ject of his affection. An emotion fo warm and fo reasonable cannot fail to command the fympathy of the reader. - When Michael, in the eleventh book of Paradife Loft, announces to Adam and Eve the necessity of their immediate departure from the garden of Eden, the poet's art in preserving the decorum of the two characters is very remarkable. Pierced to the heart at the thought of leaving that happy place, Eve, in all the violence of ungovernable forrow, breaks forth into a pathetic apostrophe to Paradife, to the flowers fhe had reared, and to the nuptial bower she had adorned. Adam makes no address to the walks, the trees, or the flowers of the garden, the lofs whereof did not fo much afflict him; but, in his reply to the Archangel, expresses, without a figure, his regret for being banished from a place where he had fo oft been honoured with a fenfible manifestation of the Divine Presence. The use of the apostrophe in the one case, and the omission of it in the other, not only gives a beautiful variety to the style, but also marks that fuperior elevation and composure of mind, by which the poet had all along diftinguished the character of Adam. - One of the finest applications of this figure that is any where to be feen, is in the fourth book of the same Poem; where the author, catching by fympathy the devotion of our first parents, suddenly drops his narrative, and Nn2 joins

joins his voice to theirs in adoring the Father of the universe.

Thus at their shady lodge arrived, both stood, Both turn'd, and under open sky adored The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heayen.

Which they beheld, the moon's refplendent globe, And starry pole: — Thou also mad'st the night, Maker Omnipotent, and thou the day, Which we in our appointed work employ'd Have finish'd. ——

Milton took the hint of this fine contrivance from a well-known passage of Virgil:

	Hic juvenum chorus, ille fenum; qui carmine laudes
	Herculeas et facta ferant;
	ut duros mille labores
ê	Rege fub Euryftheo, fatis Junonis iniquæ
	Pertulerit: - Tu nubigenas, invicte, bimembres
	Hylæum Pholoumque manu; tu Cresia mactas
H	Prodigia. *

The beauty arising from diversified compofition is the same in both, and very great in each. But every reader must feel, that the figure is incomparably more affecting to the mind in the imitation, than in the original. So true it is, that the most rational

^{*} See a fimilar instance, Tasso Gier. lib. 18. st. 14.

emotions raife the most intense fellow-feeling; and that the apostrophe is then the most emphatical, when it displays those workings of human affection, which are at once

ardent, and well-founded.

A full discussion of the present topic would require a methodical and more particular account of the feveral tropes and figures, their congruity to human emotions, and their effects in composition. But these few remarks will perhaps be thought to prove with fufficient evidence, the utility of figurative ex-pression in making language more pleasing and more natural. I shall therefore only add, that tropes and figures, particularly the metaphor, fimilitude, and allegory, are further useful in beautifying language, by fuggesting, together with the thoughts effential to the subject, an endless variety of agreeable images, for which there would be no place, if writers were always to confine themselves to the proper names of things. And this beauty and variety, judiciously applied, is fo far from diffracting, that it tends rather to fix, the attention, and captivate the heart of the reader, by giving light, and life, and pathos to the whole composition.

II. The end of Poetry, above all other literary arts, is to please by imitating nature. I have now shown, that by tropes and sigures language may be made more natural and more pleasing, than it could be without them. It follows, that tropes and sigures

are more necessary to poetry, than to any other mode of writing: — which is the fecond point proposed to be illustrated in this section.

The fame point might be proved from other confiderations. Language, as shown already, is then natural, when it is fuitable to the fupposed condition of the speaker. Figurative language is peculiarly fuitable to the supposed condition of the poet; because figures are suggested by the fancy; and the fancy of him who composes poetry is more employed, than that of any other author. Of all historical, philosophical, and theolo-gical researches, the object is real truth, which is fixed and permanent. The aim of rhetorical declamation (according to Cicero) is apparent truth; which, being less determinate, leaves the fancy of the speaker more free, gives greater fcope to the inventive powers, and supplies the materials of a more figurative phraseology. But the poet is fubject to no restraints, but those of verisimilitude; which is still less determinate than rhetorical truth. He feeks not to convince the judgement of his reader by arguments of either real or apparent cogency; he means only to please and interest him, by an appeal to his fenfibility and imagination. His own imagination is therefore continually at work, ranging through the whole of real and probable existence, "glancing from "heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,"

in quest of images and ideas suited to the . emotions he himfelf feels, and to the fympathies he would communicate to others. And, confequently, figures of fpeech, the offspring of excursive fancy, must (if he fpeak according to what he is supposed to think and feel, that is, according to his fupposed condition) tincture the language of the poet more than that of any other composer. So that, if figurative diction be unnatural in geometry, because all wanderings of fancy are unfuitable, and even impossible, to the geometrician, while intent upon his argument; it is, upon the fame principle, perfectly natural, and even unavoidable in poetry; because the more a poet attends to his fubject, and the better qualified he is to do it justice, the more active will his imagination be, and the more diversified the ideas that prefent themselves to his mind. - Befides, the true poet addresses himself to the passions and sympathies of mankind; which, till his own be raifed, he cannot hope to do with fuccess. And it is the nature of many passions, though not of all, to increase the activity of imagination: and an active imagination naturally vents itself in figurative language; nay, unless restrained by a correct taste, has a tendency to exceed in it; - of which Bishop Taylor, and Lord Verulam, two geniuses, different in kind, but of the highest order, are memorable examples.

I faid, that "the poet feeks not to con-"vince the judgement of his reader by ar-" guments of either real or apparent cogency. I do not mean, that in poetry argument has no place. The most legitimate reasoning, the foundest philosophy, and narratives purely historical, may appear in a poem, and contribute greatly to the honour of the author, and to the importance of his work. All this we have in Paradife Loft. — I mean, that what diffinguishes pure poetry from other writing, is its apnitude, not to fway the judgement by reafoning, but to please the fancy, and move the passions, by a lively imitation of nature. Nor would I exclude poetical embellishment from history or even from philosophy. Plato's Dialogues and Addison's Moral Essays abound in poetic imagery; and Livy and Tacitus often amuse their readers with poetical description. In like manner, though Geometry and Physics be different sciences; - though abstract ideas be the subject, and pure demonstration or intuition the evidence, of the former; and though the material universe, and the informations of sense, be the subject and the evidence of the latter; - yet have these sciences been united by the best philosophers, and very happy effects refulted from the union. In one and the faine work, poetry, history, philosophy, and cratory, may doubtlefs be blended; nay, these arts have all been actually blended in Mysta one

one and the fame work, not by Milton only. but also by Homer, Virgil, Lucan, and Shakespeare. Yet still these arts are different; - different in their ends, and principles, and in the faculties of the mind to which they are respectively addressed: and it is eafy to perceive, when a writer employs

one, and when another.

III. A reason why tropes and figures are more necessary in some forts of poetry, than in others, it is not difficult to affign. This depends on the condition of the supposed fpeaker, particularly on the flate of his imagination and paffions. When the foul pines with forrow, or languishes in love, it keeps its view more fleadily fixed on one or a few ideas, than when it is possessed with enthufiafm, or agitated by jealoufy, revenge, indignation, anxiety, or any other turbulent emotion. In the former case it is inactive; in the latter, restless;

Magno curarum fluctuat æftu, Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc, In partesque rapit varias, perque omnia versat;

and therefore in the one case it will be occupied by few ideas, and in the other by many. The style, therefore, of the amorous or mournful elegy, in order to be imitative of the language of forrow or desponding love, must be simpler, and less diversified by Vol. II.

figures, than that of the dithyrambic fong, or of any other poem in which the speaker

is supposed to be greatly agitated.

