than in a dull and dry manner.

Beyond mere perspicuity, the strictest precision and accuracy are required in a philosophical writer; and these qualities may be possessed without dryness. Philosophical writing admits a polished, neat and elegant style. It admits the calm figures of speech; but rejects whatever is florid and tumid. Plato and Cicero have left philosophical treatises, composed with much elegance and beauty. Seneca is too fond of an affected, brilliant, sparkling manner. Locke's Treatise on Human Understanding is a model of a clear and distinct philosophical style. In the writings of Shaftesbury, on the other hand, philosophy is dressed up with too much ornament and finery.

Among the ancients, philosophical writing often assumed the form of dialogue. Plato is eminent for the beauty of his dialogues. In richness of imagination no philosophick writer, ancient or modern, is equal to him. His only fault is the excessive fertility of his imagination, which sometimes obscures his judgment, and frequently carries him into allegory, fiction, enthusiasm, and the airy regions of mystical theology. Cicero's dialogues are not so spirited and characteristic as those of Plato. They are however agreeable, and well supported; and show us conversation, carried on among some principal persons of ancient Rome with freedom, good breeding, and dignity. Of the light and humorous dialogue, Lucian is a model; and

he has been imitated by several modern writers. Fontenelle has written dialogues, which are sprightly and agreeable; but his characters, whoever his personages be, all become Frenchmen. The divine dialogues of Dr. Henry More amid the academick stiffness of the age are often remarkable for character and vivacity. Bishop Berkley's dialogues are abstract, yet perspicuous.



## EPISTOLARY WRITING.

**I**N epistolary writing we expect ease and familiarity; and much of its charm depends on its introducing us into some acquaintance with the writer. Its fundamental requisites are nature and simplicity, sprightliness and wit. The style of letters, like that of conversation, should flow easily. It ought to be neat and correct, but no more. Cicero's epistles are the most valuable collection of letters, extant in any language. They are composed with purity and elegance, but without the least affectation. Several letters of Lord Bolingbroke and of Bishop Atterbury are masterly. In those of Pope there is generally too much study; and his letters to ladies in particular are full of affectation. Those of Swift and Arbuthnot are written with ease and simplicity. Of a familiar correspondence, the most accomplished model are the letters of

Madame de Sevigné. They are easy, varied, lively and beautiful. The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, are perhaps more agreeable to the epistolary style, than any in the English language.



### FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

**T**HIS species of composition includes a very numerous, and in general a very insignificant class of writings, called romances and novels. Of these however the influence is known to be great both on the morals and taste of a nation. Notwithstanding the bad ends to which this mode of writing is applied, it might be employed for very useful purposes. Romances and novels describe human life and manners, and discover the errors into which we are betrayed by the passions. Wise men in all ages have used fables and fictions as vehicles of knowledge; and it is an observation of Lord Bacon, that the common affairs of the world are insufficient to fill the mind of man. He must create worlds of his own, and wander in the regions of imagination.

All nations whatsoever have discovered a love of fiction, and talents for invention. The Indians, Persians, and Arabians, abounded in fables and parables. Among the Greeks, we hear of the Ionian and Milesian tales. During the dark ages, fiction assumed an unusual form,



from the prevalence of chivalry. Romances arose, and carried the marvellous to its summit. Their knights were patterns not only of the most heroick courage, but of religion, generosity, courtesy and fidelity; and the heroines were no less distinguished for modesty, delicacy, and dignity of manners. Of these romances, the most perfect model is the Orlando Furioso. But as magick and enchantment came to be disbelieved and ridiculed, the chivalerian romances were discontinued, and were succeeded by a new species of fictitious writing.

Of the second stage of romance writing, the Cleopatra of Madame Scuderi and the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sydney are good examples. In these, however, there was still too large a proportion of the marvellous; and the books were too voluminous and tedious. Romance writing appeared therefore in a new form, and dwindled down to the familiar novel. Interesting situations in real life are the ground-work of novel writing. Upon this plan, the French have produced some works of considerable merit. Such are the Gil Blas of Le Sage and the Marianne of Marivaux.

In this mode of writing, the English are inferior to the French; yet in this kind there are some performances which discover the strength of the British genius. No fiction was ever better supported than the Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. Fielding's novels are highly distinguished for humour and boldness of character. Richardson, the author of Clarissa, is

the most moral of all our novel writers ; but he possesses the unfortunate talent of spinning out pieces of amusement into an immeasurable length. The trivial performances which daily appear under the title of lives, adventures, and histories, by anonymous authors, are most insipid, and, it must be confessed, often tend to deprave the morals, and to encourage dissipation and idleness.



#### NATURE OF POETRY. ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS. VERSIFICATION.

**W**HAT, it may be asked, is poetry ? and how does it differ from prose ? Many disputes have been maintained among criticks upon these questions. The essence of poetry is supposed by Aristotle, Plato, and others, to consist in fiction. But this is too limited a description. Many think the characteristick of poetry lies in imitation. But imitation of manners and characters may be carried on in prose as well as in poetry.

Perhaps the best definition is this, “ poetry is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed most commonly into regular numbers.” As the primary object of a poet is to please and to move, it is to the imagination and the passions that he addresses himself. It is by pleasing and moving, that he aims to instruct and reform.

Poetry is older than prose. In the beginning of society there were occasions upon which men met together for feasts and sacrifices, when musick, dancing, and songs were the chief entertainment. The meetings of American tribes are distinguished by musick and songs. In songs they celebrate their religious rites and martial achievements; and in such songs we trace the beginning of poetick composition.

Man is by nature both a poet and musician. The same impulse which produced a poetick style, prompted a certain melody or modulation of sound, suited to the emotions of joy or grief, love or anger. Musick and poetry are united in song, and mutually assist and exalt each other. The first poets sung their own verses. Hence the origin of versification, or the arrangement of words to tune or melody.

Poets and songs are the first objects that make their appearance in all nations. Apollo, Orpheus and Amphion were the first tamers of mankind among the Greeks. The Gothick nations had their scalders, or poets. The Celtick tribes had their bards. Poems and songs are among the antiquities of all countries; and, as the occasions of their being composed are nearly the same, so they remarkably resemble each other in style. They comprize the celebration of gods and heroes, and victories. They abound in fire and enthusiasm; they are wild, irregular, and glowing.

During the infancy of poetry, all its different kinds were mingled in the same composition;

but in the progress of society, poems assumed their different regular forms. Time separated into classes the several kinds of poetick composition. The ode and the elegy, the epick poem and the drama, are all reduced to rule, and exercise the acuteness of criticism.



### ENGLISH VERSIFICATION.

**N**ATIONS, whose language and pronunciation were musical, rested their versification chiefly on the quantities of their syllables; but mere quantity has very little effect in English verse. For the difference, made between long and short syllables in our manner of pronouncing them, is very inconsiderable.

The only perceptible difference among our syllables arises from that strong percussion of voice which is termed accent. This accent however does not always make the syllable longer, but only gives it more force of sound; and it is rather upon a certain order and succession of accented and unaccented syllables, than upon their quantity, that the melody of our verse depends.

In the constitution of our verse there is another essential circumstance. There is the œsural pause, which falls near the middle of each line. This pause may fall after the fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh syllable; and by this

mean uncommon variety and richness are added to English versification.

Our English verse is of Iambick structure, composed of a nearly alternate succession of unaccented and accented syllables. When the pause falls earliest, that is, after the fourth syllable, the briskest melody is thereby formed. Of this, the following lines from Pope, are a happy illustration:

On her white breast | a sparkling cross she wore,  
Which Jews might kiss | and infidels adore ;  
Her lively looks | a sprightly mind disclose,  
Quick, as her eyes, | and as unfix'd as those.  
Favours to none, | to all she smiles extends ;  
Oft she rejects, | but never once offends.

When the pause falls after the fifth syllable, dividing the line into two equal portions, the melody is sensibly altered. The verse, losing the brisk air of the former pause, becomes more smooth and flowing.

Eternal sunshine | of the spotless mind,  
Each prayer accepted, | and each wish resign'd.

When the pause follows the sixth syllable, the melody becomes grave. The movement of the verse is more solemn and measured.

The wrath of Peleus' son, | the direful spring  
Of all the Grecian woes, | O goddess, sing.

The grave cadence becomes still more sensible when the pause follows the seventh syllable. This kind of verse however seldom occurs ; and its effect is to diversify the melody.

And in the smooth descriptive | murmur still,  
Long lov'd, ador'd ideas, | all adieu.

Our blank verse is a noble, bold and disencumbered mode of versification. It is free from the full close which rhyme forces upon the ear at the end of every couplet. Hence it is peculiarly suited to subjects of dignity and force. It is more favourable than rhyme to the sublime and highly pathetick. It is the most proper for an epick poem and for tragedy. Rhyme finds its proper place in the middle regions of poetry; and blank verse in the highest.

The present form of our English heroick rhyme in couplets is modern. The measure used in the days of Elizabeth, James, and Charles I. was the stanza of eight lines. Waller was the first who introduced couplets; and Dryden established the usage. Waller smoothed our verse, and Dryden perfected it. The versification of Pope is peculiar. It is flowing, smooth and correct in the highest degree. He has totally thrown aside the triplets so common in Dryden. In ease and variety, Dryden excels Pope. He frequently makes his couplets run into one another with somewhat of the freedom of blank verse.



## PASTORAL POETRY.

**I**T was not before men had begun to assemble in great cities, and the bustle of courts and large societies was known, that pastoral po-

etry assumed its present form.) From the tumult of a city life, men looked back with complacency to the innocence of rural retirement. In the court of Ptolemy, Theocritus wrote the first pastorals with which we are acquainted; and in the court of Augustus, Virgil imitated him.

The pastoral is a very agreeable species of poetry. It lays before us the gay and pleasing scenes of nature. It recalls objects which are commonly the delight of our childhood and youth. It exhibits a life with which we associate ideas of innocence, peace and leisure. It transports us into Flysian regions. It presents many objects favourable to poetry; rivers and mountains, meadows and hills, rocks and trees, flocks and shepherds void of care.

A pastoral poet is careful to exhibit whatever is most pleasing in the pastoral state. He paints its simplicity, tranquility, innocence, and happiness; but conceals its rudeness and misery. If his pictures be not those of real life, they must resemble it. This is a general idea of pastoral poetry. But, to understand it more perfectly, let us consider, 1. The scenery: 2. The characters; and lastly, the subjects it should exhibit.

The scene must always be in the country; and the poet must have a talent for description. In this respect, Virgil is excelled by Theocritus, whose descriptions are richer and more picturesque. In every pastoral a rural prospect should be drawn with distinctness. It is not enough to have unmeaning groups of roses and violets,

of birds breezes, and brooks thrown together. A good poet gives such a landscape as a painter might copy. His objects are particularized. The stream, the rock, or the tree, so stands forth as to make a figure in the imagination, and give a pleasing conception, of the place where we are.

(In his allusions to natural objects as well as in professed descriptions of the scenery, the poet must study variety.) He must diversify his face of nature by presenting us new images. He must also suit the scenery to the subject of his pastoral; and exhibit nature under such forms as may correspond with the emotions and sentiments he describes. Thus Virgil, when he gives the lamentation of a despairing lover, communicates a gloom to the scene.

*Tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos,  
Assiduè veniebat; ibi hæc incondita solus  
Montibus et sylvis studio jactabat inani.*

With regard to the characters in pastorals, it is not sufficient that they be persons residing in the country. Courtiers and citizens who resort thither occasionally, are not the characters expected in pastorals. We expect to be entertained by shepherds, or persons wholly engaged in rural occupations. The shepherd must be plain & unaffected in his manner of thinking. An amiable simplicity must be the ground-work of his character; though there is no necessity for his being dull and insipid. He may have good sense, and even vivacity; tender and delicate



feelings. But he must never deal in general reflections, or abstract reasonings; nor in conceits of gallantry; for these are consequences of refinement. When Aminta in Tasso is disentangling his mistress's hair from the tree, to which a savage had bound it, he is made to say "Cruel tree, how couldst thou injure that lovely hair, which did thee so much honour? Thy rugged trunk was not worthy of so lovely knots. What advantage have the servants of love, if those precious chains are common to them and to trees?" Strained sentiments, like these, suit not the woods. The language of rural personages is that of plain sense and natural feeling; as in the following beautiful lines of Virgil:

Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala  
 (Dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem;  
 Alter ab undecimo tum me jam ceperat annus,  
 Jam fragiles poteram a terra contingere ramos.  
 Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error!

The next enquiry is, what are the proper subjects of pastorals? For it is not enough that the poet give us shepherds discoursing together. Every good poem has a subject that in some way interests us. In this lies the difficulty of pastoral writing. The active scenes of country life are too barren of incidents. The condition of a shepherd has few things in it that excite curiosity or surprize. Hence of all poems the pastoral is most meagre in subject, and least diversified in strain. Yet this defect is not to be ascribed solely to barrenness of subjects. It is

in a great measure the fault of the poet. For human nature and human passions are much the same in every situation and rank of life. What a variety of objects within the rural sphere do the passions present! The struggles and ambition of shepherds; their adventures; their disquiet and felicity; the rivalry of lovers; unexpected successes and disasters; are all proper subjects for the pastoral muse.)

Theocritus and Virgil are the two great fathers of pastoral writing. For simplicity of sentiment, harmony of numbers, and richness of scenery, the former is highly distinguished. But he sometimes descends to ideas that are gross and mean, and makes his shepherds abusive and immodest. Virgil on the contrary, preserves the pastoral simplicity without any offensive rusticity.

Modern writers of pastorals have in general imitated the ancient poets. Sannazarius, however, a Latin poet, in the age of Leo X. attempted a bold innovation, by composing piscatory eclogues, and changing the scene from the woods to the sea, and the character from shepherds to fishermen. But the attempt was so unhappy that he has no followers. The toilsome life of fishermen has nothing agreeable to present to the imagination. Fishes and marine productions have nothing poetical in them. Of all the moderns, Gesner, a poet of Switzerland, has been the most happy in pastoral composition. Many new ideas are introduced in his Idyls. His scenery is striking, and his descrip-

tions lively. He is pathetick, and writes to the heart. Neither the pastorals of Pope, nor of Philips, do much honour to English poetry. The pastorals of Pope are barren; their chief merit is the smoothness of the numbers. Philips attempted to be more simple and natural than Pope; but wanted genius to support the attempt. His topicks, like those of Pope, are beaten; and, instead of being natural or simple, he is flat and insipid. Shenstone's pastoral ballad is one of the most elegant poems of the kind in the English language.

In latter times pastoral writing has been extended into regular drama; and this is the chief improvement the moderns have made in it. Two pieces of this kind are highly celebrated, Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, and Tasso's *Aminta*. Both possess great beauties; but the latter is the preferable poem, because less intricate, and less affected; though not wholly free from Italian refinement. As a poem, however, it has great merit. The poetry is pleasing and gentle, and the Italian language confers on it much of that softness which is suited to the pastoral.

The *Gentle Shepherd* of Allen Ramsay is a pastoral drama, which will bear comparison with any composition of the kind in any language. To this admirable poem it is a disadvantage, that it is written in the old rustick dialect of Scotland, which must soon be obsolete; and it is a farther disadvantage, that it is formed so entirely on the rural manners of Scotland, that

none, but a native of that country, can thoroughly understand and relish it. It is full of natural description, and excels in tenderness of sentiment. The characters are well drawn, the incidents affecting, the scenery and manners lively and just.



## LYRICK POETRY.

**T**HE ode is a species of poetry, which has much dignity, and in which many writers in every age have distinguished themselves. Ode in Greek is the same with song or hymn; and lyric poetry implies that the verses are accompanied with a lyre, or musical instrument. In the ode, poetry retains its first form, and its original union with music. Sentiments commonly constitute its subject. It recites not actions. Its spirit and the manner of its execution mark its character. It admits a bolder and more passionate strain than is allowed in simple recital. Hence the enthusiasm that belongs to it. Hence that neglect of regularity, those digressions, and that disorder, it is supposed to admit.

All odes may be classed under four denominations, 1. Hymns addressed to God, or composed on religious subjects. 2. Heroick odes, which concern the celebration of heroes and great actions. 3. Moral and philosophical odes,

which refer chiefly to virtue, friendship and humanity, 4. Festive and amorous odes, which are calculated merely for amusement and pleasure.

Enthusiasm being considered as the characteristick of the ode, it has often degenerated into licentiousness. This species of writing has, above all others, been infected by want of order, method, and connexion. The poet is out of sight in a moment. He is so abrupt and eccentric, so irregular and obscure, that we cannot follow him. It is not indeed necessary that the structure of the ode be so perfectly regular as the epick poem. But in every composition there ought to be a whole; and this whole should consist of connected parts. The transition from thought to thought may be light and delicate, but the connexion of ideas should be preserved; the author should think, and not rave.

Pindar, the father of lyric poetry, has led his imitators into enthusiastick wildness. They imitate his disorder without catching his spirit. In Horace's odes every thing is correct, harmonious, and happy. His elevation is moderate, not rapturous. Grace and elegance are his characteristicks. He supports a moral sentiment with dignity, touches a gay one with felicity, and has the art of trifling most agreeably. His language too is most fortunate.

Many Latin poets of later ages have imitated him. Casimir, a Polish poet of the last century, is of this number; and discovers a con-

siderable degree of original genius and poetick fire. He is, however, far inferiour to the Roman in graceful expression. Buchanan in some of his lyrick compositions is very elegant and classical.

In our own language, Dryden's ode on St. Cecilia is well known. Mr. Gray in some of his odes is celebrated for tenderness and sublimity; and in Doddsley's Miscellanies are several very beautiful lyrick poems. Professedly Pindarick odes are seldom intelligible. Cowley is doubly harsh in his Pindarick compositions. His Anacreontick odes are happier, and perhaps the most agreeable and perfect in their kind of all his poems.



### DIDACTICK POETRY.

**O**F didactick poetry, it is the express intention to convey instruction and knowledge. It may be executed in different ways. The poet may treat some instructive subject in a regular form; or without intending a great or regular work, he may inveigh against particular vices, or make some moral observations on human life and characters.

The highest species of didactick poetry is a regular treatise on some philosophical, grave, or useful subject. Such are the books of Lucretius de Rerum Natura, the Georgicks of Virgil, Pope's Essay on Criticism, Akenfide's Pleas-

ures of the Imagination, Armstrong on Health, and the Art of Poetry, by Horace, Vida, and Boileau.

In all such works, as instruction is the professed object, the chief merit consists in sound thought, just principles, and apt illustrations. It is necessary however that the poet enliven his lessons by figures, incidents, and poetical painting. Virgil in his Georgicks embellishes the most trivial circumstances in rural life. When he teaches that the labour of the farmer must begin in spring, he expresses himself thus :

*Vere novo gelidus canis cum montibus humor  
Liquitur, et Zephyro putris se gleba resolvit ;  
Depresso incipiat jam tum mihi Taurus aratro  
Ingemere, et fulco attritus splendescere vomer.*

In all didactick works such method is requisite, as will clearly exhibit a connected train of instruction. With regard to episodes and embellishments, writers of didactick poetry are indulged great liberties. For in a poetical performance a continued series of instruction without embellishment soon fatigues. The digressions in the Georgicks of Virgil are his principal beauties. The happiness of a country life, the fable of Aristeus, and the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, cannot be praised too much.

A didactick poet ought also to connect his episodes with his subject. In this, Virgil is eminent. Among modern didactick poets, Akenfide and Armstrong are distinguished. The former is rich and poetical ; but the latter

maintains greater equality, and more chaste and correct elegance.

Of didactick poetry, fatires and epistles run into the most familiar style. Satire seems to have been at first a relick of ancient comedy, the grossness of which was corrected by Ennius and Lucilius. At length, Horace brought it into its present form. Reformation of manners is its professed end; and vice and vicious characters are the objects of its censure. There are three different modes in which it has been conducted by the three great ancient satirists, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius.

The fatires of Horace have not much elevation. They exhibit a measured prose. Ease and grace characterize his manner; and he glances rather at the follies and weakness of mankind, than at their vices. He smiles while he reproves. He moralizes like a sound philosopher, but with the politeness of a courtier. Juvenal is more declamatory and serious; and has greater strength and fire. Persius has distinguished himself by a noble and sublime morality.

Poetical epistles, when employed on moral or critical subjects, seldom rise into a higher strain of poetry, than fatires. But in the epistolary form, many other subjects may be treated; as love, poetry, or elegiack. The ethical epistles of Pope are a model; and in them he shows the strength of his genius. Here he had a full opportunity for displaying his judgment and wit, his concise and happy expression, together with



the harmony of his numbers. His imitations of Horace are so happy, that it is difficult to say, whether the original or the copy ought to be most admired.

Among moral and didactic writers, Dr. Young ought not to be passed over in silence. Genius appears in all his works; but his *Universal Passion* may be considered as possessing the full merit of that animated conciseness, particularly requisite in satirical and didactic compositions. At the same time it is to be observed, that his wit is often too sparkling, and his sentences too pointed. In his *Night Thoughts* there is great energy of expression, several pathetic passages, many happy images, and many pious reflections. But his sentiments are frequently overstrained and turgid, and the style harsh and obscure.



## DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

**I**N descriptive poetry the highest exertions of genius may be displayed. In general, indeed, description is introduced as an embellishment, not as the subject of a regular work. It is the test of a poet's imagination, and always distinguishes an original from a second rate genius. A writer of an inferior class sees nothing new or peculiar in the object he would paint; his conceptions are loose and vague; and his expressions feeble and general. A true poet places

an object before our eyes. He gives it the colouring of life; a painter might copy form him.

The great art of picturesque description lies in the selection of circumstances. These ought never to be vulgar or common. They should mark strongly the object. No general description is good; all distinct ideas are formed upon particulars. There should also be uniformity in the circumstances selected. In describing a great object, every circumstance brought forward should tend to aggrandize; and in describing a gay object, all the circumstances should tend to beautify it. Lastly, the circumstances in description should be expressed with conciseness and simplicity.

The largest and fullest descriptive performance in perhaps any language, is Thomson's Seasons; a work which possesses very uncommon merit. The style is splendid and strong, but sometimes harsh and indistinct. He is an animated and beautiful describer; for he had a feeling heart and a warm imagination. He studied nature with care; was enamoured of her beauties; and had the happy talent of painting them like a master. To show the power of a single well-chosen circumstance in heightening a description, the following passage may be produced from his Summer, where, relating the effects of heat in the torrid zone, he is led to take notice of the pestilence that destroyed the English fleet at Carthage, under Admiral Vernon.

—— You, gallant Vernon, saw  
 The miserable scene: you, pitying saw  
 To infant weakness sunk the warrior's arm;  
 Saw the deep racking pang; the ghastly form;

The lip pale quivering, and the beamless eye  
 No more with ardour bright ; you heard the groans  
 Of agonizing ships from shore to shore ;  
 Heard nightly plung'd amid the fullen waves  
 The frequent corse.—————

All the circumstances here selected tend to heighten the dismal scene ; but the last image is the most striking in the picture.

