

ent in regard to this matter. If the sound of the words be good, or the meaning of particular words agreeable; if there be a competency of hills and rills, doves and loves, fountains and mountains, with a tolerable collection of garlands and lambkins, nymphs and cupids, *bergeres* and *tortorellas*, they are not folicitous about sense or elegance. In which they seem to me to consult their own honour as little as the rational entertainment of others. For what is there to elevate the mind of that composer, who condemns himself to set music to insipid doggerel? Handel's genius never soared to heaven, till it caught strength and fire from the strains of inspiration. — 2. Should not the words of every song be intelligible to those to whom it is addressed, and be distinctly articulated, so as to be heard as plainly as the notes? Or can the human mind be rationally gratified with that which it does not perceive, or which, if it did perceive, it would not understand? And therefore, is not the music of a song faulty, when it is so complex as to make the distinct articulation of the words impracticable? — 3. If the singer's voice and words ought to be heard in every part of the song, can there be any propriety in noisy accompaniments? And as every performer in a numerous band is not perfectly discreet, and as some performers may be more careful to distinguish themselves than do justice to the song, will not an instru-

mental accompaniment be almost necessarily too noisy, if it is complex. — 4. Does not the frequent repetition of the same words in a song, confound its meaning, and distract the attention of both the singer and the hearer? And are not long-winded divisions (or successions of notes warbled to one syllable) attended with a like inconvenience, and with this additional bad effect, that they disqualify the voice for expression, by exhausting it? Is not simplicity as great a perfection in music, as in painting and poetry? Or should we admire that orator who chose to express by five hundred words, a sentiment that might be more emphatically conveyed in five? — 5. Ought not the singer to bear in mind, that he has sentiments to utter as well as sounds? And if so, should he not perfectly understand what he says, as well as what he sings; and not only modulate his notes with the art of a musician, but also pronounce his words with the propriety of a public speaker? If he is taught to do this, does he not learn of course to avoid all grimace and finical gesticulation? And will he not then acquit himself in singing like a rational creature, and a man of sense? Whereas, by pursuing a contrary conduct, is he not to be considered rather as a puppet or wind-instrument, than as an elegant artist? — 6. Is not church-music more important than any other? and ought it not for that reason to be most intelligible

and expressive? But will this be the case, if the notes are drawn out to such an immoderate length, that the words of the singer cannot be understood? Besides, does not excessive slowness, in singing or speaking, tend rather to wear out the spirits, than to elevate the fancy, or warm the heart? It would seem, then, that the vocal part of church-music should never be so slow as to fatigue those who sing, or to render the words of the song in any degree unintelligible to those who hear. — 7. Do flourished cadences, whether by a voice or instrument, serve any other purpose, than to take off our attention from the subject, and set us a-staring at the flexibility of the performer's voice, the swiftness of his fingers, or the sound of his fiddle? And if this be their only use, do they not counteract, instead of promoting, the chief end of music? What should we think, if a tragedian, at the conclusion of every scene, or of every speech, in *Othello*, were to strain his throat into a preternatural scream, make a hideous wry face, or cut a caper four feet high? We might wonder at the strength of his voice, the pliancy of his features, or the springiness of his limbs; but should hardly admire him as intelligent in his art, or respectful to his audience.

But is it not agreeable to hear a *florid song* by a fine performer, though now and then the voice should be drowned amidst the accompaniments,

companiments, and though the words should not be understood by the hearers, or even by the finger? I answer, that nothing can be very agreeable, which brings disappointment. In the case supposed, the tones of the voice might no doubt give pleasure: but from instrumental music we expect something more, and from vocal music a great deal more, than mere sweetness of sound. From poetry and music united we have a right to expect pathos, sentiment, and melody, and in a word every gratification that the tuneful art can bestow. But in sweetness of tone the best finger is not superior, and scarcely equal, to an Eolus harp, to Visscher's hautboy, or to Giardini's violin. And can we without dissatisfaction see a human creature dwindle into mere wood and catgut? Can we be gratified with what only tickles the ear, when we had reason to hope, that a powerful address would have been made to the heart?—A handsome actress walking on the stage would no doubt be looked at with complacency for a minute or two, though she were not to speak a word. But surely we had a right to expect a different sort of entertainment; and were her silence to last a few minutes longer, I believe the politest audience in Europe would let her know that they were offended.—To conclude: A song, which we listen to without understanding the words, is like a picture seen at too great a distance. The former
may

may be allowed to charm the ear with sweet sounds, in the same degree in which the latter pleases the eye with beautiful colours. But, till the design of the whole, and the meaning of each part, be made obvious to sense, it is impossible to derive any rational entertainment from either.

I hope I have given no offence to the connoisseur by these observations. They are dictated by a hearty zeal for the honour of an art, of which I have heard and seen enough to be satisfied, that it is capable of being improved into an instrument of virtue, as well as of pleasure. If I did not think so, I should hardly have taken the trouble to write these remarks, slight as they are, upon the philosophy of it. But to return :

Every thing in art, nature, or common life, must give delight, which communicates delightful passions to the human mind. And because all the passions that music can inspire are of the agreeable kind, it follows, that all pathetic or expressive music must be agreeable. Music may inspire devotion, fortitude, compassion, benevolence, tranquillity ; it may infuse a gentle sorrow that softens, without wounding, the heart, or a sublime horror that expands, and elevates, while it astonishes, the imagination ; but music has no expression for impiety, cowardice, cruelty, hatred, or discontent. For every essential rule of the art tends to produce pleasing combinations,

combinations of sound; and it is difficult to conceive, how from these any painful or criminal affections should arise. I believe, however, it might be practicable, by means of harsh tones, irregular rhythm, and continual dissonance, to work the mind into a disagreeable state, and to produce horrible thoughts, and criminal propensity, as well as painful sensations. But this would not be music; nor can it ever be for the interest of any society to put such a villanous art in practice.

Milton was so sensible of the moral tendency of musical expression, that he ascribes to it the power of raising some praise-worthy emotions even in the devils themselves *. Would Dryden, if he had been an adept in this art, as Milton was, have made the song of Timotheus inflame Alexander to revenge and cruelty? — At any rate, I am well pleased that Dryden fell into this mistake (if it be one), because it has produced some of the most animated lines that ever were written †. And I am also pleased to find, for the honour of music, and of this criticism, that history ascribes the burning of Persepolis, not to any of the tuneful tribe, but to the instigation of a drunken harlot.

IV. Is there not reason to think, that

* Paradise Lost, b. i. vers. 549. — 562.

† Alexander's Feast, stanza 6.

variety and simplicity of structure may contribute something to the agreeableness of music, as well as of poetry and prose. Variety, kept within due bounds, cannot fail to please, because it refreshes the mind with perpetual novelty; and is therefore studiously sought after in all the arts, and in none of them more than in music. To give this character to his compositions, the poet varies his phraseology and syntax; and the feet, the pauses, and the sound of contiguous verses, as much as the subject, the language, and the laws of versification will permit: and the prose-writer combines longer with shorter sentences in the same paragraph, longer with shorter clauses in the same sentence, and even longer with shorter words in the same clause; terminates contiguous clauses and sentences by a different cadence, and constructs them by a different syntax; and in general avoids all monotony and similar sounds, except where they are unavoidable, or where they may contribute (as indeed they often do) to energy or perspicuity. The musician diversifies his *melody*, by changing his keys; by deferring or interrupting his cadences; by a mixture of slower and quicker, higher and lower, softer and louder notes; and, in pieces of length, by altering the rhythm, the movement, and the air: and his *harmony* he varies, by varying his concords and discords, by a change of modulation, by contrasting the ascent or slower motion of one

part to the descent or quicker motion of another, by assigning different harmonies to the same melody, or different melodies to the same harmony, and by many other contrivances.