I have heard the finest Ode in the world blamed for the boldness of its figures, and for what the critic was pleafed to call obfourity. He had, I suppose, formed his taste upon Anacreon and Waller, whose Odes are indeed very fimple, and would have been very abford, if they had not been fimple. But let us recollect the circumstances of Anacreon, (confidered as the speaker of his own poetry), and of Gray's Welfh Bard. The former warbles his lays, reclining on a bed of flowers, dissolved in tranquillity and -indolence, while all his faculties feem to be engroffed by one or a few pleafarable objects. The latter, just escaped from the massacre of his brethren, under the complicated agitations of grief, revenge, and despair; and furrounded with the fcenery of rocks, mountains, and torrents, flupendous by nature, and now rendered hideous by defolation, imprecates perdition upon the bloody Edward; vand, deized with prophetic enthufiafin, foretells in the most alarming strains, and typifies by the most dreadful images, the difafters Ithat were to overtake his family and Idescendents and If perfpicuity and simplicity beinadural in the fongs of Anacreon, as they certainly are, a figurative style and defultory composition are no less natural in this inimitable performance of Gray. And if rangement real 10 Q

real prophecy must always be so obscure as not to be fully understood till it is accomplished, because otherwise it would interfere with the free agency of man, that poem which imitates the ftyle of prophecy. must also, if natural, be to a certain degree obfcure; not indeed in the images or words, but in the allufions. And it is in the allufions only, not in the words or images, (for these are most emphatical and picturesque). that the poem partakes of obscurity; and even its allusions will hardly feem obscure to those who are acquainted with the history of England. Those critics, therefore, who find fault with this poem, because it is not so fimple as the fongs of Anacreon, or the loveverses of Shenstone and Waller, may as well blame Shakespeare, because Othello does not fpeak in the fweet and fimple language of Desdemona. Horace has no where attempted a theme of fuch animation and fublimity, as this of Gray; and yet Horace, like his mafter Pindar, is often bold in his transitions, and in the style of many of his odes extremely figurative. But this we not only excuse, but applaud, when we consider, that in those odes the affumed character of the fpeaker is enthuliafm, which in all its operations is fomewhat violent, and must therefore give a peculiar vehemence both to thought and to language. I s my winismed

On what principle, then, it may be faid, are we to look for simplicity and exact ar-

rangement, in the style of an Epic poem? Why is not the language of the Iliad and Eneid as figurative as that of Pindar ? - To this I answer, first, That the assumed character of the Epic poet is calm infpiration, the effects whereof upon the mind must be supposed to be very different from those produced by enthufiafm or prophetic rapture; regularity and composure being as effential to the former, as wildness and vehemence are to the latter: and fecondly. That a very figurative ftyle continued through a long work becomes tirefome; and therefore. that all poems of great length ought to be methodical in the plan, and fimples ing the execution. b. Abrupt transition, boldness of figure, and thoughts elevated almost to extravagance, may please in a short poem; as the dainties of a banquet, and the fplendour of a trinmph, may amuse for a day: but much feafting destroys health, and perpetual glare and tumult flupify the fenfes; and, the high lyric Ayle continued through many pages would fatigue the attention, confound the judgement, and bewilder the fanfurable. In fact we find, that no poet and ever popular who did not posses the art of harmonics supportion.

What I have a jay on the subject of Poc-AHDrmon may be referred to one or other of these heads: Sweetness, Measing, and Imitation.

In order to give fucetnist to language, cither

this if and er, urft, That the alimned track racker of the Hoic , A A iH O , intimization,

rancement, in the flyle of an Epic poet A William the language of the lind and noid as flyurative as that of Finday ! - 10

Of the Sound of Poetical Language,

true; regulation and composite being as TTV is folly to prefer found to fenie. Yet the ear, like every other perceptive faculty, is capable of gratification; and therefore to the found of words fome regard is to be had, even in profe. For ill-founding language can never be agreeable, either to the hearer or to the speaker; and of different modifications of well-founding language fome will be found to be more agreeable than others. It is the business of the poet to make his ftyle as agreeable, and confequently as pleafing to the ear, as the nature of the fubject will allow. And to the harmony of language it behoves him, more than any other writer, to attend; as it is more especially his concern to render his work pleafurable. In fact we find, that no poet was ever popular who did not possess the art of harmonious composition,

What I have to fay on the subject of Poetical Harmony may be referred to one or other of these heads: Sweetness, Measure, and

Imitation.

I. In order to give fweetness to language, either

either in verse or prose, all words of harsh found, difficult pronunciation, or unwieldy magnitude, are to be avoided as much as poffible, unless when they have in the found fomething peculiarly emphatical; and words are to be fo placed in respect of one another, as that discordant combinations may not refult from their union. But in poetry this is more necessary than in profe; poetical language being understood to be an imitation of natural language improved to that perfection which is confiftent with probability. To poetry, therefore, a greater latitude must be allowed than to profe, in expressing, by tropes and figures of pleafing found, those ideas whereof the proper names are in any respect offensive, either to the ear or to the

II. How far verification or regular measure may be effential to this art, has been disputed by critical writers; some holding it to be indispensably necessary, and some not necessary at all. Without recapitulating what has been said by others, I shall only deliver my own opinion, which, if I mistake not, will be found consistent with the principles

already established.

First, then, I am of opinion, that to poetry verse is not essential. In a prose work, we may have the fable, the arrangement, and a great deal of the pathos, and language,

^{*} See part 2. chap. 1. fect. 3. § I. 1. 2.

of poetry; and fuch a work is certainly a poem, though perhaps not a perfect one. For how abfurd would it be to fay, that by changing the polition only of a word or two in each line, one might divest Homer's Iliad of the poetical character ! At this rate, the arts of poetry and verlification would be the fame; and the rules in Despauter's Grammar, and the moral diffichs afcribed to Cato. would be as real poetry as any part of Virgil. In fact, fome very ancient poems, when tranflated into a modern tongue, are far less poetical in verse than in prose; the alterations necessary to adapt them to our numbers being detrimental to their fublime fimplicity; of which any person of taste will be fentible, who compares our common profe-version of Job, the Pfalms, and Song of Solomon, with the beft metrical paraphrafe of those books that has yet appeared . Nay,

ger part a shape in fich in [Mill The

Madame Dacier, zealous to vindicate her Homer, feeins to carry the encomium ou profe-translation rather too far, when the exclaims, "Ony, je ne crains point de le dire, et je pourrois le pronver, les poetes traduis en vers cessent d'etre poetes "Le Bar she is right in what she says a latte after "En fait de traduc-" ction, il y a fouvent dans la prose une précusen, une beauté, et une force, dont la posse ne peut approcher. "Les livres des Prophetes, et les Picaumes, dans la vulgate même, sont pleins de passages, que le plus grand poete du monde ne sgattroit readre en vers, fans leur faire perdre de leur majesté, et de leur encre gic."

Préface a l' Iliade de Mad. Dacier, p. 39.

in many cases, Comedy will be more poetical, because more pleasing and natural, in prose, than in verse. By versifying Tom Jones and The Merry Wives of Windsor, we should spoil the two sinest Comic poems, the one Epic, the other Dramatical, now in the world.

But, fecondly, Though verse be not effential to poetry, it is necessary to the perfection of all poetry that admits of it. Verie is to poetry, what colours are to painting . A painter might difplay great genius, and draw mafterly figures with chalk or ink; but if he intend a perfect picture, he must employ in his work as many colours as are feen in the object he imitates. Or, to adopt a beautiful comparison of Demosthenes, quoted by Ariffotle +, " Verlification is to poetry " what bloom is to the human counter-"nance." A good face is agreeable when the bloom is gone; and good poetry may pleafe without verification : harmonious numbers may fet off an indifferent poem, and a fine bloom indifferent features; but, without verife, poetry is incomplete; land the effect of habit or prejudice, are exceeding-

Horace scenis to time at the thine comparition, when, after specifying the several series of vertebulable to Et pie, Elegiac, Agrice and Dramatic, Poetry, he adden its

Deferiptus services, pour confue tolores, pris velle Cur ego, si nequeo ignoroque, Poeta salutor?

Ar. Poet. verf. 86.

Ariftot, Rhetor, lib. 3. capt 4.

II beauty

beauty is not perfect, unless to sweetness and regularity of feature there be superadded,

The bloom of young defire, and purple light of

If numbers are necessary to the perfection of the higher poetry, they are no less so to that of the lower kinds, to Pastoral, Song, and Satire, which have little besides the language and versification to distinguish them from prose; and which some ancient authors are unwilling to admit to the rank of poems; — though I think it too nice a scruple, both because such writings are commonly termed Poetical, and also because there is, even in them, something that may not improperly be considered as an imitation of nature.

