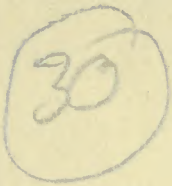

The first poets sung their own Verses ; Page 227.

Henry Corbould del. A.W. Warren sculp.

Printed for F.C.& J.Rivington, & the other Proprietors Oct.
1822.

ESSAYS on RHETORIC and Belles Letters,

ABRIDGED from Dr BLAIR.

He shut himself up in a cave that he might study with less distraction. Page 119.

LONDON:
Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington & the other Proprietors Oct.
1822.

ESSAYS

ON

RHETORIC:

ABRIDGED CHIEFLY FROM

DR. BLAIR'S

LECTURES ON THAT SCIENCE.

LONDON:

Printed for F. C. and J. Rivington; J. Nunn; T. Cadell; Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown; G. and W. B. Whittaker; J. Richardson; J. Walker; Newman and Co.; Lackington and Co.; Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen; Black, Young, and Young; Sherwood, Neely, and Jones; Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy; J. Robinson; E. Edwards; Simpkin and Marshall; R. Scholey; and G. Cowie.

By T. Davison, Whitefriars.

1822.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE want of a system of Rhetoric upon a concise plan, and at an easy price, will, it is presumed, render this little volume not unacceptable to the public. 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 a peculiar benefit from the brevity with which they are conveyed. To youth, who are engaged in the rudiments of learning, and whose time and attention must be occupied with 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 Rhetoric 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 a science more generally known, has a claim to that praise which is the reward of a 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.

INTRODUCTION.

A PROPER acquaintance with the circle of liberal arts is requisite to the study of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. To extend their knowledge must be the first care of those who wish either to write with reputation, or to express themselves in public so 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 could stamp merit on a composition for richness or splendour of expression, when it possesses barren or erroneous sentiments. Oratory, it is true, has often been disgraced by attempts to establish a false criterion of its value. Writers have

endeavoured to supply the want of matter by the graces of composition ; and to court the temporary applause of the ignorant, instead of the lasting approbation of the discerning. But the prevalence of such imposture must be short and transitory. The body and substance of any valuable composition must be formed by knowledge and science. Rhetoric completes the structure, and adds the polish ; but firm and solid bodies alone are able to receive it.

Among the learned it has long been a contested, and remains still an undecided question, whether nature or art contributes most towards excellence in writing and discourse. Various may be the opinions with respect to the manner in which art can most effectually furnish her aid for such a purpose ; and it were presumption to advance, that mere rhetorical rules, how just soever, are sufficient to form an orator. Private application and study, supposing natural genius to be favourable, are certainly superior to any system of public instruction. But though rules and instructions cannot

comprehend every thing which is requisite, they may afford considerable use and advantage. If they cannot inspire genius, they can give it direction and assistance. If they cannot make barrenness fruitful, they can correct redundancy. They discover the proper models for imitation; they point out the principal 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, perhaps, of producing great excellencies, they may at least be subservient, to prevent the commission of considerable mistakes.

In the education of youth, no object has appeared more important to wise men, in every age, than to furnish them early with a 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. It

affords the promise of many virtues. On the contrary, an entire insensibility of eloquence, poetry, or any of the fine arts, may justly be considered as a perverse symptom of youth; and supposes them inclined to inferior gratifications, or capable of being engaged only in the more common and mechanical pursuits of life.

The improvement of taste seems to be more or less connected with every good and virtuous disposition. By giving frequent exercise to all 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 humanized mankind,
Soften'd the rude, and calm'd the boist'rous mind.

Poetry, eloquence, and history, are continually holding forward to our view those elevated sentiments and high examples which

tend to nourish in our minds public spirit, the love of glory, contempt of external fortune, and the admiration of every thing that is truly great, noble, and illustrious.

CONTENTS.

BRITISH CLASSICS.

A COLLECTION of the WORKS of the most popular English Poets, and of those Prose Writers who have attained Classical Fame; with Translations from the Greek and Roman Classics, Prose and Verse; and Translations of the best French and Italian Authors; has been for some time preparing on a new, elegant, and commodious Plan, which embraces at once the two important objects—correctness of text, and beauty of printing.

These Works, which are intended to be published periodically, one, or perhaps two, appearing each month, may be continued in regular series; in which case they will form a complete Library of Standard English Literature: or they may be purchased separately, each volume containing an entire Work, a Life of the Author, or a Critical Essay, and embellished with a Vignette Title and Frontispiece, designed and engraven by the best artists, from the most interesting and characteristic subjects.

The size of these volumes is that which has been so long celebrated on the Continent, by the name of *Elzevir*, and has not only been deemed the most convenient for readers in general, but is most happily adapted for presents to young persons, of such works as may gratify their curiosity and improve their taste. And

to secure this valuable purpose, no works will be admitted but such as have been honoured by the universal sanction of criticism and popularity; such as have been approved by teachers of wisdom and the arbiters of taste, and may be circulated with confidence, as the proudest Triumphs of English Genius.

It may not be unnecessary to add, that the Writings of our eminent Authors have never before been printed in a form which so strictly combines elegance, accuracy, and cheapness. That the public, however, may be enabled to judge of the superiority of these Editions, the following are already completed, at the prices annexed:

	s.	*d.*
Arabian Nights' Entertainments, 3 v. .	13	6
Atala; Indian Cottage; Idyls, and First Navigator	3	0
Beauties of Sterne	3	0
Blair's Essays on Rhetoric	3	0

	s.	d.
Belisarius, and Numa Pompilius	4	0
Bucaniers of America	6	0
Chapone's Letters, Gregory's Legacy, and Pennington's Advice	3	0
Chesterfield's Principles of Politeness	3	0
Chinese and Oriental Tales	4	6
Cowper's Poems	5	0
Death of Abel	2	0
Devil on Two Sticks	3	6
Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul	3	6
Dodd's Beauties of Shakspeare	4	6
Don Quixote, 2 vols.	10	0
Dryden's Virgil	4	0
Fairy Tales, by the Countess D'Anois, 2 vols.	8	0
Falconer's Shipwreck	1	0
Francis's Horace	4	0
Franklin's Works	3	6
Gil Blas, 2 vols.	8	0
Goldsmith's Essays, Poems, and Plays	4	0
Gray's Poems	1	0
Gulliver's Travels	3	6
Hervey's Meditations	4	0
Hoole's Tasso	5	0
Hudibras	3	6
Humphry Cliuker	4	0
Johnson's Lives, 2 vols.	9	0
Johnson's Rambler, 2 vols.	9	0
Joseph Andrews	4	0
Junius's Letters	3	6
King Arthur, 2 vols.	9	0
Locke on the Understanding, and Bacon's Essays	3	0
Mackenzie's Man of Feeling, Man of the World, &c.	5	0
Marmontel's Tales	5	0
Mason's Gray	5	0

	s.	d.
Mason on Self-Knowledge; Economy of Human Life; and Melmoth's Great Importance of a Religious Life	3	0
Messiah	5	0
Milton's Poetical Works	4	6
Nourjahad, and Almoran and Hamet	3	0
Old English Baron, and Castle of Otrauto	3	0
Ossian's Poems	4	0
Ovid's Metamorphoses	4	0
Paley's Philosophy	4	6
—— Evidences	4	0
—— Theology	4	0
—— Horæ Paulinæ	3	6
Paul and Virginia, and Elizabeth	3	0
Peregrine Pickle, 2 vols.	9	0
Peruvian Tales	6	0
Pilgrim's Progress	4	6
Pindar's Works, 4 vols.	21	0
Pope's Poetical Works	6	0
Pope's Homer's Iliad	5	0
Ditto Odyssey	4	0
Rasselas, by Dr. Johnson, and Dinarbas, a Tale, being a continuation of Rasselas, in 1 vol.	3	0
Robinson Crusoe	5	0
Roderick Random	5	0
Romaine's Treatises	5	0
Sandford and Merton	4	0
Spiritual Quixote	5	0
Sterne's Sentimental Journey	1	6
Sturm's Reflections, 2 vols.	8	0
Tales of the Castle, by Madame De Genlis, 2 vols.	9	0
Tales of the Genii	4	6
Telemachus	4	0
Theodosius and Constantia, and Solyman and Almena, by John Langhorne, D. D.	3	0

	s.	d.
Thomson's Seasons and Castle of Indolence	2	6
Tom Jones, 2 vols.	10	0
Tristram Shandy	6	0
Vicar of Wakefield	2	6
Voltaire's Life of Charles XII. and Peter the Great	6	0
Watts on the Mind	4	0
Young's Night Thoughts	3	0
Zimmerman on Solitude	4	0

ESSAYS

ON

RHETORIC.

ON TASTE.

TASTE is "the power of receiving pleasure and pain from the beauties and deformities of nature and of art." It is a faculty common in some degree to all mankind. Throughout the circle of human nature nothing is more universal 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 the heavens. Even in the wild deserts of America, where human nature appears in its state of greatest nakedness, the savages have yet 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 of reason.

Though no human being can be entirely devoid of this faculty, yet it is possessed in very different degrees. In some men only the 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 amongst mankind is to be ascribed, undoubtedly, in some degree, to the different frame of their natures; to nicer organs, and more delicate internal powers, with which some are endowed beyond others: yet it is owing still more to culture and education. Taste is certainly one of the most improvable faculties which adorns 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 civilised, 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 convinced of the truth of this position 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 the union of all the parts 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 that reason enables us to discover such propriety in the conduct, the greater will be our pleasure.

The characters or constituents of taste, when brought to its most perfect state, may be reduced to 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; in like manner, delicacy of internal taste is visible by a quick and lively sensibility to its finest, most compounded, or most latent objects.

Correctness of taste respects the improvement which that 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 with 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 us 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 of 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 deformed by 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 the 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 to all nations. There is a certain string, which being properly struck, the human heart is so made as to accord to it.

Hence the general and decided testimony which the most improved nations of the earth, throughout 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 in some degree of poetical composition; since from 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 insipid poet, or a bad artist; but when foreigners, or when posterity examine his works, his faults are discovered, and the genuine taste of human nature is seen. Time, which overthrows the illusions of opinion, and the whimsies of caprice, confirms and establishes the decisions of nature.

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

TRUE 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 the 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 dramatic and epic 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 superior 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 superior genius, indeed, will of himself, uninstructed, compose in such a manner as shall be agreeable to the most important rules of criticism; for since these rules are founded in nature, nature will frequently suggest them in practice. Homer, it is certain, was acquainted with no systems 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 defects of those who have gone before him. No rules can, indeed, supply the defect 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 superlative beauties.

Genius is a word which, in common acceptation, extends much farther than to the 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 mathematics, as well as a genius for poetry; a genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment.

Genius may be greatly improved and cultivated 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 with, who have an excellent taste in several of the polite arts; such as music, poetry, painting, and eloquence, altogether: but an excellent execution in all these arts is very seldom found in any individual; or rather, indeed, it is not to be looked for. An universal genius, or one who is equally and indifferently inclined towards 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 bent of the mind is wholly directed towards some one object, exclusively, as it were, 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 people 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 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 opened; 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 of them should be examined fully; the pleasure which we receive from discourse, or writing, being the principal object of them. Our design is to give some openings into the pleasures of taste in general; and to insist, more particularly, upon sublimity and beauty.

As yet, we are far from having attained to 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 reduced under three heads; beauty, grandeur, and novelty. His speculations on this subject, if not remarkably profound, are, however, very beautiful and entertaining; and he has the merit of having discovered a tract which was before untrod. Since his time, the advances which have been 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 under 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 ourselves at the greatest loss. For example; we all learn by experience, that some figures of bodies appear to us 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 what is the cause of regularity and variety producing in our minds the sensation of beauty, any reason we can produce is extremely imperfect. Those first principles of internal sensation nature appears to have studiously concealed.

It is some consolation, however, that although the efficient cause be 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 endowments, 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 amply 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 wide extended plains, to which the eye can find no limits; the firmament of heaven; or the boundless expanse of the ocean. All vastness produces an idea of sublimity. Space, however extended in length, makes not so strong an impression as height or depth. Though a boundless plain be a grand object, yet a lofty mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower, whence we look down on the 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 impetuosity of that mass of waters. Wherever space is concerned, it is evident, that amplitude or greatness of extent, in one dimension or other, is inseparable from grandeur. Take away all bounds from any object, and you immediately render it sublime. Hence infinite space, endless numbers, and everlasting 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 precipitates itself with the impetuosity and noise of a torrent, it immediately becomes a sublime one. A race-horse is beheld 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 a variety of 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 such infinite numbers and with such splendid profusion, strikes the imagination with a 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, are at

any time grand and awful; but, when heard amidst the silence and stillness of the night, they become doubly striking. 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, amidst
Thick clouds and dark, does Heaven's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscured;
And, with the majesty of darkness, round
Circles his throne ———

Obscurity, we may farther remark, is favourable to the sublime. The descriptions given us of the appearances of supernatural beings carry some sublimity, though the conceptions 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 an 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 discover the limits on every side; we perceive 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. An immense mass of rocks, thrown together by the hand of nature with wildnes sand confusion, strike the mind with more grandeur than if they

had been joined 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 effect very similar to what is produced by the 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; superior to passion and to fear; animated by some great principle to the 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 prisoner by Alexander, after a gallant defence, and asked in what manner he would be treated—answering, "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 Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination.

Look then abroad through nature; to the range
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,
Wheeling, unshaken, through 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 crowd 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 an alliance with the idea of danger. But the sublime does not consist wholly in modes of danger or of pain. In many grand objects there is not the least coincidence with terror; as in the magnificent prospect of wide 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, are, in the highest degree, terrible; but are destitute of all claim whatever to sublimity. It seems just to allow, that mighty force or power, whether attended by terror or not, whether employed in protecting or in alarming us, has a better title, than any thing which has yet been 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.

THE foundation of the sublime in composition must always be laid in the nature of the object

described. We must except, however, 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, with 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 amongst the most ancient authors that we are to look for the most striking instances of the sublime. The early ages of the world, and the rude uncultivated state of society, appear to have been peculiarly favourable to the strong emotions of sublimity. The genius of mankind was then very prone to admiration and astonishment. Meeting continually with new and strange objects, their imagination was kept glowing, and their passions were often under a high agitation. They thought and expressed themselves boldly, and 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, whether ancient or modern, the Sacred Scriptures afford us the most striking instances of the sublime. There the descriptions of the Supreme Being are wonderfully noble; both

from the grandeur of the object, and the manner of representing it. What a collection of awful and sublime ideas is presented to us in that passage of the eighteenth psalm, where an appearance of the Deity 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 winds. 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 expedition and ease. 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, during all ages, been universally admired for sublimity; and he is indebted for much of his grandeur to that native and unaffected simplicity which characterises his manner. His descriptions of conflicting armies; the spirit, the fire, the rapidity which he throws into his battles, pre-

sent 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 these superior beings 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 seems to be in commotion. Jupiter thunders through the sky; Neptune smites the earth with his trident; the ships, the city, and the mountains tremble: the earth shakes to its centre; Pluto leaps 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 perhaps inferior to the original, is yet highly animated and sublime.

But when the powers descending swell'd the fight,
Then tumult rose, fierce rage, and pale affright:
Now through 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 tempests, and a night of clouds;
Now through each Trojan heart he fury pours
With voice divine, from Ilion's topmost tow'rs;
Above, the sire 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;
Through 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,
The 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 the 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 superfluity of 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 from which the mind is tending every moment to sink into its ordinary tone or situation. When an author, therefore, has brought us, or is endeavouring to bring us into this state, if he multiplies words unnecessarily, if he decks the sublime object on all sides, with glittering ornaments; nay, if he throws 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 sable brows, gave the awful nod; while he shook the celestial locks of his immortal head, all Olympus was shaken." Mr. Pope translates it in this manner:

He spoke; and awful bends his sable 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 hair of his head shaken is the consequence of his nod, and makes a happy picturesque circumstance in the description.

The boldness, freedom, and variety of our blank verse is infinitely more propitious than rhyme to all kinds of sublime poetry. The fullest evidence of this is afforded by Milton; an author whose genius led him peculiarly to the sublime. The whole first and second books of Paradise Lost are continued examples of it. Take only, 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 obscured: 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 a variety of sources of the sublime are joined together: the principal object superlatively great; a high superior 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 familiar, natural, and simple, but magnificent.

Besides simplicity and conciseness, strength is essentially necessary to sublime writing. The strength of description proceeds, in a great measure, from a simple conciseness; but it implies something more, namely, a judicious choice of circumstances in the description, so as to exhibit the object in its full and most advantageous point of view. For every object has several faces, if the expression be allowed, by which it may be presented to us, according to the circumstances with which we surround it; and it will appear superlatively sublime, or otherwise, in proportion as all these circumstances are happily chosen, and of a sublime kind. In this the great art of the writer consists; and it is, indeed, the principal difficulty of sublime description. If the description be too general, and divested of circumstances, the object is shown in a faint light; and makes either a feeble impression, or no impression at all, on the reader. At the same time, if any insignificant or improper circumstances are mingled, the whole is degraded.

The nature of that emotion which is aimed at by sublime description admits of no mediocrity, and cannot subsist in a middle state; but must either highly transport us, or, if unsuccessful in the execution, leave us exceedingly disappointed and displeased. We endeavour to rise along 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 must descend with a rapid and painful shock. When Milton, in his battle of the

angels, represents them as tearing up the 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, is rendered by Claudian 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, has been 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"—

"belched 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, by observing what figure it makes in a poem of Sir Richard Blackmore; who, through an extravagant perversity of taste, had selected it for the principal circumstance in his description; and thereby (as Dr. Arbuthnot humorously observes) had represented the mountain as in a fit of the colic.

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 the 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, contributes to, or even constitutes 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 truly striking and sublime: but put into what is vulgarly 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 has justly observed, the style is indeed raised, but the thought is humbled. 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 or inadequate 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 endeavouring to raise it into the sublime; or, in attempting to exalt a sublime object beyond all the bounds of nature and propriety.

BEAUTY, AND OTHER PLEASURES OF TASTE.

BEAUTY, next to sublimity, affords, undoubtedly, the highest pleasure to the imagination. The emotion which it raises is easily distinguished from that of sublimity. It is of a more gentle kind; it is more calm and soothing; it 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 of 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 mere abstract science. We speak frequently of a beautiful tree or flower; a beautiful poem; a beautiful character; and a beautiful theorem in mathematics.

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, by being connected in our ideas with rural scenes and prospects; white, with innocence; blue, with the serenity of the sky. Independent 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 to observation as a source of beauty. By a regular figure is understood, 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, give pleasure to the eye, by their regularity, as beautiful figures: yet a certain graceful variety is perceived to be a much more powerful principle 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 connexion 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 disregard of regularity. Cabinets, doors, and windows, are made after a regular form, in cubes and parallelograms, with an 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, the better adapted to the ends for which they were designed. Yet plants, flowers, and leaves, are full of variety and diversity. A straight canal is an insipid figure, when compared with the meanders of rivers. 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. Gentle motion, however, only 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. And 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 towards 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 upwards is commonly also more pleasing than motion downwards. The easy curling motion of flame and smoke is an object singularly agreeable. Mr. Hogarth observes very ingeniously, that all the common and necessary motions for the purposes of life are performed by men in straight or plain lines; but that all the graceful and ornamental 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 they are separate principles of beauty; yet in many beautiful objects they meet together, and thereby render the beauty both greater and more complex. Thus in flowers, trees, and animals, we are entertained at the same time with the delicacy of the colour, with the gracefulness of the figure, and sometimes likewise with the motion of the object. The most

complete assemblage of beautiful objects which can any where be found is presented 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, which are proper for such a scene; as a bridge with arches, over a river, smoke rising from cottages in the midst of trees, and the distant view of a fine building discovered by the rising sun; we then enjoy, in the highest perfection, that gay, cheerful, and placid sensation which characterises beauty.

The beauty of the human countenance is more various and complex than any that 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 the 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, a scorn of pleasures, and the contempt of death. These produce in the spectator an idea 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 without impropriety be classed under the same head.

Beauty of writing, used in its more definite sense, characterises a particular manner; when it is to signify a certain grace and amenity in the turn either of style or sentiment, for which some authors have been particularly distinguished. In this sense, it comprehends a manner neither remarkably sublime, nor extravagantly passionate, nor uncommonly sparkling; but such as excites in the reader an emotion of the gently pleasing kind, resembling that which is raised by the contemplation of beautiful objects in nature; which neither lifts the mind very high, nor agitates it to excess; but spreads over the imagination an agreeable and complacent serenity. Mr. Addison is a writer entirely of this character; and is one of the most proper examples which can be given of it. Fenelon, the author of Telemachus, may be considered as 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 carried him strongly towards vehemence and pathos.

This 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 do not only delight the imagination 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 Mr. Addison, and by every writer on this subject. An object which has no other merit than being uncommon or new, by means of this quality alone, raises in the mind a vivid and an agrecable emotion. Hence that passion of curiosity, which prevails so universally among mankind. Objects and ideas to which we have been long accustomed make too faint an impression to give an agree-

able 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 raised 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 has in itself no charms to retain our attention, the shining gloss spread over it by novelty soon wears away.

Imitation is also another source of pleasure to taste. This gives rise to what Mr. Addisou calls the secondary pleasures of imagination; which form, undoubtedly, a very extensive class. For all imitation conveys 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 harmouy appertain likewise to taste. There is no delightful sensation we receive either from beauty or sublimity but what is capable of being heightened by the power of musical sound. Hence the charm of poetical numbers; and even of the more concealed and looser measures of prose. Wit, humour, and ridicule, open likewise a variety of pleasure 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, that they encompass so large and fruitful a 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 sentiment, from novelty, from harmony, from wit, humour, and ridicule. To whichever of these the peculiar inclination of 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 or mimetic arts. They compare it with painting and with sculpture, and in many respects prefer it justly before them. But it must be observed, that imitation and description differ considerably in their nature from each other. Words have no natural resemblance to the ideas or objects which they are employed to signify; but a statue or a picture has a natural likeness to the original.

As far, however, as a poet or an historian introduces into his work persons really speaking, and by the words which he puts into their mouths represents the conversation which they might be supposed to hold; so far his art may more justly be called imitative: and this is the case in every dramatic composition. But in narrative or descriptive works it cannot with propriety be called so. 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 would never imagine that 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, 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.

TO form an adequate idea of the rise and origin of language, it is necessary to 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 the 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 propagated among other tribes or families, so as to spread and 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 any multitude of men be kept together, or be connected in the prosecution of any common interest, until, by the assistance of speech, they could communicate their wants and intentions to each other? So that, either how society could subsist previous to language, or how words could rise into a language, previous to the formation of society, seem

to be points attended with equal difficulty. And when we consider farther, that curious analogy which prevails in the construction of almost all languages, and that deep and subtile logic 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 first origin of all language to divine inspiration.

But supposing language to have a divine original, we cannot, however, imagine, that a perfect system of it was all 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 first rudiments of speech must have been poor and narrow; and we are at full liberty to inquire in what manner, and by what steps, language advanced to the state in which we now find it.

Should we suppose a period to exist before any words were invented or known, it is evident that men could have no other method of communicating their feelings to others 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: just as two men, at this day, would endeavour to make themselves understood by each other, who should be 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 first elements or beginnings of speech.

When more enlarged communication became requisite, and names began to be applied to objects, how can we suppose men to have proceeded in this application of names, or invention of words? Certainly, by assimilating, as much as they could, the nature of the object which they named, to the sound of the name which they gave to it. As a painter, who would represent grass, must make use of 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 act 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, in a manner purely arbitrary, 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 towards 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 distinguished, in which sound, noise, or motion were 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 upon 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 betwixt 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 are concerned, and still more in the 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; but that throughout the radical words of all languages there may be traced some degree of correspondence with the object signified.

This principle, however, of a natural relation between words and objects, can only be applied to language in its most simple and early state. Though in every tongue some remains of it can be traced, it were utterly vain to search for it throughout the whole construction of any modern language. As the multitude of 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 to the things signified. This is the present state of language. Words, as we now use them, taken in the general, may be considered as symbols, not as imitations; as arbitrary or instituted, not natural signs of ideas. But there seems to 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 first 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 introduced, 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 undoubtedly 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 inconsiderable stock of words which men as yet possessed rendered those helps entirely necessary for explaining their conceptions; and rude, uncultivated individuals, not having always ready even the few words which they knew, would naturally labour to make themselves understood, by changing their tones of voice, and accompanying their tones with the most expressive gesticulations they could make.

To this mode of speaking necessity first 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 having attended to this, we shall be at a loss in understanding several passages of the classics, which relate to the public speaking and the 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 in notes, and supported with instruments; as several learned men have fully demonstrated.

With regard to gestures, the case was parallel; for strong tones and animated gestures, we may observe, always go together. The action both of the orators and the players in Greece and Rome was far more vehement than that to which we are accustomed. To us, Roscius would have appeared

a madman. Gesture was of such consequence upon the ancient stage, that there is reason for believing, that on some occasions the speaking and the acting part 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, that 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 public 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 instituted for restraining the senators from studying the pantomimic art. Now, though in declamations and theatrical exhibitions, both tone and gesture were, undoubtedly, carried much farther than in common discourse; yet public speaking of any kind must, in every country, bear some proportion to the manner which is used in conversation; and such public entertainments could never have been relished by a nation, whose tones and gestures in discourse were as languid as ours.

The early language of mankind 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.

It was not, however, necessity alone which gave rise to this pictured style. In the infancy of all

societies, fear and surprise, wonder and astonishment, are the most frequent passions of mankind. Their language will necessarily be affected by this character of their minds. They will be disposed to paint every thing in the strongest and most glowing colours. Even the manner in which the first tribes of men uttered their words would have considerable 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 others 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 dyed with the blood of our brethren. Now, in this fort, we enter 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 never 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 would know it by the motion of its roots, reaching into our country. May the Great Spirit allow 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 trod 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 ex-

tinguished. The bloody bed is washed clean, and the tears are wiped from our eyes. We now renew the covenant chain of friendship. Let it be kept bright, and clean as silver, and not suffered to contract any rust. Let not any one pull away his arm from it."

As language, in its progress, began to grow more copious, it gradually lost that figurative style which was its original characteristic. The vehement manner of speaking by tones and gestures became less universal. Instead of poets, philosophers became the instructors of mankind; 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 from the intercourse of men, and reserved for those occasions only on which ornament was professedly studied.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE AND OF WRITING.

IF we examine the order in which words are arranged in a sentence, we find a very remarkable difference between the ancient and modern tongues. The consideration of this will serve to unfold farther the genius of language, and to discover the causes of those alterations which it has undergone, in the progress of society.