Simplicity makes music, as well as language, intelligible and expressive. It is in every work of art a recommendatory quality. In music it is indispensable; for we are never pleased with that music which we cannot understand, or which seems to have no meaning. Of the ancient music little more is known, than that it was very affecting and very simple. All popular and favourite airs; all that remains of the old national music in every country; all military marches, church-tunes, and other compositions that are more immediately addressed to the heart, and intended to please the general taste; all proverbial maxims of morality and prudence, and all those poetical phrases and lines, which every body remembers, and is occasionally repeating, are remarkable for simplicity. To which we may add, that language, while it improves in simplicity, grows still more and more perfect: and that, as it loses this character, it declines in the same proportion from the standard of elegance, and draws nearer and nearer to utter depravation *. Without simplicity, the varieties of art, instead of pleasing, would only bewilder

* See *Le Vicende della Letteratura del Sig. Carlo Denina*.

the attention, and confound the judgement.

Rhythm, or Number, is in music a copious source of both variety and uniformity. Not to enter into any nice speculation on the nature of rhythm *, (for which this is not a proper place), I shall only observe, that notes, as united in music, admit of the distinction of quick and slow, as well as of acute and grave; and that on the former distinction depends what is here called *Rhythm*. It is the only thing in a tune which the drum can imitate. And by that instrument, the rhythm of any tune may be imitated most perfectly, as well as by the sound of the feet in dancing:—only as the feet can hardly move so quick as the drum-sticks, the dancer may be obliged to repeat his strokes at longer intervals, by supposing the music divided into larger portions; to give one stroke, for example, where the drummer might give two or three, or two where the other would give four or six. For every piece of regular music is supposed to be divided into small portions (separated in writing a by cross line called a *bar*) which, whether they contain more or fewer notes, are all equal in respect of time. In this way, the rhythm is a source of *uniformity*; which

* The nature of Rhythm, and the several divisions of it, are very accurately explained by the learned author of *An Essay on the origin and progress of language*, vols. 2. p. 301.

pleases, by suggesting the agreeable ideas of regularity and skill, and still more by rendering the music intelligible. It also pleases, by raising and gratifying expectations; for if the movement of the piece were governed by no rules; if what one hears of it during the present moment were in all respects unlike and incommensurable to what one was to hear the next, and had heard the last; the whole would be a mass of confusion; and the ear would either be bewildered, having nothing to rest upon; and nothing to anticipate; or, if it should expect a hiatus *in* between the motion and the time, would be disappointed when it found that there was none. That rhythm is a source of very great variety every person must be sensible, who knows only the names of the musical notes, and with such of their divisions and subdivisions as relate to time; or who has attended to the manifold varieties of quick and slow motions, which the drum is capable of producing. As order and proportions are always delightful, it is no wonder that mankind should be agreeably affected with the rhythm of music. That they are, the universal use of dancing, and of the "spirit-firring drum," is a sufficient evidence. Nay, I have known a child imitate the rhythm of tunes before he could speak, and long before he could manage his voice so as to imitate their melody; which is a proof, that human nature is susceptible

susceptible of this delight previously to the
 acquirement of artificial habits, as Virgil says
 - *Nō dīhintēdātē pōuērōf accidētal*
affociatōnē gīuīng fīgnīfīcāncē to musical
 compositions. It may be remarked further,
 that association contributes greatly to heighten
 their agreeable effect. We have heard
 them performed some time or other, in an
 agreeable place (perhaps, or by an agree-
 able person, or accompanied with words that
 describe agreeable ideas; or we have heard
 them in our early years; or a period of life,
 which we seldom look back upon without
 pleasure, and of which Bacon recommends
 the frequent recollection as an expedient to
 preserved health. Nor is it necessary, that
 such melodies or harmonies should have much
 intrinsic merit, or that they should call up
 any distinct remembrance of the agreeable
 ideas associated with them. There are seasons,
 at which we are gratified with very
 moderate excellence. In childhood, every
 tune is delightful to a musical ear; in our
 advanced years, an indifferent tune will please,
 when set off by the amiable qualities of the
 performer, or by any other agreeable circum-
 stance. During the last war, the *Belle Isle*
march was long a general favourite. It filled
 the minds of our people with magnificent
 ideas of armies, and conquest, and military
 splendour; for they believed it to be the tune
 that was played by the French garrison when
 it marched out with the honours of war, and
 surrendered.

surrendered that fortress to the British troops. — The flute of a shepherd, heard at a distance, in a fine summer day, amidst a beautiful scene of groves, hills, and waters, will give rapture to the ear of the wanderer, though the tune, the instrument, and the musician, be such as he could not endure in any other place. — If a song, or piece of music, should call up only a faint remembrance, that we were happy the last time we heard it, nothing more would be needful to make us listen to it again with peculiar satisfaction.

It is an amiable prejudice that people generally entertain in favour of their national music. This lowest degree of patriotism is not without its merit: and that man must have a hard heart, or dull imagination, in whom, though endowed with musical sensibility, no sweet emotions would arise, on hearing, in his riper years, or in a foreign land, those strains that were the delight of his childhood. What though they be inferior to the Italian? What though they be even irregular and rude? It is not their merit, which in the case supposed would interest a native, but the charming ideas they would recal to his mind: — ideas of innocence, simplicity, and leisure, of romantic enterprise, and enthusiastic attachment; and of scenes, which, on recollection, we are inclined to think, that a brighter sun illuminated, a fresher verdure crowned, and purer skies and happier

happier climes conspired to beautify, than are now to be seen in the dreary paths of care and disappointment, into which men, yielding to the passions peculiar to more advanced years, are tempted to wander.—There are couplets in Ogilvie's Translation of Virgil, which I could never read without emotions far more ardent than the merit of the numbers would justify. But it was that book which first taught me “the tale of Troy divine,” and first made me acquainted with poetical sentiments; and though I read it when almost an infant, it conveyed to my heart some pleasing impressions, that remain there unimpaired to this day.

There is a dance in Switzerland, which the young shepherds perform to a tune played on a sort of bag-pipe. The tune is called *Rance des vaches*; it is wild and irregular, but has nothing in its composition that could recommend it to our notice. But the Swiss are so intoxicated with this tune, that if at any time they hear it, when abroad in foreign service, they burst into tears; and often fall sick, and even die, of a passionate desire to revisit their native country; for which reason, in some armies where they serve, the playing of this tune is prohibited*. This tune, having been the attendant of their childhood and early youth, recalls

* Rousseau. Dictionnaire de Musique, tant *Rance des vaches*.

to their memory those regions of wild beauty and rude magnificence, those days of liberty and peace, those nights of festivity, those happy assemblies, those tender passions, which formerly endeared to them their country, their homes, and their employments; and which, when compared with the scenes of uproar they are now engaged in, and the servitude they now undergo, awaken such regret as entirely overpowers them.

S E C T. III.

Conjectures on some peculiarities of National Music.

There is a certain style of melody peculiar to each musical country, which the people of that country are apt to prefer to every other style. That they should prefer their own, is not surprising; and that the melody of one people should differ from that of another, is not more surprising, perhaps, than that the language of one people should differ from that of another. But there is something not unworthy of notice in the particular expression and style that characterise the music of one nation or province, and distinguish it from every other sort of music. Of this diversity Scotland supplies

a striking example. The native melody of the highlands and western isles is as different from that of the southern part of the kingdom, as the Irish or Erse language is different from the English or Scotch. In the conclusion of a discourse on music as it relates to the mind; it will not perhaps be impertinent to offer a conjecture on the cause of these peculiarities; which, though it should not (and indeed I am satisfied that it will not) fully account for any one of them, may however incline the reader to think that they are not unaccountable, and may also throw some faint light on this part of philosophy.

