

tion, what little deserved it. But though such casual circumstances give the appearance of caprice to the judgments of taste, that appearance is easily corrected. In the course of time, the genuine taste of human nature never fails to disclose itself, and to gain the ascendant over any fantastic and corrupted modes of taste which may chance to have been introduced. These may have currency for a while, and mislead superficial judges; but being subjected to examination, by degrees they pass away; while that alone remains which is founded on sound reason, and the native feelings of men.

*I by no means pretend, that there is any standard of taste, to which, in every particular instance, we can resort for clear and immediate determination. Where, indeed, is such a standard to be found for deciding any of those great controversies in reason and philosophy, which perpetually divide mankind? In the present case, there was plainly no occasion for any such strict and absolute provision to be made. In order to judge of what is morally good or evil, of what man ought, or ought not in duty to do, it was fit that the means of clear and precise determination should be afforded us. But to ascertain in every case with the utmost exactness what is beautiful or elegant, was not at all necessary to the happiness of man. And therefore some diversity in feeling was here allowed to take place; and room was left for discussion and debate, concerning the degree of approbation to which any work of genius is entitled.

[The conclusion, which it is sufficient for us to rest upon, is, that taste is far from being an arbitrary principle, which is subject to the fancy of every individual, and which admits of no criterion for determining whether it be false or true.] Its foundation is the same in all human minds. [It is built upon sentiments and perceptions which belong to our nature; and which, in general, operate with the same uniformity as our other intellectual principles.] When these sentiments are perverted by ignorance or prejudice, they are capable of being rectified by reason. Their sound and natural state is ultimately determined, by comparing them with the general taste of mankind. Let men declaim as much as they please concerning the caprice and the uncertainty of taste, it is found by experience, that there are beauties, which, if they be displayed in a proper light, have power to command lasting and general admiration. In every composition, what interests the imagination, and touches the heart, pleases all ages and all nations. There is a certain

string to which, when properly struck, the human heart is so made as to answer.

Hence the universal testimony which the most improved nations of the earth have conspired, throughout a long tract of ages, to give to some few works of genius; such as the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Æneid* of Virgil. Hence the authority which such works have acquired as standards, in some degree, of poetical composition; since from them we are enabled to collect what the sense of mankind is, concerning those beauties which give them the highest pleasure, and which therefore poetry ought to exhibit. Authority or prejudice may, in one age or country, give a temporary reputation to an indifferent poet, or a bad artist: but when foreigners, or when posterity examine his works, his faults are discerned, and the genuine taste of human nature appears. "*Opinionum commenta delitescit; nature judicicia confirmat.*" [Time overthrows the illusions of opinion, but establishes the decisions of nature.]

LECTURE III.

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

TASTE, criticism, and genius, are words currently employed, without distinct ideas annexed to them. In beginning a course of lectures where such words must often occur, it is necessary to ascertain their meaning with some precision. Having in the last lecture treated of taste, I proceed to explain the nature and foundation of criticism. True criticism is the application of taste and of good sense to the several fine arts. The object which it proposes is, to distinguish what is beautiful and what is faulty in every performance; from particular instances to ascend to general principles; and so to form rules or conclusions concerning the several kinds of beauty in works of genius.

The rules of criticism are not formed by any induction *a priori*, as it is called; that is, they are not formed by a train of abstract reasoning, independent of facts and observations. Criticism is an art founded wholly on experience; on the observations of such beauties as have come nearest to the standard which I before established; that is, of such beauties as have

been found to please mankind most generally. For example, Aristotle's rules concerning the unity of action in dramatic and epic composition, were not rules first discovered by logical reasoning, and then applied to poetry; but they were drawn from the practice of Homer and Sophocles: they were founded upon observing the superior pleasure which we receive from the relation of an action which is one and entire, beyond what we receive from the relation of scattered and unconnected facts. Such observations, taking their rise at first from feeling and experience, were found on examination to be so consonant to reason, and to the principles of human nature, as to pass into established rules, and to be conveniently applied for judging of the excellency of any performance. This is the most natural account of the origin of criticism.