Of descriptive narration there are beautiful examples in Parnel's Tale of the Hermit. The setting forth of the hermit to visit the world, his meeting a companion, and the houses in which they are entertained, of the vain man, the covetous man, and the good man, are pieces of highly finished painting. But the richest and the most remarkable of all the descriptive poems in the English language, are the Allegro and the Penseroso of Milton. They are the store-house whence many succeeding poets have enriched their descriptions, and are inimitably fine poems. Take, for instance, the following lines from the Penseroso :

————— I walk unseen  
 On the dry, smooth-shaven green,  
 To behold the wandering moon  
 Riding near her highest noon ;  
 And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
 Oft on a plat of rising ground  
 I hear the far off curfew sound,  
 Over some wide watered shore  
 Swinging slow with solemn roar  
 Or, if the air will not permit,  
 Some still removed place will fit,  
 Where glowing embers through the room,  
 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom ;  
 Far from all resort of mirth,  
 Save the cricket on the hearth,

Or the bellman's drowsy charm,  
 To bless the doors, from nightly harm ;  
 Or let my lamp at midnight hour,  
 Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
 Exploring Plato to unfold  
 What worlds, or what vast regions hold  
 Th' immortal mind, that hath forsook  
 Her mansion in this fleshy nook ;  
 And of these demons, that are found  
 In fire, air, flood, or under ground.

Here are no general expressions ; all is picturesque, expressive and concise. One strong point of view is exhibited to the reader ; and the impression made, is lively and interesting.

Both Homer and Virgil excel in poetical description. In the second *Æneid*, the sacking of Troy is so particularly described, that the reader finds himself in the midst of the scene. The death of Priam is a master-piece of description. Homer's battles are all wonderful. Ossian, too, paints in strong colours, and is remarkable for touching the heart. He thus portrays the ruins of Balclutha : " I have seen the walls of  
 " Balclutha ; but they were desolate. The fire  
 " had refounded within the halls ; and the voice  
 " of the people is now heard no more. The  
 " stream of Clutha was removed from its place  
 " by the fall of the walls ; the thistle shook  
 " there its lonely head ; the moss whistled to  
 " the wind. The fox looked out of the win-  
 " dow ; the rank grass waved round his head.  
 " Desolate is the dwelling of Moina ; silence is  
 " in the house of her fathers."

Much of the beauty of descriptive poetry depends upon a proper choice of epithets. Many

poets are often careless in this particular ; hence the multitude of unmeaning and redundant epithets. Hence the “*Liquidi Fontes*” of Virgil, and the “*Prata Canis Albicant Pruinis*” of Horace. To observe that water is liquid, and that snow is white, is little better than mere tautology. Every epithet should add a new idea to the word which it qualifies. So in Milton :

Who shall tempt with wandering feet  
The dark unbottomed, infinite abyss ;  
And through the palpable obscure find out  
His uncouth way ? Or spread his airy flight,  
Upborne with indefatigable wings,  
Over the vast abrupt ?

The description here is strengthened by the epithets. The wandering feet, the unbottomed abyss, the palpable obscure, the uncouth way, the indefatigable wing, are all happy expressions.



## THE POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

**I**N treating of the various kinds of poetry, that of the scriptures justly deserves a place. The sacred books present us the most ancient monuments of poetry now extant, and furnish a curious subject of criticism. They display the taste of a remote age and country. They exhibit a singular, but beautiful species of composition ; and it must give great pleasure if we

find the beauty and dignity of the style adequate to the weight and importance of the matter. Dr. Lowth's learned treatise on the poetry of the Hebrews ought to be perused by all. It is an exceeding valuable work both for elegance of style and justness of criticism. We cannot do better than to follow the track of this ingenious author.

Among the Hebrews, poetry was cultivated from the earliest times. Its general construction is singular and peculiar. It consists in dividing every period into correspondent, for the most part into equal members, which answer to each other, both in sense and sound. In the first member of a period a sentiment is expressed; and in the second the same sentiment is amplified; or repeated in different terms, or some times contrasted with its opposite. Thus, "Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among all people."

This form of poetical composition is deduced from the manner in which the Hebrews sung their sacred hymns. These were accompanied with musick, and performed by bands of singers and musicians, who alternately answered each other. One band began the hymn thus: "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice;" and the chorus, or semi-chorus, took up the corresponding versicle; "Let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof."

But, independent of its peculiar mode of construction, the sacred poetry is distinguished by the highest beauties of strong, concise, bold, and figurative expression. Conciseness and strength are two of its most remarkable characters. The sentences are always short. The same thought is never dwelt upon long. Hence the sublimity of the Hebrew poetry; and all writers, who attempt the sublime, might profit much by imitating in this respect the style of the old testament. No writings abound so much in bold and animated figures, as the sacred books. Metaphors, comparisons, allegories, and personifications, are particularly frequent. But, to relish these figures justly, we must transport ourselves into Judea, and attend to particular circumstances in it. Through all that region little or no rain falls in the summer months. Hence, to represent distress, frequent allusions are made to a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; and hence, to describe a change from distress to prosperity, their metaphors are founded on the falling of showers, and the bursting out of springs in a desert. Thus in Isaiah, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert; and the parched ground shall become a pool; and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons there shall be grass, with rushes and reeds."

Comparisons employed by the sacred poets, are generally short, touching only one point of resemblance. Such is the following: "He that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Allegory is likewise frequently employed in the sacred books; and a fine instance of this occurs in the lxxxth. Psalm, wherein the people of Israel are compared to a vine. Of parables, the prophetic writings are full; and, if to us they sometimes appear obscure, we should remember that in early times it was universally the custom among all eastern nations, to convey sacred truths under mysterious figures.

The figure, however, which elevates beyond all others the poetical style of the scriptures, is personification. The personifications of the inspired writers exceed in force and magnificence those of all other poets. This is more particularly true when any appearance or operation of the Almighty is concerned. "Before him went the pestilence. The waters saw thee, O God, and were afraid. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled. The overflowings of the waters passed by; the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high." The poetry of the scriptures is very different from modern poetry. It is the burst



of inspiration. Bold sublimity, not correct elegance, is its character.

The several kinds of poetry, found in scripture, are chiefly the didactic, elegiac, pastoral and lyric. The book of Proverbs is the principal instance of the didactic species of poetry. Of elegiac poetry, the lamentation of David over Jonathan is a very beautiful instance. Of pastoral poetry, the Song of Solomon is a high exemplification; and of lyric poetry, the Old Testament is full. The whole book of Psalms is a collection of sacred odes.

Among the composers of the sacred books there is an evident diversity of style. Of the sacred poets, the most eminent are the author of the book of Job, David, and Isaiah. In the compositions of David there is a great variety of manner. In the soft and tender he excels; and in his Psalms are many lofty passages. But in strength of description he yields to Job; in sublimity, to Isaiah. Without exception, Isaiah is the most sublime of all poets. Dr. Lowth compares Isaiah to Homer, Jeremiah to Simonides, and Ezekiel to Æschylus. Among the minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and especially Nahum, are distinguished for poetical spirit. In the prophecies of Daniel and Jonah there is no poetry.

The book of Job is extremely ancient; the author uncertain; and it is remarkable, that it has no connexion with the affairs or manners of the Hebrews. It is the most descriptive of all the sacred poems. A peculiar glow of fancy and

strength of description characterize the author ; and no writer abounds so much in metaphors. He renders visible, whatever he treats. The scene is laid in the land of Uz, or Idumæa, which is a part of Arabia ; and the imagery employed differs from that which is peculiar to the Hebrews.



### EPICK POETRY.

**O**F all poetical works the epick poem is the most dignified. To contrive a story which is entertaining, important, and instructive ; to enrich it with happy incidents ; to enliven it by a variety of characters and descriptions ; and to maintain a uniform propriety of sentiment, and a due elevation of style, are the highest efforts of poetical genius.

An epick poem is the recital of some illustrious enterprize in a poetical form. Epick poetry is of a moral nature ; and tends to the promotion of virtue. With this view it acts by extending our ideas of perfection, and exciting admiration. Now this is accomplished only by proper representations of heroick deeds and virtuous characters. Valour, truth, justice, fidelity, friendship, piety, and magnanimity, are objects which the epick muse presents to our minds in the most splendid and honourable colours.

Epick composition is distinguished from history by its poetical form, and its liberty of fiction. It is a more calm composition than tragedy. It requires a grave, equal, and supported dignity. On some occasions it demands the pathetick and the violent; and it embraces a greater compass of time and action than dramatick writing admits.

The action or subject of an epick poem must have three properties. It must be one; it must be great; it must be interesting. One action or enterprize must constitute its subject. Aristotle insists on unity as essential to epick poetry; because independent facts never affect so deeply, as a tale that is one and connected. Virgil has chosen for his subject the establishment of Æneas in Italy; and the anger of Achilles, with its consequences, is the subject of the Iliad.

It is not however to be understood, that epick unity excludes all episodes. On the contrary critics consider them as great ornaments of epick poetry. They diversify the subject, and relieve the reader by shifting the scene. Thus Hector's visit to Andromache in the Iliad, and Erminia's adventure with the shepherd in the seventh book of the Jerusalem, affords us a well-judged and pleasing retreat from camps and battles.

Secondly, the subject of an epick poem must be so great and splendid, as to fix attention, and to justify the magnificent apparatus the poet bestows on it. The subject should also be of ancient date. Both Lucan and Voltaire

have transgressed this rule. By confining himself too strictly to historical truth, the former does not please ; and the latter has improperly mingled well-known events with fictitious. Hence they exhibit not that greatness which the epick requires.

The third requisite in an epick subject is, that it be interesting. This depends in a great measure upon the choice of it. But it depends much more upon the skilful management of the poet. He must so frame his plan, as to comprehend many affecting incidents. He must sometimes dazzle with valiant achievements ; sometimes he must be awful and august ; often tender and pathetick ; and he must sometimes give us gentle and pleasing scenes of love, friendship, and affection.

To render the subject interesting, much also depends upon the dangers and obstacles which must be encountered. It is by the management of these, that the poet must rouse attention, and hold his reader in suspense and agitation.

It is generally supposed by criticks, that an epick poem should conclude successfully ; as an unhappy conclusion depresses the mind. Indeed it is on the prosperous side, that epick poets generally conclude. But two authors of great name, Milton and Lucan, hold the contrary course. The one concludes with the subversion of Roman liberty ; and the other with the expulsion of man from Paradise.

No precise boundaries can be fixed for the duration of the epick action. The action of

the Iliad lasts, according to Bossu, only forty-seven days. The action of the Odyssy extends to eight years and a half; and that of the Æneid includes about six years.

The personages in an epick poem should be proper and well supported. They should display the features of human nature; and may admit different degrees of virtue, and even vice; though the principal characters should be such as will raise admiration and love. Poetick characters are of two sorts, general and particular. General characters are such as are wise, brave, and virtuous, without any farther distinction. Particular characters express the species of bravery, of wisdom, and of virtue, for which any one is remarkable. In this discrimination of characters, Homer excels. Tasso approaches the nearest to him in this respect; and Virgil is the most deficient.

Among epick poets it is the practice to select some personage as the hero of the tale. This renders the unity of the subject more perfect, and contributes highly to the interest and perfection of the species of writing. It has been asked, Who then is the hero of Paradise Lost? The devil, say some criticks, who affect to be pleasant against Milton. But they mistake his intention by supposing that whoever is triumphant in the close, must be the hero of the poem. For Adam is Milton's hero; that is, the capital and most interesting figure in his poem.