Every thought that partakes of the nature of passion, has a correspondent expression in the look and gesture: and so strict is the union between the passion and its outward sign, that, where the former is not in some degree felt, the latter can never be perfectly natural, but, if assumed, becomes awkward mimicry, instead of that genuine imitation of nature, which draws forth the sympathy of the beholder. If, therefore, there be, in the circumstances of particular nations or persons, any thing that gives a peculiarity to their passions and thoughts, it seems reasonable to expect, that they will also have something peculiar in the expression of their countenance, and even in the form of their features. Caius Marius, Jugurtha, Tamerlane, and some other great warriors, are celebrated for a peculiar ferocity of aspect, which they had

no doubt contracted from a perpetual and unrestrained exertion of fortitude, contempt, and other violent emotions. These produced in the face their correspondent expressions, which being often repeated, became at last as habitual to the features, as the sentiments they arose from were to the heart. Savages, whose thoughts are little inured to controul, have more of this significancy of look, than those men, who, being born and bred in civilized nations, are accustomed from their childhood to suppress every emotion that tends to interrupt the peace of society. And while the bloom of youth lasts, and the smoothness of feature peculiar to that period, the human face is less marked with any strong character, than in old age: — a peevish or surly stripling may elude the eye of the physiognomist; but a wicked old man, whose visage does not betray the evil temper of his heart, must have more cunning than it would be prudent for him to acknowledge. Even by the trade or profession the human countenance may be characterised. They who employ themselves in the nicer mechanic arts, that require the earnest attention of the artist, do generally contract a fixedness of feature suited to that one uniform sentiment which engrosses them while at work. Whereas, other artists, whose work requires less attention, and who may ply their trade and amuse themselves with conversation at the same time, have for the most part

part smother and more unmeaning faces: their thoughts are more miscellaneous, and therefore their features are less fixed in one uniform configuration. A keen penetrating look indicates thoughtfulness and spirit: a dull torpid countenance is not often accompanied with great sagacity.

This, though there may be many an exception, is in general true of the visible signs of our passions; and it is no less true of the audible. A man habitually peevish, or passionate, or querulous, or imperious, may be known by the sound of his voice, as well as by his physiognomy. May we not go a step farther, and say, that if a man under the influence of any passion were to compose a discourse, or a poem, or a tune, his work would in some measure exhibit an image of his mind? I could not easily be persuaded, that Swift and Juvenal were men of sweet tempers; or that Thomson, Arbuthnot, and Prior were ill-natured. The airs of Felton are so uniformly mournful, that I cannot suppose him to have been a merry, or even a chearful man. If a musician, in deep affliction, were to attempt to compose a lively air, I believe he would not succeed: though I confess I do not well understand the nature of the connection that may take place between a mournful mind and a melancholy tune. It is easy to conceive, how a poet or an orator should transfuse his passions into his work: for every passion suggests ideas

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congenial to its own nature; and the composition of the poet, or of the orator, must necessarily consist of those ideas that occur at the time he is composing. But musical sounds are not the signs of ideas; rarely are they even the imitations of natural sounds: so that I am at a loss to conceive how it should happen, that a musician, overwhelmed with sorrow, for example, should put together a series of notes, whose expression is contrary to that of another series which he had put together when elevated with joy. But of the fact I am not doubtful; though I have not sagacity, or knowledge of music, enough to be able to explain it. And my opinion in this matter is warranted by that of a more competent judge; who says, speaking of church-voluntaries, that if the Organist “do not feel in himself the divine energy of devotion, he will labour in vain to raise it “in others. Nor can he hope to throw “out those happy instantaneous thoughts, “which sometimes far exceed the best concerted compositions, and which the enraptured performer would gladly secure “to his future use and pleasure, did they “not as fleetly escape as they arise*.” A man who has made music the study of his life, and is well acquainted with all the best examples of style and expression that are to be found in the works of former masters,

* Aviston on Musical Expression, pag. 88, 89.

may, by memory and much practice, attain a sort of mechanical dexterity in contriving music suitable to any given passion; but such music would, I presume, be vulgar and spiritless, compared to what an artist of genius throws out, when under the power of any ardent emotion. It is recorded of Lulli, that, once when his imagination was all on fire with some verses descriptive of terrible ideas, which he had been reading in a French tragedy, he ran to his harpsichord, and struck off such a combination of sounds, that the company felt their hair stand on end with horror.

Let us therefore suppose it proved, or, if you please, take it for granted, that different sentiments in the mind of the musician will give different and peculiar expressions to his music;—and upon this principle, it will not perhaps be impossible to account for some of the phenomena of a national ear.

The highlands of Scotland are a picturesque, but in general a melancholy country. Long tracts of mountainous desert, covered with dark heath, and often obscured by misty weather; narrow vallies, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices resounding with the fall of torrents; a soil so rugged, and a climate so dreary, as in many parts to admit neither the amusements of pasturage, nor the labours of agriculture; the mournful dashing of waves along the friths and lakes that intersect the country; the portentous

tentous noises which every change of the wind, and every increase and diminution of the waters, is apt to raise, in a lonely region, full of echoes, and rocks, and caverns; the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape by the light of the moon: — objects like these diffuse a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occasional and social merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of silence and solitude. If these people, notwithstanding their reformation in religion, and more frequent intercourse with strangers, do still retain many of their old superstitions, we need not doubt but in former times they must have been much more enslaved to the horrors of imagination, when beset with the bugbears of Popery, and the darkness of Paganism. Most of their superstitions are of a melancholy cast. That *Second Sight*, wherewith some of them are still supposed to be haunted, is considered by themselves as a misfortune, on account of the many dreadful images it is said to obtrude upon the fancy. I have been told, that the inhabitants of some of the Alpine regions do likewise lay claim to a sort of second sight. Nor is it wonderful, that persons of lively imagination, immured in deep solitude, and surrounded with the stupendous scenery of clouds, precipices, and torrents, should dream, even when they think themselves awake, of those few striking

ideas

ideas with which their lonely lives are diversified; of corpses, funeral processions, and other objects of terror; or of marriages, and the arrival of strangers, and such like matters of more agreeable curiosity *. Let it be observed

* I do not find sufficient evidence for the reality of *second sight*, or at least of what is commonly understood by that term. A treatise on the subject was published in the year 1762, in which many tales were told of persons, whom the author believed to have been favoured, or haunted, with these illuminations; but most of the tales were trifling and ridiculous: and the whole work betrayed on the part of the compiler such extreme credulity, as could not fail to prejudice many readers against his system. — That any of these visionaries are liable to be swayed in their declarations by sinister views, I will not say; though a gentleman of character assured me, that one of them offered to sell him this unaccountable talent for half a crown. But this I think may be said with confidence, that none but ignorant people pretend to be gifted in this way. And in them it may be nothing more, perhaps, than short fits of sudden sleep or drowsiness attended with lively dreams, and arising from some bodily disorder, the effect of idleness, low spirits, or a gloomy imagination. For it is admitted, even by the most credulous highlanders, that, as knowledge and industry are propagated in their country, the *second sight* disappears in proportion: and nobody ever laid claim to this faculty, who was much employed in the intercourse of social life. Nor is it at all extraordinary, that one should have the appearance of being awake, and should even think one's self so, during these fits of dozing; or that they should come on suddenly, and while one is engaged in some business. The same thing happens to persons much fatigued, or long kept awake, who frequently fall asleep for a moment, or for a longer space, while they are standing, or walking, or riding on horseback. Add but a lively dream to this slumber,

observed also, that the ancient highlanders of Scotland had hardly any other way of supporting

flumber, and (which is the frequent effect of disease) take a way the consciousness of having been asleep; and a superstitious man, who is always hearing and believing tales of second sight, may easily mistake his dream for a waking vision: which however is soon forgotten when no subsequent occurrence recalls it to his memory; but which, if it shall be thought to resemble any future event, exalts the poor dreamer into a highland prophet. This conceit makes him more recluse and more melancholy than ever, and so feeds his disease, and multiplies his visions; which, if they are not dissipated by business or society, may continue to haunt him as long as he lives; and which, in their progress through the neighbourhood, receive some new tincture of the marvellous from every mouth that promotes their circulation. — As to the prophetic nature of this second-sight, it cannot be admitted at all. That the Deity should work a miracle, in order to give intimation of the frivolous things that these tales are made up of, the arrival of a stranger, the nailing of a coffin, or the colour of a suit of cloaths; and that these intimations should be given for no end, and to those persons only who are idle and solitary, who speak Erse, or who live among mountains and deserts, — is like nothing in nature or providence that we are acquainted with; and must therefore, unless it were confirmed by satisfactory proof, (which is not the case), be rejected as absurd and incredible. The visions, such as they are, may reasonably enough be ascribed to a distempered fancy. And that in them, 'as well as in our ordinary dreams, certain appearances should, on some rare occasions, resemble certain events, is to be expected from the laws of chance; and seems to have in it nothing more marvellous or supernatural, than that the parrot, who deals out his scurrilities at random, should sometimes happen to salute the passenger by his right appellation.