A masterly genius, it is true, will of himself, untaught, compose in such a manner as shall be agreeable to the most material rules of criticism; for as these rules are founded in nature, nature will often suggest them in practice. Homer, it is more than probable, was acquainted with no systems of the art of poetry. Guided by genius alone, he composed in verse a regular story, which all posterity has admired. But this is no argument against the usefulness of criticism as an art. For, as no human genius is perfect, there is no writer but may receive assistance from critical observations upon the beauties and faults of those who have gone before him. No observations or rules can indeed supply the defect of genius, or inspire it where it is wanting. But they may often direct it into its proper channel; they may correct its extravagancies, and point out to it the most just and proper imitation of nature. Critical rules are designed chiefly to show the faults that ought to be avoided. To nature we must be indebted for the production of eminent beauties.

From what has been said, we are enabled to form a judgment concerning those complaints which it has long been fashionable for petty authors to make against critics and criticism. Critics have been represented as the great abridgers of the native liberty of genius; as the imposers of unnatural shackles and bonds upon writers, from whose cruel persecution they must fly to the public, and implore its protection. Such supplicatory prefaces are not calculated to give very favourable ideas of the genius of the author: for every good writer will be pleased to have his work examined by the principles of sound

understanding and true taste. The declamations against criticism commonly proceed upon this supposition, that critics are such as judge by rule, not by feeling; which is so far from being true, that they who judge after this manner are pedants, not critics. For all the rules of genuine criticism I have shown to be ultimately founded on feeling; and taste and feeling are necessary to guide us in the application of these rules to every particular instance. As there is nothing in which all sorts of persons more readily affect to be judges than in works of taste, there is no doubt that the number of incompetent critics will always be great. But this affords no more foundation for a general invective against criticism, than the number of bad philosophers or reasoners affords against reason and philosophy.

An objection more plausible may be formed against criticism, from the applause that some performances have received from the public, which, when accurately considered, are found to contradict the rules established by criticism. Now, according to the principles laid down in the last lecture, the public is the supreme judge to whom the last appeal must be made in every work of taste; as the standard of taste is founded on the sentiments that are natural and common to all men. But with respect to this, we are to observe, that the sense of the public is often too hastily judged of. The genuine public taste does not always appear in the first applause given upon the publication of any new work. There are both a great vulgar and a small, apt to be caught and dazzled by very superficial beauties, the admiration of which in a little time passes away; and sometimes a writer may acquire great temporary reputation merely by his compliance with the passions or prejudices, with the party-spirit or superstitious notions, that may chance to rule for a time almost a whole nation. In such cases, though the public may seem to praise, true criticism may with reason condemn: and it will in progress of time gain the ascendant: when once become unprejudiced and dispassionate, will ever coincide at last.

Instances, I admit, there are, of some works that contain gross transgressions of the laws of criticism, acquiring, nevertheless, a general, and even a lasting admiration. Such are the plays of Shakespeare, which, considered as dramatic poems, are irregular in the highest degree. But then we are to remark,

that they have gained the public admiration, not by their being irregular, not by their transgressions of the rules of art, but in spite of such transgressions. They possess other beauties, which are conformable to just rules; and the force of these beauties has been so great as to overpower all censure, and to give the public a degree of satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from their blemishes. Shakespeare pleases, not by his bringing the transactions of many years into one play; not by his grotesque mixtures of tragedy and comedy in one piece, nor by the strained thoughts, and affected witticisms, which he sometimes employs. These we consider as blemishes, and impute them to the grossness of the age in which he lived. But he pleases by his animated and masterly representations of characters, by the liveliness of his descriptions, the force of his sentiments, and his possessing, beyond all writers, the natural language of passion: beauties which true criticism no less teaches us to place in the highest rank, than nature teaches us to feel.

I proceed next to explain the meaning of another term, which there will be frequent occasion to employ in these lectures: that is, *Genius*.

Taste and genius are two words frequently joined together; and therefore, by inaccurate thinkers, confounded. They signify however two quite different things. The difference between them can be clearly pointed out: and it is of importance to remember it. Taste consists in the power of judging; genius in the power of executing. One may have a considerable degree of taste in poetry, eloquence, or any of the fine arts, who has little or hardly any genius for composition or execution in any of these arts, but genius cannot be found without including taste also. Genius, therefore, deserves to be considered as a higher power of the mind than taste. Genius always imports something inventive or creative; which does not rest in mere sensibility to beauty where it is perceived, but which can, more over, produce new beauties, and exhibit them in such a manner, as strongly to impress the minds of others. Refined taste forms a good critic; but genius is further necessary to form the poet, or the orator.

It is proper also to observe, that genius is a word, which, in common acceptance, extends much further than to the objects of taste. It is used to signify that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, for excelling in any one thing whatever.