In epick poetry there are beside human characters gods and supernatural beings. This

forms what is called the machinery of epick poetry ; and the French suppose this essential to the nature of an epick poem. They hold that in every epick composition the main action is necessarily carried on by the intervention of gods. But there seems to be no solid reason for their opinion. Lucan has no gods, nor supernatural agents. The author of Leonidas also has no machinery.

But, though machinery is not absolutely necessary to the epick plan, it ought not to be totally excluded from it. The marvellous has a great charm for most readers. It leads to sublime description, and fills the imagination. At the same time it becomes a poet to be temperate in the use of supernatural machinery ; and so to employ the religious faith or superstition of his country, as to give an air of probability to events most contrary to the common course of nature.

With regard to the allegorical personages, fame, discord, love, and the like, they form the worst kind of machinery. In description they may sometimes be allowed ; but they should never bear any part in the action of the poem. As they are only mere names of general ideas, they ought not to be considered as persons ; and cannot mingle with human actors without an intolerable confusion of shadows with realities.

In the narration of the poet, it is of little consequence, whether he relate the whole story in his own character, or introduce one of his

personages to relate a part of the action that passed before the poem opens. Homer follows one method in his Iliad, and the other in his Odyfsey. It is to be observed however that, if the narrative be given by any of the actors, it gives the poet greater liberty of spreading out such parts of the subject as he inclines to dwell upon in person, and of comprising the rest within a short recital. When the subject is of great extent, and comprehends the transactions of several years, as in the Odyfsey and Æneid, this method seems preferable. But, when the subject is of smaller compass and shorter duration, as in the Iliad and Jerusalem, the poet may, without disadvantage, relate the whole in his own person.

What is of most importance in the narration is, that it be perspicuous, animated, and enriched with every poetick beauty. No sort of composition requires more strength, dignity, and fire, than an epick poem. It is the region in which we look for every thing sublime in description, tender in sentiment, and bold or lively in expression. The ornaments of epick poetry are grave and chaste. Nothing loose, ludicrous, or affected, finds place there. All the objects it presents ought to be great, tender, or pleasing. Descriptions of disgusting or shocking objects are to be avoided. Hence the fable of the Harpies in the Æneid, and the allegory of Sin and Death in Paradise Lost, should have been omitted.

## HOMER'S ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.

**T**HE father of epick poetry is Homer ; and in order to relish him, we must divest ourselves of modern ideas of dignity and refinement, and transport our imagination almost three thousand years back in the history of mankind. The reader is to expect a picture of the ancient world. The two great characters of Homer's poetry are fire and simplicity. But, to have a clear idea of his merit, let us consider the Iliad under the three heads of the subject or action, the characters and the narration.

The subject of the Iliad is happily chosen. For no subject could be more splendid than the Trojan war. A great confederacy of the Grecian states and ten years' siege of Troy must have spread far abroad the renown of many military exploits, and given an extensive interest to the heroes who were concerned in them. Upon these traditions, Homer grounded his poem ; and, as he lived two or three centuries after the Trojan war, he had full liberty to intermingle fable with history. He chose not, however, the whole Trojan war for his subject ; but with great judgment selected the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, which includes the most interesting period of the war. He has thus given greater unity to his poem. He has gained one hero, or principal character, that is, Achilles ; and shown the pernicious effects of discord among confederated princes.



The praise of high invention has in every age been justly given to Homer. His incidents, speeches, characters, divine and human; his battles, his little history pieces of the persons slain, discover a boundless invention. Nor is his judgment less worthy of praise. His story is conducted with great art. He rises upon us gradually. His heroes are introduced with exquisite skill to our acquaintance. The distress thickens as the poem advances; every thing serves to aggrandize Achilles, and to make him the capital figure.

In characters, Homer is without a rival. He abounds in dialogue and conversation, and this produces a spirited exhibition of his personages. This dramattick method, however, though more natural, expressive, and animated, is less grave and majestick than narrative. Some of Homer's speeches are unseasonable, and others trifling. With the Greek vivacity he has also some of the Greek loquacity.

In no character perhaps does he display greater art, than in that of Helen. Notwithstanding her frailty and crimes, he contrives to make her an interesting object. The admiration with which the old generals behold her when she is coming toward them; her veiling herself and shedding tears in the presence of Priam; her grief at the sight of Menelaus; her upbraiding of Paris for his cowardice, and her returning fondness for him, are exquisite strokes, and worthy of a great master.

Homer has been accused of making Achilles too brutal a character ; and criticks seem to have adopted this censure from two lines of Horace :

*Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,  
Jura negat sibi nata ; nihil non arrogat armis.*

It appears that Horace went beyond the truth. Achilles is passionate ; but he is not a contemner of law. He has reason on his side ; for, though he discovers too much heat, it must be allowed that he had been notoriously wronged. Beside bravery and contempt of death, he has the qualities of openness and sincerity. He loves his subjects, and respects the gods. He is warm in his friendships ; and throughout he is high spirited, gallant and honourable.

Homer's gods made a great figure ; but his machinery was not his own invention. He followed the traditions of his country. But, though his machinery is often lofty and magnificent, yet his gods are often deficient in dignity. They have all the human passions ; they drink and feast, and are vulnerable, like men. While, however, he at times degrades his divinities, he knows how to make them appear with most awful majesty. Jupiter for the most part, is introduced with great dignity ; and several of the most sublime conceptions in the Iliad are founded on the appearances of Neptune, Minerva, and Appollo.

The style of Homer is easy, natural, and highly animated. Of all the great poets, he is

the most simple in his style, and resembles most the style of the poetical parts of the Old Testament. Pope's translation of him affords no idea of his manner. His versification however is allowed to be uncommonly melodious; and to carry beyond that of any poet resemblance of sound to sense.

In narration, Homer is always concise and descriptive. He paints his objects in a manner to our sight. His battles are singularly admirable. We see them in all their hurry, terror, and confusion. In similes no poet abounds so much. His comparisons, however, taken in general, are not his greatest beauties; they come upon us in too quick succession; and often disturb his narration or description. His lions, bulls, eagles, and herds of sheep, recur too frequently.

The criticism of Longinus upon the *Odyssy* is not without foundation; that in this poem Homer may be likened to the setting sun, whose grandeur remains without the heat of his meridian beams. It wants the vigour and sublimity of the *Iliad*; yet possesses so many beauties, as to be justly entitled to high praise. It is a very amusing poem, and has much greater variety than the *Iliad*. It contains many interesting stories and pleasing pictures of ancient manners. Instead of the ferocity which pervades the *Iliad*, it presents us most amiable images of humanity and hospitality. It entertains us with many a wonderful adventure, and many a landscape of nature; and instructs

us by a rich vein of morality and virtue, running through every part of the poem.

There are some defects, however, in the *Odyſſey*. Many of its ſcenes fall below the ma- jeſty of an epick poem. The laſt twelve books are in many places languid and tedious; and perhaps the poet is not happy in the diſcovery of Ulyſſes to Penelope. She is too cautious and diſtruſtful; and we meet not that joyous ſurprize, expected on ſuch an occaſion.



### THE ÆNEID OF VIRGIL.

**T**HE diſtinguiſhing excellencies of the *Æneid* are elegance and tenderneſs. Virgil is leſs animated and leſs ſublime than Homer; but he has fewer negligences, greater variety, and more dignity. The *Æneid* has all the correctneſs and improvements of the Auguſtan age. We meet no contention of heroes about a female ſlave; no violent ſcolding, nor abuſive language; but the poem opens with the utmoſt magnificence.

The ſubject of the *Æneid*, which is the eſta- bliſhment of *Æneas* in Italy, is extremely happy. Nothing could be more intereſting to the Ro- mans than Virgil's deriving their origin from ſo famous a hero as *Æneas*. The object was ſplendid itſelf; it gave the poet a theme, tak- en from the traditionary hiſtory of his coun-

try ; it allowed him to adopt Homer's mythology ; and afforded him frequent opportunities of glancing at all the future great exploits of the Romans, and of describing Italy in its ancient and fabulous state.

Unity of action is perfectly preserved in the Æneid. The settlement of Æneas in Italy by order of the gods is constantly kept in view. The episodes are properly linked to the main subject ; and the nodus or intrigue of the poem is happily formed. The wrath of Juno, who opposes Æneas, gives rise to all his difficulties, and connects the human with the celestial operations through the whole poem.

Great art and judgment are displayed in the Æneid, but even Virgil is not without his faults. One is, that he has so few marked characters. Achates, Cloanthus, Gyas, and other Trojan heroes, who accompanied Æneas into Italy, are undistinguished figures. Even Æneas himself is not a very interesting hero. He is described, indeed, as pious and brave ; but his character is not marked by those strokes that touch the heart. The character of Dido is the best supported in the whole Æneid. Her warmth of passion, keenness of resentment, and violence of character, exhibit a more animated figure than any other Virgil has drawn.

The management of the subject also is in some respects exceptionable. The six last books received not the finishing hand of the author ; and for this reason he ordered his poem to be committed to the flames. The wars with the

Latins are in dignity inferiour to the more interesting objects previously presented to us; and the reader is tempted to take part with Turnus against Æneas.

The principal excellency of Virgil, and what he possesses beyond all poets, is tenderness. His soul was full of sensibility. He felt himself all the affecting circumstances in the scenes he describes; and knew how by a single stroke to reach the heart. In an epick poem, this merit is next to sublimity. The second book of the Æneid is one of the greatest master-pieces ever executed. The death of old Priam, and the family pieces of Æneas, Anchises, and Creusa, are as tender as can be conceived. In the fourth book, the unhappy passion and death of Dido are admirable. The interview of Æneas with Andromache and Helenus in the third book; the episodes of Pallas and Evander, of Nisus and Euryalus, of Lausus and Mezentius, are all striking instances of the power of raising the tender emotions. The best and most finished books are the first, second, fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and twelfth.

Virgil's battles are in fire and sublimity far inferiour to Homer's. But in one important episode, the descent into hell, he has outdone Homer in the Odyssy by many degrees. There is nothing in all antiquity, equal in its kind to the sixth book of the Æneid. The scenery, the objects, and the description, are great, solemn and sublime.

With regard to the comparative merit of these two great princes of epick poetry, it must be allowed that Homer was the greater genius, and Virgil the more correct writer. Homer is more original, more bold, more sublime, and more forcible. In judgment they are both eminent. Homer has all the Greek vivacity; Virgil all the Roman stateliness. The imagination of Homer is the most copious; that of Virgil the most correct. The strength of the former lies in warming the fancy; that of the latter in touching the heart. Homer's style is more simple and animated; Virgil's more elegant and uniform.

LUCAN'S PHARSALIA.

**L**UCAN is inferiour to Homer and Virgil; yet he deserves attention. There is little invention in his Pharsalia; and it is conducted in too historical a manner to be strictly epick. It may be arranged, however, in the epick class, as it treats of great and heroick adventures. The subject of the Pharsalia has all the epick dignity and grandeur; and it possesses unity of object, viz. the triumph of Cæsar over Roman liberty.

But, though the subject of Lucan is confessedly heroick, it has two defects. Civil war presents objects too shocking for epick poetry,

and furnish odious and disgusting views of human nature. But Lucan's genius seems to delight in savage scenes.

The other defect of Lucan's subject is, that it was too near the time in which he lived. This deprived him of the assistance of fiction and machinery; and thereby rendered his work less splendid and amusing. The facts on which he founds his poem, were too well known, and too recent to admit fables and the interposition of gods.