But

supporting themselves, than by hunting, fishing, or war, professions that are continually exposed to fatal accidents. And hence, no doubt, additional horrors would often haunt their solitude, and a deeper gloom overshadow the imagination even of the hardiest native.

But, whatever the reader may think of these remarks, or of their pertinency to the present subject, I am sure I shall not be blamed for quoting, from a poem little known, the following very picturesque lines; which may show, that what in history or philosophy would make but an awkward figure, may sometimes have a charming effect in poetry.

E'er since of old the haughty Thanes of Ross
(So to the simple swain tradition tells)
Were wont, with clans and ready vassals throng'd,
To wake the bounding stag, or guilty wolf;
There oft is heard at midnight, or at noon,
Beginning faint, but rising still more loud
And nearer, voice of hunters and of hounds,
And horns, hoarse-winded, blowing far and keen.
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies; the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks, and ruder din
Of hot pursuit; the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs; the shouts of men,
And hoofs thick-beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden, the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the tumult, and the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast he eyes
The mountain's height, and all the ridges round;
Yet not one trace of living wight discerns:
Nor knows, o'eraw'd and trembling as he stands,
To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,
To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend;
But wonders; and no end of wondering finds.

ALBANIA, a poem. London, 1737, folio.

What then would it be reasonable to expect from the fanciful tribe, from the musicians and poets, of such a region? Strains, expressive of joy, tranquillity, or the softer passions? No: their style must have been better suited to their circumstances. And so we find in fact that their music is. The wildest irregularity appears in its composition: the expression is warlike, and melancholy, and approaches even to the terrible. — And that their poetry is almost uniformly mournful, and their views of nature dark and dreary, will be allowed, by all who admit the authenticity of Ossian; and not doubted by any who believe those fragments of highland poetry to be genuine, which many old people, now alive, of that country, remember to have heard in their youth, and were then taught to refer to a pretty high antiquity.

Some of the southern provinces of Scotland present a very different prospect. Smooth and lofty hills covered with verdure; clear streams winding through long and beautiful vallies; trees produced without culture, here straggling or single, and there crouding into little groves and bowers; — with other circumstances peculiar to the districts I allude to, render them fit for pasturage, and favourable to romantic leisure and tender passions. Several of the old Scotch songs take their names from the rivulets, villages, and hills, adjoining to the Tweed near Melrose

rose *; a region distinguished by many charming varieties of rural scenery, and which, whether we consider the face of the country, or the genius of the people, may properly enough be termed the Arcadia of Scotland. And all these songs are sweetly and powerfully expressive of love and tenderness, and other emotions suited to the tranquillity of pastoral life.

It is a common opinion, that these songs were composed by David Rizzio, a musician from Italy, the unfortunate favourite of a very unfortunate queen. But this must be a mistake. The style of the Scotch music was fixed before his time; for many of the best of these tunes are ascribed by tradition to a more remote period. And it is not to be supposed, that he, a foreigner, and in the latter part of his life a man of business, could have acquired or invented a style of musical composition so different in every respect from that to which he had been accustomed in his own country. *Melody* is so much the characteristic of the Scotch tunes, that I doubt whether even basses were set to them before the present century; whereas, in the days of Rizzio, *Harmony* was the fashionable study of the Italian composers. Palestina himself, who

* Cowdenknows, Galashiels, Galawater, Ratterick banks, Braes of Yarrow, Bush above Traquair, &c.

flourished about two hundred and fifty years ago, and who has obtained the high title of Father of Harmony, is by a great master * ranked with those who neglected air, and were too closely attached to counterpoint; and at the time when Rizzio was a student in the art, Palestina's must have been the favourite music in Italy. — Besides, though the style of the old Scotch melody has been well imitated by Mr Oswald, and some other natives, I do not find that any foreigner has ever caught the true spirit of it. Geminiani, a great and original genius in this art, and a professed admirer of the Scotch songs, (some of which he published with accompaniments), used to say, that he had blotted many a quire of paper to no purpose, in attempting to compose a second strain to that fine little air which in Scotland is known by the name of *The broom of Cowdenknows*. — To all which we may add, that Tassoni, the author of *La Scéchia rapita*, speaks of this music as well esteemed by the Italians of his time, and ascribes the invention of it to James King of Scotland: — which a foreigner might naturally do, as all the Scotch kings of that name, particularly the first, third, fourth, and fifth, were skilled both in music and poetry. But though I admit Tassoni's testimony as a proof, that the Scotch music is more

ancient than Rizzio, I do not think him right in what he says of its inventors. Nor can I acquiesce in the opinion of those who give the honour of this invention to the monks of Melrose. I rather believe, that it took its rise among men who were real shepherds, and who actually felt the sentiments and affections, whereof it is so very expressive. Rizzio may have been one of the first, perhaps, who made a collection of these songs; or he may have played them with more delicate touches than the Scotch musicians of that time; or perhaps corrected the extravagance of certain passages;—for one is struck with the regularity of some, as well as amused with the wildness of others:—and in all or any of those cases, it might be said with truth, that the Scotch music is under obligations to him:—but that this style of pastoral melody, so unlike the Italian, and in every respect so peculiar, should have been established or invented by him, is incredible; nay, (if it were worth while to assert any thing so positively on such a subject), we might even say impossible.

The acknowledged and unequalled excellence of the Italian music, is one of those phenomena of a National Taste, that may in part be accounted for. Let us recollect some particulars of the history of that period, when this music began to recommend itself to general notice.

Leo the Tenth, and some of his immediate

diate predecessors, had many great vices, and some virtues; and we at this day feel the good effects of both: for Providence has been pleased, in this instance, as in many others, to bring good out of evil, and to accomplish the most glorious purposes by means that seemed to have an opposite tendency. The profusion, and other more scandalous qualities of Leo, were instrumental in hastening forward the Reformation: to his liberality and love of art we owe the finest pictures, the finest musical compositions, and some of the finest poems in the world.

The sixteenth century does indeed great honour to Italian genius. The ambition of Alexander the Sixth, and Julius the Second, had raised the Papal power to higher eminence, and settled it on a firmer foundation, than had been known before their time. Leo, therefore, had leisure to indulge his love of luxury and of art; and the Italians, under his administration, to cultivate the arts and sciences, which many other favourable events conspired to promote. Printing had been lately found out: the taking of Constantinople by the Turks had made a dispersion of the learned, many of whom took refuge in Italy: Leo found, in the treasures accumulated by Julius the Second, and in the ample revenues of the pontificate, the means both of generosity and of debauchery: and when the Pope, and the houses of Medici and Montefeltro, had set the
example,

example, it became the fashion all over Italy, to patronise genius, and encourage learning. The first efforts of a literary spirit appeared in translating the Greek authors into Latin; a tongue which every scholar was ambitious to acquire, and in which many elegant compositions, both verse and prose, were produced about this time in Italy. Fracastorius, Sanazarius, Vida, distinguished themselves in Latin poetry; Bembo, Casa, Manutius, Sigonius, in Latin prose. But genius seldom displays itself to advantage in a foreign tongue. The cultivation of the Toscan language, since the time of Petrarcha, who flourished one hundred and fifty years before the period we speak of, had been too much neglected; but was now resumed with the most desirable success; particularly by Tasso and Ariosto, who carried the Italian poetry to its highest perfection.