To conceive distinctly the nature of this alteration, we must go back, as before, to the most early period of language. Let us figure to ourselves a savage, beholding some object, such as fruit, which he earnestly desires, and requests another to give it to him. Suppose him unacquainted with words; he would then strive to make himself understood

by pointing eagerly at the object which he desired, and uttering at the same time a passionate cry. Supposing him to have acquired words, the first word which he uttered would, consequently, 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 evident reason, that his attention was wholly directed towards fruit, the object of his desire. From hence we might conclude, *à priori*, that this would be 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 the Latin; and it is said likewise, in the Russian, the Sclavonic, the Gaëlic, and several of the 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 called the order of the understanding. They place first in the sentence the person or thing which speaks or acts, next, its action, and finally, 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 such distinguished mildness, such unusual and unheard of clemency, and such 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, "impossible for him *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, exactly changes 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. "Tantam 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 a greater liberty for transposition and inversion in poetry than in prose. Even there, however, that liberty is confined within narrow limits, in comparison of the ancient languages. In this respect the 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 the order of time. Its characters are of two kinds; either signs for things, or signs for words. Thus the pictures, hieroglyphics, 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 towards writing. Mankind, in all ages and in all nations, have been prone to imitation. This would soon be employed for giving imperfect descriptions of events, and for recording their remembrance. Thus, to signify that one man had killed another, they painted the figure of a dead man lying on the ground, and of another standing over 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 could only be delineated.

Hieroglyphical characters may be considered as the second stage of the art of writing. They con-

sist in certain symbols, which are made to represent invisible objects, on account of a resemblance which such symbols were supposed to bear to 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. In 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 endowed. 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 hieroglyphics mankind gradually advanced to simple arbitrary marks, which stood for objects, though without any resemblance or analogy to the objects signified. Of this nature was the manner of writing among the Peruvians. They used small cords of different colours; and by knots upon these, of different sizes, and variously ranged, they invented signs for giving information, and 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 are, like hieroglyphics, independent of language; are signs

of things, and not of words. For we are told, that the Japanese, the Tonquinese, and the Coræans, who speak different languages from each other, and from the inhabitants of China, employ, however, the same written characters with them, and thus correspond intelligibly with one another in writing, though ignorant of the language spoken in their respective countries. 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 the 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 these methods of communication which have been mentioned, was the invention of signs, which should stand not directly for things, but for the words by which things were named and distinguished. An alphabet of syllables seems to have been invented previous to an alphabet of letters. Such an one is said to be retained, at this day, in Æthiopia, and some countries of India. But it must have been, at best, 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 determined. They were brought into Greece by Cadmus the Phœnician, who, according to Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology, was contemporary with King David. His alphabet consisted only of 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, the names, and the arrangement of the letters, as amounts to a de-

monstration 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 testimony 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 throughout all the nations of Europe.

Writing was first exhibited on pillars, and tables of stone, afterwards on plates of the softer metals, such as lead. As it became practised more extensively, the leaves, and the 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 impression was made with a stylus of iron. Parchment, made of the hides of animals, was an invention of later times. Paper was not invented till the fourteenth century.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

THE usual division of speech into eight parts, nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, adverbs, prepositions, interjections, and conjunctions, might easily be proved not to be very accurate; since, under the general term of nouns, it comprehends both substantives and adjectives, which are parts of speech entirely distinct; while it makes a sepa-

rate part of speech of participles, which are only verbal adjectives. Yet, as we are most accustomed to this division, and as logical exactness is not necessary to our present design, we shall adopt those terms which habit has made familiar to us.

Substantive nouns are the foundation of grammar, and are the most ancient part of speech. When men had got 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 the objects by which they were surrounded. Whichever way he looked, forests and trees would meet the eye of the beholder. To distinguish the trees by separate names would have been endless. Their common qualities, such as springing from a root, and bearing branches and leaves, would suggest a general idea, and a general name. The genus, a *tree*, would afterwards be subdivided into its several species of oak, elm, ash, &c. by experience and observation.

Still, however, only general terms of speech were adopted. For the oak, the elm, and the ash, were names of whole classes of objects, each of which comprehended an immense number of undistinguished individuals. Thus when the terms 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 and curious contrivance for determining the individual object intended, by means of that part of speech called the article. In our language we have two articles, *a* and *the; a* is more general, *the* more definite. The Greeks have but one, ὁ ἡ το, which agree with our definite article *the*. They supply the place of our article *a*, by the absence of their article: thus, Ανθρωπος signifies *a* man; ὁ Ανθρωπος, *the* man. The Latins have no article, but supply its place with the pronouns hic, ille, iste. This, however, seems to be a defect in their language,

since articles certainly contribute much to accuracy and precision.

To illustrate this remark, we may observe the different imports of the following expressions: "The friend of a king—the friend of the king—a friend of the king's." Each of these three phrases has a separate meaning, too obvious to be misunderstood. In Latin, "amicus regis" is entirely undetermined: it may bear any of the three senses which have been mentioned, and requires other words to ascertain its meaning.

Besides this quality of being distinguished by the article, three affections belong to substantive nouns; number, gender, and case, which deserve to be considered.

Number distinguishes nouns as one, or many, of the same kind, called the singular and plural; a distinction found in all tongues, and which must, indeed, have been coeval with the first origin of language; since there were few things which men had more frequent necessity of expressing than the distinction between one and many. 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, from separate terms of numbering being yet undiscovered, and one, two, and many, being all, or at least the principal numeral distinctions which mankind, at first, had any occasion to make use of.

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 substantive nouns ought to belong to what is called by grammarians the neuter gender. Yet, in most languages, a great number of inanimate objects have been ranked under the like distinctions of masculine and feminine. Thus, for instance, in the Latin tongue, *ensis*, a sword, is masculine; *sagitta*, an arrow, is feminine: and this assignation

of sex to inanimate objects seems to be entirely casual and capricious. In the Greek and Latin, however, all inanimate objects are not ranked among the masculine and feminine; but many of them are likewise classed where all of them ought to have been, under the neuter gender, as *saxum*, a rock; *mare*, the sea. But in the French and Italian tongues, the neuter gender is entirely unknown, and all their names of inanimate objects are put upon the same footing with those of living creatures; and distributed without reserve into masculine and feminine. In the English language, when we use common discourse, all substantive nouns that are not names of living creatures are neuter, without exception. And ours is, perhaps, the only tongue in the known world (except the Chinese, which is said to resemble it in this particular) in which the distinction of gender is properly and philosophically attended to.

Case, in declension, declares the state or relation which one object bears to another, denoted by some variation made upon 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 means of the words called prepositions, which are the names of those relations, prefixed to the name of the object. English nouns have no case whatever, except a sort of a genitive, usually formed by the addition of the letter S to the noun; as when we say "Pope's Dunciad," meaning the Dunciad of Pope. Our personal pronouns have likewise a case, which corresponds with the accusative of the Latin; I, me—he, him—who, whom. This, however, is but a diminutive resemblance of that declension which is used in the ancient languages.

Whether the moderns have given beauty or utility to language, by the abolition of cases, may perhaps be doubted: they have, however, certainly rendered it more simple, by removing that intricacy which arose from the different forms of declension, of which the Romans had no less than five; and from all the irregularities in these several declensions. By obtaining this simplicity, it must be confessed, we have filled language with a multitude of those little words called prepositions, which are perpetually recurring in every sentence, and seem to have encumbered speech by an addition of terms; and by rendering it more prolix, to have enervated its force. The sound of modern language has also become less agreeable to the ear, by being deprived of that variety and sweetness which arose from the length of words, and the change of terminations, occasioned by the 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 substantive nouns, and are subject to the same modifications with them of number, gender, and case. We may observe, however, that the pronouns of the first and second person, *I* and *thou*, have had no distinction of gender in any language; for, since they always refer to persons who are present to each other when they speak, their sex must be visible, and therefore needs not to be distinguished by a masculine or feminine pronoun. But, as the third person may be absent, or unknown, the distinction of gender there becomes requisite, and consequently in our language it hath all the three genders belonging to it; *he*, *she*, *it*. With respect to cases; even those languages which do not admit them in substantive nouns sometimes retain more of them in pronouns, for the greater readiness in expressing relations; since pronouns occur so frequently in

discourse. The personal pronouns, in English, are allowed by grammarians to possess two cases besides the nominative; a genitive and an accusative: *I, mine, me; thou, thine, thee; he, his, him; who, whose, whom.*

Adjectives, or terms of quality, such as *strong, weak, handsome, ugly,* are the plainest and most simple of all that class of words which are called 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, till names were assigned to their different qualities.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

ENGLISH TONGUE.

OF 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 in which they now are found. It is highly probable, as Dr. Smith has observed, that the radical verb, or the earliest form of it, in most languages, would be what we now call the impersonal verb: "It rains; it thunders; it is light;" and the like; as this is the most simple form of the verb, and merely declaratory of the existence of an event, or of a state of things. After pronouns were first invented, such verbs became gradually personal, and were extended through all the variety of tenses and moods.

The tenses are contrived to imply the several distinctions of time. We think, in general, 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 art and subtilty: it divides time into its several moments; it regards time as never standing still, but always flowing; things past, as more or less perfectly completed; and things future, as more or less distant, by different gradations. Hence the variety of tenses which are found in almost every language.

The present may, indeed, be always regarded as one indivisible point, which admits of no variety. "I walk, or I am walking, *ambulo*." But it is very different with the past. Even the poorest language has two or three tenses to express its varieties. Ours has no less than four: 1. A past action may be regarded as left unfinished; which forms the imperfect tense, "I was walking, *ambulabam*." 2. As just now finished: this constitutes the proper perfect tense, which, in English, is always expressed by the help of the auxiliary verb, "I have "walked." 3. It may be considered as finished some time since; the particular time left undetermined. "I walked; *ambuluvi*;" which may either signify, "I walked yesterday, or, I walked a twelvemouth ago." This is what grammarians call an aörist, or indefinite past. 4. It may be considered as finished before something else which is also past. This is the plusquamperfect. "I had walked; *ambulaveram*. I had walked before you did me the favour of calling upon me." Our language, we must perceive with pleasure, has here an advantage over the Latin, which has only three variations upon the past time.

The varieties in the future time are chiefly 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 pays me a visit.

Beside tenses, verbs admit the distinction of

voices, viz. the active and passive; according as the affirmation regards something that is done, or something that is suffered: "I love, or I am loved." They admit likewise the distinction of moods, which are intended to express the affirmation, whether active or passive, under different forms. The indicative mood simply declares a proposition: "I write; I have written." The imperative requires, commands, threatens: "Write thou; let him write." The subjunctive expresses the proposition under the form of a condition, or as subordinate to some other thing, to which a reference is made: "I might write; I could write; I should write, if the matter were so and so." This mode of expressing an affirmation, under so many various forms, together also with the distinction of the three persons, *I, thou*, and *he*, constitutes what is called the conjugation of verbs, which comprehends so extensive a proportion of the grammar of all languages.

Conjugation is reckoned most perfect in those languages which, by changing either the termination or the initial syllable of the verb, express the greatest number of important circumstances, without the assistance of auxiliary verbs. In the Eastern tongues, the verbs have few tenses; but their moods are so constructed as to express an extensive variety of circumstances and relations. In the Hebrew, they say in one word, without the aid of an auxiliary, not only, "I have taught," but, "I have taught exactly, or frequently; I have been commanded to teach; I have taught myself." The Greek, which is the most perfect of all languages, is very regular and complete in all the moods 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 the 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 the participle, supersede, in a great measure, the different terminations of moods and tenses, which formed the ancient conjugations.

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

Adverbs are an abridged mode of speech, expressing, by one word, what might, by a circumlocution, be resolved into two or more words belonging to the other parts of speech: "Valiantly," for instance, is the same as, "with valour or courage." Hence, adverbs seem to be less necessary, and of later introduction into speech than many other classes of words; and consequently, the generality of them are derived from other words, previously invented and established in the language.

Prepositions and conjunctions serve to express the relations which things bear to one another, their mutual influence, dependencies, and coherence; and join words together into intelligible and significant propositions. Conjunctions are commonly employed for connecting sentences, or members of sentences; as, *and*, *because*, and the like. Prepositions are used for connecting words, by showing the relation which one substantive noun bears to another; as, *of*, *from*, *to*, &c. The beauty and strength of every language depend, in a great measure, on the proper use of conjunctions, prepositions, and also those relative pronouns, which serve the same purpose of connecting the 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 the connexion 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 have been constructed, in a manner, within themselves, and built on one foundation. Hence, our syntax is confined, since there are few marks in the words themselves which can show their relation to each other, or point out either their concordance or their government in the sentence. But, if these be disadvantages in a compound language, they are balanced by other advantages which attend it; particularly by the number and variety of words with which such a language is commonly enriched. Few languages are, in reality, more copious than the English. In all grave subjects, particularly historical, critical, political, and moral, no complaint can justly be made of the barrenness of our tongue. We are rich likewise in the language of poetry: our poetical style differs considerably 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 those different occasions. In this we have an infinite superiority over the French, whose poetical language, if it were not distinguished by rhyme, would not appear to differ much, or considerably, from their ordinary prose. Their language, however, surpasses ours in expressing whatever is delicate, gay, and amusing. It is, certainly, the happiest language for conversation in the known world; but, on 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 consideration in speaking and writing. This

seems to depend on the copiousness of a language; the different arrangements of which its words are susceptible; and the variety and beauty of the sound of those words, so as to correspond to many different subjects. 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 which an author could wish, from the most simple and familiar, to the most formal and majestic. The Latin, though exceedingly beautiful, is inferior, in this respect, to the Greek; it has more of a settled character of stateliness and gravity; and is supported by a certain senatorial dignity, of which it is difficult for a writer uniformly to divest it. Among the 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 on the ruins of the ancient. Our language, though unequal to the Italian in flexibility, yet is not destitute of a considerable degree of this quality. Whoever considers the diversity of style which appears 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, in the highest degree, to its reputation.

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; in the final syllables especially, where the letter *s* is transformed into a *z*, which is one of the sounds on which the ear rests with pleasure; as in *has*, *these*, *loves*, *hears*, &c.

It must, indeed, be admitted, that smoothness is not the distinguishing characteristic of the English

tongue. Strength and expressiveness, rather than grace and melody, constitute its character. It professes, however, this property, of being the most simple, in its form and construction, of all the European dialects. It is free from the intricacy of cases, declensions, moods, and tenses. Its words are subject to fewer variations from their original form than those of any other language. Its substantives have no distinction of gender, except what is made by nature; and but one variation in case. Its adjectives admit not of any change, except what expresses the degree of comparison. Its verbs, instead of the varieties of ancient conjugation, admit no more than four or five changes in termination. A few prepositions and auxiliary verbs supply all the purposes of significancy in meaning; whilst the words, in general, preserve their form unaltered. Hence our language acquires a simplicity and facility, which is 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 as well as to the ancient tongues; and a regard to them is absolutely requisite for writing or speaking with any degree of purity, elegance, or propriety.

Be the advantages or defects of our language what they may, 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 considerable industry upon theirs; and their example is, indeed, highly laudable, and 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

and skill. If the matter of an author be ever so good and useful, his compositions will always suffer in the public esteem, if his expression be deficient in purity and elegance. At the same time, the attainment of a correct and polished style is an object which demands application and labour. If any one supposes he can catch it merely by the ear, or acquire it by a hasty perusal of some of our good authors, he will find himself much disappointed. The many grammatical errors, the many impure expressions, which are to be found in authors who are far from being contemptible, demonstrate, that an attentive study of the language is previously requisite to the writing of it with propriety and elegance.

STYLE—PERSPICUITY AND PRECISION.

STYLE is the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions, by means of language. It is a picture of the ideas which rise in his mind, and of the order in which they are there produced.

The qualities of a good style may be ranked under two heads; perspicuity and ornament. It will readily be admitted, that perspicuity ought to be essentially connected with every kind of writing. Without this, the brightest ornaments of style only glimmer through the dark; and perplex, instead of pleasing the reader. If we are 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 never please us long. Mankind are too indolent to be fond of so much labour. Though they may pretend to admire the author's depth, after having discovered his meaning, they will seldom be inclined to look a second time into his book.

The study of perspicuity claims 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, should be made between them: purity consists in the use of such words and such constructions as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak; in opposition to those words and phrases which are imported from other languages, or which are obsolete, or new 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 their correct and judicious application, in opposition to vulgar or low expressions; and to words and phrases, which would be less significant of the ideas that we intend to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may be entirely English, without Scotticisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical expressions of any kind, and may, notwithstanding, be deficient in propriety. The words may be ill selected; not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's meaning. He has taken them, indeed, from the general mass of English language; but his choice has been made without happiness or skill. Style, however, 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 understood from the etymology of the word. It is derived from "*præcidere*," to cut off: it signifies retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression in such a manner, as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of his idea who uses it.

The words, which are employed to express ideas,

may be faulty in three respects. They may either not express that idea which the author means, but some other which only resembles, or is related to it; or they may express that idea, but not fully and completely; or they may express it, together with something more than he designs. Precision is opposed to these three faults, but particularly to the last; into this feeble writers are very apt to fall. They employ a multitude of words to make themselves understood, as they think, more distinctly; and they only confound the reader. The image, as they place it before you, is always seen double; and no double image is distinct. 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 will 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 occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different; and being induced to think of both together, when only one of them should engage our attention, our view is rendered unsteady, and our conception of the object indistinct.

The great source of a loose style in opposition to precision, is the inaccurate and unhappy use of those words called synonymous. Scarcely, in any language, are there two words which express precisely the same idea; and a person perfectly acquainted with the propriety of the language, will always be able to observe something by which they are distinguished. In our language very many instances might be given of a difference in meaning, among words which are thought to be synonymous; and as the subject is of importance, we shall point out a few of them.

Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded. We are surprised with what is new or unexpected;

we are astonished at what is vast or great: we are amazed with what we cannot comprehend; 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 the high opinion we have of ourselves; disdain on the low opinion we entertain of others.

To weary, to fatigue. The continuance of the same thing wearies us; labour fatigues us. A man is weary with standing, he is fatigued with walking.

To abhor, to detest. To abhor, imports, simply, strong dislike; to detest, imports likewise strong disapprobation. I abhor being in debt; I detest treachery.

To invent, to discover. We invent things which are new; we discover what has been 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 has not one complete apartment.

Tranquillity, peace, calm. Tranquillity signifies a situation free from trouble, considered in itself: peace, the same situation, with respect to any causes which might interrupt it; calm, with respect to a disturbed situation going before, or following it. A good man enjoys tranquillity in himself; peace with others; and calm after the storm.

Enough, sufficient. Enough relates to the quantity which we wish to have of any 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 weighed and attended to, 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, it is impossible that a work, composed of such periods, can be read with pleasure, or even with profit. But, by an 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 discover where it lies, and are able to correct it.

The properties most essential to a perfect sentence seem to be the four following: 1. Clearness and precision. 2. Unity. 3. Strength. 4. Harmony.

Ambiguity is opposed to clearness and precision, 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 leading rule in the arrangement of our sentences is, that the words or members most nearly related should be placed in the sentence as near to each other as possible; so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear. This rule is too frequently neglected even by good writers. A few instances will show both its importance and its 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 Mr. Addison, "I do not only mean the bulk of any single object, but the largeness of a whole view." Here the situation of the adverb *only* renders it a limitation of the following word, *mean*. "I do not only mean." —The question may then be asked, What, does he more than mean? Had it been placed after *bulk*, still it would have been improperly situated; for it might then be asked, What is meant besides the *bulk?* Is it the colour, or any other property? Its proper place is, certainly, 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." These kind of inaccuracies may have no material inconvenience in conversation, because the tone and emphasis used in pronouncing them generally serve to show their reference, and to make the meaning perspicuous: but in writing, where a person speaks to the eye, and not to the ear, he ought to be more accurate; and should so connect those adverbs with the words which 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 art to place it in such a manner as to divest it of all ambiguity. For instance, "Are these designs," says Lord Bolingbroke, (Dissert. on Parties, Ded.) "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 words, "*in any circumstances, in any situation,*" are connected with "a man born in Britain, in any circumstances or situation," or with that man's "avowing his designs, in any circumstances, or situation, into which he may be brought?" If the latter, as seems most likely, was intended to be the meaning, the arrangement ought to have been in this form: "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 attentive care is requisite to the proper disposition of the relative pronouns, *who, which, what, whose;* and of all those particles which express the connexion of the parts of speech with one another. Since all reasoning depends upon this connexion, we cannot be too accurate with regard to it. A trifling error may obscure the meaning of the whole sentence; and even where the meaning is apparent, yet where these relative particles are misplaced, we always find something awkward and disjointed in the structure of the period. The following passage in Bishop Sherlock's Sermons (vol. 2. serm. 15.) will exemplify these observations: "It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, which nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Heavenly Father." *Which* always refers grammatically to the immediately preceding substantive, which here is, "treasures," and this would convert the whole period into nonsense. The sentence should have been thus constructed: "It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, which nothing can protect us against but the good providence of our Heavenly Father."

We now proceed to the second quality of a well-arranged sentence, which we termed its unity. This is an indispensable property. The very nature of a sentence implies one proposition to be ex-

pressed. It may consist, indeed, of parts; but these parts must be so intimately knit together, as to make the impression upon the mind of one object, not of many.

To preserve this unity, we must first observe, that during the course of the sentence, the scene 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 beginning 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." Here, though the objects are sufficiently connected, yet by this mode of representation, by shifting so often the place and the person, *we*, and *they*, and *I*, and *who*, they appear in such a disunited view, that the sense of connexion is nearly lost. The sentence is restored to its proper unity, by constructing it after the following manner: "Having come to an anchor, I was put on shore, where I was saluted by all my friends, who received me with the greatest kindness."

Another rule is, never to crowd into one sentence things which have so little connexion, that they might bear to be divided into two or more sentences. The transgression of this rule never fails to hurt and 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 under Alexander, "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 unsavoury, by reason of their continual feeding upon sea-fish." Here the

scene 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 under one view.

Another rule for preserving the unity of sentences is, to keep clear of all parentheses in the middle of them. 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, since they occur so frequently among incorrect writers.

We shall add only one rule more for the unity of a sentence; which is, to bring it always to a full and perfect close. It need hardly be observed, that an unfinished sentence is no sentence at all, with respect to any of the rules of grammar. But sentences often occur, which are more than finished. When we have arrived at what we expected to be the conclusion; when we have come to the word, on which the mind is naturally led to rest, by what went before; unexpectedly some circumstance arises, which ought to have been left out, or to have been disposed of after another manner. 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 panegyric 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" ought to have concluded the sentence; for what follows is altother new, and is added after the proper close.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

WE proceed now to the third quality of a correct sentence, which we called strength. By this is meant such a disposition of the several words and members as shall exhibit the sense to the best advantage; as shall 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 importance. To the production of this effect, perspicuity and unity are, no doubt, absolutely necessary; but they are not of themselves sufficient. For a sentence may be obviously clear; it may also be sufficiently compact, or have the required unity; and yet, by some unfavourable circumstance in the structure, it may be deficient in that strength or liveliness of impression, which a more happy collocation would have produced.

The first rule which we shall give for promoting the strength of a sentence is, to 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 to say, "Being content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it." It is certainly, therefore, one of the most useful exercises of correction, on a view of what we have written or composed, to contract that round-about mode of expression, and to cut off those useless excrescences which are usually found in a first draught. But we must be

careful not to run into the opposite extreme, 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 divested of superfluous words, so also they should appear without superfluous members. In opposition to this, is the fault we so frequently meet with, of the last member of a period being no other than the repetition of the former, in a different dress. For example—speaking of beauty, "The very first discovery of it," says Mr. 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 already expressed in the first: and though the elegant style of Mr. Addison may palliate such negligence; yet it is generally true, that language, divested of this prolixity, becomes more strong, as well as more beautiful.

The second direction we shall give for promoting the strength of a sentence is, to pay a particular attention to the use of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed for transition and connexion. Some observations on this subject, which appear to be worthy of particular remembrance, shall here be noticed.

What is termed splitting of particles, or separating a preposition from the noun which it governs, is ever to be avoided: as if we should say, "Though virtue borrows no assistance from, yet it may often be accompanied by, the advantages of fortune." In such instances, a degree of dissatisfaction arises, from the violent separation of two things, which, from their nature, ought to be intimately united.

The simplicity of style is much injured by the unnecessary multiplication of relative and demonstrative particles. Thus if a writer should say, "There is nothing which disgusts me sooner than the empty pomp of language;" he would express

himself less simply 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 exceedingly proper; but, in the ordinary current of discourse, the latter is to be preferred.

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

On the copulative particle *and*, which occurs so often in all kinds of composition, several observations are to be made. It is evident, that the unnecessary repetition of it enfeebles style. By omitting it entirely, we often mark a closer connexion, a quicker succession of objects, than when it is inserted between them. "*Veni, vidi, vici*;"—"I came, I saw, I conquered;" expresses with more spirit the rapidity of conquest, than if connecting particles had been used. When, however, we desire to prevent a quick transition from one object to another, and when we are enumerating objects which we wish to appear as distinct from each other as possible, copulatives may be multiplied with peculiar advantage. Thus Lord Bolingbroke says, with elegance and propriety, "Such a man might fall a victim to power; but truth, and reason, and liberty, would fall with him."

A third rule for promoting the strength of a sentence is, to dispose of the principal word, or words, in that place 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 extensive liberty in the choice of collocation. In general, the important words are placed in the beginning of the 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 proper to suspend the meaning for a while, and then to bring it out full at the close. "Thus," says Mr. Pope, "on whatever side we contemplate Homer, what principally strikes us is his wonderful invention."

A fourth rule for the strength of sentences is, to make the members of them go on rising in their importance above one 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 naturally love to advance to what is more and more beautiful, rather than to follow the retrograde order. Having viewed some considerable object, we cannot, without pain, be pulled back to attend to an inferior circumstance. "*Cavendum est*," says Quintilian, "*ne decrescat oratio, et fortiori subjungatur aliquid infirmius.*" We must take care that our composition shall not fall off, and that a weaker expression shall not follow one of greater strength." When a sentence consists of two members, the longest should, in general, be the concluding one. Hence the pronunciation is rendered more easy; and the shortest member of the period 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."

A fifth rule for constructing sentences with proper strength, is to 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 stress and significancy rest chiefly upon words of this kind, they may, with propriety, 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 so placed, as to make a strong impression. But when those inferior parts of speech are introduced as circumstances, or as qualifications of more important words, they should invariably be disposed of in the least conspicuous parts of the period.

We should always avoid with care the concluding with any of those particles which distinguish the cases of nouns; *of, to, from, with, by*. Thus it is much better to say, "Avarice is a crime of which wise men are often guilty," than to say, "Avarice is a crime which wise men are often guilty of.". This kind of phraseology all correct writers endeavour sedulously to avoid.

Verbs used in a compound sense, with some of these prepositions, are likewise ungraceful conclusions of a period; such as, *bring about, lay hold of, come over to, clear up*, and many others of the same kind: instead of which, if a simple verb can be employed, the sentence is always terminated with more strength. Even the pronoun *it*, especially when joined with some of the prepositions, as *with it, in it, to it*, cannot, without a violation of grace, be the conclusion of a sentence. Any phrase which expresses a circumstance only cannot conclude a sentence without great imperfection and inelegance. Circumstances are, indeed, like unshapely stones in a building, which try the skill of an artist, where to place them with the least offence. We should carefully avoid crowding too many of them together, but rather intersperse them in different parts of the sentence, 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 sometime ago, in conversation, was not a new thought."—(Letter to the Earl of Oxford.) These two circumstances, *sometime ago*, and *in conversation*, which are here joined, would have been better separated thus: "What I had the honour, sometime ago, of mentioning to your lordship in conversation."