Thus we speak of a genius for mathematics, as well as a genius for poetry: of a genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment.

This talent or aptitude for excelling in some one particular, is, I have said, what we receive from nature. By art and study, no doubt, it may be greatly improved; but by them alone it cannot be acquired. As genius is a higher faculty than taste, it is ever, according to the usual frugality of nature, more limited in the sphere of its operations. It is not uncommon to meet with persons who have an excellent taste in several of the polite arts, such as music, poetry, painting, and eloquence, all together: but, to find one who is an excellent performer in all these arts, is much more rare; or rather, indeed, such an one is not to be looked for. A sort of universal genius, or one who is equally and indifferently turned towards several different professions and arts, is not likely to excel in any. Although there may be some few exceptions, yet in general it holds, that when the bent of the mind is wholly directed towards some one object, exclusive, in a manner, of others, there is the fairest prospect of eminence in that, whatever it be. The rays must converge to a point, in order to glow intensely. This remark I here choose to make, on account of its great importance to young people; in leading them to examine with care, and to pursue with ardour, the current and pointing of nature towards those exertions of genius in which they are most likely to excel.

A genius for any of the fine arts, as I before observed, always supposes taste; and it is clear, that the improvement of taste will serve both to forward and to correct the operations of genius. In proportion as the taste of a poet, or orator, becomes more refined with respect to the beauties of composition, it will certainly assist him to produce the more finished beauties in his work. Genius, however, in a poet or orator, may sometimes exist in a higher degree than taste; that is, genius may be bold and strong, when taste is neither very delicate, nor very correct. This is often the case in the infancy of arts: a period when genius frequently exerts itself with great vigour and excels with much warmth; while taste, which requires experience, and improves by slower degrees, hath not yet attained to its full growth. Homer and Shakespeare are proofs of what I now assert; in whose admirable writings are found instances of rudeness and indelicacy, which the more refined taste of later

writers, who had far inferior genius to them, would have taught them to avoid. As all human perfection is limited, this may very probably be the law of our nature, that it is not given to one man to execute with vigour and fire, and at the same time, to attend to all the lesser and more refined graces that belong to the exact perfection of his work : while, on the other hand, a thorough taste for those inferior graces, is, for the most part, accompanied with a diminution of sublimity and force.

Having thus explained the nature of taste, the nature and importance of criticism, and the distinction between taste and genius ; I am now to consider the sources of the pleasures of taste. Here opens a very extensive field ; no less than all the pleasures of the imagination, as they are commonly called, whether afforded us by natural objects, or by the imitations and descriptions of them. But it is not necessary to the purpose of my lectures, that all these should be examined fully ; the pleasure which we receive from discourse, or writing, being the main object of them. All that I propose, is to give some openings into the pleasures of taste in general ; and to insist more particularly upon sublimity and beauty.

We are far from having yet attained to any system concerning this subject. Mr. Addison was the first who attempted a regular inquiry, in his Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination, published in the sixth volume of the Spectator. He has reduced these pleasures under three heads—beauty, grandeur, and novelty. His speculations on this subject, if not exceedingly profound, are, however, very beautiful and entertaining ; and he has the merit of having opened a track, which was before unbeaten. The advances made since his time, in this curious part of philosophical criticism, are not very considerable ; though some ingenious writers have pursued the subject. This is owing, doubtless, to that thinness and subtilty which are found to be properties of all the feelings of taste. They are engaging objects ; but when we would lay firm hold of them, and subject them to a regular discussion, they are always ready to elude our grasp. It is difficult to make a full enumeration of the several objects that give pleasure to taste ; it is more difficult to define all those which have been discovered, and to reduce them under proper classes ; and, when we would go further, and investigate the efficient causes of the pleasure which we receive from such objects, here, above all, we find ourselves at a loss. For instance ; we all learn by experience, that certain figures of bodies

PLEASURES OF TASTE.

appear to us more beautiful than others. On inquiring further, we find that the regularity of some figures, and the graceful variety of others, are the foundation of the beauty which we discern in them ; but when we attempt to go a step beyond this, and inquire what is the cause of regularity and variety producing in our minds the sensation of beauty, any reason we can assign is extremely imperfect. These first principles of internal sensation nature seems to have covered with an impenetrable veil.