The other fine arts were no less fortunate in the hands of Raphael and Palestina. What Homer was in poetry, these authors were in painting and music. Their works are still regarded as standards of good taste, and models for imitation: and though improvement may no doubt have been made since their time, in some inferior branches of their respective arts, particularly in what regards delicacy of manner; it may with reason be doubted, whether in grandeur of design, and strength of invention, they have as yet been excelled or equalled. Greece owed much of
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her literary glory to the merit of her ancient authors. They at once fixed the fashion in the several kinds of writing; and they happened to fix it on the immoveable basis of simplicity and nature. Had not the Italian music in its infant state fallen into the hands of a great genius like Palestrina, it would not have arrived at maturity so soon. A long succession of inferior composers might have made discoveries in the art, but could not have raised it above mediocrity: and such people are not of influence enough to render a new art respectable in the eyes, either of the learned, or of the vulgar. But Palestrina made his art an object of admiration, not only to his own country, but to a great part of Europe. In England he was studied and imitated by Tallis, in the reign of Henry the Eighth. All good judges were satisfied, that this system of harmony was founded on right principles; and that, though it might perhaps be improved, nothing in the art could be a real improvement, which was contradictory to it.

In the age of Leo, a genius like Palestrina must have been distinguished, even though the art he professed had gratified no important principle of the human mind; but as his art gratified the religious principle, he could not fail, in those days, and among Italians, to meet with the highest encouragement. In fact, music since that time has been cultivated in Italy with the utmost attention

tention and success. Scarlatti, Corelli, Geminiani, Martini, Marcello, were all men of extraordinary abilities; and any one of them, in the circumstances of Palestina, might perhaps have been as eminent as he. Need we wonder, then, at the unequalled excellence of the Italian music?

But other causes have contributed to this effect. Nobody who understands the language of modern Italy, will deny, that the natives have a peculiar delicacy of perception in regard to vocal sound. This delicacy appears in the sweetness of their verse, in the cadence of their prose, and even in the formation and inflexion of their words. Whether it be owing to the climate, or to the influence of the other arts; whether it be derived from their Gothic ancestors, or from their more remote forefathers of ancient Rome; whether it be the effect of weakness or of soundness in the vocal and auditory organs of the people, this national niceness of ear must be considered as one cause of the melody both of their speech and of their music. They are mistaken who think the Italian an effeminate language. Soft it is indeed, and of easy modulation, but susceptible withal of the utmost dignity of sound, as well as of elegant arrangement and nervous phraseology. In history and oratory, it may boast of many excellent models: and its poetry is far superior to that of every other modern nation, except the English.

And if it be true, that all music is originally song, the most poetical nation would seem to have the fairest chance to become the most musical. The Italian tongue, in strength and variety of harmony, is not superior, and perhaps not equal, to the English; but, abounding more in vowels and liquid sounds, and being therefore more easily articulated, is fitter for the purposes of music: and it deserves our notice, that poetical numbers were brought to perfection in Italy two hundred years sooner than in any other country of modern Europe.

C H A P. VII.

Of Sympathy.

AS a great part of the pleasure we derive from poetry depends on our Sympathetic Feelings, the philosophy of Sympathy ought always to form a part of the science of Criticism. On this subject, therefore, I beg leave to subjoin a few brief remarks, that may possibly throw light on some of the foregoing, as well as subsequent reasonings. When we consider the condition of another person, especially if it seem to be pleasurable or painful, we are apt to fancy ourselves

ourselves in the same condition, and to feel in some degree the pain or pleasure that we think we should feel if we were really in that condition. Hence the good of others becomes in some measure our good, and their evil our evil; the obvious effect of which is, to bind men more closely together in society, and prompt them to promote the good, and relieve the distresses, of one another. Sympathy with distress is called Compassion or Pity: Sympathy with happiness has no particular name; but, when expressed in words to the happy person, is termed Congratulation.

We sympathise, in some degree, even with things inanimate. To lose a staff we have long worn, to see in ruins a house in which we have long lived, may affect us with a momentary concern, though in point of value the loss be nothing. With the dead we sympathise, and even with those circumstances of their condition whereof we know that they are utterly insensible; such as, their being shut up in a cold and solitary grave, excluded from the light of the sun, and from all the pleasures of life, and liable in a few years to be forgotten for ever. Towards the brute creation our sympathy is, and ought to be, strong, they being percipient creatures like ourselves. A merciful man is merciful to his beast; and that person would be deemed melancholy or hard-hearted, who should see the frisking

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lamb,

lamb, or hear the cheerful song of the lark, or observe the transport of the dog when he finds the master he had lost, without any participation of their joy. There are few passages of descriptive poetry into which we enter with a more hearty fellow-feeling, than where Virgil and Lucretius paint so admirably, the one the sorrow of a steer for the loss of his fellow, the other the affliction of a cow deprived of her calf*. — But our sympathy exerts itself most powerfully towards our fellow-men; and, other circumstances being equal, is stronger or weaker, according as they are more or less nearly connected with us, and their condition more or less similar to our own.

We often sympathise with one another, when the person principally concerned has little sense of either good or evil. We blush for another's ill-breeding, even when we know that he himself is not aware of it. We pity a madman, though we believe him to be happy in his phrensy. We tremble for a mason standing on a high scaffold, though we know that custom has made it quite familiar to him. It gives us pain to see another on the brink of a precipice, tho' we be secure ourselves, and have no doubt of his circumspection. In these cases, it would seem, that our sympathy is raised,

* Virgil, Georg. iii. vers. 519. ; Lucretius, ii. vers. 255.

not so much by our reflecting on what others really feel, as by a lively conception of what they would feel if their nature were exactly such as ours; or of what we ourselves should feel, if we were in their condition, with the same sentiments we have at present *.

Many of our passions may be communicated and strengthened by sympathy. If we go into a chearful company, we become chearful; if into a mournful one, we become sad. The presence of a great multitude engaged in devotion, tends to make us devout. Cowards have behaved valiantly, when all their companions were valiant; and the timidity of a few has struck a panic into a whole army. — We are not, however, much inclined to sympathise with violent anger, jealousy, envy, malevolence, and other sanguinary or unnatural passions: we rather take part against them, and sympathise with those persons who are in danger from them; because we can more easily enter into their distress, and suppose ourselves in their condition. But indignation at vice, particularly at ingratitude, cruelty, treachery, and the like, when we are well acquainted with the case, awakens in us a most intense fellow-feeling: and the satisfaction we are conscious of, when such crimes are ade-

* See Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, sect. V.

quately punished, (though) somewhat stern and gloomy, is however sincere, and by no means dishonourable or detrimental to our moral nature; nor at all inconsistent with that pity, which the sufferings of the criminal extort from us, when we are made to conceive them in a lively manner.

Of sympathy all men are not equally susceptible. They who have a lively imagination, keen feelings, and what we call a tender heart, are most subject to it. Habits of attention, the study of the works of nature, and of the best performances in art, experience of adversity, the love of virtue and of mankind, tend greatly to cherish it; and those passions whereof self is the object, as pride, self-conceit, the love of money, sensuality, envy, vanity, have a tendency no less powerful to destroy it. Nothing renders a man more amiable, or more useful, than a disposition to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep; to enter heartily, not officiously, into the concerns of his fellow-creatures; to comply with the innocent humour of his company, more attentive to them than to himself, and to avoid every occasion of giving pain or offence. And nothing but downright immorality is more disagreeable, than that person is, who affects bluntness of manner, and would be thought at all times to speak all that he thinks, whether people take it well or ill; or than those pedants are, of what-
ever

ever profession, (for we have them of all professions), who, without minding others, or entering into their views of things, are continually obtruding themselves upon the conversation, and their own concerns, and the sentiments and language peculiar to their own trades and fraternities. This behaviour, though under the name of plain-dealing it may arrogate a superiority to artificial rules, is generally the effect of pride, ignorance, or stupidity, or rather of all the three in conjunction. A modest man, who sympathetically attends to the condition and sentiments of others, will of his own accord make those allowances in their favour, which he wishes to be made in his own; and will think it as much his duty to promote their happiness, as he thinks it theirs to promote his. And such a man is well principled in equity, as well as in good-breeding: and though, from an imperfect knowledge of forms, or from his having had but few opportunities to put them in practice, his manner may not be so graceful, or so easy, as could be wished, he will never give offence to any person of penetration and good-nature.