The characters of Lucan are drawn with spirit and force. But, though Pompey is his hero, he has not made him very interesting. He marks not Pompey by any high distinction, either for magnanimity or valour. He is always surpassed by Cæsar. Cato is Lucan's favourite character; and, whenever he introduces him, he rises above himself.

In managing his story, Lucan confines himself too much to chronological order. This breaks the thread of his narration, and hurries him from place to place. He is also too digressive; frequently quitting his subject, to give us some geographical description, or philosophical disquisition.

There are several poetical and spirited descriptions in the Pharsalia; but the strength of this poet does not lie either in narration or description. His narration is often dry and harsh; his descriptions are often overwrought, and employed on disagreeable objects. His chief merit consists in his sentiments; which are no-



ble, striking, glowing, & ardent. He is the most philosophical, and the most patriotick poet of antiquity. He was a stoick; and the spirit of that philosophy breathes through his poem. He is elevated and bold; and abounds in well timed exclamations and apostrophes.

As his vivacity and fire are great, he is apt to be carried away by them. His great defect is want of moderation. He knows not where to stop. When he would aggrandize his objects, he becomes tumid and unnatural. There is much bombast in his poem. His taste is marked with the corruption of his age; and, instead of poetry, he often exhibits declamation.

On the whole, however, he is an author of lively and original genius. His high sentiments and his fire serve to atone for many of his defects. His genius had strength, but no tenderness, nor amenity. Compared with Virgil, he has more fire and sublimer sentiments; but in every thing else falls infinitely below him, particularly in purity, elegance, and tenderness.

Statius and Silius Italicus, though poets of the epick class, are too inconsiderable for particular criticism.



### TASSO'S JERUSALEM.

**J**ERUSALEM DELIVERED is a strictly regular epick poem, and abounds with beauties.

The subject is the recovery of Jerusalem from Infidels by the united powers of Christendom. The enterprize was splendid, venerable, and heroick; and an interesting contrast is exhibited between the Christians and Saracens. Religion renders the subject august, and opens a natural field for machinery and sublime description. The action too lies in a country, and in a period of time, sufficiently remote to admit an intermixture of fable with history.

Rich invention is a capital quality in Tasso. He is full of events, finely diversified. He never fatigues his reader by mere war and fighting. He frequently shifts the scene; and from camps and battles transports us to more pleasing objects. Sometimes the solemnities of religion; sometimes the intrigues of love; at other times the adventures of a journey, or the incidents of pastoral life, relieve and entertain the reader. The work at the same time is artfully connected; and, in the midst of variety, there is perfect unity of plan.

Many characters enliven the poem; and these distinctly marked and well supported. Godfrey, the leader of the enterprize, is prudent, moderate, and brave; Tancred amorous, generous, and gallant. Rinaldo, who is properly the hero of the poem, is passionate and resentful; but full of zeal, honour, and heroism. Solyman is high minded; Erminia tender; Armida artful and violent, and Clorinda masculine. In drawing characters, Tasso is superiour to Virgil, and yields to no poet but Homer.

He abounds in machinery. When celestial beings interpose, his machinery is noble. But devils, enchanters, and conjurors act too great a part throughout his poem. In general, the marvellous is carried to extravagance. The poet was too great an admirer of the romantick spirit of knight-errantry.

In describing magnificent objects, his style is firm and majestick. In gay and pleasing description, it is soft and insinuating. Erminia's pastoral retreat in the seventh book, and the arts and beauty of Armida in the fourth book, are exquisitely beautiful. His battles are animated, and properly varied by incidents. It is rather by actions, characters, and descriptions, that he interests us, than by the sentimental part of his work. He is far inferiour to Virgil in tenderness; and, when he aims at being sentimental and pathetick, he is apt to become artificial.

It has been often objected to Tasso, that he abounds in point and conceit; but this censure has been carried too far. For, in his general character, he is masculine and strong. The humour of decrying him passed from the French criticks to those of England. But their strictures are founded either in ignorance or prejudice. For the *Jerusalem* is, in my opinion, the third regular epick poem in the world; and stands next to the *Iliad* and *Æneid*. In simplicity and fire Tasso is inferiour to Homer, in tenderness to Virgil; in sublimity to Milton; but for fertility of invention, variety of inci-

dents, expression of characters, richness of description, and beauty of style, no poet, except the three just named, can be compared to him.



### THE LUSIAD OF CAMOENS.

**T**HE Portuguese boast of Camoens, as the Italians do of Tasso. The discovery of the East-Indies by Vasco de Gama, an enterprize alike splendid and interesting, is the subject of the poem of Camoens. The adventures, distresses and actions of Vasco and his countrymen, are well fancied and described; and the Lusiad is conducted on the epick plan. The incidents of the poem are magnificent; and, joined with some wildness and irregularity, there is displayed in it much poetick spirit, strong fancy, and bold description. In the poem, however, there is no attempt toward painting characters. Vasco is the hero, and the only personage that makes any figure.

The machinery of the Lusiad is perfectly extravagant; being formed of an odd mixture of Christian ideas and Pagan mythology. Pagan divinities appear to be the deities; and Christ and the Holy Virgin to be inferiour agents. One great object, however, of the Portuguese expedition is to extend the empire of Christianity, and to extirpate Mahometanism. In this religious undertaking the chief protector of the Por-

tuguese is Venus, and their great adversary is Bacchus. Jupiter is introduced, as foretelling the downfall of Mahomet. Vasco during a storm implores the aid of Christ and the Virgin; and in return to this prayer Venus appears, and, discovering the storm to be the work of Bacchus, complains to Jupiter, and procures the winds to be calmed. All this is most preposterous; but, toward the end of his work, the poet offers an awkward apology for his mythology; making the goddess Thetes inform Vasco, that she and the other heathen divinities are no more than names to describe the operations of Providence.

In the *Lusiad*, however, there is some fine machinery of a different kind. The appearance of the genius of the river Ganges in a dream to Emanuel, king of Portugal, inviting him to discover his secret springs, and acquainting him that he was the monarch, destined to enjoy the treasures of the East, is a happy idea. But in the fifth canto, the poet displays his noblest conception of this sort, where Vasco recounts to the king of Melinda all the wonders of his voyage. He tells him that, when the fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, which had never been doubled before by any navigator, there appeared to them suddenly a huge phantom, rising out of the sea in the midst of tempest and thunder, with a head that reached the clouds, and a countenance, that filled them with terror. This was the genius of that hitherto unknown ocean; and he menaced them in a

voice of thunder for invading those unknown seas ; foretelling the calamities that were to befall them, if they should proceed ; and then with a mighty noise disappeared. This is a very solemn and striking piece of machinery ; and shows that Camoens was a poet of a bold and lofty imagination.



### THE TELEMACHUS OF FENELON.

**I**T would be unpardonable in a review of epick poets to forget the amiable Fenelon. His work, though in prose, is a poem ; and the plan in general is well contrived, having epick grandeur and unity of action. He employs the ancient mythology ; and excels in application of it. There is great richness as well as beauty in his descriptions. To soft and calm scenes, his genius is more peculiarly suited ; such as the incidents of pastoral life, the pleasures of virtue, or a country flourishing in peace.

His first books are eminently excellent. The adventures of Calypso are the chief beauty of his work. Vivacity and interest join in the narration. In the books which follow, there is less happiness in the execution, and an apparent languor. The author in warlike adventures is most unfortunate.

Some criticks have refused to rank this work among epick poems. Their objection arises

from the minute details it exhibits of virtuous policy, and from the discourses of Mentor, which recur too frequently, and too much in the strain of common place morality. To these peculiarities, however, the author was led by the design with which he wrote, that of forming a young prince to the cares and duties of a virtuous monarch.

Several epick poets have described a descent into hell; and in the prospects they have given us of the invisible world, we may observe the gradual refinement in the opinions of men concerning a future state of rewards and punishments. Homer's descent of Ulysses into hell is indistinct and dreary. The scene is in the country of the Cimmerians, which is always covered with clouds and darkness; and, when the spirits of the dead appear, we hardly know whether Ulysses is above or below ground. The ghosts too, even of the heroes, appear dissatisfied with their condition.

In Virgil the descent into hell discovers great refinement, corresponding to the progress of philosophy. The objects are more distinct, grand, and awful. There is a fine description of the separate mansions of good and bad spirits. Fenelon's visit of Telemachus to the shades is still much more philosophical than Virgil's. He refines the ancient mythology by his knowledge of the true religion, and adorns it with that beautiful enthusiasm, for which he is so remarkable. His relation of the happiness of the just is an excellent description in the mystick strain. Y

## THE HENRIADE OF VOLTAIRE.

**T**HE *Henriade* is without doubt a regular epick poem. In several places of this work, Voltaire discovers that boldness of conception, that vivacity and liveliness of expression, by which he is so much distinguished. Several of his comparisons are new and happy. But the *Henriade* is not his master-piece. In the tragick line he has certainly been more successful, than in the epick. French versification is ill suited to epick poetry. It is not only fettered by rhyme, but wants elevation. Hence not only feebleness, but sometimes prosaick flatness in the style. The poem consequently languishes; and the reader is not animated by that spirit which is inspired by a sublime composition of the epick kind.

The triumph of Henry IV. over the arms of the League is the subject of the *Henriade*. The action of the poem properly includes only the siege of Paris. It is an action perfectly epick; and conducted with due regard to unity, and to the rules of criticks. But it has great defects. It is founded on civil wars; and presents to the mind those odious objects, massacres, and assassinations. It is also of too recent date, and too much within the bounds of well-known history. The author has farther erred by mixing fiction with truth. The poem, for instance, opens with a voyage of Henry's to England, and an interview between him and Queen Eli-



zabeth ; though Henry never saw England, nor ever conversed with Elizabeth. In subjects of such notoriety a fiction of this kind shocks every intelligent reader.

A great deal of machinery is employed by Voltaire for the purpose of embellishing his poem. But it is of the worst kind, that of allegorical beings. Discord, cunning, and love appear as personages, and mix with human actors. This is contrary to all rational criticism. Ghosts, angels, and devils, have a popular existence ; but every one knows that allegorical beings are no more than representations of human passions and dispositions ; and ought not to have place, as actors, in a poem which relates to human transactions.

In justice however it must be observed, that the machinery of St. Louis possesses real dignity. The prospect of the invisible world, which St. Louis gives to Henry in a dream, is the finest passage in the *Henriade*. Death bringing the souls of the departed in succession before God, and the palace of the destinies opened to Henry, are striking and magnificent objects.

Though some of Voltaire's episodes are properly extended, his narration is too general. The events are superficially related, and too much crowded. The strain of sentiment, however, which pervades the *Henriade*, is high and noble.

## MILTON'S PARADISE LOST.

**M**ILTON chalked out a new and very extraordinary course. As soon as we open his Paradise Lost, we are introduced into an invisible world, and surrounded by celestial and infernal beings. Angels and devils are not his machinery, but his principle actors. What in any other work would be the marvellous, is in this the natural course of events; and doubts may arise, whether his poem be strictly an epick composition. But whether it be so or not it is certainly one of the highest efforts of poetical genius; and in one great characteristic of epick poetry, majesty and sublimity, is equal to any that bears this name.