It is some comfort, however, that although the efficient cause be obscure, the final cause of those sensations lies in many cases more open : and, in entering on this subject, we cannot avoid taking notice of the strong impression which the powers of taste and imagination are calculated to give us of the benignity of our Creator. By endowing us with such powers, he hath widely enlarged the sphere of the pleasures of human life ; and those too of a kind the most pure and innocent. The necessary purposes of life might have been abundantly answered, though our senses of seeing and hearing had only served to distinguish external objects, without conveying to us any of those refined and delicate sensations of beauty and grandeur, with which we are now so much delighted. This additional embellishment and glory, which, for promoting our entertainment, the Author of Nature hath poured forth upon his works, is one striking testimony, among many others, of benevolence and goodness. This thought, which Mr. Addison first started, Dr. Akenside, in his poem on the Pleasures of the Imagination, has happily pursued.

———Not content
With every food of life to nourish man,
By kind illusions of the wondering sense,
Thou mak'st all nature, beauty to his eye,
Or music to his ear.———

I shall begin with considering the pleasure which arises from sublimity or grandeur of which I propose to treat at some length : both as this has a character more precise and distinctly marked than any other of the pleasures of the imagination, and as it coincides more directly with our main subject. For the greater distinctness, I shall, first, treat of the grandeur or sublimity of external objects themselves, which will employ the rest of this lecture ; and afterwards, of the description of such objects, or of what is called the sublime in writing, which shall be

the subject of a following lecture. [I distinguish these two things from one another, the grandeur of the objects themselves when they are presented to the eye, and the description of that grandeur in discourse or writing; though most critics, inaccurately I think, blend them together; and I consider grandeur and sublimity as terms synonymous, or nearly so.] If there be any distinction between them, it arises from sublimity's expressing grandeur in its highest degree.*

It is not easy to describe, in words, the precise impression which great and sublime objects make upon us, when we behold them; but every one has a conception of it. It produces a sort of internal elevation and expansion; it raises the mind much above its ordinary state; and fills it with a degree of wonder and astonishment, which it cannot well express. The emotion is certainly delightful; but it is altogether of the serious kind; a degree of awfulness and solemnity, even approaching to severity, commonly attends it when at its height; very distinguishable from the more gay and brisk emotion raised by beautiful objects.

The simplest form of external grandeur appears in the vast and boundless prospects presented to us by nature; such as wide extended plains, to which the eye can see no limits; the firmament of heaven; or the boundless expanse of the ocean. All vastness produces the impression of sublimity. It is to be remarked, however, that space, extended in length, makes not so strong an impression as height or depth. Though a boundless plain be a grand object, yet a high mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower whence we look down on the objects which lie below, is still more so. The excessive grandeur of the firmament arises from its height, joined to its boundless extent; and that of the ocean, not from its extent alone, but from the perpetual motion and irresistible force of that mass of waters. Wherever space is concerned, it is clear, that amplitude or greatness of extent, in one dimension or other, is necessary to grandeur. [Remove all bounds from any object, and you presently render it sublime. Hence infinite space, endless numbers, and eternal duration, fill the mind with great ideas.]

From this some have imagined, that vastness, or amplitude of extent, is the foundation of all sublimity. But I cannot be

* See a Philosophical Enquiry into the origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. Dr. Gerrard on Taste, Section II. Elements of Criticism, chap. iv.

SUBLIMITY IN OBJECTS.

of this opinion, because many objects appear sublime which have no relation to space at all. Such, for instance, is great loudness of sound. The burst of thunder or of cannon, the roaring of winds, the shouting of multitudes, the sound of vast cataracts of water, are all incontestibly grand objects. "I heard the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunderings," saying Hallelujah." In general, we may observe, that great power and force exerted always raise sublime ideas; and perhaps the most copious source of these is derived from this quarter. Hence the grandeur of earthquakes and burning mountains; of great conflagrations; of the stormy ocean, and overflowing waters; of tempests of wind; of thunder and lightning; and of all the uncommon violence of the elements. Nothing is more sublime than mighty power and strength. A stream that runs within its banks, is a beautiful object: but when it rushes down with the impetuosity and noise of a torrent, it presently becomes a sublime one. From lions, and other animals of strength, are drawn sublime comparisons in poets. A race-horse is looked upon with pleasure; but it is the war-horse, "whose neck is clothed with thunder," that carries grandeur in its idea. The engagement of two great armies, as it is the highest exertion of human might, combines a variety of sources of the sublime; and has accordingly been always considered as one of the most striking and magnificent spectacles that can be either presented to the eye, or exhibited to the imagination in description.