That the rhythm and measures of verse are naturally agreeable; and therefore, that by these poetry may be made more pleasing than it would be without them, is evident from this, that children and illiterate people, whose admiration we cannot suppose to be the effect of habit or prejudice, are exceedingly delighted with them. In many proverbial sayings, where there is neither rhime nor alliteration *, rhythm is obviously studied. Nay, the use of rhythm in poetry is univer-

[·] See Effay on Laughter, chap, 2. feet. 3.

fal; whereas alliteration and rhime, though relished by some nations, are not much sought after by others. And we need not be at a loss to account for the agreeableness of pro-portion and order, if we reflect, that they fuggest the agreeable ideas of contrivance and skill, at the same time that they render the connection of things obvious to the understanding, and imprint it deeply on the memory *. Verse, by promoting distinct and easy remembrance, conveys ideas to the mind with energy, and enlivens every emotion the poet intends to raife in the reader or hearer. Befides, when we attend to verfes, after hearing one or two, we become acquainted with the measure, which therefore we always look for in the fequel. This perpetual interchange of hope and gratification is a fource of delight; and to this in part is owing the pleafure we take in the rhimes of modern poetry. And hence we fee, that though an incorrect rhime, or untuneable verse, be in itself, and compared with an important fentiment, a very trifling matter; yet it is no trifle in regard to its effects on the hearer; because it brings difappointment, and so gives a temporary shock to the mind, and interrupts the current of the affections; and because it suggests the difagreeable ideas of negligence or want of

^{*} On the effects of Rhythm in music, see above, part r. chap. 6. sect. 2. § 4.

skill on the part of the author. And therefore, as the public ear becomes more delicate, the negligence will be more glaring, and the disappointment more intenfely felt; and correctness of rhime and of measure will of course be the more indispensable. In our tongue, rhime is more necessary to Lyric, than to Heroic poetry. The reason feems to be, that in the latter the ear can of itself perceive the boundary of the meafure, because the lines are all of equal length nearly, and every good reader makes a short pause at the end of each; whereas, in the former, the lines vary in length; and therefore the rhime is requifite to make the measure and rhythm sufficiently perceptible. Custom too may have some influence. Englifh Odes without rhime are uncommon; and therefore have fomething awkward about them, or fomething at least to which the public ear is not yet thoroughly reconciled.

Moreover, in poetry, as in music, Rhythm is the source of much pleasing variety; of variety tempered with uniformity, and regulated by art: insomuch, that, notwithstanding the likeness of one hexameter verse to another, it is not common, either in Virgil or in Homer, to meet with two contiguous hexameters, whose rhythm is exactly the same. And though all English heroic verses consist of five seet; among which the lambic predominates; yet this measure, in Pp 2

respect of rhythm alone, is susceptible of more than thirty varieties. And let it be remarked further, that different kinds of verse, by being adapted to different subjects and modes of writing, give variety to the poetic language, and multiply the charms of

this pleafing art. In son , warren station

What has formerly been shown to be true in regard to ftyle, will alfo in many cases hold true of verification, "that it is then " natural, when it is adapted to the supposed " condition of the speaker." - In the Epopee, the poet affumes the character of calm inspiration; and therefore his language must be elevated, and his numbers majeftic and uniform. A peafant speaking in heroic or hexameter verse is no improbability here; because his words are supposed to be transmitted by one who will of his own accord give them every ornament necessary to reduce them into dignified meafure; as an eloquent man, in a folemn affembly, recapitulating the speech of a clown, would naturally express it in pure and perspicuous language. The uniform heroic measure will fuit any fubject of dignity, Twhether marrative or didactic, that admits dr requires uniformity of Ryleson In Tragedy, where the imitation of real life is more perfect than in Epic poetry, the uniform magnificence of Epicaninber might be improper ; because the heroes are heroities are supposed to speak in their own perfons, and according to the immediate

immediate impulse of passion and fendiment. Yet even in Tragedy, the verification may be both harmonious and dignified ; because the characters are taken chiefly from high life, and the events from a remote period; and because the higher poetry is permitted to imitate nature, not as it is, but in that state of perfection, in which it might be. The Greeks and Romans confidered their hexameter as too artificial for Dramatic poetry, and therefore in tragedy, and even in comedy, made use of the lambic, and fome other measures that came near the cadence of conversation; we use the lambic both in the epic and dramatic poem; but, for the most part, it is, or ought to be, much more elaborate in the former, than in the latter. In Dramatic Comedy, where the manners and concerns of familiar life are exhibited. Verse would feem to be unnatural, except it be fo like the found of common discourse, as to be hardly distinguifhable from it. Custom, however, may in fome countries determine otherwife; and against custom, in these matters, it is vain to argue. The professed enthusiasm of the dithyrambic poet renders wildness, variety, and a fonorous harmony of numbers pecuharly fuitable to his odes. The love-fonnet, and Anacreontic fong, will be less various, more regular, and of a fofter harmony; because the flate of mind expressed in it has more composure. - Philosophy can manediace fcarce fcarce go further in this investigation, without deviating into whim and hypothesis. The particular forts of verse, to be adopted in the lower species of poetry, are deter-mined by fashion chiefly, and the practice of approved authors.

III. The origin and principles of imitative harmony, or of that artifice by which the found is made, as Pope fays, "an " echo to the fenfe," may be explained in

the following manner.

It is pleafing to observe the uniformity of nature in all her operations. Between moral and material beauty and harmony, between moral and material deformity and diffonance, there obtains a very ftriking analogy. The visible and audible expressions of almost every virtuous emotion are agreeable to the eye and the ear, and those of almost every criminal passion disagreeable. The looks, the attitudes, and the vocal founds, natural to benevolence, to gratitude, to compaffion, to piety, are in themfelves graceful and pleafing; while anger, difcontent, defpair, and cruelty bring discord to the voice. deformity to the features, and diffortion to the limbs. That flowing curve, which painters know to be effential to the beauty of animal thape, gives place to a multiplicity of right lines and fharp angles in the countenance and gefture of him who knits his brows, stretches his nostrils, grinds his teeth, and clenches his fift; whereas devotion,

magnanimity, benevolence, contentment, and good-humour, foften the attitude, and give a more graceful fwell to the outline of every feature. Certain vocal tones accompany certain mental emotions. The voice of forrow is feeble and broken, that of despair boisterous and incoherent; joy affumes a fweet and sprightly note, fear a weak and tremulous cadence; the tones of love and benevolence are mufical and uniform, those of rage loud and dissonant; the voice of the fedate reasoner is equable and grave, but not unpleafant; and he who declaims with energy employs many varieties of modulation fuited to the various emotions that predominate in his discourse.

But it is not in the language of paffion only, that the human voice varies its tone, or the human face its features. Every striking fentiment, and every interesting idea,

has an effect upon it. One would efteen that person no adept in Narrative eloquence, who should describe with the very same accent, swift and slow motion, extreme labour and easy persormance, agreeable sensation and excruciating pain; who should talk of the tumult of a tempessuous ocean, the roar of thunder, the devastations of an earthquake, or an Egyptian pyramid tumbling into ruins, in the same tone of voice wherewith he describes the murmur of a rill.

the warbling of the harp of Eolus, the fwinging of a cradle, or the descent of an angel.

angel. Elevation of mind gives dignity to the voice. From Achilles, Sarpedon, and Othello, we should as naturally expect a manly and sonorous accent, as a nervous style and majestic attitude. Coxcombs and bullies, while they assume airs of importance and valour, affect also a dignisied articulation.

Since the tones of natural language are fo various, Poetry, which imitates the language of nature, must also vary its tones; and, in respect of sound as well as of meaning, be framed after that model of ideal perfection, which the variety and energy of the numan articulate voice render probable. This is the more easily accomplished, because, in every language, there is between the sound and sense of certain words a perceptible analogy; which, though not so accurate as to lead a foreigner from the found to the signification *, is yet accurate enough

reduction and dark for the

Chiama gli habitator de l'ombre eterne li ranco mon de la tartarea tromba: Treman le spaciose atre caverne, Et l'aer cieco a quel rumor rimbomba;

II Ne

^{*} There is in Taffo's Gierufalemme Liberata a famous stanza, of which Rousseau says, that a good ear and sincere heart are alone sufficient to enable one to judge of it. The imitative harmony and the poetry are indeed admirable; but I doubt whether a person who understands neither stalian nor Latin could even guess at the meaning from the sound. I have attempted it in English, but am sensible of my mability to do it justice.

enough to show, that, in forming such words, regard has been had to the imitative qualities of vocal found. Such, in English, are the words yell, crash, crack, his, roar,

murmur, and many others.