The subject of his poem led Milton upon difficult ground. If it had been more human and less theological; if his occurrences had been more connected with real life; if he had afforded a greater display of the characters and passions of men; his poem would have been more pleasing to most readers. His subject however was peculiarly suited to the daring sublimity of his genius. As he alone was fitted for it, so he has shown in the conduct of it a wonderful stretch of imagination and invention. From a few hints given in the sacred scripture, he has raised a regular structure, and filled his poem with a variety of incidents. He is sometimes dry and harsh; and too often the meta-

physician and divine. But the general tenor of his work is interesting, elevated and affecting. The artful change of his objects, and the scene, laid now in heaven, now on earth, & now in hell, afford sufficient diversity; while unity of plan is perfectly supported. Calm scenes are exhibited in the employments of Adam and Eve in Paradise; and busy scenes, and great actions in the enterprizes of Satan, and in the wars of angels. The amiable innocence of our first parents, and the proud ambition of Satan, afford a happy contrast through the whole poem, which gives it an uncommon charm. But the conclusion perhaps is too tragick for epick poetry.

The subject naturally admits no great display of characters; but such as could be introduced, are properly supported. Satan makes a striking figure; and is the best drawn character in the poem. Milton has artfully given him a mixed character, not altogether void of some good qualities. He is brave, and faithful to his troops. Amid his impiety, he is not without remorse. He is even touched with pity for our first parents; and from the necessity of his situation, justifies his design against them. He is actuated by ambition and resentment, rather than by pure malice. The characters of Beelzebub, Moloch, and Beliel, are well painted. The good angels, though described with dignity, have more uniformity of character. Among them, however, the mild condescension of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel,

form proper characteristick distinctions. The attempt to describe God Almighty himself was too bold, and accordingly most unsuccessful. The innocence of our first parents is delicately painted. In some speeches perhaps Adam appears too knowing and refined for his situation. Eve is hit off more happily. Her gentleness, modesty, and frailty, are expressively characteristick of the female character.

Milton's great and distinguishing excellence is his sublimity. In this, perhaps, he excels even Homer. The first and second books of Paradise Lost, are almost a continued series of the highest sublime. But his sublimity differs from that of Homer; which is always accompanied by impetuosity and fire. The sublime of Milton is a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms and hurries us along; Milton fixes us in a state of elevation and astonishment. Homer's sublimity appears most in his description of actions; Milton's in that of wonderful and stupendous objects.

But, while Milton excels most in sublimity, his work abounds in the beautiful, the pleasing, and the tender. When the scene is in Paradise, the imagery is gay and smiling. His descriptions show a fertile imagination; and in his similes he is remarkably happy. If faulty, it is from their too frequent allusions to matters of learning, and to ancient fables. It must also be confessed, that there is a falling off in the latter part of Paradise Lost.

The language and versification of Milton have high merit. His blank verse is harmonious and diversified; and his style is full of majesty. There may be found indeed some profaick lines in his poem. But in a work so long and so harmonious these may be forgiven.

Paradise Lost, amid beauties of every kind, has many inequalities. No high and daring genius was ever uniformly correct. Milton is too frequently theological and metaphysical; his words are often technical; and he is affectedly ostentatious of his learning. Many of his faults however are to be imputed to the pedantry of his age. He discovers a vigour, a grasp of genius equal to every thing great; sometimes he rises above every other poet; and sometimes he falls below himself.



#### DRAMATICK POETRY. TRAGEDY.

**I**N all civilized nations dramattick poetry has been a favourite amusement. It divides itself into the two forms of tragedy and comedy. Of these, tragedy is the most dignified; as great and serious objects interest us more than little and ludicrous ones. The former rests on the high passions, the virtues, crimes, and sufferings of mankind; the latter on their humours, follies, and pleasures; and ridicule is its sole instrument.

Tragedy is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. It does not, like an epick poem, exhibit characters by description or narration; it sets the personages before us, and makes them act and speak with propriety. This species of writing therefore requires deep knowledge of the human heart; and, when happily executed, it has the power of raising the strongest emotions.

In its general strain and spirit, tragedy is favourable to virtue. Characters of honour claim our respect and approbation; and, to raise indignation, we must paint a person in the odious colours of vice and depravity. Virtuous men, indeed, are often represented by the tragick poet as unfortunate; for this happens in real life. But he always engages our hearts in their behalf; and never represents vice as finally triumphant and happy. Upon the same principle, if bad men succeed in their designs, they are yet finally conducted to punishment. It may therefore be concluded that tragedies are moral compositions.

It is affirmed by Aristotle, that the design of tragedy is to purge our passions by means of pity and terror. But perhaps it would have been more accurate, to have said, that the object of this species of composition is to improve our virtuous sensibility. If a writer excite our pity for the afflicted, inspire us with proper sentiments on beholding the vicissitudes of life, and stimulate us to avoid the misfortunes of others by exhibiting their errors, he has accomplished all the moral purposes of tragedy.

In a tragedy it is necessary to have an interesting story, and that the writer conduct it in a natural and probable manner. For the end of tragedy is not so much to elevate the imagination as to affect the heart. This principle, which is founded on the clearest reason, excludes from tragedy all machinery, or fabulous intervention of gods. Ghosts alone from their foundation in popular belief, have maintained their place in tragedy.

To promote an impression of probability, the story of a tragedy, according to some criticks, should never be a pure fiction, but ought to be built on real facts. This, however, is carrying the matter too far. For a fictitious tale, if properly conducted, will melt the heart as much as real history. Hence the tragick poet mixes many fictitious circumstances with well known facts. Most readers never think of separating the historical from the fabulous. They attend only to what is probable, and are touched by events, that resemble nature. Accordingly some of the most affecting tragedies are entirely fictitious in their subjects. Such are the Fair Penitent, Douglas, and the Orphan.

In its origin, tragedy was rude and imperfect. Among the Greeks it was at first nothing more than the song which was sung at the festival of Bacchus. These songs were sometimes sung by the whole company, and sometimes by separate bands, answering alternately to each other, and making a chorus. To give this entertainment some variety, Thespis, who lived about five

hundred years before the Christian era, introduced a person between the songs, who made a recitation in verse. Æschylus, who lived fifty years after him, introduced a dialogue between two persons or actors, comprehending some interesting story; and placed them on a stage adorned with scenery. The drama now began to assume a regular form; and was soon after brought to perfection by Sophocles and Euripides.

It thus appears that the chorus was the foundation of tragedy. But, what is remarkable, the dramattick dialogue, which was only an addition to it, at length became the principal part of the entertainment; and the chorus, losing its dignity, came to be accounted only an accessory in tragedy. At last, in modern tragedy, it has entirely disappeared; and its absence from the stage, forms the chief distinction between the ancient and modern drama.

The chorus, it must be allowed, rendered tragedy more magnificent, instructive, and moral. But on the other hand it was unnatural, and lessened the interest of the piece. It removed the representation from the resemblance of life. It has accordingly been with propriety excluded from the stage.

The three unities of action, place, and time, have been considered, as essential to the proper conduct of dramattick fable. Of these three, unity of action is undoubtedly most important. This consists in the relation which all the incidents introduced bear to some design or effect,



combining them naturally into one whole. This unity of subject is most essential to tragedy. For a multiplicity of plots, by distracting the attention, prevents the passions from rising to any height. Hence the absurdity of two independent actions in the same play. There may indeed be underplots; but the poet should make these subservient to the main action. They should conspire to bring forward the catastrophe of the play.

Of a separate and independent action, or intrigue, there is a clear example in Addison's *Cato*. The subject of this tragedy is the death of Cato, a noble personage, and supported by the author with much dignity. But all the love-scenes in the play; the passion of Cato's two sons for Lucia, and that of Juba for Cato's daughter, are mere episodes. They break the unity of the subject, and form a very unseasonable junction of gallantry with high sentiments of patriotism.

Unity of action must not, however, be confounded with simplicity of plot. Unity and simplicity import different things in dramatick composition. The plot is simple, when a small number of incidents is introduced into it. With respect to plots, the ancients were more simple than the moderns. The Greek tragedies appear, indeed, to be too naked, and destitute of interesting events. The moderns admit a much greater variety of incidents; which is certainly an improvement, as it renders the entertainment more animated and more instructive. It

may, however, be carried too far ; for an overcharge of action and intrigue produces perplexity and embarrassment. Of this, the Mourning Bride of Congreve is an example. The incidents succeed each other too rapidly ; and the catastrophe, which ought to be plain and simple, is artificial and intricate.

Unity of action must be maintained, not only in the general construction of the fable, but in all the acts and scenes of the play. The division of every play into five acts is founded merely on common practice, and the authority of Horace :

*Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu  
Fabula.*

There is nothing in nature which fixes this rule. On the Greek stage the division by acts was unknown. The word act never occurs once in the Poetics of Aristotle. Practice, however, has established this division ; and the poet must be careful that each act terminate in a proper place. The first act should contain a clear exposition of the subject. It should excite curiosity, and introduce the personages to the acquaintance of the spectators. During the second, third, and fourth acts, the plots should gradually thicken. The passions should be kept constantly awake. There should be no scenes of idle conversation or mere declamation. The suspense and concern of the spectators should be excited more and more. This is the great excellency of Shakespeare. Sentiment, passion, pity, and terror, should pervade every tragedy.

In the fifth act, which is the feat of the catastrophe, the author should most fully display his art and genius. The first requisite is, that the unravelling of the plot be brought about by probable and natural means. Secondly, the catastrophe should be simple, depending on few events, and including but few persons. Passionate sensibility languishes when divided among many objects. Lastly, in the catastrophe every thing should be warm and glowing; and the poet must be simple, serious, and pathetick; using no language but that of nature.

It is not essential to the catastrophe of a tragedy, that it end happily. Sufficient distress and agitation, with many tender emotions, may be raised in the course of the play. But in general the spirit of tragedy leans to the side of leaving the impression of virtuous sorrow strong upon the mind.

A curious question here occurs: How happens it that the emotions of sorrow in tragedy afford gratification to the mind? It seems to be the constitution of our nature, that all the social passions should be attended with pleasure. Hence nothing is more pleasing than love and friendship. Pity is for wise ends a strong instinct; and it necessarily produces some distress on account of its sympathy with sufferers. The heart is at the same moment warmed by kindness, and afflicted by distress. Upon the whole, the state of the mind is agreeable. We are pleased with ourselves, not only for our benevolence, but for our sensibility. The pain of

sympathy is also diminished by recollecting that the distress is not real; and by the power of action and sentiment, of language and poetry.

After treating of the acts of a play it is proper to notice the scenes. The entrance of a new person upon the stage, forms what is called a new scene. These scenes, or successive conversations, should be closely connected; and much of the art of dramattick composition consists in maintaining this connexion. For this purpose two rules must be observed. 1. During the course of one act the stage should never be left empty a moment, for this would make a gap in the representation. Whenever the stage is evacuated, the act is closed. This rule is generally observed by French tragedians; but it is much neglected by the English. 2. No person should come upon the stage, or leave it, without some apparent reason. If this rule be neglected, the dramatis personæ are little better than so many puppets; for the drama professes imitation of real transactions.

To unity of action, criticks have added the unities of time and place. Unity of place requires the scene never to be shifted; that the action of the play continue in the same place where it began. Unity of time, strictly taken, requires that the time of the action be no longer than the time allowed for the representation of the play. Aristotle, however, permits the action to comprehend a whole day. These rules are intended to bring the imitation nearer to reality.

Among the Greeks there was no division of acts. In modern times the practice has prevailed of suspending the spectacle some little time between the acts. This practice gives latitude to the imagination, and renders strict confinement to time and place less necessary. Upon this account therefore too strict an observance of these unities should not be preferred to higher beauties of execution, nor to the introduction of more pathetick situations. But transgressions of these unities, though they may be often advantageous, ought not to be too frequent, nor violent. Hurrying the spectator from one distant city to another, or making several days or weeks pass during the representation, would shock the imagination too much, and therefore cannot be allowed in a dramattick writer.