The last rule which we shall mention concerning the strength of a sentence is, that in the members of it, where two things are compared or contrasted to one another; where either a resemblance or an opposition is designed 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 the rule we are now giving. "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 careless magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a sudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a constant stream. And when we look upon their machines, Homer seems like his own Jupiter in his terrors, shaking Olympus, scattering the 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 of this kind, when introduced with propriety, and not too frequently repeated, have a sensible and attractive beauty: but if such a construction be aimed at in all our sentences, 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.

HAVING treated of sentences, with regard to their meaning, under the heads of perspicuity, unity, and strength; we will now consider them with respect to their sound, their harmony, or agreeableness to the ear.

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 superior beauty.

The beauty of musical construction, it is evident, will depend upon the choice of words, and the arrangement of them. Those words are most pleasing to the ear which are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, where there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants, without too many harsh consonants rubbing against each other, or too many open vowels in succession, to produce a hiatus, or unpleasing aperture of the mouth. Long words are generally more pleasing to the ear than monosyllables; and those are the most musical which are not wholly composed of long or 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 music is entirely lost. As an instance of a musical sentence, we may take the following from Milton, in his Treatise on Education. "We shall conduct you to a hill-side, laborious, indeed, at the first ascent; but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly pro-

speets 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 besides, they are so happily arranged, that no alteration could be made, without injuring the melody.

There are two things on which the music 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, we observe, that the distribution of the several members should be carefully attended to. Whatever is easy and pleasing to the organs of speech always sounds grateful to the ear. While a period is going on, the termination of each of its members 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. The following passage is taken from Archbishop Tillotson. "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, properly, no more than one pause in it, falling between the two members into which it is divided; each of which is so long as to require a considerable stretch of the breath in pronouncing it. Let us observe now, on the contrary, 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 sufficiency. 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 ever can, shoot better, or beyond it. His own reason he holds to be the certain measure of truth; and his own knowledge of what is possible in nature." Here every thing is, at the same time, easy to the breath, and grateful to the ear. We must, however, observe, that if composition abounds with sentences which have too many rests, and these placed at intervals too apparently measured and regular, it is apt to savour of affectation.

The next thing which demands our attention is, the close or cadence of the whole sentence. The only important rule which can here be given is, that 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 employed in the conclusion. As an instance of this, the following sentence of Mr. Addison may be given. "It fills the mind," speaking of sight, "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." Here every reader must be sensible of a beauty, both in the just division of the members and pauses, and the manner in which the sentence is rounded, and brought to a full and harmonious termination.

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 run of long syllables, before, has rendered them pleasing to the ear.

Sentences, however, which are so constructed as to make the sound always swell and grow towards the end, and to rest either on a long or a penult long syllable, give a discourse the tone of declamation. If melody be not varied, the ear soon becomes acquainted and 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 our style a certain character and expression. Sentences constructed with the Ciceronian fulness and swell, excite an idea of what is important, magnificent, and sedate. They suit, however, no violent passion, no eager reasoning, no familiar address. These require measures brisker, easier, and more concise. It were as ridiculous to write a familiar epistle and a funeral oration in a style of the same cadence, as to set the words of a tender love-song to the tune of a warlike march.

Besides that general correspondence which the current of sound has with the current of thought, a more particular expression may be attempted, of certain objects, by resembling sounds. In poetry this resemblance is chiefly to be looked for. It obtains sometimes, indeed, in prose composition; but there in a more faint and inferior degree.

The sounds of words may be employed to describe chiefly three classes of objects; first, other

sounds; secondly, motion; and thirdly, the emotions and passions of the mind.

In most languages it will be found, that the names of many particular sounds are so formed as to bear some resemblance to 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 word has been plainly constructed from the sound it represents. A remarkable example of this beauty we shall produce from Milton, taken from two passages in his Paradise Lost, describing the sound made in the one, by the opening of the gates of hell; in the other, by the opening of those of heaven. The contrast between the two exhibits, to great advantage, the art of the poet. The first is the opening 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.——————

The second class of objects, which the sound of words is frequently employed to imitate, is 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 music and dancing. The poet can, consequently, give us a lively idea of the kind of motion he would describe, by the help of sound, which corresponds in our imagination, with that motion. Long syl-

lables naturally excite the idea of slow motion; as in this line of Virgil:

Olli inter sese 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 we mentioned the sound of words as capable of representing, consists of the emotions and passions of the mind. Between sense and sound there appears, at first view, to be no natural resemblance. But if the arrangement of syllables, by the sound alone, calls forth one set of ideas more readily than another, and disposes the mind for entering into that affection which the poet intends to raise, such arrangement may, with propriety, be said to resemble the sense, or be similar and correspondent to it. Thus when pleasure, joy, and agreeable objects, are described by one who sensibly feels his subject, the anguage naturally runs into smooth, liquid, and flowing numbers.

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

Brisk and lively sensations excite quicker and more animated numbers.

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

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 will be suggested by a moderate acquaintance with the good poets, either ancient or modern.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

FIGURES may be defined to be that language which is suggested either by the imagination or by the passions. They are commonly divided by rhetoricians into two great classes, figures of words, and figures of thought. The former are generally called tropes, and consist in a word's being used to signify something that is different from its original meaning. Hence, if the word be altered, the figure is destroyed: thus, for instance, "Light ariseth to the upright in darkness." Here the trope consists in "light and darkness" not being taken literally, but intended to express comfort and adversity: to which conditions of life they are supposed to bear some analogy or resemblance. The other class, called figures of thought, supposes the figure to consist in the sentiment only, whilst the words are used in their literal signification: as in exclamations, interrogations, apostrophes, and comparisons; where, though the words be varied, or translated from one language into another, the same figure, notwithstanding, is still preserved. This distinction, however, is of small importance, since practice cannot be assisted by it; nor is it in itself always sufficiently perspicuous.

Tropes derive their origin, in some degree, from the barrenness of language, but more extensively from the influence which the imagination possesses over every kind of speech. The imagination never contemplates any one idea, as single and

alone, but as accompanied by other ideas, 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 employed, although the principal has a proper and well known name of its own. Thus, for example, when we design to point out the period at 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 figure, and is considered as directing all the animal operations; from this resemblance we figuratively say, "Catiline was the head of his party."

We will now examine why tropes or figures contribute to the beauty and grace of style. By them language is enriched, and becomes more copious. Hence words and phrases are multiplied for expressing every species of ideas; for describing even the smallest differences; the most delicate shades and colours of thought; which by proper words alone could not possibly have been expressed. They also give dignity to style, which is degraded by the familiarity of vulgar expressions. Figurative language has the same connexion with an elevated subject that a rich and splendid apparel has with a person of rank and dignity. In prose compositions, assistance of this kind is often requisite; from poetry it is inseparable. To say, "the sun rises," is trite and common; but it be-

comes a magnificent image, when expressed as Mr. Thomson has done:

> 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 which occur 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 with each other, that the imagination plays between them with delight, and views at once two similar objects without embarrassment or confusion.

Besides, figures are attended with this additional advantage; of affording a more clear and striking view of the principal object than could be had if it were expressed in simple terms, and freed from its accessory idea. They communicate to the object on which they are employed a picturesque appearance; they can transform an abstract conception, in some degree, into 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 a sensible idea, it serves, like an argument from analogy, to enforce what the author advances, and to produce conviction.

All tropes being founded on the relation which

one object bears to another, the name of the one can be substituted for that of the other; and by this the vivacity of the idea is generally intended to be increased. The relation between a cause and its effect is one of the first and most obvious. Hence the cause is sometimes figuratively put for the effect. For instance, 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 effects or produce of all the seasons 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 which subsists 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 that was contained in the golden cup. The name of a country is also used to signify its inhabitants. To pray for the assistance of Heaven is the same as to pray for the assistance of God, who is thought to reside 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, which are founded on these several relations of cause and effect, container and contained, sign and thing signified, are called by the name of metonymy.

When the trope is founded on the relation be-

twixt an antecedent and its consequent, it is called a metalepsis; as when the Romans used to say, "fuit," or "vixit," to signify that one was dead. "Fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teucrum," expresses that the glory of Troy is no more.

If 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, if any thing less, or any thing more, is substituted for the precise object meant, the figure is then termed a synecdoche. We say, for instance, "A fleet of so many sail," in the place of "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 it is unnecessary to insist longer on this enumeration. The metaphor, which is founded on the relation of similitude and resemblance, which is by far the most fruitful of tropes, shall be considered in the next chapter.

METAPHOR.

METAPHOR is founded entirely on the resemblance which one object bears to another. It is, therefore, nearly allied to simile or comparison; and differs only from it in being expressed in a shorter form. When we say of a great minister, "that he upholds the state like a pillar which supports the weight of a massy edifice," we evidently make a comparison; but when we say of such a man, that he is, "the pillar of the state," it becomes a metaphor.

Of all the figures of speech, none approaches so near to painting as the metaphor. It gives light

and strength to description; makes intellectual ideas, in some degree, visible to the eye, by giving them colour, and substance, and sensible qualities. To produce this effect, however, a delicate care 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 which we shall mention is, that they be suited to the nature of the subject; neither too numerous, nor too gay, nor too elevated for it; that we neither endeavour to force the subject, by the use of them, into a degree of elevation which is not natural to it, nor, on the contrary, suffer it to fall below its proper dignity. Some metaphors are beautiful in poetry, which would be absurd and unnatural in prose; some are graceful in orations, which would be highly improper in historical or philosophical compositions. Figures are, indeed, the dress of sentiment. They should, consequently, be adapted to the character of that style which they are intended to adorn.

The second rule respects the choice of objects, from whence metaphors are to be drawn. The field for figurative language is very extensive. All nature opens its stores to us, and allows us to gather them without restraint. But care must be taken not to use such allusions as raise in the mind disagreeable, mean, low, or unclean ideas. To render a metaphor perfect it must not only be apt, but pleasing; it must entertain as well as enlighten. Mr. Dryden, therefore, can hardly escape the imputation of a very unpardonable breach of delicacy, when, in the dedication of his Juvenal, 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 those which are derived from the more frequent occurrences of art

or nature, or the civil transactions and customs of mankind. Thus how expressive, yet at the same time how familiar, is that 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 i' th' air!

In the third place, a metaphor should be founded on a resemblance which is clear and perspicuous, and not on one which is far-fetched, or 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 granada, 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 hers th' 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 such of them as belong to particular professions, are almost continually faulty by their obscurity.

In the fourth place, we must be careful never to jumble metaphorical and plain language together; never to construct a period in such a manner that part of it must be understood metaphorically, part literally; which always introduces a most disagree-

able confusion. Though the works of Ossian abound with beautiful and correct metaphors, yet they 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 exceedingly beautiful: The "stream," the "unmoved rock," the "waves rolling back broken," are expressions perfectly agreeable to the proper and consistent language of figure; but in the conclusion, 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 represented as waves that *roll*, and as men that may be *pursued* and *wounded with a spear*.

In the fifth place, we must take care not to make two different metaphors meet on the same subject. This, which is called mixed metaphor, is one of the grossest abuses of this figure. Shakspeare'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 Shakspeare are sometimes guilty of this error. Mr. Addison, in one of his numbers in the Spectator, 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 seems to be a good rule to form a picture upon them, and consider how the parts would agree, and what kind of figure the whole would present, 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 aleæ,
> Tractas; et incedis per ignes
> Suppositos cineri doloso. L. 2. 1.

This passage, though highly poetical, is rendered harsh and obscure by three distinct metaphors being crowded together: First, "*arma uncta cruoribus nondum expiatis;*" next, "*opus plenum periculosæ aleæ;*" and then, "*incedis per ignes suppositos cineri doloso.*"

The last rule which we shall suggest concerning metaphors is, that 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. Thus, 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 extremely beautiful; but when he continues the metaphor, by "putting good works on board, and waiting the wind," it becomes strained, and sinks in dignity.

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

An allegory is a continued metaphor; it is the representation of one thing, by another which has a resemblance to it. Thus Prior, in his Henry and Emma, makes Emma, in the following allegorical manner, describe her constancy to Henry:

Did I but purpose to embark with thee
On the smooth surface of a summer's sea,
While gentle zephyrs play with prosp'rous 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 also applied to allegories, on account of the affinity which subsists 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 natural signification: as when we say, "Achilles was a lion;" "an able minister is the pillar of the state." The lion and the 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.

HYPERBOLE—PERSONIFICATION—APOSTROPHE.

HYPERBOLE consists in magnifying an object beyond its natural bounds. This figure occurs very frequently in all languages, and makes a part

even of common conversation: As swift as the wind; as white as the snow; and the like; and our usual forms of compliment are, in general, only extravagant hyperboles. These exaggerated expressions, however, from habit, are seldom considered as hyperbolical.

Hyperboles are of two kinds; either such as are employed in description, or such as are suggested by the ardour of passion. Those are the best which are the effect of passion; since it not only gives rise to the most daring figures, but often, at the same time, renders them natural and just. Hence the following passage in Milton, though extremely hyperbolical, contains nothing but what is natural and proper. It exhibits the mind of Satan agitated with 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 greater caution. When an earthquake or a 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 wild exaggeration as the following in one of our dramatic 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 the genuine 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 only speaks the language of description, cannot be permitted an 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.

WE proceed now to the examination of those figures which lie altogether in the thought; where the words are 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 gentle and humble forms, is much indebted to this figure. From prose it is by no means 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 that are inanimate, or to abstract conceptions.

There are three different degrees of this figure; which it is requisite to remark and distinguish, in order to determine the propriety of its use. The first is, when some of the properties or qualities 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 communicating to inanimate objects some of the qualities of living creatures, raises the style so little, that the humblest discourse will admit it without any force. Thus, "a raging storm, a deceitful disease, a cruel disaster," are familiar and simple expressions. This, indeed, is such an obscure degree of personification, as might not, perhaps, be improperly classed with plain 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 advance a step higher, and the personification becomes sensible. According to the nature of the action which we ascribe to those inanimate objects, and the particularity with which we describe it, such is the strength of the figure. When pursued to a considerable length, it belongs only to laboured 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 occidendum hominem ab ipsis porrigitur legibus.*" Here the laws are beautifully personified, as stretching forth their hand to give us a sword for putting a man to death.

In poetry, personifications of this kind are extremely frequent, and, indeed, constitute its essence. In the descriptions of a poet who has a lively fancy every thing becomes 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. Milton and Shakspeare resemble him in this particular. 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 eat;

Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost. B. ix. l. 780.

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 hearing and attending when we address ourselves to them. This is the boldest of all rhetorical figures; it is the style of strong passion only; and, consequently, should never be attempted, except when the mind is very much heated and agitated. Milton affords us 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:

Oh! 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 hopes 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 ev'n, 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?
B. ii. l. 268.

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 to attempt it unless prompted by strong passion, and never to continue it when the passion begins to subside. The second rule is, never to 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 one's body, as if they were animated, is not agreeable to the dignity of passion. For this reason, the following passage in Mr. 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 gods, 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 or affections, this also may pass without censure. But when she addresses her hand, and tells it not to write his name, this is strained 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 unsuitable to the native passion and tenderness which breathe through the rest of that inimitable poem.

APOSTROPHE.

APOSTROPHE is an address to a real person; but one who is either absent or dead, as if he were present, and attentive to us. This figure is, in boldness, a degree lower than the address to personified objects; since it requires a 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 with the most 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 sunbeam 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 fortunate comparison is a sort of sparkling ornament, which adds lustre and beauty to language.

All comparisons may be reduced under two heads; *explaining and embellishing* comparisons. For when a writer compares the object of which he treats with any other thing, it always is, or at least ought to be, with a view either to make us understand that object more clearly, or to render it more pleasing and engaging. Even the most abstract reasoning admits of explaining comparisons. For instance, the distinction between the powers of sense and imagination in the human mind are, in Mr. Harris's Hermes, illustrated by a simile, in the following manner: "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 instantly lost." In comparisons of this kind, perspicuity and usefulness are chiefly to be studied.

But embellishing comparisons, which are introduced to adorn the subject of which we treat, 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 or likeness of appearance. Two objects may raise a train of similar or concordant ideas in the mind, though they resemble each other, strictly speaking, in nothing. For example, to describe the nature of soft and melancholy music, Ossian says, "The music of Carryl was, like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul." This is just and beautiful; yet no kind of music bears any resemblance to a feeling of the mind, such as the memory of past joys.

We will 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 are often culpable in this respect. Thus Mr. Addison, in his Cato, makes Portius, just after Lucia had bid him farewell for ever, express himself in a studied and affected comparison.

Thus, o'er the dying lamp th' unsteady flame
Hangs quiv'ring 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.

Though comparison be not the style of strong passion, so neither, when designed as an embellishment, is it the language of a mind totally unmoved. Being a figure of dignity, it always demands some elevation in the subject to make it proper. It supposes the imagination to be uncommonly enlivened, though the heart be not agitated by passion. The language of simile seems to lie between the highly pathetic and the very humble style, at the same distance from each. It is, however, a sparkling ornament; and must consequently dazzle and fatigue, if it should recur too often. Similes should, even in poetry, be employed with moderation; but, in prose, much more; otherwise the style will grow disgustingly luscious, and the ornament lose its beauty and effect.

We will now consider the nature of those objects from which comparisons should be drawn; supposing them introduced in their proper order.

In the first place, they must not be drawn from things which have too intimate and obvious a resemblance to the object with which they are compared. The pleasure which 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 apparent, 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, or one of which few people can have a clear idea. Similes, therefore, 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 the generality of readers have either seen, or can strongly conceive.

In the fourth place, we must observe, that in compositions of a grave or elevated kind, similes should never be drawn from low or mean objects. These have a tendency to degrade and vilify; whereas similes are generally intended to embellish and to dignify; and, therefore, except in burlesque writings, or where an object is meant to be diminished, mean ideas should never be submitted to our observation.

ANTITHESIS.

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 and deformity. 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 defence of Milo, representing the improbability of Milo's attempting to take away the life of Clodius, when every thing was unfavourable to such a design, after he had omitted many opportunities of effecting such a purpose, heightens our conviction of this improbability, by a judicious use of this figure: "*Quem igitur cum omnium gratiâ interficere noluit, hunc voluit cum aliquorum querelâ? Quem jure, quem loco, quem tempore, quem impune, non est ausus, hunc injuriâ, 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 to each other.

We must, however, acknowledge, that the frequent use of antithesis, particularly 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; both 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 such contrasted expressions. But where a number of such sentences succeed each other; where this is an author's favourite and prevailing mode of expression, his style is exposed to censure.

INTERROGATION AND EXCLAMATION.

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; neither 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 some 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 they are properly employed, make us sympathise with those who use them, and enter into their feelings. Nothing, however, has a worse effect than the frequent and unseasonable use of exclamations. Young, unexpe-

rienced writers suppose, that by pouring them forth plenteously they render their compositions warm and animated. But quite the contrary is the case. 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.

VISION.

ANOTHER figure of speech, fit only for animated composition, is what some writers call vision; when, instead of relating something that is past, we use the present tense, and describe it as if passing immediately before our eyes. Thus Cicero, in his fourth oration against Catiline: "*Vidcor cnim mihi hanc urbem videre, lucem orbis terrarum atque arcem omnium gentium, subito uno incendio concidentem cerno animo sepulta in patria miseros atque inscpultos accrvos civium; vcrsatur mihi ante oculos aspectus Cethegi, et furor, in vestrâ cæde bacchantis.*" This figure has great beauty when it is well executed, and when it flows from the true spirit of genuine enthusiasm. If it be suggested by affection, it shares the same fate with all feeble attempts towards passionate figures; that of throwing ridicule upon the author, and leaving the reader more cool and uninterested than he was before.

CLIMAX.

THE last figure which we shall mention, and which is of frequent use among all public speakers,

is called a 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 be raised to the highest pitch. We shall give an instance of this figure, from a printed pleading of a celebrated Scotch lawyer, Sir George Mackenzie. It is 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 then the mother have demanded! 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 misdeeds in one single crime; a crime, in its own nature, detestable; in a woman, prodigious, in a mother, incredible; and perpetrated against one whose age called for compassion, whose near relation claimed affection, and whose innocence deserved the highest favour?" Such regular climaxes as these, though they have great beauty, yet, at the same time, have the appearance of art and study; and, consequently, though they may be admitted into formal harangues, yet they are not the language of passion, which seldom proceeds by such regular and measured steps.

GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE. DIFFUSE, CONCISE, FEEBLE, NERVOUS, DRY, PLAIN, NEAT, ELEGANT, FLOWERY.

THAT different subjects ought to be treated in different kinds of style is a position so self-evident, that it requires not illustration. Every one is convinced, 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 variation in the style and manner. Yet amidst this variety we still expect to find, in the composition of any one man, some degree of uniformity or consistency with himself, in manner; we expect to find some prevailing character of style impressed on all his writings, which shall be suited to, and shall distinguish, 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 thing may be observed in those of Tacitus. Yet in the orations of both these elegant historians, the distinguishing manner of each may be clearly traced; the splendid fulness of the one, and the sententious brevity of the other. Wherever there is real and native genius, it prompts a disposition to one kind of style rather than to another. Where this is wanting, where there is no marked nor peculiar character which appears 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 original genius.

One of the first and most obvious distinctions of the different sorts of style arises from an author's expanding his thoughts more or less. The distinc-

tion constitutes what are termed the diffuse and 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 immediately express.

A diffuse writer unfolds his idea fully. He holds it out in a variety of lights, and assists the reader, as much as possible, in comprehending 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 some degree under the same class.

To determine when to adopt the concise, and when the diffuse manner, we must be guided by the nature of the composition. Discourses which 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 conception. Description, when we wish to have it vivid and animated, should be in a concise strain. 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 the 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 a 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. They do, indeed, very 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, indeed, of a nervous or weak style, is laid in an author's manner of thinking: if he conceives an object forcibly, he will express it with strength; but if he has an indistinct view of his subject, this will clearly appear in his style. Unmeaning words and loose epithets will escape him; his expressions will be vague and general; his arrangement indistinct and weak; 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, consequently, all expressive: every phrase and every figure which he uses renders the picture

which he would set before us more striking and complete.

It must, however, be observed, that too great a study of strength, to the neglect of the other qualities of style, is apt to betray writers into a harsh manner. Harshness proceeds from uncommon words, from forced inversions in the construction of a sentence, and too great a neglect of smoothness and ease. This is imputed as a fault to some of our earliest classics in the English language; such as Sir Walter Ralcigh, Sir Francis Bacon, Hooker, Harrington, 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 considerable degree; and are to this day distinguished by that quality in style. But the language, in their hands, was very different from what it is at present, and was, indeed, entirely formed upon the idiom and construction of the Latin, in the arrangement of sentences. The present form which the language has assumed has, in some degree, sacrificed the study of strength to that of ease and perspicuity. Our arrangement has become less forcible, perhaps, 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 will now consider it in another view, 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. Of these we will treat briefly, in the order in which they stand.

A dry manner excludes every kind of ornament. Satisfied with being understood, it aims not to please, in the least degree, either the fancy or the ear. This is tolerable only in pure didactic writing; and even there to make us bear it great solidity

of matter is necessary, and entire perspicuity of language.

A plain style advances 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. Besides 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 consequently, such an author, if his sentiments be good, may be sufficiently agreeable. The difference between a dry and a plain writer is, that 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 that ornament is not of the most sparkling kind. A writer of this character shows that he does not despise the beauty of language, by his attention to the choice of his words, and to their graceful collocation. His sentences are always free from the incumbrance of superfluous words; are of a moderate length; rather inclining 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 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 extensive, 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 composed with neatness; and a sermon, or a philosophical treatise, in a neat style, will be read with satisfaction.

An elegant style admits a higher degree of or-

nament than a neat one; and possesses 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 carefulness and skill in their harmonious and happy arrangement. It implies farther, the beauty of imagination spread over style, as far as the subject allows it, and all the illustration which figurative language affords when properly employed. An elegant writer, in short, is one who delights the fancy and the ear, while he informs the understanding; and who clothes his ideas with all the beauty of expression, but does not overload them with any of its misplaced finery.

A florid style comprehends the excess of ornament. This, in a young composer, is not only pardonable, hut is often a symptom of a bold and inventive genius. But, although it may be allowed to youth, in their first attempts, 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 these it is a luxuriancy of words, not of fancy. They forget that, unless it be founded on sense and solid thought, the most florid style is but a childish imposition on ignorant and unthinking readers.

STYLE—SIMPLE; AFFECTED; VEHEMENT. —DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING A PROPER STYLE.

SIMPLICITY, applied to writing, is a term very commonly used; but, like many other critical terms, it is often used vaguely, and without

precision. The different meanings given to the word simplicity have been the chief cause of this inaccuracy. It will not, therefore, be improper to make a distinction between them; and 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, which is opposed to too great a variety of parts. This is the simplicity of plan in a 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 irregularity of the Gothic. Simplicity, in this sense, is the same as unity.

The second sense is simplicity of thought, in opposition to refinement. Simple thoughts are those which flow naturally; which are easily suggested by the subject or occasion; and which, when once suggested, are universally understood. Refinement in writing means a less obvious and natural turn of thought, which, when carried too far, approaches to intricacy, and is unpleasing, by the appearance of being far sought. Thus we should say, that Mr. Parnell is a poet of much greater simplicity, in his turn of thought, than Mr. Cowley.

A third sense of simplicity is that in which it regards style; is opposed to too much ornament, or pomp of language. Thus we say, Mr. Locke is a simple, Mr. Hervey a florid, writer.

There is a fourth sense of simplicity, which also respects style; but it regards not so much the degree of ornament employed, as the easy and natural manner in which language is expressive of our thoughts. In this sense, simplicity is compatible with the highest ornament. Homer, for example, has this simplicity in the greatest perfection; and yet no writer possesses more orna-

ment and beauty. This simplicity, which is now the object of our consideration, stands opposed, not to ornament, but to affectation of ornament, and is a superior excellency in composition.

A writer who has attained simplicity 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 possess richness of expression; he may be full of figures and of fancy; but these flow from him without difficulty, and he seems to write in this manner, not because he has studied it, but because it is the mode of expression most familiar and easy to him. With this character of style a certain degree of negligence is not inconsistent, nor even ungraceful; for too accurate an attention to words is foreign to it. Simplicity of style possesses this considerable advantage, that, like simplicity of manners, it shows us a man's sentiments and turn of mind laid open 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 the splendour of dress, and the ceremonial of behaviour, conceal those peculiarities which distinguish one individual 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 the most eminent for it. This proceeds from a very obvious cause, that they wrote from the dictates of natural genius, and were not formed upon the labours and writings of others.

Of affectation in style, which is opposed to simplicity, we have a remarkable instance in our language. Lord Shaftesbury, though an author of considerable merit, can express nothing with simplicity. He seems to have considered it as vulgar,

and beneath the dignity of a man of fashion, to speak like other men. Hence, he is perpetually in buskins; replete with circumlocutions and artificial elegance. In every sentence the marks of labour are visible; no appearance 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 conspicuous; 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 to 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, amidst several very considerable blemishes, has, at the same time, many dazzling and imposing beauties.