All the particular laws that regulate this fort of imitation, as far as they are founded in nature, and liable to the cognizance of philosophy, depend on the general law of style above mentioned. Together with the other circumstances of the supposed speaker, the poet takes into consideration the tone of voice suitable to the ideas that occupy his mind, and thereto adapts the sound of his language, if it can be done consistently with ease and elegance of expression. But when this imitative harmony is too much sought after, or words appear to be chosen for sound rather than sense, the verse becomes finical and ridiculous *.

Words

Ne ftridendo così da le fuperne Regioni del cielo il folgor piomba; Ne si Scossa giamai trema la terra, Quando i vapori in sen gravida serra.

Can. 4. St. 4.

To call the tribes that roam the Stygian shores,
The hoarse Tartarean trump in thunder roars;
Hell through her trembling caverns starts aghast,
And Night's black void rebellows to the blast:
Far less the peal that rends th'ethereal world,
When bolts of vengeance from on high are hurl'd;
Far less the shock that heaves earth's tottering frame,
When its torn entrails spout th'imprison'd stame.

[•] Such is Ronfard's effected imitation of the fong of the fky-lark: Vol. II. • Q q Elle

Words by their found may imitate found; and quick or flow articulation may imitate quick or flow motion. Hence, by a proper choice and arrangement of words, the poet may imitate, Sounds that are, Sweet with dignity (a), - Sweet and tender (b), gradified iniques introduce and sel had Loud son W. biggs, awards to gather

Elle quindec du zephire Sublime on l'air vire et revire, av an col sun') Et y declique un joli cris, adus suplaced sell Qui rit, guerit, et tire l'ire une l'amoralque? Des esprits mieux que je n'ecris.

This is as ridiculous as that line of Ennius, de olis the fifth of the Odyfley :-

Tum tuba terribili fonitu taratantara dixit;

Or as the following verses of Swift; and ad P (5)

The man with the kettle-drum enters the gate, Dub dub a dub dub: the trumpeters follow, Tantara tantara; while all the boys hollow.

(a) No fooner had th' Almighty ceas'd, than all The multitude of angels, with a shout Lond as from numbers without number, fweet As from bleft voices uttering joy; heaven rung With jubilee, and loud hofannas fill'd The eternal regions, Par. Loft, book 3.

See also the night-storm of thunder, lightening, wind and rain, in Virg. Georg. lib. 1. verl. 328 - 334.

secol Et longum, formofe, vale, vale, inquit, Iola.

Pos Led VIII data

Formofam refonase doces Amarillida filvas. allowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait, Virg. Ecl. 1.

Sounds that are, Sweet

Loud (c), — and Harsh (d); — and Motions that are, Slow in consequence of dignity (c), — Slow in consequence of difficulty (f), — Swift

See also the simile of the nightingale, Geor. lib. 4, vers. 511. And see that wonderful couplet describing the wailings of the owl, Æncid. IV. 462.

Cum fonitu venit, et ruere omnia vifa repente,
Tyrrhenufque tubæ mugire per æthera clangor;
Suspiciunt; iterum atque iterum fragor intonat ingens. Eneid. 8.

See also the form in the first book of the Eneid, and in the fifth of the Odyssey; — and the stanza already quoted from Tasso.

(d) The hoarfe rough verfe flould like the torrent Pope.

With impetuous recoil and jarring found,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder.

Par. Loft, 11. 879.

See alfo Homer's Iliad, lib. 3. verf. 363. and Clarke's annotation.

- (e) See an exquisite example in Gray's Progress of Poefy; the conclusion of the third stanza.
 - (f) And when up ten ficep flopes you've drag'd your thighs.

 Pope.

Just brought out this, when scarce his tongue could stir.

Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait,
Tempest the ocean. Par. Loft, VII. 411.

Ses

Swift and noify (g),—Swift and fmooth (h),
—Uneven and abrupt (k),—Quick and
joyous (m). An unexpected paule in the
verie may also imitate a sudden failure of

See the famous description of Sifyphus rolling the frone, Odyst lib. 11. verf. 592. See Quintil Inst. Orat lib. 9. cap. 4. 5 4. compared with Paradise Lost, book 2. verf. 1022.

(g) Quadrupedante putrem fonitu quatit ungula campum. Æneid.

Αύταρ έπείτα πεδόεδε κυλίνδετο λάας άταιδης.

Δίθετη κόμερας κίω κότωο κιαικοί το Ολίβ. Α μ. (π)

το περικού το κατορού επιπρού μετορού που δου δου διαικού που δ

See also Virg. Ancid. lib. 1. verf. 83 .- 87.

(b) See wild as the winds o'er the defart he flies. Only Pope.

Ille volat, fimul arva fuga, fimul ecquora verreus.

Price σ επειτα πέλει, χαλεπι στο ένεα. He fied.

(k) Henra b ararra катагта парагта то водила т издег Hom.

The lass thrick'd, frarted up, and thrick'd again.

(m) Let the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks found,
To many a youth, and many a maid, we had
Dancing in the chequir'd field.

app inse a di Milesels Allegroin :

See also Grays Progress of Peefy, Stanza 3.

ftrength

Par Est.

strength (n), or interruption of motion (o), or give vivacity to an image or thought, by fixing our attention longer than usual upon the word that precedes it (p). — Moreover, when we describe great bulk, it is natural for us to articulate flowly even in common discourse; and therefore a line of poetry that requires a flow pronunciation, or seems longer than it should be, may be used with good effect in describing values of fize (q). — Sweet and smooth numbers

See also Virg. Georg. lib. 3. verf. 515. 516.

(o) For this, befure to night thou fhalt have cramps,
Side fliches that fhall pen thy breath up. Urchins
Shall exercise upon thee.

Prospero to Calyban in the Tempest.

See Pope's Iliad, XIII. 199.

(p) —— How often from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
Celestial voices, to the midnight air,
Sole, — or responsive to each other's note,
Singing their great Creator?

Par. Lest, b. 4.

And over them triumphant Death his dart Shook, — but delay'd to strike.

See also Hom. Odyff. lib. 9. vers. 290.

(q) Thus firetch'd out, huge in length, the arch fiend lay.

And the service of t

are most proper, when the poet paints agreeable objects, or gentle energy (r); and harsher founds when he speaks of what is

ugly, violent, or difagreeable (s). This too is according to the nature of common language; for we generally employ harsher tones

can occanonally express themselves morewhat Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen -11300 to rademptum. Jones w Virg. Eneid. 3.

Et magnos membrorum artus, magna offa, lacertofque Exuit, atque ingens media confistit arena. -37 di burnell bour Junium Mi

(r) Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori, Hie nemus, hic ipfo tecum confumerer avo. one much as some a teneral virg. Ect. 10.

The dumb shall fing, the lame his crutch forego, And leap, exulting like the bounding roe, a mind clevated with great is

See Milton's description of the evening, Par. Loft, book 4.

Ye gentle gales, beneath my body blow, And fortly lay me on the waves below. Pope's Sappho.

(1) Stridenti ftipula miserum difperdere earmen. about olls and milling. Ed. 3.