For the further illustration of this subject, it is proper to remark, that all ideas of the solemn and awful kind, and even bordering on the terrible, tend greatly to assist the sublime; such as darkness, solitude, and silence. What are the scenes of nature that elevate the mind in the highest degree, and produce the sublime sensation? Not the gay landscape, and flowery field, or the flourishing city; but the hoary mountain, and the solitary lake; the aged forest, and the torrent falling over the rock. Hence, too, night scenes are commonly the most sublime. The firmament, when filled with stars, scattered in such vast numbers, and with such magnificent profusion, strikes the imagination with a more awful grandeur, than when we view it enlightened with all the splendour of the sun. The deep sound of a great bell, or the striking of a great clock, are at any time grand; but, when heard amid the silence and stillness of the night, they become doubly so. Darkness is very commonly

applied for adding sublimity to all our ideas of the Deity, "He maketh darkness his pavilion; he dwelleth in the thick cloud." So Milton:

—How oft, amidst
Thick clouds and dark, does heaven's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscur'd,
And, with the majesty of darkness, round
Circles his throne—
Book II. 263.

Observe, with how much art Virgil has introduced all those ideas of silence, vacuity, and darkness, when he is going to introduce his hero to the infernal regions, and to disclose the secrets of the great deep.

*Di, quibus imperium est animarum, umbraeque silentes,
Et Chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte silentia late,
Sit mihi fas audita loqui; sit, numine vestro,
Pandere res altâ terrâ et caligine mersas.
Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram,
Perque domos Ditis vacuas, et inania regna
Quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna
Est iter in silvis—**

These passages I quote at present, not so much as instances of sublime writing, though in themselves they truly are so, as to show, by the effect of them, that the objects which they present to us, belong to the class of sublime ones.

Obscurity, we are further to remark, is not unfavourable to the sublime. Though it render the object indistinct, the impression, however, may be great; for, as an ingenious author has well observed, it is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination; and the imagination may be strongly affected, and, in fact, often is so, by objects of which we have no clear conception. Thus we see that almost all the descriptions given us of the appearances of supernatural beings, carry some sublimity, though the conceptions which they afford us be confused and indistinct. Their subli-

* Ye subterranean Gods, whose awful sway

The gliding ghosts and silent shades obey;

O Chaos, hear! and Phlegethon profound!

Whose solemn empire stretches wide around!

Give me, ye great tremendous powers! to tell

Of scenes and wonders in the depths of hell;

Give me your mighty secrets to display,

From those black realms of darkness to the day.—PITT.

Obscure they went; through dreary shades, that led

Along the waste dominions of the dead;

As wander travellers in woods by night,

By the moon's doubtful and malignant light.—DRAIDEN.

SUBLIMITY IN OBJECTS.

unity arises from the ideas, which they always convey, of superior power and might, joined with an awful obscurity. We may see this fully exemplified in the following noble passage of the book of Job: "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep filleth upon men, fear came upon me, and trembling, fore my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still; but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes; there was silence; and I heard a voice—Shall mortal man be more just than God?" (Job iv. 15.) No ideas, it is plain, are so sublime as those taken from the Supreme Being; the most unknown, but the greatest of all objects; the infinity of whose nature, and the eternity of whose duration, joined with the omnipotence of his power, though they surpass our conceptions, yet exalt them to the highest. In general, all objects that are or in time, are apt to strike us as great. Our viewing them as through the mist of distance or antiquity, is favourable to the impressions of their sublimity.

As obscurity, so disorder too, is very compatible with grandeur; nay, frequently heightens it. Few things that are strictly regular, and methodical, appear sublime. We see the limits on every side; we feel ourselves confined; there is no room for the mind's exerting any great effort. Exact proportion of parts, though it enters often into the beautiful, is much disregarded in the sublime. A great mass of rocks, thrown together by the hand of nature with wildness and confusion, strike the mind with more grandeur than if they had been adjusted to one another with the most accurate symmetry.

In the feeble attempts which human art can make towards producing grand objects (feeble, I mean, in comparison with the powers of nature), greatness of dimensions always constitutes a principal part. No pile of buildings can convey any idea

* The picture which Lucretius has drawn of the dominion of superstition over mankind, representing it as a portentous spectre showing its head from the clouds, and dimming the whole human race with its countenance, together with the magnanimity of Epicurus in raising himself up against it, carries all the grandeur of a sublime, obscure, and awful image.