It is very possible, however, for an author to write with simplicity, and yet to be destitute of beauty. He may be free from affectation, and not have merit. The beautiful simplicity supposes an author in possession of real genius; and capable of writing with solidity, purity, and brilliancy of imagination. In this case, the simplicity of his manner is the crowning ornament: it gives lustre to every other beauty; it is the dress of nature, without which all beauties are but imperfect. But if the mere absence of affectation were sufficient to constitute the beauty of style, weak and dull writers might often have pretensions to it. A distinction, therefore, must be made between that simplicity which accompanies true genius, and which is entirely compatible with every proper ornament of style, and that which is the effect only of carelessness and inattention.

Another character of style, different from those which have been already mentioned, is the vehe-

ment. This always supposes 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. With a negligence of lesser graces, he pours himself forth with the rapidity and plenitude of a torrent. The vehement 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 species of style.

Having determined and explained the different characters of style, we shall conclude our observations with a few directions for the attainment of excellence in writing.

The first direction proper to be observed is, to study clear ideas on the subject concerning which we are to write or to speak. What we conceive clearly and feel strongly, we shall naturally express with clearness and with strength. We should, therefore, think closely on the subject, till we have attained a full and distinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words; till we become warm and interested in it; then, and then only, shall we find a proper expression begin to flow.

In the second place, to the acquisition of a good style the frequency of composing is indispensably requisite. But it is not every kind of composing which will improve style. By a careless and hasty habit of writing a bad style will be acquired; more trouble will afterwards be necessary to unlearn faults, and correct negligence, than to endeavour, from a state of entire ignorance, to become acquainted with the first rudiments of composition. In the beginning, therefore, we ought to write with deliberation and with care. Facility and speed are the fruit of practice and experience. 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 we employ. On certain occasions there is a glow of composition which must be kept up, if we expect 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 for some time, till the ardour of composition be subsided; till the partiality for our expressions be weakened, and the expressions themselves be forgotten; and then examining 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 our notice.

In the third place, an acquaintance with the style of the best authors is peculiarly requisite. Hence a just taste will be formed, and a copious fund be supplied of words on every subject. No exercise, perhaps, will be found more useful for acquiring a proper style, than to translate some passage from an elegant author into our own words. Thus, to take, for instance, a page of one of Mr. 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, by comparison, show us our own 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 and perfect.

In the fourth place, a caution must be given against a servile imitation of any one author whatever. A desire of imitating hampers genius, and generally produces a stiffness of expression. They who follow an author minutely commonly copy his faults as well as his beauties. No one will ever become an accomplished writer or speaker who has not some confidence in his own genius. We

ought carefully to avoid using any author's particular phrases, or transcribing passages from him: such an habit will be fatal to all genuine composition. It is much better to possess something of our own, though of inferior beauty, than to endeavour to shine in borrowed ornaments, which will, at last, betray the utter barrenness of our genius.

In the fifth place, it is a plain but important rule, with regard to style, that we always endeavour to adapt it to the subject, and likewise to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to speak in public. To attempt a poetical, florid style, when it should be our business only to argue and 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 and useless. When we begin to write or speak, we should previously impress on our minds a complete idea of the end to be aimed at; keep this steadily in view, and adapt our style to it.

We must, in the last place, recommend, that an attentive regard to style do not occupy us so much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts. This rule is the more necessary, since the present taste of the age seems to be directed more to style than to thought. It is much more easy to dress up trifling and common thoughts with some ornament of expression than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and useful sentiments. The latter requires genius; the former may be attained by industry, with the aid of very superficial parts. Hence the crowd of writers who are rich in words, but poor in sentiments. Custom obliges us not to be inattentive to the ornaments of style, if we wish that our labours should 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 who does not regard ornament as a secondary and inferior recommendation.

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

HAVING insisted rather copiously on the subject of language in general, we will now enter on a critical analysis of the style of some good author. This will suggest observations which we have not hitherto had an opportunity of making, and will show in a proper light some 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 the more proper subject of our present criticism. We proceed, therefore, to examine No. 411, the first of his admired 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, expresses the proposition which he is going to illustrate. A first sentence should seldom be long, and should never be difficult to be understood.

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 most judicious; since between *perfect* and *delightful*, in the present case, there being no contrast, such a repetition was unnecesary. 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 completely conspicuous. It is not loaded with unnecessary words. That quality of a good sentence which we termed its unity is here entirely preserved. The members of it grow, and rise above each other in sound, till it is conducted to one of the most harmonious eloses which our language admits. It is figurative, without being too much so for the subject. There is no fault whatever, except that a severe critic might perhaps object, that the epithet *large*, which he applies to *variety*, is more commonly applied to extent than to number. It is evident, that he employed it to avoid the repetition of the word *great*, which occurs immediately afterwards.

"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 here very inaccurate; and it requires the two words, *with regard*, to be inserted after the word *operations*, in order that the sense should be rendered at all 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 harmonious. 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. Another sentence being interposed, however, prevents this unpleasing 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 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 sufficiently 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 of fancy and imagination, which were meant to be synonymous. To call a painting or a statue *an occasion,* is not an accurate expression; nor is it very just to speak of *calling up ideas by occasions.* The common phrase, *any such means,* would have been more natural and proper.

"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;* and yet the ar-

rangement requires this construction. This error would have been avoided by arranging the passage in the following manner: "We have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received; and of forming them into all the varieties of picture and vision."—The latter part of the sentence is perspicuous 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, would have been much better omitted. The article prefixed to *fancy and imagination* should also have been left out, since he does not mean the power of *the fancy and the imagination*, but the words only. It had better been thus expressed: "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 at first sight, 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*—this is evidently faulty. A metaphor is improperly mixed with the words in the 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 the 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 abverb *only* is not here in its proper place: it is not designed to qualify the verb *mean*, but *such pleasures*, and ought consequently to have been 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."

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 here omitted, and the style rendered 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 in 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 one is surprised how it could have

escaped 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.* Besides that *the other* makes not a proper contrast with *the last,* it is left doubtful; whether, by *the other,* are meant the pleasures of the understanding or the pleasures of sense; though no 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 had been asserted, and is expressed with that elegance for which Mr. Addison is distinguished.

"Besides, the pleasures of the imagination have this advantage above 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, without impropriety, be said *to assent to the beauty of an object*. In the conclusion, both *particular* and *occasions* are superfluous words; and the pronoun *it* is in some measure doubtful, whether as referring to beauty or to object.

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

It may here, perhaps, be objected, that the word *polite* is oftener 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 an ungraceful repetition, *which* is esteemed preferable to *that*, and was 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 pleasures: 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 paragraph. 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 that is not a proper ante-

cedent, 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 and 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 is a proper 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, in order that, within that sphere, he might find a safe retreat and a laudable satisfaction. The transition, therefore, is made loosely. 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 beautiful and unexceptionable.

"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."

A minute critic might here observe, that *worked out by dint of thinking*, is a phrase which borders too much on the style of common conversation to be admitted, with propriety, into a 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 subtile 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 sentences a member or the period is improperly placed;—*Where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtile disquisitions, has not thought it improper*, &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 the proper collocation of circumstances in a period. We have formerly showed, that a judicious collocation of them is a matter of difficulty.

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 neither have been so neat nor so clear as it is by the present construction.

ELOQUENCE.—ORIGIN OF ELOQUENCE.—GRECIAN ELOQUENCE.—DEMOSTHENES.

ELOQUENCE 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 utterance as shall invite and 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 the philosopher to convince us of truth; it is that of the 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; and hence, beside solid argument and clear method, all the captivating and interesting arts, both of composition and pronunciation, enter into the idea of eloquence.

Eloquence may be considered as consisting of three kinds, or degrees. The first, and most in-

ferior, is that which endeavours 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 connected, at the same time, with very useful sentiments. But it must be acknowledged, that where the speaker intends only to shine and to please, there is no small danger of art being strained into ostentation, and of the composition becoming tiresome and insipid.

A second, and a superior degree of eloquence is, when the speaker proposes, not merely to please, but likewise 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, disposing of them in the best order, expressing and delivering them with propriety and beauty; and thereby preparing us to pass that judgment, or favour that side of the cause, to which he desires to bring us. Within this degree, chiefly, is employed the eloquence of the bar.

Yet there remains a third, and still higher degree of eloquence, by which we are not only convinced, but are 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 prepared to resolve, or to act, with vigour and warmth. Debate, in popular assemblies, opens the most extensive field for the exercise of this species of eloquence; and the pulpit likewise admits it.

It is necessary to remark, that this high species of eloquence is always the offspring of passion. By passion, we mean that state of the mind in which it is agitated and fired by some object it has in view. Hence the universally acknowledged power of enthusiasm in public speakers, affecting

their audience. Hence all studied declamation, and laboured ornaments of style, which show the mind to be cool and unmoved, are so incompatible with persuasive eloquence. Hence every kind of affectation in gesture and pronunciation diminish so much the merits of a speaker. Hence, in fine, 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. Whilst the intercourse among men was unfrequent, and force and strength were the principal means employed in deciding controversies, the arts of oratory and persuasion, of reasoning and debate, could be little known. The first empires that arose, the Assyrian and Egyptian, were of the despotic kind. A single person, or at most a few, held the reins of government. The multitude were accustomed to a blind obedience; they were driven, not persuaded; and, consequently, none of those refinements of society, which make public speaking an object of importance, were as yet introduced.

It is not till the origin of the Grecian republics that we perceive any remarkable appearances of eloquence as the art of persuasion; and these opened to it such a field as it never had before, and, perhaps, has never again, since that time, experienced. Greece was divided into a number of little states. These were governed, at first, by kings, who were not unmeaningly termed tyrants; and who being successively, by the wisdom of the people, expelled from their dominions, there sprung up a multitude of democratical governments, founded nearly upon the same plan, animated by the same glorious spirit of freedom, mutually jea-

lous, and rivals of each other. Among these, Athens shone forth with a superior lustre. In this state, arts of every kind, but especially, eloquence was brought to the highest perfection. We shall pass over the orators who flourished in the early period of this republic, and take a view of the great Demosthenes, in whom eloquence shone forth with the highest and most 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 could avail, for acquiring an excellence which nature appeared willing to have denied.

No orator had ever a finer field than Demosthenes, in his Olynthiacs and Philippics, which are his capital orations; and undoubtedly, to the greatness of the subject, and to that integrity and public spirit which breathe in them, they owe a large portion of their merit. The subject is, to excite the indignation of his countrymen against Philip of Macedon, the public enemy of the liberties of Greece; and to guard them against the treacherous measures, by which that crafty tyrant endeavoured to lull them into a neglect of their danger. To attain this end, we see him use every proper means 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 public good; while, at the same time, he reminds them of their former glory, and of their present resources. His contemporary orators, who were bribed by Philip, and who persuaded the people to peace, he openly reproaches as traitors to their country. He not only prompts to vigorous measures, but teaches how they are to be carried into execution. His orations are strongly animated, and full of the impetuosity and ardour of public spirit. His composition is not distinguished by ornament and splendour. It is an energy of thought, peculiarly his own, which forms his character, and raises him above his species. He seems not to attend to words, but to things. We forget the orator, and think of the subject. He has no parade and ostentation; no studied introductions; but is like a man full of his subject, who, after preparing his audience by a sentence or two, for the reception of plain truths, enters directly on business.

The style of Demosthenes is strong and concise; though sometimes, it must be confessed, harsh and abrupt. His words are highly expressive, and his arrangement firm and manly. Negligent of lesser graces, he seems to have aimed at that sublime which lies in sentiment. His action and pronunciation are said to have been uncommonly vehement and ardent: which, from the manner of his writings, we should readily believe. His character appears to have been 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 that 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 is said to have transcribed eight times with his own hand. But these defects are

more than atoned for, by the 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.

HAVING treated of the state 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 and cultivated form. The Romans derived their eloquence, poetry, and learning from the Greeks, and were, consequently, far inferior 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 vigorous; in comparison of them they were a phlegmatic people. Their language bore a resemblance to their character; it was regular, firm, and stately; but wanted that expressive simplicity, that flexibility to suit every different species of composition, for which the Greek tongue is peculiarly distinguished. And hence, by comparison, we shall always find, that in the Greek productions there is more native genius; in the Roman, more regularity and art.

Since the Roman government, during the republic, was of the popular kind, public speaking, no doubt, became early the means of acquiring power, honour, and distinction. But in the rude, unpolished times of the state, their speaking could hardly deserve the name of eloquence. It was not till a short time preceding 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 productions are extant, nor any of Hortensius's, who was Cicero's rival at the bar, it is not necessary to transcribe what Cicero has said of them, and of the character of their eloquence.

The object most worthy of our attention is Cicero himself, whose name alone suggests to us whatever is 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 remark both his virtues and his defects. His virtues are, beyond doubt, superlatively great. In all his orations his 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 are arranged with exact propriety. In a superior clearness of method, he has an advantage over Demosthenes. Every thing appears in its proper place; he never tries to move till he has attempted to convince; and in moving, particularly the softer passions, he is highly successful. No one ever knew the force of words better than Cicero. He rolls them along with the greatest beauty and magnificence; 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 generally diffuse, it is often happily varied, and accommodated to the subject. When an important public 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 his defects. In most of his orations there is too much art, even carried to a degree of ostentation. He seems often desirous of obtaining admiration, rather than of operating conviction. He is some-

times, therefore, showy rather than solid; and diffuse where he ought to have been urgent. His sentences are always round and sonorous; they cannot be accused of monotony, since they possess variety of cadence; but from too great a fondness for magnificence, he is on some occasions deficient in strength. Though the services which he had performed to 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 be the most perfect orator, is a question on which critics are by no means agreed. Fenelon, the celebrated Archbishop of Cambray, and author of Telemachus, seems, in our opinion, to have stated their merits with great justice and perspicuity. His judgment is given in his Reflections on Rhetoric and Poetry. We shall translate the passage, though not, it is to be feared, without losing much of the spirit of the original. "I do not hesitate to declare," says he, "that I think Demosthenes superior 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 republic, 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; unsought for he possesses it. He is superior 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 ourselves. 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 Demosthenes."

The empire of eloquence, among the Romans, was exceedingly short. It expired with Cicero. Nor can we wonder at this being the case, since liberty was no more; and since the government of Rome was delivered 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 introduction of Christianity gave rise to a new kind of eloquence, in the apologies, sermons, and pastoral writings of the fathers. But none of them afford 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 swoln and strained thoughts, and of the play of words.

As nothing occurs that deserves attention in the middle ages, we pass now to the state of eloquence in modern times. Here it must be acknowledged, that in no European nation public speaking has been valued so highly, or cultivated with so much care, as in Greece and Rome. The genius of the world appears, in this respect, to have undergone some alteration. The two nations 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 towards all the liberal arts, and of the encouragement which, for more than a century past, those arts have received from the public: Great Britain, on account

of its free government, and the liberal spirit and genius of its people. Yet in neither of these countries has the talent of oratory risen near 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 public speakers are obliged to be more reserved than the ancients, in their endeavours to elevate the imagination and warm the passions; and, by the influence of prevailing taste, their own genius is, perhaps, in too great a degree, rendered chaste and delicate. 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, more particularly of the former, seem to have been much superior to ours, and to have communicated to them a higher relish for all the beauties of oratory.

Though the parliament of our own nation be the noblest field which Europe at present affords to a public 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 of the ancients, is considerable. 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 large and ample. But at present, the system of law is become much more complicated. The knowledge of it is rendered so la-

borious an attainment, as to constitute the business 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 highly disadvantageous, that the habit of reading sermons, iustead of repeating them, has prevailed so universally in England. By this habit, indeed, accuracy may have been introduced, but eloquence has been much enfeebled. Another circumstance, too, has been prejudicial. The sectaries and fanatics, before the Restoration, used a warm, zealous, and popular manner of preaching; and their adherents afterwards continued to distinguish themselves by a similar ardour. A 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, with us, into mere reasoning and instruction.

ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES.

THE foundation of every species of eloquence is good sense and solid thought. It should be the first study of him who means to address any 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 language an air of manliness and strength, which is a principal instrument of persuasion. Ornament, if there be a genius for it, will succeed of course; and at any rate, it deserves only a secondary regard.

To become a persuasive speaker in a popular assembly, it seems to be 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 any side of the argument but what he believes to be the just one. All high eloquence must be the offspring of real, unaffected passion. This makes every man persuasive, and gives a force to his genius, which it cannot otherwise possess.

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

This, however, does not by any means prohibit a premeditation of the subject on which we intend to speak. With respect to the matter, we cannot be too accurate in our preparation; but with regard to words and expression, it is very possible to be so assiduous, as to render our speech stiff and precise. A few short notes of the substance of the discourse are, however, not only allowable, but of considerable service, to those, especially, who are beginning to speak in public. They will teach them a degree of accuracy, which, if they speak frequently, they are in danger too soon of losing. They will accustom them to a distinct arrangement, without which, eloquence, however great, cannot produce entire conviction.

Popular assemblies afford scope for the most animated manner of public speaking. Passion is easily excited in a great assembly, where the move-

ments are communicated by mutual sympathy between the orator and the audience. That ardour of speech, that vehemence and warmth of sentiment, which proceed from a mind animated and inspired by some great and public object, constitute 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 concerning a matter which is either of small importance, or which, by its nature, requires to be treated of 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 both reputation and influence by a calm argumentative manner. To reach the pathetic and the sublime of oratory requires those strong sensibilities of mind, and that high power of expression, which are the lot of a very small portion of mankind.

Even when vehemence is justified by the subject, and prompted by genius; when warmth is felt, not feigned; we must, however, be cautious, lest impetuosity carry us beyond the bounds of prudence and propriety. If the speaker lose the command of himself, he will soon cease to influence his hearers. He should begin with moderation; and endeavour to warm his audience gradually and equally with himself. For if their passions be not in unison with his, the discord will soon become disagreeable and offensive. Respect for his hearers should always lay a decent restraint upon his warmth, and prevent it from carrying him beyond proper limits. When this is the case, 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 preserve a due regard to what the public ear will receive without disgust. Without an attention to this, an injudicious imitation of ancient orators might betray a speaker into a boldness of manner, with which the coolness of modern taste would be dissatisfied and displeased. It is also necessary to attend with care to all the decorums of time, place, and character. No ardour of eloquence can atone for the neglect of these. No one should attempt to speak in public, without forming to himself a just and strict idea of what is suitable to his own 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 elocution.

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 the most proper. It seems, however, that there is danger of erring in this respect; and that, by too diffuse a style, public speakers often lose more in point of strength than they gain by the fulness of their illustration. Excessive conciseness, indeed, must be cautiously avoided. We must explain and inculcate; but confine ourselves within certain limits. We never forget, that however we may be delighted with hearing ourselves speak, every audience is apt to tire; 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, exhaust the attention of our hearers, and leave them languid and fatigued.

ELOQUENCE OF THE BAR.

THE objects of eloquence at the bar, and in popular assemblies, are commonly different. In the latter, the orator endeavours principally to persuade; to determine his hearers to some choice, or conduct, as good, fit, or useful. He consequently applies himself to every principle of action in our nature; to the passions and to the heart, as well as to the understanding. At the bar, however, 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 it is to the understanding that his eloquence is chiefly to be addressed.

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 the exercise of all the arts of eloquence are not admissible. Passion does not rise so easily; the speaker is heard with great coolness; he is watched with more severity; and would expose himself to ridicule, should he adopt that high and animated tone which is suited only to a crowded and mixed assembly. Besides, at the bar, the field of speaking is very limited and confined. Law and statute are the ramparts, beyond which it is not allowed to pass. Imagination is fettered. The advocate sees 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 at present. In the times 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 the pleaders. Cicero informs us, that three months study would make a complete civilian; nay, it was even thought that a man might be a good pleader without any previous application. Among the Romans, there was a set of men called *Pragmatici*, whose office it was to supply the orator with all the law knowledge which his cause required, and which he disposed of in that popular form, and ornamented with those colours of eloquence, which were most fitted for influencing the judges.

It may also be observed, that the civil and criminal judges, both in Greece and Rome, were usually much 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 the least. In Rome, the *judices selecti*, as they were called, were always numerous, and had the office and power of both judge and jury. In the noted cause of Milo, Cicero spoke to fifty-one *judices selecti;* and thus had the advantage of addressing his whole pleading, not to one, or to a few learned judges of the point of law, as at present, 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 considered as 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 his young children, endeavouring to excite pity by their cries and tears.

The foundation of a lawyer's reputation and suc-

cess must, in the present times, be always 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 reckoned superficial, few will choose to engage him in their defence. Besides 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, so as to be completely master of all the facts and circumstances with which it is connected. By this means, he will, in a great measure, be prepared for the arguments of his opponents; 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 attacks of his adversaries.

Though the ancient popular and vehement manner of pleading be now in a great measure superseded, we must not conclude that there is no room for eloquence at the bar, and that the study of it is become superfluous. There is, perhaps, no scene of public speaking where eloquence is more requisite. The dryness and subtilty of the subjects usually agitated at the bar require, more than any other, a certain kind of expression, in order to command attention; to give proper weight to the arguments that are employed; and to prevent whatever the pleader advances from passing unregarded. The effect of good speaking is always highly conspicuous. There is as much difference in the impression we receive from a cold, dry, and confused speaker, and that made upon us by one who pleads the same cause with elegance, order, and strength, as there is between our conception of an object, when viewed by the glimmering of twilight, and when beheld by the wide effulgence of a summer's noon.

Purity and neatness of expression is, in this species of eloquence, chiefly to be studied; a style per-

spicuous and proper, not needlessly overcharged with the pedantry of law terms, nor affectedly avoiding these, when they are suitable and requisite. Verbosity is a fault of which men of this profession are frequently accused; and into which the habit of speaking and writing so hastily, and with so little preparation as they are often obliged to do, almost unavoidably betrays them. It cannot, therefore, be too earnestly recommended to those who are beginning to practise at the bar, that they should early endeavour to guard against this, whilst they have full leisure for preparation. Let them form themselves to the habit of a strong and correct style; which will become natural to them afterwards, when compelled by a multiplicity of business to compose with more precipitation. Whereas, if a loose and negligent style has 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 peculiarly necessary. It should be shown, first, in stating the question; in exhibiting clearly the point in debate; in showing 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 becomes infinitely essential.

The narration of facts should always be as concise as the nature of them will admit. They are always very necessary to be remembered, and consequently tediousness in relating them, and an unnecessary minuteness, clogs and overloads the memory. Whereas, if a pleader omit all superfluous circumstances in his recital, he adds strength to the material facts; he 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 commonly plain and obvious, arguments gain strength by their conciseness. But the intricacy of law points frequently requires the arguments to be expanded, and exposed in different lights, in order to be completely apprehended.

Candour in stating the arguments of his adversary cannot be too much recommended to every pleader. Should he disguise them, or place them in a false light, the artifice will be soon 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 endeavours to confute them, a strong prejudice will prevail in his favour. He will appear to have an entire confidence in his own cause, since he does not attempt to support it by artifice and concealment. The judge will consequently be inclined to receive much more readily the impressions made upon him by a speaker who appears, at the same time, both candid and intelligent.

Wit may sometimes be serviceable at the bar, particularly in a lively reply, by which ridicule may be thrown on what an adversary has advanced. But a young pleader should be cautious how he admits too freely the indulgence of this dazzling talent. His office is not to excite laughter, but to produce conviction; nor, perhaps, ever did any one rise to 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 the 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 the arguments which appear to his judgment the most forcible; reserving his zeal and indignation for cases where injustice and iniquity are notorious.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

HAVING already treated of the eloquence of popular assemblies, and of that of the bar, we shall now consider the strain and spirit of that eloquence which is suited to the pulpit. This field of public speaking has, evidently, several advantages peculiar to itself. The dignity and importance of its subjects must be allowed to be superior to any other. They admit of the highest embellishments 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 numerous assembly. He is not afraid of interruption. He chooses his subject at leisure; and has all the assistance which the most accurate premeditation can afford him. The disadvantages, however, which attend the eloquence of the pulpit are by no means 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 public ear, that it requires no ordinary genius in the preacher to fix the attention

of his hearers. 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 a subject generally more interesting to the hearers, and which 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, there are so few who have arrived at eminence. Perfection is very distant, indeed, from modern preaching. The object, however, is truly noble and illustrious; and worthy of being pursued with attention, ardour, and perseverance.

To excel in preaching, it is necessary to have a fixed and habitual view of its end and object. This, undoubtedly, is to persuade men to become good. Every sermon ought, consequently, 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 the same time clear views, and persuasive impressions of religious truth.

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 too predominant, becomes a dull, uniform solemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, approaches too near the theatrical and light. A proper union of the two forms that character of preaching which the French call *onction;* that affecting, penetrating, and interesting manner, flowing from a strong sense in the preacher of the importance

of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

With regard to the composition of a sermon, a principal circumstance which must be attended to is its 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 the discourse; or that one single thought only should be exhibited in different points of view. Unity is not confined by such narrow limits; it admits of some varicty; 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 leveth 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 offend very much against unity, and leave a very confused impression on the minds of his hearers.

Sermons are always the more striking, and generally the more useful, in proportion as the subject of them is more precise and particular. Unity can never be so complete in a general as in a particular subject. General subjects, indeed, such as the excellencies or the pleasures of religion, are often chosen by young preachers as the most showy, and the easiest to be handled; and no doubt general views of religion should not be neglected, since on several occasions they have great propriety. But these subjects produce not the high effects of preaching. Attention is much more commanded by taking

some particular view of a great object, 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, as it appears in certain characters, or affects certain situations in life, the subject becomes still more interesting. The execution is certainly less easy, 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 an unnecessary and tedious fulness. There are always some things which he may suppose to be known, and some that require only a brief attention. If he endeavour to omit nothing which his subject suggests, he must unavoidably encumber it, and debilitate 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 that himself is particularly addressed. He should, consequently, 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 of one speaking to a multitude, and studying to connect what is called application, or what immediately refers to practice, with the doctrinal and didactic 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 a man feels to touch his own character, or to be applicable to his own circumstances, you are sure of his attention. No study, therefore, is

more necessary for a preacher than the study of human life and of the human heart. To be able to discover a man to himself, in a light in which he never saw his own 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 the pursuit of which we may trace, and lay open, some of the most secret windings of the human heart. Other topics of preaching have become trite and common; but this is an extensive field, which has hitherto been little explored, and possesses all the advantages of being curious, new, and in the highest degree useful. Bishop Butler's sermon 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 pathetic; at another all argumentative; according as some celebrated preacher has afforded the example. Each of these modes in the extreme is very defective; and he who conforms himself to it will both confine his genius, and corrupt it. Truth and good sense are the only basis on which he can build with safety. Mode and humour are feeble and unsteady. No example, however admired, should be servilely imitated. From various examples the preacher may collect materials for improvement; but the servility of imitation will extinguish his genius, and expose its poverty to his hearers.

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

HAVING already considered what is peculiar to the three great fields of public speaking—popular assemblies, the bar, and the pulpit—we shall now treat of what is common to them all, and explain the conduct of a discourse, or oration, in general.