Having examined dramattick action, we shall now attend to the characters most proper to be exhibited in a tragedy. Several criticks affirm that the nature of tragedy requires the principal personages to be always of high or princely rank; as the sufferings of such persons seize the heart the most forcibly. But this is more specious than solid. For the distresses of Desdemona, Monimia, and Belvidera, interest us as much as if they had been princesses or queens. It is sufficient, that in tragedy there be nothing degrading or mean in the personages exhibited. High rank may render the spectacle more splendid; but it is the tale itself, and the art of the poet, that make it interesting and pathetick,

In describing his characters, the poet should be careful so to order the incidents which relate to them, as to impress the spectators with favourable ideas of virtue, and of the divine administration. Pity should be raised for the virtuous in distress; and the author should studiously beware of making such representations of life as would render virtue an object of aversion.

Unmixed characters, either of good or ill men, are not, in the opinion of Aristotle, fit for tragedy. For the distresses of the former, as unmerited, hurt us; and the sufferings of the latter excite no compassion. Mixed characters afford the best field for displaying, without injury to morals, the vicissitudes of life. They interest us the most deeply; and their distresses are most instructive when represented as springing out of their own passions, or as originating in some weakness incident to human nature.

The Greek tragedies are often founded on mere destiny and inevitable misfortunes. Modern tragedy aims at a higher object, and takes a wider range; as it shows the direful effects of ambition, jealousy, love, resentment, and every strong emotion. But of all the passions which furnish matter for tragedy, love has most occupied the modern stage. To the ancient theatre love was almost unknown. This proceeded from the national manners of the Greeks, which encouraged a greater separation of the sexes than takes place in modern times; and

did not admit female actors upon the ancient stage; a circumstance which operated against the introduction of love stories. No solid reason, however, can be assigned for this predominancy of love upon the stage. Indeed it not only limits the natural extent of tragedy, but degrades its majesty. Mixing it with the great and solemn revolutions of human fortune, tends to give tragedy the air of gallantry and juvenile entertainment. Without any assistance from love, the drama is capable of producing its highest effects upon the mind.

Beside the arrangement of his subject, and the conduct of his personages, the tragick poet must attend to the propriety of his sentiments. These must be suited to the characters of the persons to whom they are attributed, and to the situations in which they are placed. It is chiefly in the pathetick parts, that the difficulty and importance of this rule are greatest. We go to a tragedy, expecting to be moved; and, if the poet cannot reach the heart, he has no tragick merit; and we return cold and disappointed from the performance.

To paint and to excite passion strongly, are prerogatives of genius. They require not only ardent sensibility, but the power of entering deeply into characters. It is here that candidates for the drama are least successful. A man under the agitation of passion makes known his feelings in the glowing language of sensibility. He does not coolly describe what his feelings are; yet this sort of secondary def-

cription tragick poets often give us instead of the primary and native language of passion. Thus in Addison's *Cato*, when Lucia confesses to Portius her love for him, but swears that she will never marry him, Portius, instead of giving way to the language of grief and astonishment, only describes his feelings :

Fix'd in astonishment, I gaze upon thee,  
Like one just blasted by a stroke from heaven,  
Who pants for breath, and stiffens yet alive  
In dreadful looks; a monument of wrath.

This might have proceeded from a bystander, or an indifferent person ; but it is altogether improper in the mouth of Portius. Similar to this descriptive language are the unnatural and forced thoughts, which tragick poets sometimes employ, to exaggerate the feelings of persons whom they wish to paint, as strongly moved. Thus, when Jane Shore on meeting her husband in distress, and finding that he had forgiven her, calls on the rains to give her their drops, and to the springs to lend her their streams, that she may have a constant supply of tears ; we see plainly that it is not Jane Shore that speaks ; but the poet himself, who is straining his fancy, and spurring up his genius, to say something uncommonly strong and lively.

The language of real passion is always plain and simple. It abounds indeed in figures, that express a disturbed and impetuous state of mind ; but never employs any for parade and embellishment. Thoughts, suggested by pas-



sion, are natural and obvious ; and not the offspring of refinement, subtilty, and wit. Passion neither reasons, speculates, nor declaims ; its language is short, broken, and interrupted. The French tragedians deal too much in refinement and declamation. The Greek tragedians adhere most to nature, and are most pathetick. This too is the great excellency of Shakespear. He exhibits the true language of nature and passion.

Moral sentiments and reflections ought not to recur very frequently in tragedy. When unseasonably crowded, they lose their effect, and convey an air of pedantry. When introduced with propriety, they give dignity to the composition. Cardinal Woolsey's soliloquy on his fall is a fine instance of the felicity with which they may be employed. Much of the merit of Addison's Cato depends on that moral turn of thought which distinguishes it.

The style and versification of tragedy should be free, easy, and varied. English blank verse is happily suited to this species of composition. It has sufficient majesty, and can descend to the simple and familiar ; it admits a happier variety of cadence, and is free from the constraint and monotony of rhyme. Of the French tragedies it is a great misfortune, that they are always in rhyme. For it fetters the freedom of the tragick dialogue, fills it with languid monotony, and is fatal to the power of passion.

With regard to those splendid comparisons in rhyme, and those strings of couplets, with

which it was some time ago fashionable to conclude the acts of a tragedy, and sometimes the most interesting scenes, they are now laid aside, and regarded not only as childish ornaments, but as perfect barbarisms.

  
GREEK TRAGEDY.

**T**HE plot of Greek tragedy was exceedingly simple; the incidents few; and the conduct very exact with regard to the unities of action, time, and place. Machinery, or the invention of gods, was employed; and, what was very faulty, the final unravelling was sometimes made to turn upon it. Love, one or two instances excepted, was never admitted into Greek tragedy. A vein of morality and religion always runs through it; but they employed less than the moderns, the combat of the passions. Their plots were all taken from the ancient traditional stories of their own nation.

Æschylus, the father of Greek tragedy, exhibits both the beauties and defects of an early original writer. He is bold, nervous, and animated; but very obscure, and difficult to be understood. His style is highly metaphorical, and often harsh and tumid. He abounds in martial ideas and descriptions, has much fire and elevation, and little tenderness. He also delights in the marvellous.

The most masterly of the Greek tragedians is Sophocles. He is the most correct in the conduct of his subjects; the most just and sublime in his sentiments. In descriptive talents he is also eminent. Euripides is accounted more tender than Sophocles; he is fuller of moral sentiments; but he is less correct in the conduct of his plays. His expositions of his subjects are less artful; and the songs of his chorus, though very poetick, are less connected with the principal action, than those of Sophocles. Both of them, however, have high merit, as tragick poets. Their style is elegant and beautiful; and their sentiments for the most part just. They speak with the voice of nature; and in the midst of simplicity they are touching and interesting.

Theatrical representation on the stages of Greece and Rome was in many respects very singular, and widely different from that of modern times. The songs of the chorus were accompanied by instrumental musick; and the dialogue part had a modulation of its own, and might be set to notes. It has also been thought that on the Roman stage the pronouncing and gesticulating parts were sometimes divided, and performed by different actors. The actors in tragedy wore a long robe; they were raised upon cothurni, and played in masks; these masks were painted; and the actor by turning the different profiles exhibited different emotions to the auditors. This contrivance, however, was attended by many disadvantages.

## FRENCH TRAGEDY.

**I**N the compositions of some French dramatick writers, tragedy has appeared with great lustre; particularly Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire. They have improved upon the ancients, by introducing more incidents, a greater variety of passions, and a fuller display of characters. Like the ancients, they excel in regularity of conduct; and their style is poetical and elegant. But to an English taste they want strength and passion, and are too declamatory and refined. They seem afraid of being too tragick: and it was the opinion of Voltaire, that to the perfection of tragedy, it is necessary to unite the vehemence and action of the English theatre with the correctness and decorum of the French.

Corneille, the father of French tragedy, is distinguished by majesty of sentiment and a fruitful imagination. His genius was rich, but more turned to the epick than the tragick vein. He is magnificent and splendid, rather than touching and tender. He is full of declamation, impetuous and extravagant.

In tragedy, Racine is superiour to Corneille. He wants, indeed, the copiousness of Corneille; but he is free from his bombast, and excels him greatly in tenderness. The beauty of his language and versification is uncommon; and he has managed his rhymes with superiour advantage.

Voltaire is not inferiour to his predecessors in the drama; and in one article he has outdone them, the delicate and interesting situations he has introduced. Here lies his chief strength. Like his predecessors, however, he is sometimes deficient in force, and sometimes too declamatory. His characters, notwithstanding, are drawn with spirit, his events are striking, and his sentiments elevated.

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ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

**I**T has often been remarked of tragedy in Great-Britain, that it is more ardent than that of France, but more irregular and incorrect. It has, therefore, excelled in the soul of tragedy. For the pathetick must be allowed to be the chief excellence of the tragick muse.

The first object on the English theatre, is the great Shakespeare. In extent and force of genius, both for tragedy and comedy, he is unrivalled. But at the same time it is genius shooting wild, deficient in taste, not always chaste, and unassisted by art and knowledge. Criticism has been exhausted in commentaries upon him; yet to this day it is undecided, whether his beauties or defects be greatest. In his writings there are admirable scenes and passages without number; but there is not one of his plays

which can be pronounced a good one. Beside extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of the serious and comick, we are frequently disturbed by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, and a certain obscure bombast, and play upon words. These faults are, however, compensated by two of the greatest excellencies a tragick poet can possess, his lively and diversified painting of character, and his strong and natural expressions of passion. On these two virtues his merit rests. In the midst of his absurdities he interests and moves us; so great is his skill in human nature, and so lively his representations of it.

He possesses also the merit of having created for himself a world of preternatural beings. His witches, ghosts, fairies, and spirits of all kinds, are so awful, mysterious and peculiar, as strongly to affect the imagination. His two master-pieces are his Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his historical plays, they are neither tragedies, nor comedies; but a peculiar species of dramattick entertainment, in which he describes the characters, events, and manners of the times of which he treats.

Since Shakespeare, there are few English dramattick writers, whose whole works are entitled to high praise. There are several tragedies, however, of considerable merit. Lee's Theodosius has warmth and tenderness, though romantick in the plan, and extravagant in the sentiments. Otway is great in his Orphan and Venice Preserved. Perhaps, however, he is too

tragick in these pieces. He had genius and strong passions, but was very indelicate.

The tragedies of Rowe abound in morality and in elevated sentiments. (His poetry is good, and his language pure and elegant. He is, notwithstanding, too cold and uninteresting; and flowery, rather than tragick.) His best dramas are *Jane Shore* and the *Fair Penitent*, which excel in the tender and pathetick.

Dr. Young's *Revenge* discovers genius and fire; but wants tenderness, and turns too much on the direful passions. / In the *Mourning Bride* of Congreve there are fine situations and much good poetry. The tragedies of Thomson are too full of a stiff morality, which renders them dull and formal. His *Tancred* and *Sigismunda* is his master-piece; and for the plot, characters and sentiments, justly deserves a place among the best English tragedies.

A Greek tragedy is a simple relation of an interesting incident. / A French tragedy is a series of artful and refined conversations. / An English tragedy is a combat of strong passions, set before us in all their violence, producing deep disasters, and filling the spectators with grief. / Ancient tragedies are more natural and simple; modern more artful and complex.

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COMEDY.