*Humana ante oculos fcede cum vita jaceret
In terris, oppressa gravi sub religione,
Quæ caput a cœli regionibus ostendebat,
Horribili super aspectu a mortalius instans,
Primum Gratus homo mortales tollere contra
Host oculos ausus—*

Lib. I. 62.

of sublimity, unless it be ample and lofty. There is too, in architecture, what is called greatness of manner; which seems chiefly to arise from presenting the object to us in one full point of view; so that it shall make its impression whole, entire, and undivided, upon the mind. A Gothic cathedral raises ideas of grandeur in our minds, by its size, its height, its awful obscurity, its strength, its antiquity, and its durability.

There still remains to be mentioned one class of sublime objects, which may be called the moral or sentimental sublime; arising from certain exertions of the human mind; from certain affections and actions of our fellow-creatures. These will be found to be all, or chiefly, of that class, which comes under the name of magnanimity or heroism; and they produce an effect extremely similar to what is produced by the view of grand objects in nature; filling the mind with admiration, and elevating it above itself. A noted instance of this, quoted by all the French critics, is the celebrated *Qu'il mourut* of Corneille, in the tragedy of Horace. In the famous combat between the Horatii and the Curiatii, the old Horatius, being informed that two of his sons are slain, and that the third had betaken himself to flight, at first will not believe the report; but being thoroughly assured of the fact, is fired with all the sentiments of high honour and indignation at this supposed unworthy behaviour of his surviving son. He is reminded, that his son stood alone against three, and asked what he wished him to have done?—"To have died!"—he answers. In the same manner, Porus, taken prisoner by Alexander, after a gallant defence, and asked how he wished to be treated? answering, "Like a king;" and Caesar chiding the pilot who was afraid to set out with him in a storm, "Quid times? Cæsarem velis?" are good instances of this sentimental sublime. Wherever, in some critical and high situation, we behold a man uncommonly intrepid, and resting upon himself; superior to passion and to fear; animated by some great principle to the contempt of popular opinion, of selfish interest, of dangers, or of death; there we are struck with a sense of the sublime.*

* The sublime, in natural and in moral objects, is brought before us in one view, and compared together, in the following beautiful passage of Akenstide's Pleasures of the Imagination:

Look then abroad through nature; to the range
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,
Wheeling, unshaken, through the void immense;
And speak, O man! does this capacious scene,
With half that kindling majesty, dilate
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose

High virtue is the most natural and fertile source of this great sublimity. However, on some occasions, where virtue either has no place, or is but imperfectly displayed, yet if extraordinary vigour and force of mind be discovered, yet if extraordinary to a degree of grandeur in the character; we are not insensible to a degree of grandeur in the character; and from the splendid conqueror, or the daring conspirator, whom we are from approving, we cannot withhold our admiration.*

I have now enumerated a variety of instances, both in inanimate objects and in human life, wherein the sublime appears. In all these instances, the emotion raised in us is of the same kind, although the objects that produce the emotion be of widely different kinds. A question next arises, whether we are able to discover some one fundamental quality in which all these different objects agree, and which is the cause of their producing an emotion of the same nature in our minds? Various hypotheses have been formed concerning this, but, as far as appears to me, hitherto unsatisfactory. Some have imagined that amplitude or great extent, joined with simplicity, is either immediately, or remotely, the fundamental quality of whatever is sublime; but we have seen that amplitude is confined to one species of sublime objects; and cannot, without violent straining, be applied to them all. The author of "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,"

Retracting, from the stroke of Caesar's fate,
Amid the crowd of patriots; and his arm
Alone extending, like eternal Jove,
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and shook his crimson steel,
And bade the father of his country hail!
For lo! the tyrant prostrate on the dust;
And Rome again is free!—

Book i.

* Silas Itarius studied to give an august idea of Hannibal, by representing him as surrounded with all his victories, in the place of guards. One who had formed the design of assassinating him in the midst of a feast, is thus addressed:

Fallite, meas inter quod crebris incertum;
Fœt bellis quasita viro, tot cœdibus, armat
Majestas æterna ducem. Si admoventis ora,
Cannas, et Trebiam ante oculos, Trasymanque busta
Et Pauli stare ingentem nitubens umbram.

Lih. xi. 348.