The parts which compose a regular formal oration are these six; the exordium or introduction; the state and the division of the subject; narration or explication; the reasoning or arguments; the pathetic part; the conclusion. It is not necessary that these must enter into every public discourse, or that they must always be admitted in the order which we have mentioned. There are many excellent discourses, in which some of these parts are altogether omitted. But as they are the natural and 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 opinion of the hearers; to excite their attention; and to render them open to persuasion. When a speaker is previously secure of the goodwill, the attention, and the docility of his audience, a formal introduction may, without any impropriety, be omitted. Respect for his hearers will, in that case, only require a short exordium, to prepare them for the other parts of his discourse.

The introduction, where it is necessary, is that part of a discourse which requires no inferior 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 till after he has meditated in his own mind the substance of his discourse. By taking an 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 whole discourse to the introduction which he had previously written.

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 unoccupied with the subject or 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 every judicious introduction. If the speaker begins with an air of arrogance and ostentation, the self-love and pride of his hearers will be presently awakened, and will follow him with a very suspicious eye through the rest of the discourse. His modesty should appear not only in his expressions, but in his whole manner; in his looks, in his gestures, and in the modulation of his voice. Every audience is flattered by those marks of respect and

awe which are paid them by the person who addresses them. 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 a persuasion of the justice or importance of the subject on which he is to speak.

Except in particular cases, the orator should not put forth all his strength at the beginning; but 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 can venture on strong and empassioned sentiments. Yet when the subject is of such a nature, 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 Roman senate renders the violent opening of Cicero's first oration against him very natural and proper. "Quousque tandem, Catilina, abutere patientiâ nostrâ?" And Bishop Atterbury, in preaching from this text, "Blessed is he whosoever 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 for some time, till he enters on the division of his subject. But these 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 afterwards 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 principal idea is always made with the greatest advantage when it is made entire, and in its proper place.

The last circumstance which we shall observe with regard to an introduction is, that it be proportioned both in length and in kind to the discourse which follows it: in length, since nothing would be more absurd than to erect an extensive portico before a diminutive building; and in kind, since it would be no less ridiculous to load with glittering ornaments the vestibule of a plain dwelling-house; or to make the approach to a monument as gay and lively as that to an arbour.

After the introduction, what generally succeeds next in order is the proposition or enunciation of the subject; concerning which we shall only observe, that it should be as clear and distinct as possible, and expressed without affectation, in the most concise and simple manner. To this commonly succeeds the division, or the laying down the method of the discourse; in the management of which the following rules should be carefully attended to.

First, That the parts into which the subject is divided be really distinct from each other; that is, that no one include another. It were a ridiculous 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 will, therefore, involve the subject in indistinctness and disorder.

Secondly, We must be careful always to follow the order of nature; beginning with the most simple points, such as are most easily understood, and necessary to be first discussed; and proceeding thence to those which are built upon the former,

and which suppose them to be known. The subject, in fine, 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 and corners only, without any plan being offered by which the whole may be displayed.

Fourthly, Let conciseness and precision be peculiarly studied. A division will always appear to the most advantage when the several heads are expressed in the clearest, most forcible, and at the same time the fewest words possible. This never fails to make an agreeable impression on the hearers; and contributes also to make the divisions more easily remembered.

Fifthly, An unnecessary multiplication of heads should be cautiously avoided. To divide a subject into a great many minute parts, by endless divisions and subdivisions, produces always a bad effect in speaking. In a logical treatise this may not be improper; 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, which we mentioned, was narration or explication. These two are joined together, both 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 either one side or the other, or to endeavour 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 consider as essential to narration. Distinctness is requisite to the whole of the discourse, but belongs especially to narration, which ought to throw a

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, a particular attention is requisite in ascertaining clearly the names, the dates, the places, and every other important circumstance of the facts recounted. In order to be probable in narration, it is necessary to exhibit the characters of those persons of whom we speak, and to show that their actions proceed 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 both 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 abounding with ornament. 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 the discourse, is properly the didactic part of preaching; on the right execution of which much depends, for what comes afterwards in the way of persuasion. 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; observe 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

determined, precise, and circumstantial view, may be afforded of the doctrine to be inculcated. By such 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 beneficial.

THE ARGUMENTATIVE PART OF A DISCOURSE—THE PATHETIC PART—THE PERORATION.

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

With regard to arguments, three things are necessary to be observed: first, the invention of them; secondly, their proper disposition and arrangement; and thirdly, the expressing them in the most forcible style and 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 confusedly 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 mankind. But the arguments employed upon either of them are generically distinct; and

he who mixes them all under one topic, 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 to be 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 be apprehensive of his cause, and has but one material argument on which to lay the stress, putting less confidence in the rest, in this case it is often proper to place his most forcible argument in the front; to prejudice his hearers as early as possible in his favour, and dispose them to pay attention to the weaker reasoning which he may afterwards introduce. When, amidst a variety of arguments, there is one or two more feeble than the rest, though proper to be used, Cicero advises that they be placed in the middle, as a situation less conspicuous than either the beginning or the end of the train of reasoning.

When arguments are strong and satisfactory, the more distant 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, or multiplied too much. This serves rather to render a cause suspicious, than to increase its strength. A needless multiplicity of arguments both oppresses the memory and diminishes the weight of that conviction, which a few well chosen arguments might not fail to 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 possible point of view, it generally happens, that, fatigued with 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 pathetic; in which, if any where, eloquence reigns, and exerts its power. On this head we shall offer the following directions, which appear worthy of being remembered.

To consider carefully, whether the subject admit the pathetic, and render it proper; and if it does, what part of the discourse is the most fit for its admission. In determining these points, good sense is the only just criterion. Many subjects admit not the pathetic at all, and even in those that are susceptible of it, an attempt to excite the passions in the wrong place may expose the 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 pathetic 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 previous preparation of this kind chills their sensibility. There is also a material difference between showing mankind that they ought to be moved, and actually exciting their passions. 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, or when he exclaims against us for our indifference and coldness. He is hitherto addressing only our reason or conscience. He must paint to us 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 till then, our hearts begin to be touched, our gratitude or our compassion begin to flow. The basis, therefore, of all successful execution in pathetic 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 pathetic, 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 with bold and strong figures, but it will have no ornament of finery. There is a material 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 seem to 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 pathetic. It is also to be observed, that emotions which are violent cannot be lasting. The pathetic, therefore, should not be prolonged and extended too much. A due regard should always be preserved to what the audience will bear; for he that attempts to carry them farther in passion than they will follow him, annihilates his purpose. By endeavouring to warm them in the extreme, he takes the surest method of freezing them completely.

Concerning the peroration or conclusion of a dis-

course, a few words will be sufficient. Sometimes the whole pathetic 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 point of view, and leaving the impression of them, full and strong, on the minds of the hearers. For the principal rule of a conclusion, and what nature obviously suggests, is, to place that last on which we choose that the strength of our cause should rest.

In every kind of public speaking, it is important to hit the precise time of concluding, so as 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 discourse being finished. The close should always be concluded with dignity and spirit, that the minds of the hearers may be left warm, and that they may depart with a favourable impression of the subject and of the speaker.

PRONUNCIATION OR DELIVERY.

THE great objects to which every public 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. This may be distinguished by three gradations; the high, the middle, and the low one. 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 public speaking: for it is erroneous 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 of 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 pitch of his voice, he will fatigue himself, and speak with pain; and whenever a man speaks with pain to himself, he is always heard with pain by his audience. To the voice, therefore, may be given full strength and swell of sound; but it should always be pitched on the 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 assembly, and to consider himself as speaking to them. We naturally and mechanically express our words with such a degree of strength as to be heard by one to whom we address ourselves, provided he be situated within the reach of our voice. This will be the case in public speaking, as well as in common conversation. But it must be remembered, that speaking too loud is peculiarly offensive. The ear is wounded when the voice comes upon it in rumbling indistinct masses; besides, it appears as

if assent were demanded by mere vehemence and force of sound.

To being well heard and clearly understood, distinctness of articulation is more conducive, perhaps, than mere loudness of sound. The quantity of sound requisite to fill even a large space, is less than is generally supposed; and with distinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it extend farther than the strongest voice can reach without it. This, therefore, demands peculiar attention. The speaker must give every sound which he utters its due proportion, and make every syllable, and even every letter, be heard distinctly. To succeed in this, a rapidity of pronunciation must be avoided. A lifeless, drawling method is, however, by no means to be adopted. To pronounce with a proper degree of slowness, and with full and clear articulation, cannot be too industriously studied, or too earnestly recommended. Such a pronunciation gives weight and dignity to language. It assists the voice, by the pauses and rests which it permits it more easily to make; and enables the speaker to swell all his sounds, both with more energy and more music. He may, by this means, preserve a due command over himself, and avoid that flutter of spirits produced by a rapid and hurried manner, which is destructive of all just and finished oratory.

To propriety of pronunciation, nothing is more conducive than an attentive care in giving to every word which we utter that sound which the most polite usage of the language appropriates to it, in opposition to broad, vulgar, or provincial pronunciation. On this subject, however, written instructions will 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 public speaking as in common discourse. In this respect many persons are apt to err. When they speak in public, 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 strength to their discourse, and increases the pomp of public declamation. But this is one of the greatest faults which can be committed in pronunciation; it constitutes what is termed a theatrical or mouthing manner, and gives an artificial, affected air to speech, which detracts, in a great degree, from its agreeableness and its impression.

We shall now mention 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 a particular stress, and to show how it affects the rest of the sentence. To acquire the proper management of the emphasis, the principal, and indeed the only rule which can be given is, that the speaker study to acquire a just conception of the force and spirit of those sentiments which he intends to deliver. In all prepared discourses, it would be extremely useful if they were read over or repeated in private, with a view of searching for the proper emphasis, before they were pronounced in public; 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 at the same time be given, against multiplying the emphatical words too much. They

only become striking when used with a prudent reserve. If they recur too frequently; if a speaker endeavours 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, and on which we want to fix the hearer's attention. Sometimes a matter of importance is preceded by a pause of this nature. Such pauses have the same effect as strong emphases, and are subject to the same rules; particularly to the caution just now given, of not repeating them too frequently. For since they excite particular attention, and consequently raise expectation, if this be not fully answered, they will occasion disappointment and disgust.

But the most common, 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 just and graceful management of such pauses is one of the most delicate and difficult articles in delivery. A proper command of the breath is peculiarly requisite to be acquired. 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 be gathered at the intervals of a sentence, when the voice suffers only a momentary suspension; and hence a sufficient supply may be obtained for carrying on the longest period, without improper interruptions.

Pauses in public discourse must be formed upon the manner in which we express ourselves in common, sensible conversation, and not upon the stiff

artificial manner which we acquire from perusing books, according to the common punctuation. The general method of punctuation is very arbitrary; often capricious and false; and dictates an uniformity of tone in the pauses, which is extremely unpleasing: for it must be observed, that to make pauses graceful and expressive, they must not only fall in the right places, but be accompanied by a proper tone of voice; by which the nature of these pauses is intimated, much more than by their length, which can never be precisely measured. Sometimes it is only a slight and simple suspension of the voice which is proper; sometimes a degree of cadence is requisite; and sometimes that peculiar tone and cadence which marks the conclusion of the sentence. In all these cases a speaker is to regulate himself by attending to the manner in which nature teaches him to speak, when engaged in real and earnest discourse with others.

In reading or reciting verses, there is a 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 the line, and the other in the middle of it. Rhyme always renders the former sensible, and compels an observance of it in the pronunciation. In blank verse it is less perceivable; and when there is no suspension in the sense, it has been doubted, whether in reading it with propriety 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, it were better, for the sake of melody, to read blank verse in such a manner as to make each line sensibly distinct. In attempting this, however, every appearance of sing-song and tone must be cautiously avoided. The close of the line, where there is no pause in the meaning,

should be marked only by such a slight 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 syllables, and no other. When it happens that this pause coincides with the slightest division in the sense, the line can 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 it happen that words which have such an intimate connexion as not to admit even a momentary separation be divided from each other by this pause in the middle of the verse, we then perceive a conflict between the sense and the sound, which renders it difficult to read such lines with grace and harmony. In such cases, it is always better to sacrifice sound to sense. Thus, for instance, in the following line of Milton;

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

The sense evidently dictates the pause after "illumine," which ought to be observed; though if the melody only were to be regarded, "illumine" should be connected with what follows, and no pause be made till after the 4th or 6th syllable. So also in the following line of Pope's Epistle to Arbuthnot:

I sit; 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 injudicious reading. The sense allows no other pause than after the second syllable, "sit," which therefore is the only one that ought to be observed.

We proceed next to treat of tones in pronunciation, which are different both from emphasis and pauses; consisting in the modulation of the voice, the notes or variations of sound which are employed in public speaking. The most material instruction which can be given on this subject is, to form the tones of public speaking upon the tones of sensible and 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 is sure to render his discourse frigid and unpersuasive. Nothing is more absurd than to suppose that as soon as a speaker ascends a pulpit, or rises in a public assembly, he is immediately 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 public speaker be prepared against this error. Whether he speak in private, or in a great assembly, let him not forget that he still speaks. Let him take nature for his guide, and she will teach him to express his sentiments and feelings in such a manner as to make the most forcible and pleasing impression upon the minds of his hearers.

It now remains for us to treat of gesture, or what is called action, in public discourse. The best rule is, to recommend attention 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 the model for imitation. A public 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 ungraceful. But though nature be the basis on which every grace in gesture and action must be founded, yet the ornamental improvements which art can supply must not be neglected. 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 it is to be feared that written instructions on this subject can be of little service. To become useful, they must be well exemplified. A few of the simplest precepts, however, may be attended to with advantage. Thus, every speaker should study to preserve as much dignity as possible in the whole attitude of his body. He should generally prefer an erect posture; his position should be firm, so as to have the fullest and freest command of all his motions; if any inclination be used, it should be forward towards 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 the motions made with the hands, consists the principal part of gesture in speaking. It is natural that the right hand should be employed more frequently than the left. Warm emotions require the exercise of them both together. But whether a speaker gesticulates with one or with both his hands, it is an important rule, that all his motions should 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, in a straight line up and down, which

Shakspeare calls, "sawing the air with the hand," are to be avoided. Oblique motions are the most pleasing and graceful. Too sudden and rapid motions are seldom good. Earnestness can be fully expressed without their assistance.

We cannot conclude our observations on this subject without earnestly admonishing every speaker to guard against all 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 a 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 the generality of mankind. They must only unlearn false and corrupt habits; they must follow nature; and they will speak in public as they do in private, when they speak in earnest, and from the heart.

MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

TO 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 all their moral feelings. A true orator must possess generous sentiments, and a mind turned towards the admiration of all those great and high objects, which mankind are, by nature, prone to venerate. Connected with the manly virtues, he should have a

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 the 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. The pleader must make himself completely acquainted with the law; he must possess all that learning and experience which can be useful in his profession, for supporting a cause, or convincing a judge. The preacher must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the subjects both of instruction and of persuasion. He who wishes to excel as a member of the supreme council of the nation, or of any public assembly, should be minutely acquainted with the business which belongs to such assembly, and should attend with accuracy to all the facts which may be the subject of question or deliberation.

Besides the knowledge which is more peculiarly connected with his profession, a public speaker should make himself acquainted with the general circle of polite literature. Poetry he will find useful for the embellishment of style, for affording lively images, or pleasing illusions. History may be still more advantageous; since the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the course of human affairs, must find place on many occasions. A deficiency of knowledge, even in subjects not immediately connected with his profession, will expose a public speaker to many disadvantages, and give his rivals, who are better qualified, a decided superiority.

To every one who wishes to excel as a public

speaker, a habit of application and industry cannot be too much recommended. This is inseparably connected with the attainment of every species of excellence. 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 would become flat and insipid. No enemy is so destructive both to honourable attainments, and to the real and animated enjoyment 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 an enthusiasm for that art; which firing his mind with the object in view, will dispose him to endure every necessary degree of industry and perseverance. This was the characteristic of the great men of antiquity; and it must distinguish the moderns, who would imitate their bright examples. By those who are studying oratory, this honourable enthusiasm should be cultivated with the most lively attention. If it be wanting to youth, manhood will flag exceedingly.

An attention to the best models contributes greatly towards improvement in the arts of speaking or writing. Every one, indeed, should endeavour to have something that is his own, that is peculiar to himself, and that distinguishes his composition and style. Genius is certainly depressed, and its poverty betrayed, by a slavish imitation. But yet there is no genius so original, but may receive improvement from proper examples, in style, composition, and delivery. They always afford some new ideas, and contribute to enlarge and correct our own. They accelerate the current of thought, and excite the ardour of emulation.

In imitating the style of any 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 exhibited 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 some good authors would seem stiff, affected, and even obscure, if transferred into a popular oration. How unnatural, for instance, would Lord Shaftsbury's sentences sound in the mouth of a public speaker! Some kinds of public discourse, indeed, such as that of the pulpit, where a more accurate preparation and a more studied style are allowable, would admit such a manner better than others, which are expected to approach nearer to extemporaneous speaking. But yet there is, generally, so great a difference between speaking, and a composition intended only to be read, as should caution us against a close and improper imitation.

The composition of some authors approaches nearer to the style of speaking than others; and they can, therefore, be imitated with more propriety. 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; and this is an excellence by which he is peculiarly distinguished. The style of the latter is more splendid; but still it is the style of speaking, or rather of declamation. Bolingbroke, indeed, may be studied with singular advantage by those who are desirous of attaining

the natural elegance and the graces of composition.

Frequent exercise both in composing and speaking must be recommended as a necessary mean of improvement. That kind of composition is, undoubtedly, most useful, which is connected with the profession, or sort of public speaking, to which persons devote themselves. This they should ever keep in view, and be gradually habituating 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 to speak correctly, should, in the most trifling kind of composition, in writing a letter, or even in common conversation, endeavour to express himself with propriety. By this we do not mean, that he is never to write, or to speak, but in studied and artificial language. This would introduce a stiffness 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. That manner which is becoming is often the most light, and apparently the most careless; but taste and attention are requisite to possess the just idea of it. That idea, when once acquired, should be kept constantly in view, and upon it should be formed whatever we write or speak.

Exercises of speaking have always been recommended to students in elocution; and, when under proper regulation, must, undoubtedly, be of the greatest use. Those public 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 public speaking, and have no other object in view than to exhibit their supposed talents, are institutions not only of an useless, but of an injurious nature. They are cal-

culated to become seminaries of licentiousness, petulance, and faction. Even the allowable meetings, into which students of oratory may form themselves, must be under proper direction, in order to be rendered useful. If their subjects of debate be improperly selected; 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 these be useful and manly, either connected with the course of their studies, or related to morals and taste, to action and life. They should be temperate in the practice of speaking; not to speak too frequently, nor on subjects of which they are ignorant; but only when they have laid up 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 adopt the best method of forming themselves gradually to a manly, correct, and persuasive elocution.

It may now be asked, of what use will the study of critical and rhetorical writers be, for the improvement of those who wish to excel in eloquence? They ought certainly 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 can be derived; and it is a disgrace to any one, whose profession calls him to speak in public, to be unacquainted with them. In all the rhetorical writers among the ancients, there is, indeed, one defect; they are too systematical; they endeavour to perform too much; they aim at reducing rhetoric to a perfect art,

which may supply invention with materials on every subject; so that one would suppose they expected to make an orator by rule, in the same manner as a mechanic would learn his business. But, in reality, all that can be done is to assist and enlighten taste, and to point out to genius the path in which it ought to tread.

Aristotle seems to have been the first who took rhetoric out of the hands of the sophists, and founded it on reason and solid sense. Some of the most subtle observations which have been made on the passions and manners of men are to be found in his treatise on rhetoric; 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 the foundation which he had laid. Two of them are still existing, Demetrius Phalereus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus: both have written on the construction of sentences, and deserve to be consulted; particularly Dionysius, who is a very accurate and able critic.

To recommend the rhetorical writings of Cicero would be 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*, in three books. None of his writings are more highly finished than this treatise. The dialogue is politely conducted, 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, throughout all Cicero's rhetorical works, there are seen those elevated and sublime ideas of eloquence, which are well calculated to form a just taste, and to inspire that enthusiasm for the art, which is highly conducive to the attainment of excellence.

Among all the ancient writers on the subject of oratory, none, perhaps, is more instructive, and

more useful, than Quintilian. His Institutions abound with valuable knowledge, and discover a taste in the highest degree accurate. He has well digested the ancient ideas concerning rhetoric, and has delivered his instructions in elegant and polished language.

COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS.

A VERY curious question has been agitated, with regard to the comparative perfection of the ancients and the 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; and it is somewhat difficult to discern upon what grounds the controversy is to be determined.

To decry the ancient classics is a vain attempt. Their reputation is established upon too solid a foundation to be shaken. At the same time, it is obvious that imperfections may be traced in their writings. But to discredit their works in general can only belong to peevishness or prejudice. The approbation of the public, for 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 mistaken; and systems of philosophy have often 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; and Homer and Virgil must continue to stand upon the same ground which they have occupied so long.

It is true, at the same time, that a blind veneration ought not be paid to the ancients; and it is proper to institute a fair comparison between them and the moderns. If the ancients are allowed to have the pre-eminence in genius, it is observable, that the moderns cannot but have some advantage, in all arts of which the knowledge is progressive.

Hence in natural philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences, which rest upon the observation of facts, it is undoubtedly certain that the moderns have the superiority over the ancients. Perhaps too, in precise reasoning, the philosophers of the modern ages have the advantage over those of ancient times; as a more extensive literary intercourse has contributed to sharpen the faculties of men. Perhaps also the moderns have the superiority in history, as political knowledge is certainly more perfect now than of old, from the extension of commerce, the discovery of different countries, the superior 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 on the side of regularity and accuracy. In dramatic performances, improvements have certainly been made upon the ancient models. The variety of the characters is greater; a 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 originality, and a more fortunate simplicity. Among the moderns there is more art and more correctness, but a genius less forcible and striking. It is notwithstanding observable, that though this rule may be just in general, they are doubtless exceptions from it. Thus it may be said, that Milton and Shakspeare are not inferior to any poet in any age.

Among the ancients there were many circumstances which were favourable to the exertions of genius. They travelled much in search of learning, and conversed with priests, poets, and philosophers. They returned home fired with the discoveries and acquisitions which they had made. Their enthusiasm was great; and there being few who were stimulated to excel as authors, the fame they procured was more intense and flattering. In modern times composition is less prized as an art. Every body has pretensions to it. We write with less effort and more at ease. Printing has multiplied books so prodigally, that assistances are common and easy, and a mediocrity of genius prevails. To rise beyond this, and to pass beyond the crowd, is the happy pre-eminence of a chosen few.

With respect to epic poetry, Homer and Virgil are still unrivalled; and modern times have produced no orator, who can be compared with Demosthenes and Cicero. In history we have no modern narration that is so elegant, so picturesque and so animated as those of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, and Sallust. Our dramas, with all the improvements they have received, are inferior in poetry and sentiment to those of Sophocles and Euripides. We have no comic dialogue so gracefully simple as that of Terence. Tibullus, Theocritus, and Horace have no counterparts in modern times. By those therefore who would improve their taste, and feed their genius, the utmost attention must be paid to the ancient classics, both Greek and Roman.

After having made these observations on the ancients and the moderns, it may be proper to treat critically of the more distinguished kinds of composition, and of the characters of those writers, whether ancient or modern, who have excelled in them. Of orations and public discourses much has already been said. The remaining prose composi-

tions may be divided into historical writing, philosophical writing, epistolary writing, and fictitious history.

HISTORICAL WRITING.

HISTORY may be defined to be a record of truth for the instruction of mankind. Hence it follows, that the great requisites of an historian are impartiality, fidelity, gravity, and dignity.

In the conduct of an historical detail, the attention of the historian should be applied, most anxiously, to bestow upon his work as much unity as possible. His history should not consist of separate and unconnected parts. Its portions should be linked together by a connecting principle, which should produce in the mind the impression of something that is one, whole and entire. Polybius, though not an elegant writer, is remarkable for possessing this quality.

An historian should trace actions and events to their sources. He should, therefore, be acquainted with human nature, and with political knowledge. His skill in the former will enable him to describe the characters of individuals; and his proficiency in the latter would prepare him for the task of recording revolutions of government, and for accounting for the operation of political causes on public affairs. With regard to political knowledge, the ancients wanted some advantages which are enjoyed by the moderns. There was not, in ancient periods, so free a communication among neighbouring states, as in the modern ages. There prevailed no regular intercourse by established posts; and there were no ambassadors residing at distant courts. A 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 the narrative, and not by the affected mode of dissertation, that the historian is to impart his political knowledge. Formal discussions expose the historian to the suspicion of being willing to accommodate his facts to his theory. They have also an air of pedantry, and are an evident result of his want of art. For reflections, whether moral, political, or philosophical, may be insinuated in the stream and body of a narrative.

Clearness, order, and due connexion, are great virtues in historical narration. They are attained when the historian is so completely master of his subject, as that he can see it at one view, and comprehend its dependence of parts. History being a dignified species of composition, it should also be conspicuous for gravity. There should be nothing mean or vulgar in the historic style; no quaintness, no smartness, no affectation, no wit. A history should likewise be interesting; and this is the circumstance which distinguishes chiefly the genius and eloquence of the writer.

In order that an historian be interesting, it is necessary that he preserve a proper medium between a rapid recital, and a detailed prolixity. He should know when to be concise, and when to enlarge. He should attend to a proper selection of circumstances. These give life, body, and colouring to his narration. They constitute what is termed historical painting.

In all these qualities of history, and particularly in picturesque description, the ancients eminently excel. Hence the pleasure of reading Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. In the talent of historical painting there are great varieties. Livy, for example, and Tacitus, paint in very different ways. The descriptions of Livy are full,

plain, and natural; but those of Tacitus are short and bold.

One embellishment which the moderns have laid aside was practised by the ancients. This is the putting of orations into the mouths of celebrated personages. These serve to diversify history, and were conveyances for moral and political instruction. Thucydides was the first historian who followed this practice; 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 that is unnatural, joining together truth and fiction. The moderns are, perhaps, more chaste, when, on great occasions, the historian delivers, in his own person, the sentiments and reasonings of opposite and contending factions.

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.

A sound morality should also be characteristic of the perfect historian. He should perpetually show himself upon the side of virtue. It is not, however, his province to preach; and his morality should not occupy too large a proportion of his work. 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 coldness of historical narration.

In modern times, the historical genius has shone most in Italy. Acuteness, political sagacity, and wisdom, are all conspicuous in Machiavel, Guicci-

ardin, Davila, Bentivoglio, and Father Paul. In Great-Britain history has only been fashionable for a few years. For though Lord Clarendon and Burnet are very considerable historians, they are inferior to Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson.

The inferior kinds of historical composition are annals, memoirs, and lives. Annals are a collection of facts, according to a chronological order; and the properties of an annalist are fidelity and distinctness. Memoirs are a composition which pretends not to hold out a complete detail of the period to which it relates, but only to record what the author knows in his own person, or from particular information, concerning any certain object, transaction, or event. It is not, therefore, expected of such a writer, that he should possess that profound research, and those superior talents, which are requisite in an historian. It is chiefly required of him, that he should be lively and interesting. The French have put forth a flood of memoirs; the greatest part of which are to be regarded as 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 dignity of legitimate history. They are full of virtue and good sense; and are well calculated to form both the heads and the hearts of those who are designed for high stations in affairs and the world.