With feelings which we do not approve, or not have experienced, we are not apt to sympathise. The distress of the miser when his hoard is stolen, of the fop when he soils his fine jubilee cloaths, of the vaunting cockcomb when his dyes are detected, of the unnatural parent when his daughter escapes with

with a deserving lover, is more likely to move laughter than compassion. At Sparta, every father had the privilege of correcting any child; he who had experience of paternal tenderness being supposed incapable of wounding a parent's sensibility by unjust or rigorous chastisement. When the Cardinal of Milan would expostulate with the Lady Constance upon her violent sorrow for the loss of her child, she answers, but without deigning to address her answer to one who she knew could be no competent judge of her case, "He speaks to me who "never had a son *." — The Greeks and Romans were as eminent for public spirit, and for parental affection, as we; but, for a reason elsewhere assigned †, knew little of that romantic love between unmarried persons, which modern manners and novels have a tendency to inspire. Accordingly the distress in their tragedies often arose from patriotism, and from the conjugal and filial charities, but not from the romantic passion whereof we now speak. But there are few English tragedies, and still fewer French, wherein some love-affair is not connected with the plot. This always raises our sympathy; but would not have been so interesting to the Greeks or Romans, because they

* King John, act 3. scene 3.

† Essay on Laughter, chap. 4.

were not much acquainted with the refinements of this passion.

Sympathy, as the means of conveying certain feelings from one breast to another, might be made a powerful instrument of moral discipline, if poets, and other writers of fable, were careful to call forth our sensibility towards those emotions only that favour virtue, and invigorate the human mind. Fictions, that breathe the spirit of patriotism or valour; that make us sympathise with the parental, conjugal, or filial charities; that recommend misfortune to our pity, or expose crimes to our abhorrence, may certainly be useful in a moral view, by cherishing passions, that, while they improve the heart, can hardly be indulged to excess. But those dreadful tales, that only give anguish to the reader, can never do any good: they fatigue, enervate, and overwhelm the soul: and when the calamities they describe are made to fall upon the innocent, our moral principles are in some danger of a temporary depravation from the perusal, whatever resemblance the fable may be supposed to bear to the events of real life. Some late authors of fiction seem to have thought it incumbent upon them, not only to touch the heart, but to tear it in pieces. They heap "misfortune on misfortune, "grief on grief," without end, and without mercy: which discomposes the reader too much to give him either pleasure or improve-

ment; and is contrary to the practice of the wiser ancients, whose most pathetic scenes were generally short.

It is said, that at the first representation of *the Furies* of Eschylus, the horror of the spectacle was so great, that several women miscarried; which was indeed pathos with a vengeance. But though the truth of that story should be questioned, it admits of no doubt, that objects of grief and horror too much enlarged on by the poet or novelist may do more harm than good, and give more pain than pleasure, to the mind of the reader. Surely this must be contrary to the essential rules of art, whether we consider poetry as intended to please that it may instruct, or to instruct that it may the more effectually please. And supposing the real evils of life to be as various and important as is commonly believed, we must be thought to consult our own interest very absurdly, if we seek to torment ourselves with imaginary misfortune. Horace insinuates, that the ancient *Satyrical Drama* (a sort of burlesque tragi-comedy) was contrived for the entertainment of the more disorderly part of the audience*; and our critics assure us, that the modern farce is addressed to the upper gallery, where, it is supposed, there is no great relish for the sublime graces of the Tragic Muse. Yet I be-

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 221.

lieve these *little pieces*, if consistent with decency, will be found neither unpleasant nor unprofitable even to the most learned spectator. A man, especially if advanced in years, would not chuse to go home with that gloom upon his mind which an affecting tragedy is intended to diffuse: and if the play has conveyed any sound instruction, there is no risk of its being dissipated by a little innocent mirth.

Upon the same principle, I confess, that I am not offended with those comic scenes wherewith our great Dramatic Poet has occasionally thought proper to diversify his tragedies. Such a licence will at least be allowed to be more pardonable in him, than it would be in other Tragic poets. They must make their way to the heart, as an army does to a strong fortification, by slow and regular approaches; because they cannot, like Shakespeare, take it at once, and by storm. In their pieces, therefore, a mixture of comedy might have as bad an effect, as if besiegers were to retire from the outworks they had gained, and leave the enemy at leisure to fortify them a second time. But Shakespeare penetrates the heart by a single effort, and can make us as sad in the present scene, as if we had not been merry in the former. With such powers as he possessed in the pathetic, if he had made his tragedies uniformly mournful or terrible from beginning to end, no person of sensibility

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would

would have been able to support the representation. — As to the probability of these mixed compositions, it admits of no doubt. Nature every where presents a similar mixture of tragedy and comedy, of joy and sorrow, of laughter and solemnity, in the common affairs of life. The servants of a court know little of what passes among princes and statesmen, and may therefore, like the porter in Macbeth, be very jocular when their superiors are in deep distress. The death of a favourite child is a great affliction to parents and friends; but the man who digs the grave may, like Goodman Delver in Hamlet, be very chearful while he is going about his work. A conspiracy may be dangerous; but the constable who apprehends the traitors may, like Dogberry, be a ludicrous character, and his very absurdities may be instrumental in bringing the plot to light, as well as in delaying or hastening forward the discovery. — I grant, that compositions, like those I would now apologize for, cannot properly be called either tragedies or comedies: but the name is of no consequence; let them be called *Plays*: and if in them nature is imitated in such a way as to give pleasure and instruction, they are as well entitled to the denomination of *Dramatic Poems*, as any thing in Sophocles, Racine, or Voltaire. — But to return:

Love is another “tyrant of the throbbing
“breast,”

“breast,” of whom they who wish to see the stage transformed into a school of virtue, complain, that his influence in the modern drama is too despotical. Love, kept within due bounds, is no doubt, as the song says, “a gentle and a generous passion ;” but no other passion has so strong a tendency to transgress the due bounds : and the frequent contemplation of its various ardours and agonies, as exhibited in plays and novels, can scarce fail to enervate the mind, and to raise emotions and sympathies unfriendly to innocence. And certain it is, that fables in which there is neither love nor gallantry, may be made highly interesting even to the fancy and affections of a modern reader. This appears, not only from the writings of Shakespeare, and other great authors, but from the *Pilgrim’s Progress* of Bunyan, and the history of Robinson Crusoe : than which last, there is not perhaps in any language a more interesting narrative ; or a tale better contrived for communicating to the reader a lively idea of the importance of the mechanic arts, of the sweets of social life, and of the dignity of independence.

PART II.

OF THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY.

HAVING finished what I intended to say on the general nature of Poetry, as an Imitative Art, I proceed to consider the INSTRUMENT which it employs in its imitations; or, in other words, to explain the General Nature of POETIC LANGUAGE. For *language* is the poet's instrument of imitation, as *sound* is the musician's, and *colour* the painter's. My conclusions on this part of the subject will be found to terminate in the principles already laid down.

Words in Poetry are chosen, first, for their *sense*; and, secondly, for their *sound*. That the first of these grounds of choice is the more excellent, nobody can deny. He who in literary matters prefers sound to sense, is a fool. Yet sound is to be attended to, even in prose; and in verse demands particular attention.

attention. I shall consider Poetical Language, first, as SIGNIFICANT; and, secondly, as SUSCEPTIBLE OF HARMONY.

CHAP. I.

Of Poetical Language, considered as significant.

IF, as I have endeavoured to prove, Poetry be imitative of Nature, poetical fictions of real events, poetical images of real appearances in the visible creation, and poetical personages of real human characters; it would seem to follow, that the *language of Poetry* must be an imitation of the *language of Nature*. For nothing but what is supposed to be natural can please; and language, as well as fable, imagery, and moral description, may displease, by being unnatural.—— What then is meant by *Natural Language*? This comes to be our first inquiry.

SECT.

S E C T. I.

An idea of Natural Language.