> Immo ego Sardois videar tibi amarior herbis, Horridior ruico, projecta vilius algal 202

Virg. Ecl. 7.

at Lyamples are frequent in the great retibors ! for Neu patriæ validas in viscera vertife vires. Virg. Eneid. 6. we O now for ever

See also Milton's description of the Lazar-house in Paradife Loft, book 11. verf. 477.-492.

of voice to express what we dislike, and more melodious notes to describe the objects of love, complacency, or admiration. Harsh numbers however should not be frequent in poetry. For in this art, as in music, concord and melody ought always to predominate. And we find in fact, that good poets can occasionally express themselves somewhat harfuly, when the fubject requires it, and yet preferve the fweetness and majesty of poetical diction .- Further, the voice of complaint, pity, love, and all the gentler affections is mild and mufical, and should therefore be imitated in mufical numbers; while despair, defiance, revenge, and turbulent emotions in general, affume an abrupt and fonorous cadence. Dignity of description (t), folemn vows (u), and all fentiments that proceed from a mind elevated with great ideas (v), require a correspondent pomp of language and verification. - Laftly: An irregular or uncommon movement in the verfe may fometimes be of use, to make the reader Bright Line

⁽¹⁾ See Virg. Geor. I. 328. and Homer, Virgil, and Milton, paffim. See also Dryden's Alexander's Feast, and Gray's Odes.

lamo ese Serdois videar tibe marior heroi-(u) See Virg. Ameid IV. 24 Jun voil molf

and which (v) Examples are frequent in the great authors. Othello's exclamation my at sabilar mining Hall

O now for ever Farewell the granguil mind ! &co. All. 3. Scene 3. conceive contains and stoll and conceive

conceive an image in a particular manner. Virgil describing horses running over rocky heights at full speed, begins the line with two dactyls, to imitate rapidity, and concludes it with eight long fyllables (w); which is a very unufual measure, but feems well adapted to the thing expressed, namely, to the descent of the animal from the hills to the low ground. At any rate, this extraordinary change of the rhythm, may be allowed to bear some resemblance to the animal's change of motion, as it would be felt by a rider, and as we may suppose it is felt by the animal itself.

Other forms of imitative harmony, and many other examples, besides those referred to in the margin, will readily occur to all who are conversant in the writings of the best verlifiers, particularly Homer, Virgit, Milton, Lucretius, Spenfer, Dryden, Shake-fpeare, Pope, and Gray.

I must not conclude without remarking, in justice to the Greek and Latin poets, that, from our ignorance of the ancient pronunciation, we are but incompetently skilled in

and not in this line there the no fewer than (a) Saxa per, et scopulos, et depressa convalles, Geor. III. 276. Milton seems to have imitated this movement, when he says, 1011 1011 1011 1011 1011 1011

we make only five or fix of the fyllables long s-

- Eternal wrath of apolicy Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.

See above, Part. 1. chap. 6. feet. or. (2003)

c li their

their numbers; and that there may be, and probably are, in Homer and Virgil, many imitative harmonics whereof we are not fenfible at all. The quantity of Greek and Latin fyllables we know well enough; but it is a notorious fact, that in cases innumerable or r pronunciation of them is contrary to what we know to be right. Thus, in reading the following line of Horace,

Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poete,

every body pronounces the first fyllable of volunt long, and the last short; and yet every body knows, that the first is short, and the last long. All regular hexameters begin with a long syllable; yet how often do the best readers introduce them with a short one!

When we read this line, by which Virgil meant both to describe and to imitate flow motion,

and setting and the same of the party of the

we make only five or fix of the fyllables long; and yet in this line there are no fewer than ten long fyllables. Must it not then to a Roman ear have appeared more imitative, than it does to ours?

Bornt after them to the bottomiefs pir

* Georg. i. 380 Feb. 5 creds a 1984 avoids and

Vol. II. Rr In

In each of those admirable hexameters, so descriptive of great size, or garanteers

Et magnos membrorum artus, magna offa, lacertosque.

Monthrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lu-

there are eleven long fyllables according to the ancient pronunciation, and only fix or feven according to the modern. If, then, there be any natural fuitableness in the slow rhythm of these lines, (and Virgil certainly thought there was), must not that have been more observable anciently than it is now?

In the English tongue, the foot Spondens, confifting of two long fyllables, is not frequent, there being generally one fhort fyllable, or more, for each long fyllable. And as our accented or emphatic fyllables are all long, and as we give emphasis to the Greek and Latin fyllables in the fame way almost as to our own, we seldom preserve in our pronunciation the rhythm of the ancient poetry, and are (I think) most apt to lose it in those verses that abound in the Spondeus. The Dactyl, of one long and two thort fyllables, is very common in English; and it fometimes happens, though not often, that in pronouncing an hexameter of Dactyls we do preserve the true rhythm tolerably well. Of fuch an hexameter I take the rhythm to be the fame with the following:

Multitudes

Multitudes rush'd all at once on the plain with a thundering uproar.

And according to this rhythm, nearly, we do in fact pronounce the last line of Homer's celebrated description of Sifyphus *. But this line of Virgil, whose measure and motion are exactly the same, the moderns pronounce differently, at least in the first three feet:

Quadrupedante/putrem fonitu quatit ungula camp-

Of this other line of Virgil, describing loud found,

Suspiciunt; iterum atque iterum fragor intonat

the rhythm is still the same, after making the necessary elisions; and if the reader pronounce it so, his ear will perhaps inform him, that it is more imitative than he at sirst imagined.

In the beginning of the Eneid, Eolus, at Juno's defire, fends out his winds to defirey

* Aurap s-	7710 7011 7674 71-	Joseph Ru-	Key J. TO	hdas ar-	lastes.
AND THE RESIDENCE OF THE PROPERTY OF THE PROPE	outh'd all at	A NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY AND	医水油 二氢的溶液 二氢医氯苯	RESERVE AND THE PROPERTY AND A	RESERVE THE PROPERTY.
Quidrupes	danie pu	egrem foni-	te quatit	17 wagula	campum-
Sufpici-	unräfel (e atqui ice.	Pum fragor	(intenst)	ingens.

the

Distribute 1/

Trojan fleet. Neptune rebukes them for invading his dominions without his leave; and is just going to denounce a threatening, or inflict a punishment, when he recollects, that it was proper to calm his waters, before he did any thing else a work stody (2006)

Quos ego-fed motos przestat componere suctus.

The interrupted threat is a dactyl;—the remainder of the line goes off in spondees. By this transition from a quick to a flow rhythm, is it not probable, that the poet intended to imitate the change of Neptune's purpose? But this is lost in our pronunciation, though in the ancient I believe it must have been obtervable.—One instance more, and I quit the subject.

When Dido, that fatal morning on which the put a period to her life, faw that Eneas and his Trojans were actually gone, the at first broke forth into frantic denunciations of revenge and ruin; but soon checks herfelf, as if exhausted by her passion, when the reflects, that her ravings were all in vain. "Unhappy Dido! (says she), thy evil def"tiny is now come upon thee." This

gan long years ago, but have not yet it little

Infelix Dido! nune te fata impia tangunt. Eneid, iv. co6. — If we read facta impia, with the Mediceau Munuscript, the Rhythm is still the same, and the sense not materially different: "Unhappy Dido! now are the consequences of thy broken vows come upon thee."

change of her mind from tempest to a momentary calm (for the immediately relapfes into vengeance and diffraction) is finely imitated in the poet's numbers. The words I have translated form a line of Spondees, whose flow and fost motion is a striking contrast to the abrupt and sonorous rapidity of the preceding and following verses. This beauty, too, is in a great measure lost in our pronunciation; for we only give five or fix long fyllables to a line which really contains eleven. - Are thefe remarks too refined? Those readers will hardly think for who have studied Virgil's verification; which is artful and apposite to a degree that was never equalled or attempted by any other poet.

In the course of these observations on the found of Poetical Language, I am not conscious of having affirmed any thing which does not admit of proof. Some of the proofs, however, I was obliged to leave out; as they would have led me into long disquisitions, relating rather to the peculiarities of Latin and English verse, than to the general characters of the Poetic Art. These proofs may possibly find a place hereafter in A Treatise of versistication and English prosody, which I began some years ago, but have not yet finished, which I began some years ago, but have not yet finished.

Manuferipe, the Physicin is full the tame, and the feater not materially hill **M** if **H** in **H** in

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A N

E S S A Y

ON

LAUGHTER

AND

LUDICROUS COMPOSITION.

E S S A Y

ON

LAUGHTER

AND

LUDICROUS COMPOSITION.

Written in the year 1764.

Ego vero omni de re facetius puto posse ab homine non inurbano, quam de ipsis facetiis, disputari. Cicero.

CHAP. I.

Introduction. The Subject proposed.

Opinions of Philosophers, — I. Aristotle — II. Hobbes — III. Hutcheson — IV. Akenside.