The writing of lives, or biography, is a sort of composition less stately than history; but it is, perhaps, more instructive. For it affords the full opportunities 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; and he has no peculiar beauty or elegance. His judgment too, and accuracy, are not to be highly

commended. But he is a very humane writer, and fond of displaying great men in the gentle lights of retirement.

It is now right to observe, that of late years a great improvement has been introduced into historical writing. A more particular attention than formerly has been shown to laws, commerce, religion, literature, and to the spirit and genius of nations. It is now conceived, that an historian should illustrate manners as well as facts. The person who introduced this improvement into history is Voltaire; who, as an historian, has very enlarged and instructive views.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING.

OF philosophy, the professed object is to instruct. With the philosopher, accordingly, style, form, and dress, are inferior pursuits. But they must not wholly be neglected. For the same reasonings delivered in an elegant fashion will strike more than in a dull and dry manner.

In a philosophical writer, the strictest precision and accuracy are required; and these qualities may be possessed without dryness. For there are examples of philosophical writings that are polished, neat, and elegant. It admits of the calmer 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, a brilliant, and a sparkling manner. In English, Mr. Locke's Treatise on the Human Understanding is a model of a clear and distinct philosophical style. The writings of Lord Shaftsbury, on the other hand, are dressed out with too much ornament and finery.

Among the ancients, philosophical writing as-

sumed often the form of dialogue. Plato is eminent for the beauty of his dialogues. In richness of imagination, no philosophic writer, either ancient or modern, is equal to him. His only fault is the excessive fertility of his imagination, which carries him into allegory, fiction, enthusiasm, and the airy regions of mystical theology. Cicero has also distinguished himself by his dialogues; but they are not so spirited and characteristical as those of Plato. They are yet agreeable and well supported; and show us how conversations were carried on among the principal persons of ancient Rome. Of the light and humorous dialogue, Lucian is a model; and he has been imitated by modern writers. Fontenelle has written dialogues which are sprightly and agreeable: but as for characters, whoever his personages be, they all become Frenchmen. The divine dialogues of Dr. Henry More, amidst academic stiffness, are often remarkable for character and vivacity. Bishop Berkeley's dialogues are abstract and yet perspicuous.

EPISTOLARY WRITING.

IN epistolary writing we expect familiarity and ease; 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, and should indicate no mark of study. The letters of Lord Bolingbroke and of Bishop Atterbury are masterly. In those of Mr. Pope, there is, in general, too much study; and his letters in particular to ladies are too full of affectation. In French, Balzac and Voiture are celebrated epistolary writers. The former is swelling and pompous: the latter

sparkling and witty. 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 Montagu, though not so perfect, are perhaps more agreeable to the epistolary style than any that have ever appeared in England.

FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

THIS species of composition includes a very numerous, and, in general, an insignificant class of writings, called romances and novels. Of these, however, the influence is known to be great; and, indeed, notwithstanding the bad ends to which this mode of writing may be applied, it is very possible to employ it for the most useful purposes. Romances and novels describe human life and manners, and discover the disorders, as well as the perfections, of the passions. Even wise men, in different nations, have used fables and fictions for the propagation of knowledge; and it is an observation of Lord Bacon, that the common affairs of the world are insufficient to engage the mind of man. He must create worlds of his own, and wander in the regions of imagination.

All nations whatsoever have discovered talents for invention and the love of fiction. Among the Greeks we hear of the Ionian and Milesian tales. During the dark ages, fictions assumed an unusual form from the prevalence of chivalry, romances arose, and carried the marvellous to its highest summit. They exhibited knights as patterns not only of the most heroic courage, but as superlatively eminent for religion, generosity, courtesy, and fidelity; and ladies, who were distinguished, in the greatest degree, for modesty, delicacy, and dignity of manners.

Of these romances the most perfect model is the Orlando Furioso. But as magic 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 Sidney, are good examples. In these, however, there was still too large a proportion of the marvellous; and the books were too voluminous and unwieldy. Romance writing appeared, therefore, in a new form. It 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 works of great merit. Such is the Gil Blas of Le Sage, the Marianne of Marivaux, and the Nouvelle Heloise of Rousseau.

In this mode of writing the English are inferior to the French; yet in this way we have performances which discover the strength of the British genius. Robinson Crusoe is a well-conducted fiction. Mr. Fielding's novels are distinguished for their humour, and for a boldness of character. Mr. Richardson, the author of Clarissa, is the most moral of all our writers; but he possesses the unfortunate talent of spinning out his books into an immeasurable length. As to the common run of performances, under the titles of lives, adventures, and histories, they are most insipid; and it is too often their tendency to deprave the morals, and to encourage dissipation and idleness.

NATURE OF POETRY.

ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS; VERSIFICATION.

WHAT, it may be asked, is poetry? and how does it differ from prose? Many disputes have been

maintained among the critics upon these questions. The essence of poetry is supposed by Aristotle, Plato, and others, to consist in fiction. This description, however, has been esteemed to be imperfect and limited. Many account the characteristic of poetry to be imitation. But an imitation of human manners and characters may be carried on in prose.

Perhaps it is the best definition of poetry, "that it is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed most commonly into regular numbers." As the primary aid of the poet is to please and to move, it is to the imagination and the passions that he addresses himself. With him, instruction and reformation are secondary considerations.

It has been said, that poetry is older than prose; and the position is certainly true. In the very beginning of society there were occasions upon which men met together at feasts and sacrifices, when music, dance, and song, were the chief entertainment. The meetings of the northern tribes of America are distinguished by music and song. By songs they celebrate their religious ceremonies, and their martial achievements. And it is in such songs which characterise the infancy of all nations, that there may be traced the beginnings of poetic composition.

Man is by nature both a poet and a musician. The same impulse which produces an enthusiastic poetic style, produces a high modulation of sound. Music and poetry are united in song; and they mutually assist and exalt each other. The first poets sung their own verses; and hence the origin of what is called versification, or the arrangement of words to some tune or melody.

Poets and songs are the first objects that make their appearance in any nation. Apollo, Orpheus, and Amphion, were the first tamers of mankind among the Greeks. The Gothic nations had their

scalders, or poets. The Celtic tribes had their bards. Poems and songs are among the antiquities of all countries; and the occasions of their being composed are nearly the same. They comprise the celebration of gods, and heroes, and victories. They abound in fire and enthusiasm; and they are wild, irregular, and glowing.

It is in the progress of society that poems assume different forms. Time separates into classes the different kinds of poetic composition. A peculiar merit, and certain rules, are assigned to each. The ode and the elegy, the epic poem, and dramatic compositions, are all reduced to regulations, and exercise the acuteness of criticism.

ENGLISH VERSIFICATION.

MERE quantity is of very little effect in English versification. 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 is occasioned by some of them being pronounced with that stronger percussion of voice, which is termed accent. This accent, however, does not always make the syllable longer. It communicates only more force of sound; and it is upon a certain order and succession of accented and unaccented syllables, more than upon their being short or long, that the melody of our verse depends.

In the constitution of our verse there is another essential circumstance. This is the cæsural pause which falls towards the middle of each line. This pause may fall after the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, or the seventh syllable; and by this means uncommon variety and richness are added to English versification.

When the pause falls earliest, it is upon the fourth syllable; and in this case, a spirited air is given to the line. Of this, the following lines from Mr. Pope are a proper 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, which divides equally the line, 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 grows grave. The march 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, occurs the most seldom. Its effect is to diversify the melody of long poems.

And in the smooth descriptive | murmur still.
Long loved, adored ideas, | all adieu.

Our blank verse is a bold and disencumbered mode of versification. It is free from the full close which rhyme forces upon the ear at the termination of every couplet. Hence it is peculiarly suited to subjects of dignity and force. It is more favourable than rhyme to the sublime and the highly pathetic. It is the most proper for an epic poem, and for tragedy. Rhyme finds a proper place in the mid-

dle regions of poetry; and blank verse in the highest.

The present form of our English heroic rhyme in couplets is modern. For the measure of versification in use in the days of Elizabeth, King James, and Charles I. was the stanza of eight lines. Waller was the first who gave the fashion to couplets; and Dryden established the usage. Waller harmonized our verse; and Dryden carried it to perfection. The versification of Pope is peculiar. It is flowing and smooth, correct and laboured, in the highest degree. He has thrown totally aside the triplets, which are so common in Dryden, and the older poets. As to ease and variety, Dryden excels Pope. He makes his couplets to run into one another, and has somewhat of the freedom of blank verse.

PASTORAL POETRY.

IT was not till men had begun to assemble in great cities, and the bustle of courts and large societies was known, that pastoral poetry assumed its present form. From the tumult of a city life, men looked back with complacency to the innocence of a country retirement. In the court of King 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 the objects which commonly are the delight of our childhood and youth. It gives us the image of a life, to which we join the ideas of innocence, peace, virtue, and leisure. It transports us into the calm Elysian regions. It holds out many objects favourable to poetry; rivers and moun-

tains, meadows and hills, rocks, trees, and shepherds.

The pastoral poet is careful to exhibit whatever is most pleasing in the pastoral state. He paints its simplicity, its tranquillity, and happiness; but conceals its rudeness and misery. His pictures are not those of real life: it is sufficient that they resemble it. He has occasion, accordingly, for great art. And to have a proper idea of pastoral poetry, we must consider, 1. The scenery. 2. The characters; and lastly, the subjects which it exhibits.

The scene must be ever in the country; and the poet must have a talent for description. In this respect Virgil is outdone by Theocritus, whose paintings are richer and more picturesque. In every pastoral, a rural prospect should be drawn with distinctness. It is insipid to have unmeaning groups of roses and violets, of birds, breezes, and brooks. A good poet gives a landscape that would figure on canvas. His objects are particularised. They cannot be mistaken, and afford to the mind clear and pleasing conceptions.

In his allusions to natural objects, as well as in professed descriptions of the scenery, the poet should also be clear and various. He must diversify his face of nature. It is likewise a rule with him, to suit his scenery to the subject of the pastoral; and to show nature under the forms that most accurately correspond with the emotions and sentiments he describes. Thus Virgil, when he gives the lamentation of a despairing lover, communicates a gloomy sadness to the scene.

Tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos,
Assidue veniebat; ibi hæc incondita solus
Montibus et sylvis studio jactabit inani.

As to the characters in pastorals, it is not sufficient that they are persons who reside constantly in the country. Courtiers and citizens, who resort occasionally to retirements, would not figure in pasto-

rals. The persons in such poems must be actually shepherds, and wholly engaged in rural occupations. The shepherd must be plain and unaffected, without being dull or insipid. He must have good sense, and even vivacity. He must be tender and delicate in his feelings. He should never deal in general reflections or in conceits, 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 such lovely knots. What have the servants of love, if those precious chains are common to them, and to the trees?" Strained and forced sentiments like these suit not the woods. The language of rural personages is that of plain good sense, and natural feeling. Hence the charm of the following lines in 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 à terra contingere ramos.
Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error.

Once with your mother to our fields you came
For dewy apples: thence I date my flame;
The choicest fruit I pointed to your view;
Though young, my raptur'd soul was fix'd on you;
The bough I just could reach with little arms;
But then, even then, could feel thy powerful charms.
O how I gaz'd in pleasing transport tost!
How glow'd my heart, in sweet delusion lost!

With respect to the subjects of pastorals, there is a nicety which is absolutely necessary. For it is not enough, that the poet should give us shepherds discoursing together. Every good poem must have a topic that should be interesting in some way. In this lies the difficulty of pastoral poetry. The active

scenes of country life are too barren of incidents. The condition of a shepherd has few things in it that produce curiosity and surprise. Hence the generality of pastorals are common-place, and impertinently insipid. Yet this insipidity is not solely to be ascribed to the barrenness of topics. It is, in a great measure, the fault also of the poet: for human passions are much the same in every situation and rank of life. And what an infinite variety of objects within the rural sphere do the passions present! The struggles and ambition of shepherds; their adventures; their disquiets and felicity; the rivalship of lovers; unexpected successes and disasters are all proper topics for the pastoral muse.

Theocritus and Virgil are at the head of this mode of writing. For the simplicity of his sentiments, the harmony of his numbers, and the richness of his scenery, the former is distinguished. But he descends sometimes into ideas that are mean, abusive, and immodest. Virgil, on the contrary, has all the pastoral simplicity and grace, without any offensive rusticity.

The modern writers of pastorals have, in general, imitated Theocritus and Virgil. Sannazarius, however, a Latin poet, in the age of Leo X. attempted a bold innovation, by composing piscatory eclogues, and changing the scene from woods to the sea, and from shepherds to fishermen. But this attempt was unhappy, and he has had no imitators. The toilsome life of the fisherman had nothing agreeable to present to the imagination. Fish and marine productions had nothing poetical in them. Of all the moderns, Gesner, a poet of Switzerland, has been the most happy. There are many new ideas in his Idyls. His scenery is striking, and his descriptions are lively. He is pathetic, and writes to the heart. Neither the pastorals of Mr. Pope, nor Mr. Philips, are a great acquisition to English poetry. The pastorals of Pope are wonderfully barren; and their chief merit is the smoothness of their versi-

fication. Philips attempted to be more natural than Pope; but wanted genius to support his attempt. His topics, like those of Pope, are beaten; and instead of being natural or simple, he is insipid and flat. Between these authors there was a strong competition; and in some papers of the Guardian a partiality was shown to Philips. This offended Pope, who procured a paper to be inserted in that work*, in which he affected to carry on the plan of extolling Philips, but in which he satirised him most severely with ironical compliments, and pointed to his own superiority over that poet. The Shepherd's Week of Mr. Gay was designed as a ridicule on Philips, and is an ingenious burlesque of pastoral writing, when it copies too completely the manners of clowns and rustics. As to Mr. Shenstone's pastoral ballad, it is one of the most elegant poems in the English language.

In latter times, the pastoral writing has been extended into a play, or drama; and this is one of the chief improvements that have been made upon 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, as being less intricate, and less affected. It is yet not wholly free from Italian refinement. As a poem it has, however, great merit. The poetry is pleasing and gentle; and the Italian language has communicated to it that softness, which is so suited to the pastoral.

The Gentle Shepherd of Allan Ramsay is a pastoral composition which must not be omitted. To this admirable poem it is perhaps a disadvantage, that it is written in the old rustic dialect of Scotland, which must be soon obsolete: and it is further to be objected to it, that it is formed so accurately on the rural manners of Scotland, that a native alone of that country can thoroughly enter into,

* Guardian, No. 40.

and relish it. Of natural description it is full; and it excels in tenderness of sentiment. The characters are drawn with a skilful pencil, the incidents are affecting, and the scenery and manners are lively and just.

LYRIC POETRY.

THE ode is a species of poetry which preserves dignity, and in which many poets in every age have exercised themselves. Ode is, in Greek, equivalent with song or hymn; and lyric poetry implies, that the verses are accompanied with a lyre, or with a musical instrument. The ode retains its first and most ancient form; and sentiments of some kind or other constitute its subject. It recites not actions. Its spirit, and the manner of its execution, give it its chief value. It admits of a bolder and more passionate strain than is allowed in simple recitations. Hence the enthusiasm that belongs to it. Hence that neglect of regularity, and that disorder it is supposed to admit.

There are four denominations under which all odes may be classed. 1. Hymns addressed to the Supreme Being, and relating to religious subjects. 2. Heroic 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 for pleasure and amusement.

As enthusiasm is considered as the characteristic of the ode, it has too much degenerated into licentiousness; and this species of writing has, above all others, been infected with the 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 partake of his raptures.

It is not indeed necessary that the structure of the ode should be so perfectly exact and formal as a didactic poem. But in every work of genius there ought to be a whole, and this whole should consist of parts. These parts too should have a bond of connexion. In the ode, the transitions from thought to thought may be brisk and rapid, but the connexion of ideas should be preserved; and the author should think, and not rave.

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

The Latin poets, of later ages, have imitated him; and sometimes happily. Cassimir, a Polish poet of the last century, is of the number of his imitators; and discovers a considerable degree of original genius, and poetical fire. He is, however, far inferior to the Roman. Buchanan, in his lyric compositions, is greater, and more classical.

In the French, the odes of Jean Baptiste Rousseau are justly celebrated for great beauty of sentiment and expression. 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 Dodsley's Miscellanies there are several very beautiful lyric poems. As to professed Pindaric odes, they are seldom intelligible. Cowley is doubly harsh in his Pindaric compositions. His Anacreontic odes are better; and perhaps the most agreeable and perfect in their kind of all his works.

DIDACTIC POETRY.

OF didactic poetry, it is the express intention to convey instruction and knowledge. A didactic poem 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 press some moral observations on human life and characters.

The highest species of didactic composition is a formal treatise on some philosophical or grave subject. Such are the books of Lucretius de Rerum Naturâ, the Georgics of Virgil, the Essay on Criticism by Mr. Pope, the Pleasures of the Imagination by Akenside, Armstrong on Health, and the Art of Poetry by Horace, Vida, and Boileau.

In all these works instruction is the professed object. It is necessary, however, that the poet enliven his lessons by figures, and incidents, and poetical painting. In his Georgics, Virgil has the most common circumstances in rural life. When he is to say that the labour of the farmer must begin in spring, he expresses himself in the following manner:

Verè 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.

While yet the spring is young, while earth unbinds
Her frozen bosom to the western winds;
While mountain snows dissolve against the sun,
And streams yet new from precipices run:
Even in this early dawning of the year,
Produce the plough, and yoke the sturdy steer,
And goad him till he groans beneath his toil,
Till the bright share is buried in the soil.

In all didactic works, such a method and order are requisite as shall exhibit clearly a connected train of instruction. With regard to episodes and embellishments, the writers of didactic poetry may indulge in great liberties. For in a poetical performance, a continued series of instruction, without entertaining embellishments, would fatigue, and even disgust. The digressions in the Georgics of Virgil are all admirable. The happiness of a country life, the fable of Aristeus, and the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, cannot be praised too much.

A didactic poet ought also to exert his skill in connecting his episodes with his subjects. In this address Virgil is eminent. Among modern didactic poetry, Dr. Akenside and Dr. Armstrong are deservedly illustrious. The former is very rich and poetical; but the latter maintains a greater equality, and is throughout remarkable for a chaste and correct elegance.

Of didactic poetry, satires and epistles run into the most familiar style. It is probable, that the satire is a relic of the ancient comedy, the grossness of which was corrected by Ennius and Lucilius. It was Horace who brought it to the perfection in which we now behold it. Vice and vicious characters are its objects, and it professes the reformation of manners. There are three different modes in which it appears in the writings of Horace, Juvenal, and Persius.

The satires of Horace have not much elevation. They exhibit a measured prose. Ease and grace characterise him; and he glances rather at the follies and weaknesses of mankind than their vices. He smiles while he reproves. He moralises like a sound philosopher, 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 and critical topics, have a resemblance in the strain of

their poetry to satires. But in the epistolary form many other subjects may be treated. Love poetry, or elegiac, may, for example, be carried on in this mode. The ethical epistles of Pope are a model: and he shows in them 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 is the most to be admired.

Among moral and didactic writers, Doctor 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 conciseness which is particularly requisite in satirical and didactic productions. At the same time it is to be observed, that his wit is often too sparkling, and that his sentences are sometimes too concise. In his Night Thoughts there is great energy of expression, several pathetic passages, many happy images, and many pious reflections. But it must be allowed, that he is frequently overstrained and turgid, harsh and obscure.

DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

IT is in descriptive poetry that the highest exertions of genius may be displayed. In general, indeed, description is introduced as an embellishment, and constitutes not properly any particular species or mode of composition. It is the test of a poet's imagination, and never fails to distinguish the original from the second-rate genius. A writer of an inferior class sees nothing new or peculiar in the object he would paint: he is loose and vague, feeble and general. A true poet, on the contrary,

places an object before our eyes. He gives it the colouring of life, and the painter might copy from 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. For all distinct ideas are formed upon particulars. There should also be a uniformity in the circumstances which are selected. In describing a great object, all the circumstances brought forward should lift and aggrandise; and in holding out a gay object, all the circumstances should tend to beautify.

The largest and fullest descriptive performance, in our language, is the Seasons of Thomson; 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, and possessed a feeling heart, and a warm imagination. He had studied nature with great 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 to heighten a description, the following passage may be appealed to, in 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 Carthagena, 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 quiv'ring; and the beamless eye
No more with ardour bright; you heard the groans
Of agonising ships from shore to shore;
Heard nightly plunged, amid the sullen waves,
The frequent corse. ———————

All the circumstances selected here contribute to augment the dismal scene. But the last image is the most striking in the picture.

Of descriptive narration, there are beautiful examples in Mr. Parnell's Tale of the Hermit. The setting forth of the hermit to visit the world, his meeting with a companion, 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 storehouse from whence succeeding poets have enriched their descriptions, and are to be considered as 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 fleshly nook;
And of those dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground.

All here is particularly 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 wonderful, and universally known. 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 resounded 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 window; the rank grass waved round his head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina; silence is in the house of her fathers."

Upon a proper choice of epithets there depends much of the beauty of descriptive poetry. With regard to this poets are too often careless; and hence the multitude of unmeaning and redundant epithets. Hence the "Liquidi Fontes" of Virgil, and the "Prata Canis Albicant Pruinis" of Horace. Every epithet should add a new idea to the word which it qualifies. To observe that water is liquid, and that snow is white, is little better than mere tautology. But the propriety and advantage of an ingenious selection of epithets will appear best from an example; and the following lines from Milton will afford one:

—— Who shall tempt with wand'ring feet
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyss,
And through the palpable obscure find out
This uncouth way? Or spread his airy flight,
Upborn with indefatigable wings,
Over the vast abrupt?

It is obvious that the description here is very considerably assisted by the epithets. The wandering feet, the unbottomed abyss, the palpable obscure, the uncouth way, the indefatigable wing, are all very happy expressions.

THE POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

IN treating of the different kinds of poetry, that of the Scriptures deserves a place. In this task, Dr. Lowth on the poetry of the Hebrews is an excellent guide; and it may be proper that we benefit by the observations of a writer so ingenious.

Among the Hebrews poetry was cultivated from the earliest times. Its general construction must not be judged of by the poems of other nations. It is singular and peculiar. It consists in dividing every period into correspondent, for the most part into equal numbers, which answer to one another, both in sense and sound. A sentiment is expressed in the first member of the period; and in the second member the same sentiment is amplified, or sometimes 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 the people."

This form of poetical composition is to be deduced from the manner in which the Hebrews sung their sacred hymns. These were accompanied with music, and were performed by bands of singers and musicians, who answered alternately to 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 figure and 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 poetry of the Hebrews.

To understand the description of natural objects in the Scriptures, it is necessary to attend to particular circumstances of the land of Judæa. Throughout all that region, little or no rain falls during the summer months. Hence to represent distress, there are frequent allusions 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. 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."

The comparisons employed by the sacred poets are generally short. They are, of consequence, the more striking. Of this the following is a good example: "He that ruleth over man 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."—2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

Allegory likewise is a figure employed by the Hebrews; and a fine instance of this occurs in the lxxxth Psalm, wherein the people of Israel are compared to a vine. Of parables the prophetical writings are full; and if it should be objected to

these that they are obscure, it should be remembered, that in old times, in the Eastern world, it was universally the fashion to convey truth under mysterious representations.

The figure, however, which elevates beyond all others the poetical style of the Scriptures, is the prosopopæia, or personification. The personifications of the Scriptures exceed, in boldness and sublimity, every thing that can be found in other poems. This is more particularly the case 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, and 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 a principal instance of the didactic species of poetry. Of elegiac poetry there is a very beautiful instance in the lamentation of David over Jonathan. Of pastoral poetry the Song of Solomon is a high exemplification; and of lyric poetry the Old Testament is full.

With regard to the composers of the sacred books, it is obvious that there is a strong diversity in style and manner. 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 style and manner. In the soft and tender he excels; and there are many lofty passages in his Psalms. But in strength of description he yields to Job, and in sublimity he is inferior to Isaiah. The most sublime of all poets, without exception, is Isaiah. 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 eminent for poetical spirit. In the prophecies of Daniel and Jonah there is no poetry.

The book of Job is extremely ancient; but the author is uncertain; and it is remarkable, that it has no connexion with the affairs or manners of the Jews and Hebrews. The poetry of it is highly descriptive. It abounds in a peculiar glow of fancy, and in metaphor. The author 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 in it differs from that which is peculiar to the Hebrews.

EPIC POETRY.

OF all poetical works, the epic poem is allowed to be the most dignified. To contrive a story which is entertaining, important, and instructive, to enrich it with happy incidents, to enliven it with descriptions and characters, and to maintain a uniform propriety of sentiment, and a due elevation of style, are efforts of high genius. An epic poem may be defined to be the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a poetical form. The epic muse is of a moral nature; and the tendency of this kind of poetry is the promotion of virtue. To this purpose it acts, by extending our ideas of perfection, and by exciting admiration. Now this is accomplished by adequate representations of heroic deeds and virtuous characters. Valour, truth, justice, fidelity, friendship, piety, magnanimity, are the objects which the epic muse presents to our minds, in the most shining and honourable colours.

Epic 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 pathetic and the violent, and it admits a great compass of time and action.

The action or subject of the epic must possess three qualifications or properties. It must be one; it must be great; it must be interesting. One action or enterprise must constitute its subject. Aristotle insists on unity as essential to the epic; because separate facts never affect so deeply as a tale that is one and connected. Virgil and Homer are careful to uphold the unity of action. Virgil, for example, 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 the epic unity, or action, is to exclude episodes. On the contrary, the epic poem would be cold without them; and the critics consider them as its greatest embellishments. They are introduced for the sake of variety, and they 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, afford us a well-judged and pleasing retreat from camps and bustles.

The next property of an epic, after unity, is, that the action represented be great, to a degree that is sufficient to fix attention, and to justify the splendour of poetic elevation. Both Lucan and Voltaire have transgressed this rule. The former does not please, by confining himself too strictly to historical truth; and the latter has mingled, improperly, well-known events with fictitious parts. Hence they exhibit not that greatness which the epic requires.

The third property of the epic is, that it be interesting. This depends, in a great measure, upon the choice of the story. It depends, however, a great deal more upon the artful management of the poet. He must frame his plan so as to comprehend many affecting incidents. He must dazzle with valiant achievements. He must be awful and august; tender and pathetic; gentle and pleasing.

To render the epic interesting, great care must also be employed with respect to the characters of the heroes. It is by the management of the characters that the poet is to excite the passions, and to hold up the suspense and the agitation of his reader.

It is generally supposed by the critics that an epic poem should conclude successfully, as an unhappy conclusion depresses the mind. And, indeed, it is on the prosperous side generally that epic poets conclude. But two authors, of great name, are an exception to this practice. Lucan and Milton held the contrary course. The one concludes with the subversion of the Roman liberty, and the other with the expulsion of man from Paradise.