THE term *Natural Language* has sometimes been used by philosophers to denote those tones of the human voice, attitudes of the body, and configurations of the features, which, being *naturally* expressive of certain emotions of the soul, are universal among mankind, and every where understood. Thus anger, fear, pity, adoration, joy, contempt, and almost every other passion, has a look, attitude, and tone of voice, peculiar to itself; which would seem to be the effect, not of men imitating one another, but of the soul operating upon the body; and which, when well expressed in a picture or statue, or when it appears in human behaviour, is understood by all mankind, as the external sign of that passion which it is for the most part observed to accompany. In this acceptation, *natural language* is contradistinguished to those articulate voices to which the name of *speech* has been appropriated; and which are also universal among mankind, though different in different nations; but derive all their meaning from human compact and *artifice*, and are not understood except by those

those who have been instructed in the use of them. — But in this inquiry the term *Natural Language* denotes that use of speech, or of *artificial language*, which is suitable to the speaker and to the occasion. “Proper words in proper places,” is Swift’s definition of a good style; and may with equal propriety, serve for a definition of that style, or mode of language, which is here called *Natural*, in contradistinction, not to *artificial* (itself being artificial) but to *unnatural*; and which it is the poet’s business to imitate. I say, *to imitate*: for as poets (for a reason already given) copy nature, not as it is, but in that state of perfection, wherein, consistently with verisimilitude, and with the genius of their work, it may be supposed to be; and are therefore said to *imitate* nature, that is, to give a view of nature similar to, but somewhat different from the reality:—so, in forming poetical language, they must take for their model human speech, not in that imperfect state wherein it is used on the common occasions of life, but in that state of perfection, whereof, consistently with verisimilitude, it may be supposed to be susceptible.

But, as we cannot estimate the perfection or imperfection of poetical imagery, till we know the natural appearance of the thing described; so neither can we judge of this perfection of human speech, till we have formed some idea of that quality of language which we express by the epithet *natural*.

That some modes of language are more natural than others, and that one mode may be natural at one time which at another would be unnatural, must be evident even to those who never studied criticism. Would soft words, for example, be natural in the mouth of a very angry man? or do even the vulgar expect blustering expressions from him who melts with pity, or love, or sorrow? Between groans and pain, tears and grief, laughter and jocularly, trembling and fear, the connection is not more natural, than between certain sentiments of the human mind and certain modifications of human language.

Natural language and *good* language are not the same: and Swift's definition, which is equally applicable to both, will not perhaps be found to express adequately the characteristic of either. The qualities of good language are perspicuity, simplicity, elegance, energy, and harmony. But language may possess all these qualities, and yet not be natural. Would the Anacreontic or Ovidian simplicity be natural in the mouth of Achilles upbraiding Agamemnon with his tyranny and injustice; or of Lear defying the tempestuous elements, and imprecating perdition upon his daughters? Would that perspicuity which we justly admire in Cato's soliloquy *, be accounted natural in Ham-

* It must be so. Plato, thou reason'st well, &c.

let's *, by those who know, that the former is supposed to speak with the rationality of a philosopher, and the latter with the agitation of a young man tortured to madness with sorrow, and love, disappointment, and revenge? Would language so magnificent as that in which the sublime Othello speaks of the pomps and honours of war, be natural in the mouth of the soft, the humble, the broken-hearted Desdemona bewailing her unhappy fate? Or would the sonorous harmony of the Dithyrambic song, or Epic poem, suit the simplicity of shepherds, contending in alternate verse, and praising their mistresses, putting forth riddles, or making remarks upon the weather? — Yet language must always be so far simple as to have no superfluous decoration; so far perspicuous, as to let us see clearly what is meant; and so far elegant, as to give no ground to suspect the author of ignorance, or want of taste.

Good language is determinate and absolute. We know it where-ever we meet with it; we may learn to speak and write it from books alone. Whether pronounced by a clown or a hero, a wise man or an idiot, language is still good if it be according to rule. But natural language is something not absolute but relative; and can be estimated by those only, who have studied men as well

* To be, or not to be, &c.

as books; and who attend to the real or supposed character of the speaker, as well as to the import of what is spoken.

There are several particulars relating to the speaker which we must attend to, before we can judge whether his expression be natural.—It is obvious, that his *temper* must be taken into the account. From the fiery and passionate we expect one sort of language, from the calm and moderate another. That impetuosity which is natural in Achilles, would in Sarpedon or Ulysses be quite the contrary; as the mellifluent copiousness of Nestor would ill become the blunt rusticity of Ajax. Those diversities of temper, which make men think differently on the same occasion, will also make them speak the same thoughts in a different manner. And as the temper of the same man is not always uniform, but is variously affected by youth and old age, and by the prevalence of temporary passions; so neither will that style which is most natural to him be always uniform, but may be energetic or languid, abrupt or equable, figurative or plain, according to the passions or sentiments that may happen to predominate in his mind. And hence, to judge whether his language be natural, we must attend, not only to the habitual temper, but also to the *present passions*, and even to the *age* of the speaker.—Nor should we overlook his *intellectual peculiarities*. If his thoughts be confused or indistinct, his style must

must be immethodical and obscure; if the former be much diversified, the latter will be equally copious. — The *external circumstances* of the speaker, his rank and fortune, his education and company, particularly the two last, have no little influence in characterising his style. A clown and a man of learning, a pedantic and a polite scholar, a husbandman and a foldier, a mechanic and a seaman, reciting the same narrative, will, each of them, adopt a peculiar mode of expression, suitable to the ideas that occupy his mind, and to the language he has been accustomed to speak and hear: and if a poet, who had occasion to introduce these characters in a comedy, were to give the same uniform colour of language to them all, the style of that comedy, however elegant, would be unnatural. — Our language is also affected by the very thoughts we utter. When these are lofty or groveling, there is a correspondent elevation or meanness in the language. The style of a great man is generally simple, but seldom fails to partake of the dignity and energy of his sentiments. In Greece and Rome, the corruption of literature was a consequence of the corruption of manners; and the manly simplicity of the old writers disappeared, as the nation became effeminate and servile. Horace and Longinus * scruple

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 323. — 332. Longinus, sect. 9. 44.

not to ascribe the decline of eloquence, in their days, to a littleness of mind, the effect of avarice and luxury. The words of Longinus are remarkable. “ The truly eloquent “ (says he) must possess an exalted and noble “ mind ; for it is not possible for those who “ have all their lives been employed in ser- “ vile pursuits, to produce any thing worthy “ of immortal renown or general admira- “ tion.” In fact, our words not only are the signs, but may be considered as the pictures of our thoughts. The same glow or faintness of colouring, the same consistency or incoherence, the same proportions of great and little, the same degrees of elevation, the same light and shade, that distinguish the one, will be found to characterise the other : and from such a character as Achilles or Othello we as naturally expect a bold, nervous, and animated phraseology, as a manly voice and commanding gesture.—It is hardly necessary to add, that style, in order to be natural, must be adapted to the *sex* and to the *nation* of the speaker. These circumstances give a peculiarity to human thought, and must therefore diversify the modes of human language. I will not say, as some have done, that a lady is always distinguishable by her style and handwriting, as well as by her voice and features ; but I believe it may be truly said, that female conversation, even when learned or philosophical, has, for the most part, an ease and

and a delicacy, which the greatest masters of language would find it difficult to imitate. The style that Shakespeare has given to Juliet's nurse, Mrs Quickly, Desdemona, or Katharine, would not suit any male; nor the phraseology of Dogberry or Petruchio, Pistol or Falstaff, any female character. National peculiarities are also to be attended to by those who study natural language in its full extent. We should expect a copious and flowery style from an Asiatic monarch, and a concise and figurative expression from an American chief. A French marquis, and a country-gentleman of England, would not use the same phrases on the same subject, even though they were speaking the same language with equal fluency. And a *valet-de-chambre* newly imported from Paris, or a Scotch footman who had been born and bred in Edinburgh, appearing in an English comedy, would be censured as an unnatural character, if the poet were to make him speak pure English.