F Man, it is observed by Homer, that he is the most wretched, and, by Addison and others, that he is the merriest animal in the whole creation: and both opinions are plausible, Vol. II.

and both perhaps may be true. If, from the acuteness and delicacy of his perceptive powers, from his remembrance of the past, and his anticipation of what is to come, from his restless and creative fancy, and from the various fensibilities of his moral nature, Man be exposed to many evils, both imaginary and real, from which the brutes are exempted, he does also from the fame sources derive innumerable delights, that are far beyond the reach of every other animal. That our pre-eminence in pleasure should thus, in some degree, be counterbalanced by our pre-eminence in pain, was necessary to exercife our virtue, and wean our hearts from fublunary enjoyment; and that beings thus befet with a multitude of forrows should be fupplied from fo many quarters with the means of comfort, is fuitable to that benign egonomy which characterifes every operation of nature, and a series of the series of

When a brute has gratified those few appetites that minister to the support of the species, and of the individual, he may be said to have attained the summit of happinels; above which a thousand years of prosperity could not raise him a single step. But for Man, her favourite child, Nature has saide a more liberal provision. He, if he have only guarded against the necessities of life, and included the animal part of his constitution, has experienced but little of that felicity whereof he is capable. To say

nothing at present of his moral and religious gratifications, is he not furnished with faculties that fit him for receiving pleafure from almost every part of the visible universe? Even to those persons, whose powers of observation are confined within a narrow circle, the exercise of the necessary arts may open inexhaustible fources of amusement, to alleviate the cares of a folitary and laborious life. Men of more enlarged understanding. and more cultivated tafte, are still more plentifully fupplied with the means of innocent delight. For fuch, either from acquired habit, or from innate propentity, is the foul of man, that there is hardly any thing in art or nature from which we may not derive gratification. What is great, overpowers with pleafing aftonishment; what is little, may charm by its nicety of proportion, or beauty of colour; what is diverlified, pleafes by fupplying a feries of novelties; what is uniform, by leading us to reflect on the skill displayed in the arrangement of its parts; order and connection gratify our fenfe of propriety; and certain forms of irregularity and unfuitableness raise within us that agreeable emotion whereof LAUGHTER is the outward fign. Dead Silve Grant tag

RISIBILITY, confidered as one of the characters that diftinguish man from the inferior animals, and as an influment of harmless, and even of profitable recreation, to every age, condition, and capacity, of S f 2 human

human creatures, must be allowed to be not unworthy of the philosopher's notice. Whatever is peculiar to rational nature, must be an object of some importance to a rational being; and Milton has observed, that of the single man - see a

Smiles from reason flow. To brute denied:

---- Whatever may be employed as a means of discountenancing vice, folly, or falsehood, is an object of importance to a moral being; and Horace has remarked, and land a land

Ridiculum acri Fortius et melius magnas plerumque fecat res *.

Let this apology fuffice at prefent for my choice of a fubject. Even this apology might have been spared: for nothing is below the attention of philosophy, which the Author of Nature has been pleased to establish,

In tracing out the cause of Laughter, I mean rather to illustrate than to confute the opinions of those who have already written on the fame subject. The investigation has been feveral times attempted; nor is the caufe altogether unknown. Yet, notwithstanding

And cut the knot when graver reasons fail. the me acceptant on the

former discoveries, the following Essay may perhaps be found to contain something new; to throw light on certain points of criticism that have not been much attended to; and even to have some merit (if I execute my purpose) as a samiliar example of philosophical induction carried on with a strict regard to sact, and without any previous bias

in favour of any theory.

To provoke Laughter, is not effential either to Wit or to Humour. For though that unexpected discovery of refemblance between ideas supposed diffimilar, which is called Wit, and that comic exhibition of fingular characters, fentiments, and imagery, which is denominated Humour, do frequently raifelaughter, they do not raife it always. Addison's Poem to Sir Godfrey Kneller, in which the British kings are likened to heathen gods, is exquifitely witty, and yet not laugh-Pope's Effay on Man abounds in ferious wit; and examples of ferious humour are not uncommon in Fielding's Hiftory of Parfon Adams, and in Addison's Account of Sir Roger de Coverly. Wit, when the fubject is grave, and the allufion fublime, raifes admiration instead of laughter: and if the comic fingularities of a good man appear in circumstances of real distress, the imitation of those fingularities, in the Epic or Dramatic Comedy, will-form a species of humour, which, if it should force a smile, will draw forth a tear at the fame time. quiry, MER IO

quiry, therefore, into the diffinguishing characters of Wit and Humour, has no necessary connection with the present subject. I did, however, once intend to have touched upon them in the conclusion of this Discourse: but Dr Campbell's mafterly difquifition concerning that matter, in the first part of his Philosophy of Rhetoric, makes it improper for me to attempt it. I was favoured with a perufal of that work in manuscript, when I had finished the three first chapters of this Essay for the press; and was agreeably furprifed to find my notions, in regard to the cause or object of Laughter, so fully warranted by those of my very learned and ingenious friend. And it may not perhaps be improper to inform the public, that neither did he know of my having undertaken this argument, nor I of his having difcuffed that fubject, till we came mutually to exchange our papers, for the purpole of knowing one another's fentiments in regard to what we had written.

Some authors have treated of Ridicule, without marking the diffinction between Ridiculous and Indicrous ideas. But I prefume the natural order of proceeding in this Inquiry, is to begin with afcertaining the nature of what is purely Ludicrous. Things ludicrous and things ridiculous have this in common, that both excite laughter; but the former excite pure laughter, the latter excite laughter mixed with disapprobation or contempt

contempt *. My defign is, to analyse and explain that quality in things or ideas, which makes them provoke pure Laughter, and entitles them to the name of Ludicrous or Laughable.

When certain objects, qualities, or ideas, occur to our fenfes, memory, or imagination, we finile or laugh at them, and expect that other men should do the same. To smile on certain occasions, is not less natural, than to weep at the sight of distress, or cry

out when we feel pain.

warms 14

There are different kinds of Laughter. As a boy, passing by night through a churchyard, fings or whiftles in order to conceal his fear even from himfelf; fo there are men, who, by forcing a finile, endeavour fometimes to hide from others, and from themfelves too perhaps, their malevolence or envy. Such laughter is unnatural. The found of it offends the ear; the features difforted by it feem horrible to the eye. A mixture of hypogrify, malice, and cruel joy, thus displayed on the countenance, is one of the most hateful fights in nature, and transforms the "human face divine" into the vifage of a fiend. -- Similar to this is the fmile of a wicked person pleasing himself with the hope of accomplishing his evil purposes.

^{*} Ridiculus proprie dicitur, qui in rebus turpibus ridetur. Festus.

Milton gives a striking picture of it, in that well-known passage:

He ceased; for both feem'd highly pleased, and Death

Grin'd horrible a ghaftly fmile, to hear His famine should be fill'd, and bless'd his maw Destin'd to that good hour.

But enough of this. Laughter that makes man a fiend or monster, I have no inclination to analyse. My inquiries are confined to "that species of laughter, which is at "once natural and innocent."

Of this there are two forts. The laughter occasioned by tickling or gladness is different from that which arises on reading the Tale of a Tub. The former may be called Animal Laughter: the latter (if it were lawful to adopt a new word, which has become very common of late) I should term Sentimental. Smiles admit of fimilar divisions. Not to mention the fcornful, the envious, the malevolent finile, I would only remark, that of the innocent and agreeable fmile there are two forts. The one proceeds from the rifible emotion, and has a tendency to break out into laughter. The other is the effect of good humour, complacency, and tender affection. This last fort of fmile renders a countenance amiable in the highest degree. Homer afcribes it to Venus, in an epithet *,

^{*} Propuncions.

which Dryden and Pope, after Waller, improperly translate laughter-loving; an idea that accords better with the character of a romp or hoyden, than with the goddess of

love and beauty.

Animal laughter admits of various degrees: from the gentle impulse excited in a child by moderate joy, to that terrifying, and even mortal convultion, which has been known to accompany an unexpected change of fortune. This passion may, as well as joy and forrow, be communicated by fympathy *; and I know not, whether the entertainment we receive from the playful tricks of kittens, and other young animals, may not in part be refolved into fomething like a fellow-feeling of their vivacity. - Animal and Sentimental laughter are frequently blended; but it is eafy to diffinguish them. The former is often excessive; the latter never, unless heightened by the other. The latter is always pleafing, both in itself and in its cause; the former may be painful in both. But their principal difference is this: - the one always proceeds from a fentiment or emotion, excited in the mind, in confequence of certain objects or ideas being prefented to it, of which emotion we may be conscious even when we suppress laughter; - the other arises, not from any sentiment, or perception of ludicrous ideas, but from fome

^{*} Hor. Ar. Poet, verf. 101.

bodily feeling, or fudden impulse, on what is called the animal spirits, proceeding, or feeming to proceed, from the operation of causes purely material. - The present inquiry regards that species that is here diftinguished by the name of Sentimental Laughter.