No precise boundaries are fixed for the time or duration of the epic action. Of the Iliad, the action lasts, according to Bossu, no longer than forty-seven days. The action of the Odyssey extends to eight years and a half, and that of the Æneid includes about six years.

The personages in an epic poem should be proper, and well supported. They should display the features of human nature, and admit of different degrees of virtue and turpitude. Poetic characters are of two sorts, general and particular. General characters are such as are wise, brave, and virtuous, without any further distinction. Particular characters express the species of wisdom, of bravery, 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 here greatly deficient.

Among epic poets it is the practice to select some particular personage as the hero. This renders the unity more perfect, and contributes highly to the interest and perfection of this species of writing. It has been asked, Who then is the hero of Paradise Lost? The devil, say a number of critics, who affect to be pleasant against Milton for so violent an absurdity. But their conclusion is false. For it is Adam who is Milton's hero; and it is obvious that he is the most capital and interesting figure in the poem.

In epic poetry, beside human characters, there are gods and supernatural beings. This forms what is called the machinery of the epic; and the French suppose it essential to this species of poetry. They conceive that in every epic the main action ought to be carried on by the intervention of the gods. But there seems to be no solid reason for their opinion. Lucan has no gods, or supernatural agents. The author of Leonidas has also no machinery.

But if machinery be not absolutely necessary to the epic poem, it ought not to be totally excluded from it. The marvellous has a great charm for the generality of readers. It leads to sublime description, and fills the imagination. At the same time it becomes the poet to be temperate in the use of supernatural beings, and to employ the religious faith or superstition of his country in such a way as to give an air of probability to events that are most contrary to the ordinary course o nature.

As to allegorical personages, such as Fame, Discord, Love, and such like, they form the worst machinery of any. In description they may 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 unseemly confusion of shadows with realities.

As to the narration of the epic poem, it is of little consequence whether it proceeds in the character of the poet, or in the person of some of the personages. It is to be observed, however, that if the narrative is given by any of the actors, it affords the poet the advantage of spreading out such parts of the subject as he inclines to dwell upon in person, and of comprehending the rest within a short recital.

HOMER'S ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.

THE father of epic poetry is Homer; and in order to relish him, we must divest ourselves of the modern ideas of dignity, and transport back our imagination almost three thousand years in the history of mankind. The reader is to expect a picture of the ancient world. The two great characters of the Homeric poetry are fire and simplicity. But in order to have a clear idea of his merit, it may be right to consider the Iliad under the three heads of the subject and action, the characters, and the narration.

It is undoubtedly certain that the subject of the Iliad is happily chosen. For no object could be more splendid than the Trojan war. A ten years' siege against Troy, and a great confederacy of the Grecian states, must have spread far the renown of many military exploits, and given an extensive interest to the heroes who were concerned in them. Upon these traditions Homer built his poem; and as he lived two or three centuries after the Trojan war, he had a full liberty to intermingle fable with

history. He chose not, however, the whole Trojan war for his subject; and in this he was right. He selected, with judgment, the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, which includes the most interesting period of the war. He has thus communicated the greater unity to his performance. He gained one hero, or principal character, that is, Achilles; and he shows the pernicious effects of discord among confederated princes.

The praise of high invention has been uniformly bestowed on Homer. His incidents, his speeches, his characters, divine and human, his battles, his little history pieces of the persons slain, discover a boundless imagination. Nor is his judgment less worthy of commendation. His story is every where conducted with art. He rises upon us gradually. He introduces his heroes with exquisite skilfulness into our acquaintance. The distress thickens; and every thing leads to aggrandize Achilles, and to give the most complete interest to his work.

In his characters, Homer is without a rival. He abounds in dialogue and conversation, and this produces a spirited exhibition of his personages. It must at the same time be acknowledged, that if this dramatic method is often expressive and animated, it takes away occasionally from the gravity and majesty of the epic. For example, it may be observed, that some of the speeches of Homer are unseasonable, and others trifling. With the Greek vivacity, he has also the Greek loquacity.

Perhaps in no character he displays greater art than in that of Helen. Notwithstanding her frailty and crimes, he contrives to make her interesting. The admiration with which the old generals behold her when she is coming towards 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; these strokes are exquisite, and worthy of a great master.

It has been reproached to Homer, that he has been unhappy in his portrait of Achilles; and the critics seem to have adopted this censure, from the following lines of Horace:

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

It appears that Horace was mistaken, and went beyond the truth. Achilles, no doubt, was passionate, but he was no contemner of laws. He had reason on his side; and if he discovers heat, it should be allowed that he had been notoriously wronged. Beside bravery and contempt of death, he had also the qualities of openness and sincerity. He loved his subjects, and respected the gods. He was strong in his friendships; and throughout he was high-spirited, gallant, and honourable.

Homer's gods make a great figure; but his machinery was not his own. He followed the traditions of his country. But though his machinery is often lofty and magnificent, it is yet true that his gods are often deficient in dignity. They have all 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 the most awful majesty. Jupiter, for the most part, is introduced with great dignity; and several sublime conceptions are founded on the appearances of Neptune, Minerva, and Apollo.

As to the style or manner of Homer, it is easy, natural, and animated. He resembles in simplicity the poetical parts of the Old Testament. Mr. Pope, in his translation of him, affords no idea of his manner. His versification is allowed to be uncommonly melodious.

With regard to narration, Homer is concise and descriptive. He paints his objects, in a manner, to our sight. His battles are admirable. We see them in all their hurry, terror, and confusion.

His similes are thrown out in the greatest abundance, and many of them are extremely beautiful. His comparisons have also great merit; but they come upon us in too quick a succession. They even serve, at times, to disturb the train of narration. His lions, bulls, eagles, and herds of sheep, recur too frequently.

Upon the subject of the Odyssey, the criticism of Longinus 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. In vigour and sublimity it is inferior to the Iliad. It has, however, great beauties, and is confessedly a very amusing poem. It possesses much greater variety than the Iliad, and exhibits very pleasing pictures of ancient manners. Instead of the ferocity which pervades the Iliad, it presents us with amiable images of hospitality and humanity. It entertains us with many a wonderful adventure, and many a landscape of nature; and there is a rich vein of morality and virtue running through every part of the poem.

It is not, however, without striking faults. Many of its scenes are evidently below the level of the epic poem. The last twelve books, after Ulysses is landed in Ithaca, are in many places tedious and languid; 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 surprise of joy which was to have been expected on such an occasion.

THE ÆNEID OF VIRGIL.

THE Æneid has all the correctness and refinement of the Augustan age. We meet no conten-

tions of heroes about a female slave, no violent scoldings, no abusive language. There reigns through the poem an uniform magnificence.

The subject of the Æneid, which is the establishment of Æneas in Italy, is extremely happy. Nothing could be more interesting to the Romans than to look back to their origin from so famous a hero. While the object was splendid itself, the traditionary history of his country opened interesting fields to the poet; and he could glance at all the future great exploits of the Romans, in its ancient and fabulous state.

As to the unity of action, it is perfectly well preserved in the Æneid. The settlement of Æneas, by the order of the gods, is constantly kept in view. The episodes are linked properly with the main subject. The nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is happily managed. The wrath of Juno, who opposes Æneas, gives rise to all his difficulties, and connects the human with the celestial operations throughout the whole poem.

There are great art and judgment in the Æneid; but it is not to be supposed that Virgil is without his faults. One great imperfection of the Æneid is, that there are almost no marked characters in it. Achates, Cloanthes, Gyas, and other Trojan heroes who accompanied Æneas into Italy, are insipid figures. Even Æneas himself is without interest. The character of Dido is the best supported in the whole Æneid.

Perhaps, in the Æneid, the management of the subject has several defects. 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 unimportant and uninteresting; and the reader is tempted to take part with Turnus against Æneas.

The principal excellency of Virgil is tenderness. His soul was full of sensibility. He must have felt himself all the affecting circumstances in the scenes

he describes; and he knew how to touch the heart by a single stroke. In an epic poem this merit is the next to sublimity. The second book of the Æneid is one of the greatest master-pieces that ever was 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 episodes of Pallus and Evander, of Nisus and Euryalus, of Lausus and Mezentius, are all superlatively fine.

In his battles, Virgil is far inferior to Homer. But in the important episode, the descent into hell, he has outdone Homer by many degrees. There is nothing in antiquity to equal the sixth book of the Æneid. The scenery, the objects, the description, are great, solemn, and sublime. With regard to their comparative merit, 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 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 is more simple; Virgil more elegant.

LUCAN'S PHARSALIA.

LUCAN is inferior to Homer and Virgil. He yet deserves attention. There is little invention in his Pharsalia; and it is conducted in too historical a manner to be strictly epic. It may be arranged, however, under the epic class, as it treats of great and heroic adventures. The subject of

the Pharsalia has sufficiently the epic dignity and grandeur; and it possesses unity of object; for it points to the triumph of Cæsar over the Roman liberty.

But though the subject of Lucan is confessedly heroic, it is not happy; and a penetrating reader may remark two defects in it. Civil wars present shocking objects to observation, and furnish melancholy pictures of human nature. These are not fit topics for the heroic muse. It was the unhappiness of Lucan's genius to delight in savage scenes, and to depict the most horrid forms of atrocious cruelty.

It is another defect of Lucan's subject, that it was too near the times in which he lived. This deprived him of the assistance he might have derived from fiction and machinery. The facts upon which he founds were too well known, and too recent, to admit of fables, and the interposition of gods.

The characters of Lucan are drawn with fire and force. But although Pompey is his hero, he has not been able to make him sufficiently interesting. He marks not Pompey by any high distinction, either for magnanimity or valour. He is always surpassed by Cæsar. Cato is a favourite character with him; and he is very careful in making him always appear with an advantageous lustre.

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, at the same time, too digressive. He indulges preposterously in geographical descriptions, and in philosophical disquisitions.

It must, notwithstanding, be allowed, that there are splendid passages in the Pharsalia; but the strength of this poet does not lie either in narration or description. His narration is often dry and harsh, and his descriptions are often overwrought. His chief merit consists in his sentiments. They

are noble, striking, glowing, and ardent. He is the most philosophical and the most patriotic poet of ancient times. He was a stoic; and the spirit of that philosophy pervades his work. He is elevated and bold; and his feelings were keen and warm.

As his vivacity and fire are great, he is apt to be carried away by them. His great defect is the want of moderation. He never knows how to stop. When he would aggrandize his objects, he is unnatural and tumid. There is a great deal of 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 must be allowed the praise of liveliness and originality. His high sentiments and his fire serve to atone for his various defects. His genius had strength, but was without tenderness or amenity.

As to Statius and Silius Italicus, they cannot be refused to belong to the epic class; but they are too inconsiderable for minute or particular criticism.

TASSO'S JERUSALEM.

THE *Jerusalem Delivered* is a strictly regular poem of the epic kind, and abounds with beauties. The subject is the recovery of Jerusalem from the Infidels, by the united powers of Christendom. The enterprise was splendid, venerable, and heroic; and an interesting contrast is exhibited between the Christians and the Saracens. Religion renders the subject august, and opens a field for sublime description and machinery. The action too lies in a country, and at a period of time sufficiently remote, to admit the intermixture of fable with history.

A rich invention is a capital quality in Tasso. His events are finely diversified. He never fatigues his reader by sameness or repetition. His scenes have an endless variety; and from camps and battles, he transports us to more pleasing objects. The work, at the same time, is artfully connected; and in the midst of variety, the author preserves, perfectly, the unity of his plan.

A great many characters enliven the poem; and these are supported with a striking propriety. Godfrey is prudent, moderate, and brave; Tancred is amorous and gallant; Rinaldo is passionate and resentful, but full of honour and heroism. Solyman is high-minded; Erminia is tender; Armida is artful and violent. In the drawing of characters, Tasso is superior to Virgil, and yields to no poet but Homer.

There is a great deal of machinery in this poet. When celestial beings interfere, Tasso is noble. But devils, enchanters, and conjurers, act too great a part throughout his poem. And, in general, the marvellous is carried to an extravagance, that spoils the interest of the work. The poet had conceived too great an admiration of the romantic spirit of knight-errantry.

In describing magnificent objects, the style of Tasso is firm and majestic. 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 full of fire, and varied in the incidents. It is chiefly by actions, characters, and descriptions, that he interests us. For he excels not in the sentimental part of his performance. He is by far inferior to Virgil in tenderness; and, in general, when he aims at sentiment, he is artificial.

It has often been objected to Tasso, that he abounds in point and conceit; but this is an error. For in his general character he is masculine. The

humour of decrying him has passed from the French critics to those of England. But their censures are founded either in ignorance or prejudice. For the *Jerusalem* is the third epic poem in the world; and Tasso takes his station after Homer and Virgil. He is eminent for the fertility of his invention, the expression of his characters, the richness of his description, and the beauty of his style.

THE LUSIAD OF CAMOENS.

THE Portuguese boast of Camoens as much as the Italians do of Tasso. The discovery of the East-Indies by Vasco de Gama is the subject of the poem of Camoens; and the enterprise is alike splendid and interesting. The adventures, distresses, and actions of Vasco, and his countrymen, are well fancied and described; and the Lusiad is conducted upon the epic plan. The incidents of the poem are magnificent; and if an allowance is made for some wildness and irregularity, there will be found in it much poetic spirit, much fancy, and much bold description. In the poem, however, there is no attempt towards painting characters; and the machinery of the Lusiad is altogether extravagant. There prevails in it an odd mixture of Christian ideas and Pagan mythology. The true deities appear to be Pagan divinities; and what is strange, Christ and the holy Virgin are made to be inferior agents. The great purpose, notwithstanding, of the Portuguese expedition, is to extend the empire of Christianity, and to extirpate Mahometanism.

In this religious undertaking, the chief protector of the Portuguese 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 hushed. All this is most preposterous; but towards the end the poet makes an apology for his mythology. His apology, however, is not satisfactory. For his salvo is, that the goddess Thetis informs Vasco, that she and the other heathen divinities are nothing more than names to describe the operations of providence.

In the Lusiad, notwithstanding, 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 its secret springs, and acquainting him that he was destined to enjoy the treasures of the East, is a fine idea. But it is in the fifth canto that the poet displays his noblest conception of this sort. Vasco is there recounting the wonders of his navigation. And when the fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, which never had been doubled before by any navigator, he relates, that there appeared to them suddenly a huge phantom, rising out of the sea in the midst of tempests and thunder, with a head that advanced to the skies, and a countenance the most terrific. This was the genius of that hitherto unknown ocean; and he menaced them, in a voice of thunder, not to invade those undisturbed seas, and foretelling the calamities that were to befal them, retired from their view. This is a very solemn and striking piece of machinery.

THE TELEMACHUS OF FENELON.

IT would be unpardonable, in a review of epic poets, to forget the amiable Fenelon. His work,

though in prose, is a poem; and the plan, in general, is well contrived, having epic grandeur, and unity of action. He employs the ancient mythology, and excels in its application. There is great richness, as well as beauty, in his descriptions. To soft and calm scenes his genius is more peculiarly suited. He delights in painting the incidents of pastoral life, the pleasures of virtue, and the prosperity and tranquillity of peace.

His first six 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 critics have refused to rank *The Telemachus* among epic poems. This delicacy arises from the minute details it exhibits of virtuous policy, and from the discourses of Mentor, which recur too frequently, and in which there is doubtless too much of a common-place morality. To these peculiarities, however, the author was led from the design with which he wrote, of forming a young prince to the cares and duties of a virtuous monarch.

Several poets of the epic class have distinguished themselves by describing a descent into hell; and in all of them there is a diversity. It is even curious to observe, that from examining the notions they convey of an invisible world, we may perceive, with ease, the improvements which the progress of refinement had gradually produced in the opinions of men, with regard to a future state of rewards and punishments. In Homer, the descent of Ulysses into hell is indistinct and dreary. The scene is in the country of the Cimmerians, who inhabit a region covered with clouds and darkness; and when the dead appear, we hardly know

whether Ulysses is above or below ground. The ghosts too, even of the heroes, appear to be sad and dissatisfied.

In Virgil, the descent into hell discovers greater refinement, and indicates a higher advancement in philosophy. The objects are distinct, awful, and grand. There is a fine discrimination of the separate mansions of the good and the bad spirits. Fenelon, in his turn, improves upon Virgil. The visit of Telemachus to the shades is in a higher style of philosophy. He refines the ancient philosophy by his knowledge of the true religion, and that beautiful enthusiasm for which he is so remarkable. His relation of the happiness of the just is an admirable effort in the mystic strain.

THE HENRIADE OF VOLTAIRE.

THE Henriade is, without doubt, a regular epic poem. To deny genius to Voltaire would be absurd; and in the present work, accordingly, he discovers, in several places, that boldness of conception, that vivacity, and that liveliness of expression, for which he has been so much distinguished. A few of his comparisons are new, and remarkably happy. But perhaps the Henriade is not the master-piece of this writer. In the tragic line he has certainly been more successful than in the epic. It may be observed too, that French versification is by no means suited to epic composition. Its want of elevation is against it, as well as its being fettered with rhyme. There is thence not only a feebleness in the Henriade, but even a prosaic flatness. The poem, of consequence, languishes; and the imagination of the reader is not animated with any of that spirit and interest, which

ought to be inspired by a sublime and spirited performance of the epic kind.

The triumph of Henry IV. over the arms of the League is the subject of the Henriade. But the action of the poem includes, properly, only the siege of Paris. It is sufficiently epic; and the poem, in general, is conducted according to the critical rules. But it has great defects. It is founded on civil wars; and it presents to the mind the odious objects of assassinations. The period which it contains is also too recent, and too much within the circle of well-known incidents. The author has farther erred, by mixing fiction improperly with truth. For example, he makes Henry IV. to travel into England, and to hold an interview with Queen Elizabeth. Now Henry never saw England, and never conversed with Elizabeth; and such unnatural and ill-sorted fables are so wild, that they shock every intelligent reader.

A great deal of machinery is employed by Voltaire, for the purpose of embellishing his poem. But it is remarkable, that his machinery is of the worst kind. It consists of allegorical beings. Discord, Cunning, and Love, are with him personages and actors. This is against rational criticism. It is possible to go along with the belief of ghosts, angels, and devils; but it should be considered, that allegorical beings are nothing better than representations of human passions and dispositions; and they ought not to have a place as actors in any poem.

It is, notwithstanding, to be remarked, to the honour of Voltaire, that the machinery of Saint Louis, which he also employs, is possessed of a real dignity. The prospect of the invisible world, which St. Louis gives to Henry in a dream, is a very fine passage in the Henriade. The introduction, by Death, of the souls of the dead in succession before God, and the palace of the Destinies, are also passages which are striking and magnificent.

Notwithstanding the episodes of Voltaire, his narration is by far too general. At the same time, the events are too much crowded together. The strain of sentiment, however, which pervades the Henriade, is noble. Religion appears always with the greatest lustre; and the poem has that spirit of humanity and toleration, which is the constant distinction of men who rise far above the level of the species.

MILTON'S PARADISE LOST.

MILTON runs a new and very extraordinary career. In Paradise Lost, he introduces his reader, at once, into an invisible world, and surrounds him with celestial and infernal beings. Angels and devils are not his machinery, but his actors. As the natural course of his events is marvellous, doubts may arise, whether his poem be strictly an epic composition. But whether it be so or not, it is certainly a high effort of poetical genius; and in majesty and sublimity is equal to any performance of ancient or modern times.

The subject of his poem led Milton into difficult ground. If his matter had been more human, and less theological; if his occurrences had been connected with real life; and if he had afforded a greater display of the characters and passions of men, his poem, to the generality of readers, would have been more alluring. His subject, however, was certainly suited, in a peculiar manner, to the daring sublimity of his genius. As he alone, perhaps, was fitted for his subject, so he has shown, in the conduct of it, a wonderful stretch of imagination and invention. From a few hints afforded by the sacred Scriptures, he has stupendously raised a regular structure, and filled his poem with a variety of incidents. No doubt, he is at times dry and

harsh; and too often the metaphysician and the divine. But in the general flow of his narration he is engaging, elevated, and affecting. His objects are changed with art; his scene is now in heaven, and now on earth; and amidst this variety he supports the unity of his plan. Still and calm scenes are exhibited in the employments of Adam and Eve when in Paradise; and there are busy scenes, and great actions, in the enterprises of Satan, and the wars of the Angels. The amiable innocence of our first parents, and the proud ambition of Satan, afford a contrast throughout the whole poem, which gives it an uncommon charm. But perhaps the conclusion is too tragic for epic composition.

In the Paradise Lost there is no great display of characters; but the personages which appear are properly supported. Satan is a figure particularly striking; and Milton has artfully given him a mixed character, not altogether void of some good qualities. He is brave; and to his own troops he is faithful. He is impious, but not without remorse. He even feels a sentiment of compassion for our first parents, and appeals to the necessity of his situation, as an apology for his machinations against them. His malice is not full and unbounden; and while he is resentful, he is ambitious. The characters of Beelzebub, Moloch, and Belial, are well painted. The good angels, though dignified, have too much uniformity. They have their distinctions, however, and it is impossible not to remark the mild condescension of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel. The attempt of the poet to describe God Almighty himself was too bold, and accordingly is unsuccessful. Our first parents are finely portrayed. Yet, perhaps, Adam is represented as too knowing and refined for his situation. Eve is hit off more happily: her gentleness, modesty, and frailty, are expressively characteristic of the female character.

The great strength of Milton consists in sub-

limity. Here, perhaps, he is superior to every poet. But it is to be observed, that his sublimity is of a peculiar sort. It differs from that of Homer, which is always accompanied with impetuosity and fire. The sublime of Milton is a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms us and hurries us along. By Milton we are fixed in a state of elevation and astonishment. The sublime of the former is to be found, most commonly, in his description of actions; that of the latter, in the representation of stupendous and wonderful objects.

But while Milton must be allowed to be highly sublime, it is likewise true, that 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 mark a fertile imagination; and his similes have uncommon happiness. His faults, for what writer is without them, refer chiefly to his learned allusions, 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 has great force and majesty. There may be found, indeed, prosaic lines in his poem; but these are easily pardoned in a long work, where the poetry is in general so smooth, so varied, and so flowing.

In the Paradise Lost, amidst beauties of every kind, it is not surprising to meet inequalities. No high genius was ever uniformly correct. Theology and metaphysics appear too abundantly in Milton; his words are often technical; and he is too affectedly ostentatious of his learning. These faults are a great blemish to his work; but in extenuation of them, it is to be observed, that they are to be imputed to the pedantry of his age.

DRAMATIC POETRY.

TRAGEDY.

IN all civilised nations, dramatic poetry has been a favourite amusement; and it divides itself into the two forms of tragedy and comedy. Of the two, tragedy is the most dignified; as great and serious objects interest more than little and ludicrous ones. The one has a reference to the passions, the virtues, the crimes, and the sufferings of mankind; the other rests on their humours, follies, and pleasures. Of the latter the instrument is ridicule.

Tragedy is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. It does not exhibit characters by description or narration: it sets the personages before us, and makes them act and speak with propriety. This species of writing requires, of consequence, a deep knowledge of the human heart; and when happily executed, it has a commanding power in raising the strongest emotions.

In its strain and spirit, tragedy is favourable to the promotion of virtue. It is chiefly by exciting virtuous emotions that it operates. Characters of honour claim our respect and approbation; and to raise indignation, we must paint a person in the odious colours of depravity and vice. Virtuous men, indeed, are often represented by the tragic poet as unfortunate; for this happens in nature: but he never fails to engage our hearts in their behalf; and in the end he conducts them to triumph and prosperity. Upon the same principle, if bad men are represented as successful, they are yet finally conducted to punishment. It may, therefore, be concluded, that tragedies are moral compositions; and that pious men have often preposterously exclaimed against them.

It is affirmed by Aristotle, that the design of

tragedy is to purge our passions by the 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; and if a writer excites our pity for the afflicted, inspires us with becoming sentiments on beholding the vicissitudes of life, and stimulates us to avoid the misfortune of others by exhibiting their errors, he has attained all the moral purposes of the tragic muse.

In the composition of a tragedy, it is necessary to have an interesting story upon which to build; and in the conduct of the piece, nature and probability are chiefly to be consulted. For the end of tragedy is not so much to elevate the imagination, as to affect the heart. This principle, which is founded in the clearest reason, excludes from tragedy all machinery, and all fabulous interventions whatsoever. Ghosts alone, from their foundation in popular belief, have maintained their place upon the stage; but the use of them is not to be commended, and must be managed with great art.

To support the impression of probability, the story of a tragedy, according to some critics, should never be a pure fiction, but ought to be built on real history. This, however, is surely carrying the matter too far: for a fictitious tale, if properly conducted, will melt the heart as much as any real history. It is sufficient that nature and probability are not wounded; and thus it is not objected to the tragic poet, that he mixes many a fictitious circumstance with real and well-known facts. The great majority of readers never think of separating the historical from the fabulous. They are only attentive to, and touched by, the events that resemble nature. Accordingly, the most affecting tragedies are entirely fictitious in their subject. Such are the Zaire and Alzire of Voltaire, the Fair Penitent, and Douglas.

In its origin, tragedy was very rude and imper-

fect. Among the Greeks, it was 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 the greater variety, Thespis, who flourished above five hundred years before the Christian æra, contrived, that between the songs there should be a recitation in verse; and Æschylus, who lived fifty years after him, introduced a dialogue between two persons, or actors, comprehending some interesting story, and placed them upon a stage adorned with scenery. The drama began now to have 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 dramatic dialogue, which was only an addition to it, grew to be the principal part of the entertainment. The chorus losing its dignity, came to be accounted only an accessory in tragedy. At length, in modern tragedy, it disappeared altogether; and its absence from the stage, in modern times, is the chief distinction between our drama and that of the ancients.

With regard to the chorus, it must be allowed, that it gave a splendour to the stage; and that it was a vehicle for moral lessons, and high poetic flights. But, on the other hand, it was unnatural, and took away from the interest of the piece. It removed the representation from the resemblance of life. It has, accordingly, been excluded, with propriety, from the stage.

In the conduct of a drama, the unities of action, place, and time, have been considered as very capital circumstances, and it is proper to treat of them.

The unity of action is undoubtedly very important. It refers to the relation which all the incidents introduced bear to some design or effect, so as to combine them naturally into a whole or totality.

This unity of subject is expressly essential to tragedy. For a multiplicity of plots, by distracting the attention, prevent the passions from rising to any height. Hence the absurdity of two independent actions in the same play. There may, indeed, be under-plots; but the poet should be careful to make these subservient to the main action. It is the business of these to contribute to the bringing forward the catastrophe of the play.

Of the defect of a separate and independent intrigue, which has no connexion with the real object of the piece, there is a clear example in the Cato of Addison. Cato is, no doubt, a noble personage, and the author supports his character with success. But all the love-scenes in the play have no connexion with the principal action. The passion of Cato's sons for Lucia, and of Juba for Cato's daughter, are merely episodiacal. They break the unity of the subject; and join, most unseasonably, the fopperies of gallantry with high sentiments of patriotism and public virtue.