**T**HE strain and spirit of comedy discriminate it sufficiently from tragedy. While pity,

terror, and the other strong passions form the province of the latter, the sole instrument of the former is ridicule. Follies and vices, and whatever in the human character is improper, or exposes to censure and ridicule, are objects of comedy. As a satirical exhibition of the improprieties and follies of men, it is useful and moral. (It is commendable by this species of composition to correct and to polish the manners of men. Many vices are more successfully exploded by ridicule, than by serious arguments. It is possible however to employ ridicule improperly ; and by its operation to do mischief instead of good. ( For ridicule is far from being a proper test of truth. / Licentious writers therefore of the comick class have often cast ridicule on objects and characters which did not deserve it. But this is not the fault of comedy, but of the turn and genius of certain writers. In the hands of loose men, comedy will mislead and corrupt ; but in those of virtuous writers, it is not only a gay and innocent, but a laudable and useful entertainment. English comedy, however, is frequently a school of vice.

The rules of dramattick action, that were prescribed for tragedy, belong also to comedy. A comick writer must observe the unities of action, time, and place. He must attend to nature and probability. The imitation of manners ought to be even more exact in comedy than in tragedy ; for the subjects of comedy are more familiar and better known.



The subjects of tragedy are confined to no age nor country ; but it is otherwise in comedy. For the decorums of behaviour, and the nice discriminations of character which are the subjects of comedy, change with time and country ; and are never so well understood by foreigners, as by natives. We weep for the heroes of Greece and Rome ; but we are touched by the ridicule of such manners and characters only as we see and know. The scene therefore of comedy should always be laid in the author's own country and age. The comick poet catches the manners living, as they rise.

It is true, indeed, that Plautus and Terence did not follow this rule. The scene of their comedies is laid in Greece, and they adopted the Greek laws and customs. But it is to be remembered, that comedy was in their age a new entertainment in Rome, and that they were contented with the praise of translating Menander and other comick writers of Greece. In posterior times the Romans had the " *Comœdia Togata*," or what was founded on their own manners, as well as the " *Comœdia Palliata*," which was taken from the Greeks.

There are two kinds of comedy, that of character, and that of intrigue. In the last, the plot or action of the play is the principal object. In the first, the display of a peculiar character is the chief point ; and to this the action is subordinate. The French abound most in comedies of character. Such are the capital pieces of Moliere. The English have inclined more

to comedies of intrigue. Such are the plays of Congreve ; and in general there is more story, action, and bustle in English, than in French comedy.

The perfection of comedy is to be found in a proper mixture of these two kinds. Mere conversation without an interesting story is insipid. There should ever be so much intrigue, as to excite both fears and wishes. The incidents should be striking, and afford a proper field for the exhibition of character. The piece however should not be overcharged with intrigue ; for this would be to convert a comedy into a novel.

With respect to characters it is a common error of comick writers, to carry them much beyond real life ; indeed it is very difficult to hit the precise point, where wit ends, and buffoonery begins. The comedian may exaggerate ; but good sense must teach him where to stop.

In comedy there ought to be a clear distinction in characters. The contrast of characters, however, by pairs, and by opposites, is too theatrical and affected. It is the perfection of art to conceal art. A masterly writer gives us his characters, distinguished rather by such shades of diversity, as are commonly found in society, than marked by such oppositions, as are seldom brought into actual contrast in any of the circumstances of life.

The style of comedy ought to be pure, lively, and elegant, generally imitating the tone of polite conversation, and never descending into

gross expressions. Rhyme is not suitable to comick composition ; for what has poetry to do with the conversation of men in common life ? The current of the dialogue should be easy without pertness, and genteel without flippancy. The wit should never be studied, nor unseasonable.



## ANCIENT COMEDY.

**T**HE ancient comedy was an avowed satire against particular persons, brought upon the stage by name.) Such are the plays of Aristophanes ; and compositions of so singular a nature illustrate well the turbulent and licentious state of Athens. The most illustrious personages, generals and magistrates, were then made the subjects of comedy. Vivacity, satire, and buffoonery are the characteristics of Aristophanes. On many occasions he displays genius and force ; but his performances give us no high idea of the attack taste for wit in his age. His ridicule is extravagant ; his wit farcical ; his personal raillery cruel and biting, and his obscenity intolerable.

Soon after the age of Aristophanes the liberty of attacking persons by name on the stage was prohibited by law.) The middle comedy then took its rise. Living persons were still attacked, but under fictitious names. Of these pieces we have no remains. They were suc-

ceeded by the new comedy ; when it became as it is now, the business of the stage to exhibit manners and characters, but not those of particular persons. The author of this kind, most celebrated among the Greeks, was Menander ; but his writings are perished.

Of the new comedy of the ancients, the only remains are the plays of Plautus and Terence. The first is eminent for the *vis comica*, and for an expressive phraseology. He bears, however, many marks of the rudeness of the dramatick art in his time. He has too much low wit and scurrility ; and is by far too quaint and full of conceit. He has more variety and more force than Terence ; and his characters are strongly marked, though sometimes coarsely.

Terence is polished, delicate, and elegant. His style is a model of the most pure and graceful latinity. His dialogue is always correct and decent, and his relations have a picturesque and beautiful simplicity. His morality is in general unexceptionable ; his situations are interesting ; and many of his sentiments touch the heart. He may be considered as the founder of serious comedy. In sprightliness and strength he is deficient. There is a sameness in his characters and plots ; and he is said to have been inferior to Menander, whom he copied. To form a perfect comick author, the spirit and fire of Plautus ought to be united with the grace and correctness of Terence.

## SPANISH COMEDY.

**T**HE most prominent object in modern comedy is the Spanish theatre. The chief comedians of Spain are Lopez de Vega, Guillen and Calderon. The first, who is the most famous of them, wrote above a thousand plays; and was infinitely more irregular than Shakspeare. He totally disregarded the three unities, and every established rule of dramatick writing. One play often includes many years, and even the whole life of a man. The scene, during the first act is in Spain; the next in Italy; and the third in Africa. His plays are chiefly historical, and are a mixture of heroick speeches, serious incidents, war and slaughter, ridicule and buffoonery. He jumbles together Christianity and Paganism, virtues and vices, angels and gods. Notwithstanding his faults, he possessed genius, and great force of imagination. Many of his characters are well painted; many of his situations are happy; and from the source of his rich invention, dramatick writers of other nations have frequently drawn their materials. He was conscious himself of his extreme irregularity, and apologized for them from the prevailing taste of his countrymen.

## FRENCH COMEDY.

**T**HE comick theatre of France is allowed to be correct, chaste, and decent. The comick author, in whom the French glory most, is Moliere. In the judgment of French criticks he has nearly reached the summit of perfection in his art. Nor is this the decision of mere partiality. Moliere is the satirist only of vice and folly. His characters were peculiar to his own times; and in general his ridicule was justly directed. His comick powers were great; and his pleasantry is always innocent. His *Misanthrope*, and *Tartuffe* are in verse, and constitute a kind of dignified comedy, in which vice is exposed in the style of elegant and polite satire. In his prose comedies there is a profusion of ridicule; but the poet never gives alarm to modesty, nor casts contempt on virtue. With these high qualities however considerable defects are mingled. In unravelling his plots he is unhappy; as this is frequently brought on with too little preparation, and in an improbable manner. In his verse comedies he is not always sufficiently interesting, and he is too full of long speeches. In his risible pieces in prose he is too farcical. But upon the whole it may be affirmed, that few writers ever attained so perfectly the true end of comedy. His *Tartuffe* and *Avare* are his two capital productions.

## ENGLISH COMEDY.

**F**ROM the English theatre is naturally expected a great variety of original characters in comedy, and bolder strokes of wit and humour than from any other modern stage. (Humour is in some degree peculiar to England. The freedom of the government, and the unrestrained liberty of English manners, are favourable to humour and singularity of character. In France the influence of a despotick court spreads uniformity over the nation. Hence comedy has a more amplified and a freer vein in Britain than in France. But it is to be regretted, that the comick spirit of Britain is often disgraced by indecency and licentiousness.

The first age, however, of English comedy was not infected by this spirit. (The plays of Shakespeare and Ben Johnson have no immoral tendency. The comedies of the former display a strong creative genius; but are irregular in conduct. They are singularly rich in characters and manners; but often descend to please the mob. Johnson is more regular, but stiff and pedantick; though not void of dramattick genius. Much fancy and invention, and many fine passages, are found in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. But in general they abound in romantick incidents, unnatural characters and coarse allusions.

Change of manners has rendered the comedies of the last age obsolete. For it is the exhibition of prevailing modes and characters, that gives a charm to comedy. Thus Plautus was antiquated to the Romans in the days of Augustus. But to the honour of Shakespeare, his Falstaff is still admired, and his Merry Wives of Windsor read with pleasure.

(After the restoration of Charles II. the licentiousness which polluted the court and nation, seized upon comedy. The rake became the predominant character. Ridicule was thrown upon chastity and sobriety. At the end of the play, indeed the rake becomes a sober man; but through the performance he is a fine gentleman, and exhibits a picture of the pleasurable enjoyments of life. This spirit of comedy had the worst effect on youth of both sexes, and continued to the days of George II.

In the comedies of Dryden there are many strokes of genius; but he is hasty and careless. As his object was to please, he followed the current of the times, and gave way to indelicacy and licentiousness. His indecency was at times so gross, as to occasion a prohibition of his plays on the stage.

After Dryden flourished Cibber, Vanburgh, Farquhar and Congreve. Cibber has sprightliness and a pert vivacity; but his incidents are so forced and unnatural, that his performances have all sunk into obscurity, excepting the Careless Husband and the Provoked Husband. Of



these the first is remarkable for the easy politeness of the dialogue ; and is tolerably moral in its conduct. The latter, in which Cibber was assisted by Vanburgh, is perhaps the best comedy in the English language ; and even to this it may be objected that it has a double plot. Its characters however are natural, and it abounds with fine painting and happy strokes of humour.

Wit, spirit, and ease, characterize Sir John Vanburgh ; but he is the most indelicate and immoral of all our comedians. Congreve undoubtedly possessed genius. He is witty and sparkling, and full of character and action. Indeed he overflows with wit ; for it is often introduced unseasonably ; and in general there is too much of it for well bred conversation. Farquhar is a light and gay writer ; less correct and less brilliant than Congreve ; but he has more ease, and much of the *vis comica*. Like Congreve he is licentious ; and modesty must turn from them both with abhorrence. The French boast with justice of the superiour decency of their stage, and speak of the English theatre with astonishment. Their philosophical writers ascribe the profligate manners of London to the indelicacy and corruption of English comedy.

Of late years a sensible reformation has taken place in English comedy. Our writers of comedy now appear ashamed of the indecency of their predecessors. They may be inferiour to Farquhar and Congreve in spirit, ease, and wit ; but they have the merit of being far more innocent and moral.

To the French stage we are much indebted for this reformation. The introduction within a few years of a graver comedy in France, called the serious or tender comedy, has attracted the attention and approbation of our writers. Gaiety and ridicule are not excluded from this species of comedy; but it lays the chief stress on tender and interesting situations. It is sentimental, and touches the heart. It pleases not so much by the laughter it excites, as by the tears of affection and joy which it draws forth.

This form of comedy was opposed in France, as an unjustifiable innovation. It was objected by criticks that it was not founded on laughter and ridicule; but it is not necessary that all comedies be formed on one precise model. Some may be gay; some serious; and some may partake of both qualities. Serious and tender comedy has no right to exclude gaiety and ridicule from the stage. There are materials for both; and the stage is richer for the innovation. In general it may be considered as the mark of increasing politeness and refinement, when those theatrical exhibitions become fashionable, which are free from indelicate sentiments and an immoral tendency.

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