The pleasing emotion *, arising from the view of ludicrous ideas, is known to every one by experience, but, being a simple feeling, admits not of definition. It is to be diffinguished from the laughter that generally attends it, as forrow is to be diftinguished from tears; for it is often felt in a high degree by those who are remarkable for gravity of countenance. Swift feldom laughed; notwithstanding his uncommon talents in wit and humour, and the extraordinary delight he feems to have had in furveying the ridiculous fide of things. Why this agreeable emotion should be accompanied with laughter as its outward fign, or forrow express itfelf by tears, or fear by trembling and paleness, I cannot ultimately explain, otherwise than by faying, that fuch is the appointment of the Author of Nature. — All I mean by this inquiry is, to determine, WHAT IS PECULIAR TO THOSE THINGS WHICH PRO-

VOKE

^{*} This emotion I fometimes call the Rifible Emotion, and fometimes the Ludicrous Sentiment; terms that may be fufficiently intelligible, though perhaps they are not according to first analogy. STATE OF THE PARTY OF

VOKE LAUGHTER; — OR, RATHER, WHICH RAISE IN THE MIND THAT PLEASING SENTIMENT OR EMOTION WHEREOF LAUGHTER IS THE EXTERNAL SIGN.

I. Philosophers have differed in their opinions concerning this matter. Aristotle, in the fifth chapter of his Poetics, observes of Comedy, that "it imitates those vices or " meanneffes only which partake of the ri-" diculous : - now the Ridiculous (fays he) " confifts in some fault or turpitude not at-" tended with great pain, and not destruc-" tive." It is clear, that Aristotle here means to characterife, not laughable qualities in general, (as fome have thought), but the objects of Comic Ridicule only; and in this view the definition is just, however it may have been overlooked or despised by Comic writers. Crimes and misfortunes are often in modern plays, and were fometimes in the ancient, held up as objects of public merriment; but if poets had that reverence for nature which they ought to have, they would not shock the common sense of mankind by fo abfurd a reprefentation. I wish our writers of comedy and romance would in this respect imitate the delicacy of their ancestors, the honest and brave savages of old Germany, of whom the historian fays, " Ne-" mo vitia ridet; nec corrumpere et cor-" rumpi feculum vocatur

^{*} Tacitus, de moribus Germanorum, cap. 19.

nition from Aristotle does not, however, suit the general nature of ludicrous ideas; for it will appear by and by, that men laugh at that in which there is neither fault nor

turpitude of any kind.

II. The theory of Mr Hobbes would hardly have deferved notice, if Addison had not fpoken of it with approbation in the fortyfeventh paper of the Spectator. " The paffion of laughter (favs Mr Hobbes) is nothing elfe, but fudden glory arifing from " fome fudden conception of fome emi-" nency in ourfelves by comparison with " the infirmity of others, or with our own " formerly. For men (continues he) laugh " at the follies of themselves past, when they " come fuddenly to remembrance, except " they bring with them any prefent dif-"honour." Addison justly observes, after quoting these words, that " according to " this account, when we hear a man laugh " excellively, inflead of faying, that he is " very merry, we ought to tell him, that " he is very proud." It is strange, that the elegant author should be aware of this confequence, and yet admit the theory; for fo good a judge of human nature could not be ignorant, that Laughter is not confidered as a fign of pride; perfons of fingular gravity being often suspected of that vice, but great laughers feldom or never. When we fee a man attentive to the innocent humours of a merry company, and yet maintain a fixed folemnity of countenance, is it natural for us to think, that he is the humblest, and the only humble person, in the circle?

Another writer in the Spectator, No 249. remarks, in confirmation of this theory, that the vainest part of mankind are most addicted to the passion of laughter. Now, how can this be, if the proudest part of mankind are also most addicted to it, unless we suppose vanity and pride to be the same thing? But they are certainly different passions. The proud man defpifes other men, and derives his chief pleafure from the contemplation of his own importance: the vain man stands in need of the applause of others, and cannot be happy without it. Pride is apt to be referved and fullen; vanity is often affable. and officiously obliging. The proud man is fo confident of his merit, and thinks it fo obvious to all the world, that he will fcarce give himself the trouble to inform you of it: the vain man, to raife your admiration, fcruples not to tell you, not only the whole truth, but even a great deal more. In the fame person these two passions may, no doubt, be united: but fome men are too proud to be vain, and fome vain men are too confcious of their own weakness to be proud. Be all this, however, as it will, we have not as yet made any difcovery of the cause of laughter; in regard to which, I apprehend that the vair are not more intemperate than other people; and I am fure that

the proud are much less fo.

The instances brought by Addison, in favour of this theory of Mr Hobbes;—of great men formerly keeping in their retinue a person to laugh at, who was by profession a fool;—of Dutchmen being diverted with the sign of the gaper;—of the mob entertaining themselves with Jack Puddings, whose humour lies in committing blunders;—and of the amusement that some people find in making as many April sools as possible *:"—these instances, I say, may prove the truth of the distich, quoted by our author from Dennis, who translates it from Boileau,

Thus one fool lolls his tongue out at another, And shakes his empty noddle at his brother.

—But I cannot see how they should prove, that laughter is owing to pride, or to a sense of our superiority over the ludicrous object. Great men are as merry now when they do not keep professed jesters, as they were formerly when they did. The gaper may be a common sign at Amsterdam, as the Saracen's head is in England, without being the standing jest of the country, or indeed any jest at all. The Jack Pudding is considered, even by the mob, as more rogue than sool;

^{*} See Spectator, Numb. 47-

and they who attend the stage of the itinerant physician, do for the most part regard both the mafter and the fervant as persons of extraordinary abilities. And as to the wag who amuses himself on the first of April with telling lies, he must be shallow indeed, if he hope by fo doing to acquire any fuperiority over another man, whom he knows to be wifer and better than himfelf; for on these occasions, the greatness of the joke, and the loudness of the laugh, are, if I rightly remember, in exact proportion to the fagacity of the perfon imposed on. What our author, in the same paper, says of Butts in conversation, makes rather against his theory than for it. No man, who has any pretenfions to good manners, to common underflanding, or even to common humanity, will ever think of making a butt of that person who has neither fense nor spirit to defend himself. Sir John Falstaff would not have excelled fo much in this character, if he had not equally excelled in warding off and retorting raillery. The truth is, the butt of the company is generally known to be one of the wittiest and best-humoured persons in it : fo that the mirth he may diffuse around him cannot be supposed to arise from his apparent inferiority.

If Laughter arose from pride, and that pride from a sudden conception of some present eminency in ourselves, compared with others, or compared with ourselves as we were formerly; it would follow,—that the wife, the beautiful, the strong, the healthy, and the rich, must giggle away a great part of their lives, because they would every now and then become suddenly sensible of their superiority over the foolish, the homely, the feeble, the sickly, and the poor;—that one would never recollect the transactions of one's childhood, or the absurdity of one's dreams, without merriment;—that in the company of our equals we should always be grave;—and that Sir Isaac Newton must have been the greatest wag of his time.

That the passion of laughter, though not properly the effect of pride, does, however, arise from a conception of some small fault or turpitude, or at least from some fancied inferiority, in the ludicrous object, has been afferted by several writers. One would indeed be apt at first hearing to reply, that we often smile at a witty performance or passage,—such as Butler's allusion to a boiled lobster, in his picture of the morning *,—when we are so far from conceiving any inferiority or turpitude in the author, that we greatly admire his genius, and wish ourselves possessed of that very turn of fancy which produced the drollery in question.——

. But

The fun had long fince in the lap of Thetis taken out his nap,

And, like a lobiter hoil'd, the morn

From black to red begin to turn.

"But as we may be betrayed into a momentary belief, that Garrick is really Abel Drugger; fo, it is faid, we may imagine a transient inferiority, either real or affumed, even in a person whom we admire; and that, when we smile at Butler's allusion, we for a moment conceive him to have assumed the character of one who was incapable to discern the impropriety of such an odd union of images.—We smile at the logic, wherewith Hudibras endeavours to solace himself, when he is fet in the stocks,

As beards, the nearer that they tend To th' earth, grow still more reverend; And cannons shoot the higher pitches, The lower you let down their breeches, I'll make this present abject state Advance me to a greater height.