The unity of action must not, however, be confounded with the simplicity of the plot. The plot is simple, when a small number of incidents are introduced into it. With respect to plots, the ancients were more simple than the moderns. The Greek tragedies appear, indeed, to be even too naked, and destitute of interesting events. The moderns admit of a greater extent of incidents; and this variety is certainly an improvement, as it renders the entertainment not only more instructive, but more animated. It may, however, be carried too far; for an overcharge of action and intrigue produce perplexity and embarrassment. Of this the Mourning Bride of Congreve is an example. Its events are too many, and too rapidly exhibited. The business of the play is too complex; and the catastrophe is intricate and artificial.

But it is not only in the general construction of the fable, that the unity of action is to be attended

to. It must be studied in all the acts and scenes of the play. By an arbitrary division, there are five acts in every play. This is founded on the authority of Horace,

Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu
Fabula.

There is nothing, however, in nature or reason for 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 it will not be easily overthrown.

A clear exposition of the subject should appear in the first act. It should introduce the personages to the acquaintance of the spectator, and should excite curiosity. During the second, third, and fourth acts, the plot should advance and thicken. The passions should be kept perpetually awake. There should be no scenes of idle conversation, or vain declamation. The suspense and agitation of the spectator should be excited more and more. Such is the great excellency of Shakspeare. Sentiment and passion, pity and terror, should reign and pervade every tragedy.

In the fifth act, which is the seat of the catastrophe, the author should display his fullest art and genius. The unravelling of the plot should be brought about by natural and probable means. It should be simple, depend on a few events, and include a few persons. A passionate sensibility languishes, when divided among a number of objects. It is only strong and vehement when directed to a few. In the catastrophe, every thing should be warm and glowing; and the poet should be simple, serious, and pathetic.

To the catastrophe of a tragedy, it is not necessary that it should terminate unfortunately. It is sufficient that distress, agitation, and tender emotions are raised, in the course of the play. Accord-

ingly, Voltaire's finest tragedies have a happy conclusion. But with regard to the spirit of English tragedy, it leans more to the other side.

It is curious to inquire, how it should happen that the emotions of sorrow in tragedy should afford a pleasing gratification to the mind. It seems to be the constitution of our nature, that all the social passions should be attended with pleasure. Hence there is nothing more agreeable than love and friendship. Pity, for wise ends, is appointed to be a strong instinct; and it is an affection which is necessarily accompanied with some distress, on account of the sympathy with the sufferers which it involves. The heart, at the same moment, is warmed with kindness, and afflicted with distress. Yet, upon the whole, the condition or state of the mind is agreeable. We are pleased with ourselves, not only for our benevolence, but for our sensibility. Hence the foundation of the charm of tragedy. The pleasure of tragedy is also heightened by the recollection that the distress is not real; and by the power of action and sentiment, poetry and language.

After treating of the acts of a play, it is proper to attend to the scenes. The entrance of a new person upon the stage constitutes what is called a new scene. These scenes, or successive conversations, should be connected closely together; and a great deal of the art of dramatic composition consists in the management of them. There are, upon this subject, two rules which deserve consideration. 1. During the course of one act, the stage should never be left empty for one moment; for this would make a gap in the representation; and whenever the stage is evacuated, the act is closed. This rule is uniformly preserved by the French poets; but it has been much neglected by the English tragedians. 2. The other rule is, that no person should come upon the stage, or leave it, without a reason appearing for the one and the other. If this rule is neglected, the dra-

matis personæ are little better than so many puppets; and the nature of dramatic writing is contradicted and wounded. For the drama professes an imitation of real transactions.

To the unity of action, the critics have added the unities of time and place. It is required, by the unity of place, that the scene should never be shifted; but that the action of the play should continue in the same place where it had begun. It is required, by the unity of time, that the time of the action be no longer than the time that is allowed for the representation of the play. Aristotle, however, is not so severe in this particular, and permits the action to comprehend the whole time of one day. These rules are intended to bring the imitation as close as possible to reality.

Among the Greeks there was no division of acts. In modern times, the practice has prevailed of suspending the spectacle for some little time between the acts. This practice gives a latitude to the imagination, and renders the strict confinement to time and place less necessary. Upon this account, therefore, too strict an adherence to these unities should not be preferred to high beauties of execution, nor to the introduction of pathetic scenes. But transgressions of these unities, though they may be often advantageous, ought not to be too wild and violent. The hurrying the spectator from one distant city to another, and the making several weeks and months pass during the representation, would shock the imagination too much, and could not be relished.

Having examined dramatic action, it is now fit to attend to the characters most proper to be exhibited in tragedy. Many critics affirm, that the nature of tragedy demands that the principal personages should be constantly of illustrious character, and of high or princely ranks. For they affirm, that the sufferings of such persons seize the heart most forcibly. But this is but a specious

way of reasoning: for the distresses and agitations of private life are affecting in a high degree. Desdemona, Monimia, and Belvidera, interest us as much as if they had been queens or princesses. It is sufficient, that in tragedy there be nothing degrading or mean in the personages exhibited. Illustrious rank may give greater splendour to the spectacle; but it is the tale itself, and the art of the poet, that alone can give its full influence to the piece.

In describing the characters of the persons represented, 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 the administration of Providence. Pity should be raised for the virtuous in distress; and the author should studiously beware of making such exhibitions of life as would render virtue an object of aversion.

Perfect unmixed characters, either of good or ill men, are not, in the opinion of Aristotle, the fittest for tragedy: for the distresses of the former, as unmerited, hurt us; and the afflictions of the latter excite no compassion. Mixed characters, like those we meet with in the world, are the best field for displaying, without any bad consequence to morals, the vicissitudes of life. They interest us the most deeply; and while all their distresses are pathetic, they are the more instructive, when their misfortunes are represented as springing out of their own passions, or as originating in some weakness incident to human nature.

The Greek tragedies are too 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 have engaged the modern stage, love has had the greatest triumph. To the ancient theatre, love was, in a manner, unknown. This proceeded from the national man-

ners of the Greeks, which encouraged a greater separation of the sexes than takes place in modern times. Neither did female actors appear upon the ancient stage; a circumstance which operated against the introduction of love stories. It is clear, however, that no solid reason can be assigned for the predominancy of love upon the stage; and it is, doubtless, most improper, that the limits of tragedy should be confined. Racine in the Athalie, Voltaire in the Merope, and Home in Douglas, have afforded sufficient proofs that the drama, without any assistance from love, may produce the highest effects upon the mind.

Beside the arrangement of his subject, and the conduct of his personages, the tragic poet must attend to the propriety of his sentiments. These must correspond with the persons who are represented, and with the situations in which they are placed. This rule is so obvious, that it requires not to be insisted upon; and it is chiefly in the pathetic parts that the difficulty of following it is the greatest. We go to a tragedy in order to be moved and agitated; and if the poet cannot reach the heart, he can have no tragic merit; and we must leave his play not only with coldness, but under an uneasy disappointment.

To paint and to excite passion are the prerogatives of genius. They require not only high sensibility, but the art of entering deeply into situations and characters. It is here that the candidates for the drama are the least successful. A man under high passion makes known his feelings in the glowing language of sensibility. He does not coolly describe what his feelings are; yet it is to this sort of description that tragic poets have recourse, when they are unable to attain the native language of passion. Thus it is even in Addison's Cato, when Lucia having confessed to Portius her love for him, swears that she will never marry him: for Portius,

instead of giving way to the language of grief and astonishment, describes only his feelings.

Fix'd in astonishment, I gaze upon thee,
Like one just blasted by a stroke from heav'n,
Who pants for breath, and stiffens yet alive
In dreadful looks; a monument of wrath.

These lines might have proceeded from a by-stander, or an indifferent person, but are altogether improper in the mouth of Portius. Similar to this descriptive language, are the unnatural and forced thoughts which tragic poets sometimes employ to exaggerate the feelings of persons, whom they wish to describe under high agitation. Thus when Jane Shore, in meeting with her husband in her distress, and on 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 possess a constant supply of tears, the poet strains his fancy, and spurs up his genius to be absurd.

The language of real passion is always plain and simple. It abounds, indeed, in figures; but these express a disturbed and impetuous state of mind, and are not for mere parade and embellishment. The thoughts suggested by passion are natural and obvious, and not exaggerations of refinement, subtilty, and wit. Passion neither reasons, nor speculates, nor declaims. The language is short, broken, and interrupted. The French tragedians deal too much in refinement and declamations. The Greek tragedians adhere most to nature: they are natural and pathetic. This too is the great excellency of Shakspeare. He exhibits the true language of nature and passion.

As to moral sentiments and reflections, they ought not to recur too frequently in tragedy. When unseasonably used, they lose their effect, and convey an air of pedantry. When introduced with propriety, they have an alluring dignity. Cardinal

Wolsey's soliloquy on his fall is a fine instauce of the felicity with which they may be employed. There is also a high moral turn of thought in many places of Addison's Cato.

The style and versification of tragedy should be free, easy, and various; and the English blank verse appears to be peculiarly suited to this species of composition. It is capable of great majesty, and may yet descend to the familiar: it admits of a happy variety of cadence, and is free from the monotony of rhyme. Of the French tragedics, it is a great misfortune that they are constantly in rhyme: for it fetters the freedom of the tragic dialogue, debases it with languor, and is fatal to the power of passion.

As to the splendid comparisons in vogue, and to the strings of couplets with which it was, some time ago, the fashion to conclude the acts of a tragedy, and even the more interesting scenes, they are now laid aside; and they are to be regarded not only as childish ornaments, but as disgusting barbarisms.

GREEK TRAGEDY.

WE have formerly observed, that in the Greek tragedy there was much simplicity. The plot was natural and unencumbered; the incidents few; and the conduct very exact, with respect to the unities of action, time, and place. Machinery and the intervention of the gods were employed; and what was preposterous, the final unravelling was not unfrequently made to turn upon them. Love, if one or two instances are excepted, was never admitted into the tragedy of the Greeks. A vein of morality and religion is made to run through it; but they employed less than the moderns the combat

of the passions. For their plots they were indebted to the ancient hereditary stories of their own nation.

Æschylus, who is the father of the Greek tragedy, exhibits both the beauties and defects of an early original writer. He has boldness and animation, but is often difficult and obscure. His style is highly metaphorical, and often tumid and harsh. His ideas are martial; and he possesses more force than tenderness. He also delights in the marvellous.

The most masterly of the Greek tragedians is Sophocles. He is the most correct in the management of his subjects, and the most just and sublime in his sentiments. In descriptive talents he is also eminent. Euripides is accounted more tender than Sophocles; and in moral sentiments he is more abundant. But he is less careful in the conduct of his plays; his expositions of his subjects are less artful; and the songs of his chorus, though finely poetic, are less connected with the principal action. Both of them, however, have high merit as tragic poets. Their style is beautiful; and their sentiments, for the most part, just. They speak with the tones of nature; and though simple, they are touching and interesting.

The 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 with instrumental music; and the dialogue part had a modulation of its own, and might be set to notes. It has also been thought that sometimes, on the Roman stage, the pronouncing and gesticulating parts were divided, and performed by different actors. In tragedy, the actors 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; a contrivance

this, which was surely very imperfect. In the dramatic spectacles, notwithstanding, of Greece and Rome, the attention given to their exhibition and magnificence far exceeded the attempts of modern ages.

FRENCH TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY has appeared with great lustre in France; and the principal dramatic writers of this nation are Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire. It must be acknowledged that they have improved upon antiquity, and are more interesting than the old tragedians, from their exhibition of more incidents, greater variety of passions, and the fuller display of characters. Like the ancients, they excel in regularity of conduct, and their style is poetical and elegant. But, perhaps, to an English taste they want strength and passion, and are too declamatory and too refined. They seem afraid of being too tragic; and it was the opinion of Voltaire, that there is necessary to the perfection of tragedy the union of the English vehemence and action with the correctness and decorum of the French theatre.

Corneille, who raised to eminence the French tragedy, unites majesty of sentiment and a fruitful imagination. His genius was rich, but had rather a turn to the epic than the tragic. He is magnificent and splendid, rather than touching and tender. He is too full of declamation, and often too extravagant. His productions are numerous; and the most celebrated of his dramas are the Cinna, the Cid, Horace, and Polyeucte.

In the tragic line, Racine is superior to Corneille. He possesses not, indeed, the copiousness of Corneille, but he is free from his bombast, and is re-

markable for tenderness. His Phædra, his Athalie, and his Mithridate, are a great honour to the French stage. The beauty of his language and versification is uncommon, and he has managed his rhymes with a superior advantage. Voltaire has repeatedly observed, that the Athalie of Racine is the "chef d'œuvre" of the French theatre. It is a sacred drama, and owes much to the majesty of religion. Perhaps, however, it is less interesting than the Andromaque. He is also infinitely fortunate in his Phædra.

Voltaire is not inferior to his predecessors in the drama; and there is one circumstance in which he has far outdone them. This is in the delicacy and interest of his situations. Here he is peculiarly great. Like his predecessors, however, he is sometimes deficient in force, and sometimes too declamatory. His characters, notwithstanding, are depicted with spirit, his events strike, and his sentiments abound in animation. Zaire, Merope, Alzire, and the Orphan of China, are most excellent tragedies.

ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

IT has often been remarked of tragedy in Great Britain, that it is more ardent than that of France, but more irregular and incorrect. It therefore has excelled in what is the soul of tragedy. For the passionate and the pathetic must be allowed to be the chief excellence of the tragic muse.

Shakspeare is the first of all the English dramatists. In extent and force of genius he is unrivalled. But at the same time it must be owned, that his genius is sometimes wild, that his taste is not always chaste, and that he was too little assisted by art and knowledge. Criticism has been

lavished with the utmost prodigality in commentaries upon him; yet it is undecided whether his beauties or defects are the greatest. There are in his writings scenes that are admirable, and passages that are superlatively touching; but there is not one of his plays which can be pronounced to be a good one. His irregularities are extreme, his mixtures of the serious and the comic are grotesque, and he has often a disgusting play of words, harsh expressions, and a certain obscure bombast. These faults are, however, extenuated or redeemed by two of the greatest perfections that a tragic poet can display, by lively and diversified paintings of character, and by strong and happy expressions of passion. Upon these pillars 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 has another high advantage. He has created for himself a world of preternatural beings. His witches and ghosts, fairies and spirits, are so awful, mysterious, and peculiar, that they strongly affect the imagination. Of the dramas of this singular writer, the greatest are his Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his historical plays, they are not tragedies or comedies, but a species of dramatic entertainment, in which he describes the personages, the events, and the manners of the times of which he treats.

After Shakspeare there are few dramatic writers whose whole works are entitled to high praise. There are several tragedies, however, which have great value. Lee's Theodosius has warmth and tenderness, but is somewhat romantic in the plan, and extravagant in the sentiments. Otway is excellent in the Orphan and Venice Preserved. Perhaps, however, he is too tragic in these pieces. He had genius and strong passions, but is disposed to be too indelicate.

The tragedies of Rowe abound in morality and

in elevated sentiments. His poetry is good, and his language is elegant. He is, notwithstanding, cold, and less tragic than flowery. His best dramas are Jane Shore and the Fair Penitent, which excel in the tender and pathetic.

In the Revenge of Dr. Young there are fire and genius; but it is deficient in tenderness, and exhibits too strong a conflict of direful passions. In the Mourning Bride of Congreve there are fine situations, and a great flow of poetry. The tragedies of Thomson are dull and formal, from too inordinate an intermixture of stiff morality. His Tancred and Sigismunda is by far his best piece.

A Greek tragedy may be denominated a simple relation of an interesting incident. A French tragedy is a succession of refined conversations. In an English tragedy vehemence predominates, and it may be described to be a representation of the combat of strong passions.

COMEDY.

THE strain and scope of comedy discriminate it sufficiently from tragedy. The greater passions are the province of the latter; and the instrument of the former is ridicule. Follies and vices, and whatever in the human character is the object of censure and impropriety, are the objects of the comic muse. It is a satirical exhibition, and includes an idea that is useful and moral. It is commendable, by this species of composition, to correct and to punish the manners of men. There are many vices which are more successfully exploded by ridicule than by serious argumentation. It is possible, however, to employ ridicule improperly, and by its operation to do mischief instead of good. For it is not right to consider it as the

proper test of truth; and licentious writers of the comic sort may cast a ridicule on objects which are not deserving of it. But this is not the fault of comedy, but of the turn and genius of certain individuals. In the management of loose men, comedy may corrupt; but in that of well-intentioned writers it is a gay entertainment, and may lead to reformation and the advancement of virtue.

The rules of dramatic action, that are prescribed for tragedy, belong also to comedy. The comic writer must also observe the unities of action, time, and place. It is ever requisite to attend to nature and probability. The imitation of manners ought even to be 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 or country; but it is otherwise in comedy. For the decorums of behaviour, and the nice discriminations of character, which are the objects of comedy, are not to be understood but by the natives of the country where the author resides. We may weep for the heroes of Greece and Rome, but we can only be touched with the ridicule of the manners and characters that come under our own observation. The scene, therefore, of comedy should constantly be laid in the author's own country, and in his own age. The comic poet catches the manners living as they rise.

It is indeed true that Plautus and Terence did not adopt this rule. The scene of their comedies is laid in Greece, and they adopted the Greek laws and customs. It is to be considered, however, that comedy was in their age a new entertainment; and that they were contented with the praise of being translators from Menander, and other comic writers of Greece. In posterior times, too, the Romans had the "Comœdia Togata," or what was established on their own manners, as well as the

"Comœdia Palliata," which was founded on those of the Greeks.

There are two kinds of comedy, that of character and that of intrigue. In the last, the plot 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. It is in comedies of character that the French abound most. Such are the capital pieces of Moliere, the Avare, Misanthrope, and Tartuffe. It is to comedies of intrigue that the English have leaned most. Such are the plays of Congreve; and in general there are more story and action on the English than on the French theatre.

The perfection of comedy is, perhaps, to be found in the mixture of these two kinds of entertainments. A mere conversation, without an interesting story, is insipid. There should ever be so much of intrigue as to give a foundation for wishes and fears. The incidents should be striking, and in nature, and should afford a full 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 comic writers to carry them much beyond real life; and indeed it is very difficult to hit the precise point where wit ends and buffoonery commences. The comedian must exaggerate; but good sense must teach him where to set bounds to his satire and ridicule. Plautus, for instance, is extravagant, when his Miser, after examining the right and the left hands of the person whom he suspects of having purloined his casket, cries out, "*ostende etiam tertiam.*"

There ought, in comedy, to be a clear distinction in characters. The contrast of characters, however, by their introduction in pairs, and by opposites, is too theatrical and affected. It is the

perfection of art to conceal art. The masterly discrimination of characters is by the use of such shades of diversity as are commonly found in society; and it is obvious that strong oppositions are seldom brought into actual contrast in any of the circumstances of life.

As to the style of comedy, it ought to be elegant, lively, and pure, and should generally imitate the tone of polite conversation. It should not descend into gross expressions. Rhyme is not suitable to comic composition. For what has poetry to do with the conversations of men in common life? The flow of the dialogue should be easy without pertness, and genteel without flippancy. The wit should never be studied or unseasonable.

ANCIENT COMEDY.

THE comedy of the ancients was an avowed satire against particular persons, who were brought upon the stage by name. Such were the plays of Aristophanes; and compositions of so singular a nature illustrate well the turbulent licentiousness of Athens. The most illustrious personages, generals and magistrates, were then exposed to the unrestrained scope of the comic muse. Vivacity, satire, and buffoonery, are the characteristics of Aristophanes. His strength and genius are not to be doubted; but his performances do not surely afford any high idea of the Attic taste of wit in his age. His ridicule is pushed to extremity; his wit is farcical; his personal raillery is cruel and biting; and his obscenity is intolerable.

After the age of Aristophanes, the laws prohibited the liberty of attacking persons by name on the stage. The middle comedy took its rise. Living characters were still assailed, but under fictitious

names. Of these pieces there are no remains. They were succeeded by the new comedy. It was then, as it is now, the business of the stage to exhibit manners and characters, but not those of particular men. The author the most celebrated of this kind among the Greeks was Menander; but his writings have perished.

Of the new comedy of the ancients, the only examples which exist 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 dramatic art in his time. He has too much low wit and scurrility; and is by far too quaint, and too full of conceit. He has variety, notwithstanding, and force; and his characters are well marked, though somewhat coarse. Dryden and Moliere have done him the honour to imitate him.

Terence is polished, delicate, and elegant. Nothing can be more pure and graceful than his latinity. Correctness and decency reign in his dialogue; and his relations have a picturesque and beautiful simplicity. The morality he inculcates cannot be objected to; his situations are interesting; and many of his sentiments find their way to the heart. He may be considered as the founder of the serious comedy. In sprightliness and in strength he is deficient. There is a sameness and uniformity in his characters and plots; and he is said to have been inferior to Menander, whom he copied.

SPANISH COMEDY.

THE earliest object in modern comedy is the Spanish theatre. The chief comedians of Spain are Lopez de Vega, Guillin, and Calderon. The first,

who is the most famous of them, was the author of not less than a thousand plays; and was infinitely more irregular than our Shakspeare. He disregarded, altogether, the three unities, and every established rule of dramatic composition. In one play he is not afraid to include whole years, and even the life of a man. His scene in one act is in Spain; in another in Italy; and in a third in Africa. His dramas are chiefly historical; and are a mixture of heroic speeches, serious incidents, war, ridicule, and buffoonery. He jumbles together christianity, paganism, virtues, vices, angels, and gods. Notwithstanding his faults, he was in possession of genius, and of 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 the dramatic writers of other nations have drawn many advantages. He was conscious himself of his extreme irregularities, and apologised for them, from the want of taste of his countrymen.

FRENCH COMEDY.

THE comic theatre of France is allowed to be correct, chaste, and decent. Regnard, Dufresnoy, Dancourt, and Marieux, are comic writers of considerable merit: but the author of this class in whom the French glory most is Moliere. According to the judgment of the French critics, he has nearly reached the summit of perfection in his art. Nor, perhaps, is their decision fallacious. Moliere is the satirist only of vice and folly. His characters were peculiar to his own times; and, in general, his ridicule is exact. His comic powers were very great; and there is an innocence in his pleasantry. His Misanthrope and Tartuffe are in verse,

and constitute a kind of dignified comedy, in a style politely satirical. In his prose comedies there is a profusion of ridicule; but the poet never gives the alarm to modesty, or is desirous to cast a contempt against virtue. These are great perfections; but it is to be allowed that they are mingled with considerable defects. The unravelling of his plots is by no means happy: in this he is often improbable, and without preparation. Perhaps his attention to the full exhibition of characters took away from his care of the conduct of the intrigue. In his verse comedies, he does not always afford a complete interest; and his speeches run not unfrequently into prolixity. In his pieces in prose he is often too farcical. But, upon the whole, it may be affirmed, that few writers ever attained so perfectly the true end of comedy. With regard to grave comedy, it is understood that his Tartuffe is his chief production; and with respect to gay comedy, the preference has been given to his Avare.

ENGLISH COMEDY.

THE English comic theatre excites high expectations. A variety of original characters, and bold strokes of wit and humour, belong to it. It has been pronounced that humour is, in some degree, peculiar to England. The freedom of our government, and the unrestrained liberty of manners which prevail, tend to the production of singularity. In France, the influence of a despotic court spreads a uniformity over the nation. Comedy, accordingly, has a freer vein in England than in France. But it is to be regretted, that the comic spirit of Britain is too often disgraced by indecency and licentiousness.

It is remarkable, however, that the first age of English comedy was free from this spirit. Shakspeare and Ben Jouson have no immoral tendency in their plays. The comedies of the former have a high invention, but are irregular in their conduct. They are singularly rich in characters and manners; but they descend too often to please the mob. Jonson is more regular, but more pedantic: he yet was possessed of dramatic genius. There are much fancy, and many fine passages, in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. But, in general, they are deformed with romantic improbabilities, with unnatural characters, and with coarse allusions.

The changes which have taken place in manners have rendered the old comedies rather obsolete. For it is the exhibition of prevailing characters and modes that gives its charm to comedy. Thus Plautus was antiquated to the Romans in the days of Augustus. But to the great honour of Shakspeare, it is observable, that his Falstaff is still admired, and that his Merry Wives of Windsor may yet be read with real pleasure.

After the restoration of Charles II. the licentiousness which polluted the court and the nation seized upon comedy. The rake became the predominant character. A ridicule was thrown upon chastity and sobriety. Indeed, in the end of the piece, the rake becomes a sober man; but throughout the performance he was a fine gentleman, and exhibits a picture of the pleasurable enjoyment of life. This spirit of comedy had the worst effects in forming the youth of both sexes; and it continued down to the days of George II.

In the comedies of Dryden there are many strokes of genius; but he is frequently hasty and careless. As his object was to please, he followed the current of the times, and gave into a vein of corruption and licentiousness. His want of decency was at times so gross as to occasion the prohibition of his pieces.

After Dryden, flourished Cibber, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Congreve. Cibber has sprightliness, and a pert vivacity; but is forced and unnatural in his incidents. 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 it is tolerably moral in its conduct. The latter, in which Cibber was assisted by Vanbrugh, is perhaps the best comedy in the English language. It may yet be objected to it, 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, characterise Sir John Vanbrugh; but he is the most indelicate and immoral of all our comedians. Congreve possessed, undoubtedly, a happy genius. He is witty and sparkling, and attentive to character and action. Indeed it may be said, that he overflows with wit. It is often introduced without propriety; and, in general, it is too pointed and apparent for well-bred conversation. Farquhar is a light and gay writer; ess correct than Congreve, and less brilliant; but more easy, and nearer to real life. Like Congreve too, he is foully licentious; and modesty must turn from them with abhorrence. The French boast, with justice, of the superior decency of their stage, and speak of the English theatre with astonishment. Their philosophical writers have even ascribed the profligate manners of London to the indelicacy and corruption of the English comedy.

Of late years, a reformation has gradually taken place in English comedy. Our writers of comedy now appear ashamed of the indecency of their predecessors. They may be inferior to Farquhar and Congreve in spirit, ease, and wit; but virtue has gained something by their being by far more innocent and moral.

It is to the French stage that we are indebted for

this improvement. The introduction there of a graver comedy, of what has been called La Comedie Larmoyante, has attracted the attention and the approbation of our writers. This invention is not altogether a modern one: for the Andria of Terence is of this description. Gaiety and ridicule are not excluded from this graver comedy; but it seeks to merit praise by 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 which it draws forth.

This form of comedy has been opposed in France as an unjustifiable innovation. Its not being founded on laughter and ridicule has been objected to it with harshness. For it does not follow, that all comedies should be formed on one precise model. Some may be light, and some may be serious; and others may partake of both these descriptions. It is sufficient, that human life and manners are described with precision and knowledge. It is not to be supposed, that this new species of comedy is to supersede, altogether, the comedy that is founded in ridicule. There are materials for both; and the stage is the richer for the innovation. At any rate it may be considered as a mark of true politeness, and refinement of manners, that theatrical exhibitions should become fashionable which are free from indelicate sentiment, and an immoral tendency.

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by T. Davison, Whitefriars.

X R+J 274 M

ZG

30

Cat.
R+J 14