A thought somewhat of the same nature occurs in a French author: "Il se cache; mais sa réputation le découvre: il marche sans suite et sans équipage; mais chacun, dans son esprit, le met sur un char de triomphe. On compte, en le voyant, les ennemis qu'il a vaincus, non pas les serviteurs qui le suivent. Tout ce qu'il est, on se figure, autour de lui, ses vertus, et ses victoires qui l'accompagnent. Moins il est superbe, plus il devient vénérable." Oraison Funèbre de M. de Turenne, par M. Flechier.—Both these passages are splendid, rather than sublime. In the first there is a want of justness in the thought; in the second, of simplicity in the expression.

to whom we are indebted for several ingenious and original thoughts upon this subject, proposes a formal theory upon this foundation, That terror is the source of the sublime, and that no objects have this character, but such as produce impressions of pain and danger. It is indeed true, that many terrible objects are highly sublime; and that grandeur does not refuse an alliance with the idea of danger. But though this is very properly illustrated by the author, (many of whose sentiments on the head I have adopted,) yet he seems to stretch his theory too far, when he represents the sublime as consisting wholly in modes of danger, or of pain. For the proper sensation of sublimity appears to be distinguishable from the sensation of either of these, and, on several occasions, to be entirely separated from them. In many grand objects, there is no coincidence with terror at all; as in the magnificent prospect of wide extended plains, and of the starry firmament; or in the moral dispositions and sentiments, which we view with high admiration; and in many painful and terrible objects also, it is clear, there is no sort of grandeur. The amputation of a limb, or the bite of a snake, are exceedingly terrible; but are destitute of all claim whatever to sublimity. I am inclined to think, that mighty force or power, whether accompanied with terror or not, whether employed in protecting or in alarming us, has a better title, than any thing that has yet been mentioned, to be the fundamental quality of the sublime; as, after the review which we have taken, there does not occur to me any sublime object, into the idea of which, power, strength, and force, either enter not directly, or are not, at least, intimately associated with the idea, by leading our thoughts to some astonishing power, as concerned in the production of the object. However, I do not insist upon this as sufficient to found a general theory: it is enough to have given this view of the nature and different kinds of sublime objects; by which I hope to have laid a proper foundation for discussing, with greater accuracy, the sublime in writing and composition.

LECTURE IV.

THE SUBLINE IN WRITING.

HAVING treated of grandeur or sublimity in external objects, the way seems now to be cleared, for treating, with more

advantage, of the description of such objects; or, of what is called the sublime in writing. Though I may appear to enter early on the consideration of this subject; yet, as the sublime is a species of writing, which depends less than any other on the artificial embellishments of rhetoric, it may be examined with as much propriety here, as in any subsequent part of the Lectures.

Many critical terms have unfortunately been employed in a sense too loose and vague, none more so, than that of the sublime. Every one is acquainted with the character of Caesar's Commentaries, and of the style in which they are written; a style remarkably pure, simple, and elegant; but the most remote from the sublime, of any of the classical authors. Yet this author has a German critic, Johannes Gulielmus Bergerus, who wrote no longer ago than the year 1720, pitched upon as the perfect model of the sublime, and has composed a quarto volume, entitled *De naturali Pulchritudine Oratorum*; the expression of which is to show, that Caesar's Commentaries contain the most complete exemplification of all Longinus's rules relating to sublime writing. This I mention as a strong proof of the confused ideas which have prevailed concerning this subject. The true sense of sublime writing, undoubtedly, is such a description of objects, or exhibition of sentiments, which are in themselves of a sublime nature, as shall give us strong impressions of them. But there is another very indefinite, and therefore very improper sense, which has been too often put upon it; when it is applied to signify any remarkable and distinguishing excellency of composition; whether it raise in us the ideas of grandeur, or those of gentleness, elegance, or any other sort of beauty. In this sense Caesar's Commentaries may, indeed, be termed sublime, and so may many sonnets, pastorals, and love elegies, as well as Homer's Iliad. But this evidently confounds the use of words; and marks no one species, or character of composition whatever.

I am sorry to be obliged to observe, that the sublime is too often used in this last and improper sense, by the celebrated critic Longinus, in his treatise on this subject. He sets out, indeed, with describing it in its just and proper meaning; as something that elevates the mind above itself, and fills it with high conceptions, and a noble pride. But from this view of it, he frequently departs; and substitutes in the place of it, whatever, in any strain of composition, pleases highly. Thus many of the passages which he produces as instances of the sublime