"Here, it is faid, that the laugh arises from our supposing the author to assume for a moment the character of one who, from his ignorance of the nature of things, and of the rules of analogical reasoning, does not perceive, that the case he argues from is totally unlike the case he argues to, nor, consequently, that the argument is a sophism.—If we smile at the ass, in the fable, fawning upon his master, in imitation of the spaniel; or at the frog pussing and swelling to stretch himself to the size Vol. II.

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" of the ox, it is (we are told) because we " perceive fomething fingularly defective in " the paffions or fentiments of those animals. " And a respectable friend, who entertains " us with a merry flory, is faid to do fo, " either by affuming a momentary inferiori-"tv, or by leading our thoughts to fome " thing in which we feem to differn fome " fmall fault or turpitude." In proof of this, it is further affirmed, "That we never fmile at fortuitous combinations of i-" deas, qualities, or events, but at those " combinations only that feem to require " the agency of some directing mind: -" whence it is inferred, that where-ever the " ludicrous quality appears, a certain mental "character is supposed to exert itself; and " that this character must needs imply infe-" riority, because, from our being so often " tempted to fmile by the tricks of buffoons " and brute animals, it would feem to be " confistent neither with superiority nor with equality."

"fequality."

This theory is more fubtle than folid. Let us look back to the analogical argument which Butler puts in the mouth of his hero, and which every person who has the feelings of a man must allow to be laughable. Why is it fo ? Because (fay they) it leads us to discover fome turpitude or deficiency in the author's understanding. Is this deficiency, then, in the hero Hudibras, or in Butler the poet? Is it real, or is it affumed? It matters not which; which; for, though we knew that an idior had accidentally written it, or that a wrongheaded enthuliast had seriously spoken it, the reasoning would still be ludicrous. Is then a trissing argument from analogy a laughable object, whether advanced seriously or in jest? If this be the case, it must be owned, that the sentiments of mortal men are strangely perverted in these latter times; for that many a volume of elaborate controversy, instead of disposing the gentle reader to slumber by its darkness and dullness, ought to have "fet the table in a roar" by its vain

and fophistical analogies.

Further, I deny not, that all performances in wit and humour are connected with a mind, and lead our thoughts to the performer as naturally as any other effect to its cause. But do we not sometimes laugh at fortuitous combinations, in which, as no mental energy is concerned in producing them, there cannot be either fault or turpitude? Could not one imagine a fer of people jumbled together by accident, fo as to prefent a laughable group to those who know their characters? If Pope and Colley Cibber had been fo foucezed by a croud in the playhouse, as to be compelled to fit with their heads contiguous, and the arm of one about the neck of the other, expressing at the fame time in their looks a mutual antipathy and reluctance, I believe the fight would have been entertaining enough, especially if believed Uu 2

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believed to be accidental. --- Our coffeehouse-politicians were lately betrayed into a finile, by one Papirius Curfor, a wag who read the news-papers quite across the page, without minding the space that distinguishes the columns, and fo pretended to light upon fome very amufing combinations. Thefe were no doubt the contrivance of Papirius himself; but, supposing them to have been accidental, and that the printer had without defign neglected to separate his columns, I ask, whether they would have been less ridiculous? The joke I shall allow to be as wretched as you please: but we are not now talking of the delicacies of wit or humour, (which will be touched upon in the fequel), but of those combinations of ideas that provoke laughter. And here let me beg of the critic, not to take offence at the familiarity of these examples. I shall apologize for them afterwards. Meantime he will be pleafed to consider, that my subject is a familiar one, and the phenomenon I would account for as frequent among clowns and children as among philosophers.

III. Hutcheson has given another account of the ludicrous quality. He feems to think, that," it is the contrast or opposition of dig-" nity and meanness that occasions laughter." Granting this to be true, (and how far this is true will appear by and by), I would obferve, in the first place, what the ingenious author feems to have been aware of,

CHITETIES

that there may be a mixture of meanness and dignity, where there is nothing ludicrous. A city, considered as a collection of low and lofty houses, is no laughable object. Nor was that personage either ludicrous or ridiculous, whom Pope so justily characterises,

The greatest, wiself, meanest, of mankind.

But, secondly, cases might be mentioned, of laughter arising from a group of ideas or objects, wherein there is no discernible opposition of meanness and dignity. We are told of the dagger of Hudibras, that

It could ferape trenchers, or chip bread,
Toast cheese or bacon, though it were
To bait a mouse-trap, 'twould not care;
'Twould make clean shoes, or in the earth
Set leeks and onions, and so forth.

The humour of the passage cannot arise from the meanness of these offices compared with the dignity of the dagger, nor from any opposition of meanness and dignity in the offices themselves, they being all equally mean; and must therefore be owing to some other peculiarity in the description. — We laugh, when a droll mimics the solemnity of a grave person; here dignity and meanness are indeed united: but we laugh also (though not so heartily perhaps) when he mimics the peculiarities

from the season and product and

culiarities of a fellow as infignificant as himfelf, and displays no opposition of dignity and meannefs. - The levities of Sancho Panca opposed to the solemnity of his master, and compared with his own schemes of preferment, form an entertaining contrast: but fome of the vagaries of that renowned fquire are truly laughable, even when his preferment and his mafter are out of the question. -We do not perceive any contrast of meanness and dignity in Mistress Quickly, Sir Toby in Twelfth Night, the nurse in Romeo and Juliet, or Autolycus in the Winter's Tale : yet they are all ludicrous characters: Dr Harrison in Fielding's Amelia is never mean. but always respectable; yet their is a dash of humour in him, which often betrays the reader into a' fmile. - Men laugh at puns; the wifest and wittiest of our species have laughed at them; Queen Elifabeth, Cicero, and Shakespeare, laughed at them; clowns and children laugh at them; and most men, at one time or other, are inclined to do the fame: - but in this fort of low wit, is it an opposition of meanness and dignity that entertains us? Is it not rather a mixture of fameness and diversity, - fameness in the found, and divertity in the fignification?

IV. Akenfide, in the third book of his excellent Poem, treats of Ridicule at confiderable length. He gives a detail of ridiculous characters; ignorant pretenders to learning, - boaftful foldiers, and lying travellers, -hypo- hypocritical churchmen, - conceited politicians, - old women that talk of their charms and virtue, - ragged philosophers. who rail at riches, - virtuofi intent upon trifles, - romantic lovers, - wits wantonly fatirical,—fops that out of vanity affect to be difeafed and profligate,—daftards who are ashamed or afraid without reason, - and fools who are ignorant of what they ought to know. These characters may no doubt be fet in fuch a light as to move at once our laughter and contempt, and are therefore truly ridiculous, and fit objects of comic fatire: but the author does not diffinguish between what is laughable in them and what is contemptible; fo that we have no reason to think, that he meant to specify the qualities peculiar to those things that provoke pure laughter. - Having finished the detail of characters, he makes fome general remarks on the cause of ridicule; and explains himself more fully in a profe definition illustrated by examples. The definition, or rather deficiption, is in these words. "That which makes objects ridiculous, is some ground of admiration or others." " of admiration or efteem connected with " other more general circumstances compa-" ratively worthless or deformed; or it is " fome circumstance of turpitude or defor-" mity connected with what is in general excellent or beautiful: the inconfiltent properties existing either in the objects themselves, or in the apprehension of the

"person to whom they relate; belonging always to the same order or class of being; implying sentiment and design; and exciting no acute or vehement emotion of the heart." — Whatever account we make of this definition, which to those who acquiesce in the foregoing reasonings may perhaps appear not quite satisfactory, there is in the poem a passage that deserves particular notice, as it seems to contain a more exact account of the ludicrous quality, than is to be found in any of the theories above mentioned. This passage will be quoted in the next chapter.

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Laughter feems to arife from the view of things incongruous united in the fame affemblage; I. By Juxta-polition; II. As Cause and Effect; III. By Comparison founded on Similitude; or, IV. United so as to exhibit an opposition of Meanness and Dignity.

appear, there is none of them destitute