May we not infer, from what has been said, that "Language is then according to nature, when it is suitable to the supposed condition of the speaker?"—meaning by the word *condition*, not only the outward circumstances of *fortune, rank, employment, sex, age, and nation*, but also the internal temperature of the *understanding and passions*, as well as the peculiar nature of the *thoughts* that may happen to occupy the mind. Ho-
race

race seems to have had this in view, when
 he said, that "if what is spoken on the stage
 " shall be unsuitable to the *fortunes* of the
 " speaker, both the learned and unlearned
 " part of the audience will be sensible of the
 " impropriety: — For that it is of great
 " importance to the poet to consider, whe-
 " ther the person speaking be a slave or a
 " hero; a man of mature age, or warm
 " with the passions of youth; a lady of rank,
 " or a bustling nurse; a luxurious Assyrian,
 " or a cruel native of Colchis; a mercantile
 " traveller, or a stationary husbandman;
 " an acute Argive, or a dull Beotian *."

But Horace's remark, it may be said, re-
 fers more immediately to the style of the
 drama; whereas we would extend it to poe-
 try, and even to composition, in general.
 And it may be thought, that in those wri-
 tings wherein the imitation of human life is
 less perfect, as in the Epic poem, or where-
 in the style is uniformly elevated and pure,
 as in History and Tragedy, this rule of lan-
 guage is not attended to. In what respect,
 for example, can the style of Livy or Homer
 be said to be suitable to the condition of
 the speaker? Have we not, in each author,
 a great variety of speeches, ascribed to men
 of different nations, ranks, and characters;
 who are all, notwithstanding, made to utter
 a language, that is not only grammatical,

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 112.

but elegant and harmonious? Yet no reader is offended; and no critic ever said, that the style of Homer or Livy is unnatural.

The objection is plausible. But a right examination of it will be found not to weaken, but to confirm and illustrate the present doctrine. I say, then, that language is natural, when it is suited to the supposed condition and circumstances of the speaker.— Now, in history, the speaker is no other than the historian himself; who claims the privilege of telling his tale in his own way; and of expressing the thoughts of other men, where he has occasion to record them, in his own language. All this we must allow to be natural, if we suppose him to be serious. For every man, who speaks without affectation, has a style and a manner peculiar to himself. A person of learning and eloquence, recapitulating on any solemn occasion the speech of a clown, would not be thought in earnest if he did not express himself with his wonted propriety. It would be difficult, perhaps he would find it impossible, to imitate the hesitation, barbarisms, and broad accent, of the poor man; and if he were to do so, he would affront his audience, and, instead of being thought a natural speaker, or capable of conducting important business, would prove himself a mere buffoon. Now an historian is a person who assumes a character of great dignity, and addresses himself to a most respectable audi-

ence. He undertakes to communicate information, not to his equals only or inferiors, but to the greatest, and most learned men upon earth. He wishes them to listen to him, and to listen with pleasure, to believe his testimony, and treasure up his sayings as lessons of wisdom, to direct them in the conduct of life, and in the government of kingdoms. In so awful a presence, and with views so elevated, what style is it natural for him to assume? A style uniformly serious, and elegant, clear, orderly, and emphatical, set off with modest ornaments to render it pleasing, yet plain and simple, and such as becomes a man whose chief concern it is to know and deliver the truth. The moralist and the preacher are in similar circumstances, and will naturally adopt a similar style: only a more sublime and more pathetic energy, and language still plainer than that of the historian, though not less pure, will with reason be expected from those, who pronounce, the dictates of divine wisdom, and profess to instruct the meanest, as well as the greatest of mankind, in matters of everlasting importance.

When a man, for the public amusement, assumes any character, it is not necessary, nor possible, for him to impose upon us so far as to make us believe him to be the very person he represents: but we have a right to expect that his behaviour shall not belie his pretensions in any thing material. With all his

his powers of incantation, Garrick himself will never be able to charm us into a belief, that he is really Macbeth; all that can be done he does; he speaks and acts just as if he were that person; and this is all that the public requires of him. Were he to fall short, — or rather (for we need not suppose what will never happen) — were any other tragedian to fall short of our expectations, and plead, by way of excuse, that truly he was neither a king nor a traitor, neither an ambitious nor a valiant man, and therefore ought not to be blamed for not acting as becomes one; we should more easily pardon the fault, than the apology. — Now it is very true, that an Epic poet is no more inspired than any other writer, and perhaps was never seriously believed to be so. But as he lays claim to inspiration; and before the whole world professes to display the most interesting and most marvellous events, to be particularly informed in regard to the thoughts as well as actions of men, and to know the affairs of invisible beings and the economy of unseen worlds; we have a right to expect from him a language much elevated above that of history and philosophy, as his assumed character and pretensions are higher than those of the historian and philosopher. From such a man, supposed to be invested with such a character, we have indeed a right to require every possible perfection of human thought and language. And

therefore, if he were to introduce mean persons talking in their own dialect, it would be as unnatural, as if a great orator, on the most solemn occasion, were to lisp and prattle like a child; or a hero to address his victorious army in the jargon of a gypsy or pickpocket.

In the Epopee, the Muse, or rather the Poet, is supposed to speak from beginning to end; the incidental orations ascribed to Thersites or Nestor, to Ulysses or Polypheme, to Ascanius or Eneas, to Satan or Raphael, not being delivered, as in tragedy, by the several speakers in their own persons, but rehearsed by the poet in the way of narrative. These orations, therefore, must not only be adapted to the characters of those to whom they are ascribed, and to the occasion upon which they are spoken, but must also partake of the supposed dignity of the poet's character. And if so, they must be elevated to the general pitch of the composition; even though they be said to have been uttered by persons from whom, in common life, elegance of style would not have been expected. And a certain degree of the same elevation must adhere to every description in Epic poetry, though the thing described should be comparatively unimportant:—which is no more than we naturally look for, when an eloquent man, in a solemn assembly, gives a detail of ordinary events, or recapitulates, in his own style and manner, the sentiments of an

an illiterate peasant. So that in the Epic poem, (and in all serious poetry, narrative or didactic, wherein the poet is the speaker), language, in order to be natural, must be suited to the assumed or supposed character of the poet, as well as to the occasion and subject. Polyphemus, in a farce or comedy, might speak clownishly; because he there appears in person, and rusticity is his character: but Homer and Virgil, rehearsing a speech of Polyphemus, would indeed deliver thoughts suitable to his character and condition, but would express them in their own elegant and harmonious language. — And hence we see, how absurdly those critics argue, who blame Virgil for making Eneas *too poetical* (as they are pleased to phrase it) in the account he gives Dido of his adventures. They might with equal reason affirm, that every person in the Iliad and Odyssey, as well as Eneid, speaks too poetically. The mistake arises from confounding Epic with Dramatic composition, and supposing that the heroes both of the one and of the other speak in their own persons. Whereas, in the first the poet is the only speaker, and in the last he never speaks at all: nay, the first is nothing more, from beginning to end, but a narration, or speech, delivered by a person assuming, and pretending to support, the character of an inspired poet. In the style, therefore, of the Epopee, the poetic character must every where

where predominate, as well as the heroic; because a speech, in order to appear natural, must be suited to the supposed character of the speaker, as well as to the things and persons spoken of.

The puns that Milton ascribes to his devils, on a certain occasion *, are generally and justly condemned. It has, however, been urged, as an apology for them, that they are uttered by evil beings, who may be supposed to have lost, when they fell, all taste for elegance, as well as for virtue; and that the poet, on this one occasion, might have intended to make them both detestable as devils, and despicable as buffoons. But this plea cannot be admitted. For the fiends of Milton, notwithstanding their extreme wickedness, retain an elevation of mind, without which they could not have appeared in an Epic poem, and which is inconsistent with the futility of a buffoon or witling. Granting, then, (what is not likely), that the poet, in this one instance, meant to render them contemptible for their low wit, he must yet be blamed for assigning them a part so repugnant to their general character. Or, even if he could be vindicated on this score, he is liable to censure for having put so paltry a part of his narration in the mouth of the holy angel Raphael. Or, if even for this we were to pardon him, still he is in-

* Paradise Lost, book 6. vers. 609. - 627.