

imitate an author's faults as well as his beauties. No man will ever become a good writer or speaker, who has not some degree of confidence to follow his own genius. We ought to beware, in particular, of adopting any author's noted phrases, or transcribing passages from him. Such a habit will prove fatal to all genuine composition. Infinitely better it is to have something that is our own, though of moderate beauty, than to affect to shine in borrowed ornaments, which will, at last, betray the utter poverty of our genius. On these heads of composing, correcting, reading, and imitating, I advise every student of oratory to consult what Quintilian has delivered in the tenth book of his *Institutions*, where he will find a variety of excellent observations and directions, that well deserve attention.

In the fifth place, it is an obvious, but material rule, with respect to style, that we always study to adapt it to the subject, and also to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to speak in public. Nothing merits the name of eloquent or beautiful, which is not suited to the occasion, and to the persons to whom it is addressed. It is to the last degree awkward and absurd, to attempt a poetical florid style, on occasions, when it should be our business only to argue and reason; or to speak with elaborate pomp of expression, before persons who comprehend nothing of it, and who can only stare at our unseasonable magnificence. These are defects not so much in point of style, as, what is much worse, in point of common sense. When we begin to write or speak, we ought previously to fix in our minds a clear conception of the end to be aimed at; to keep this steadily in our view, and to suit our style to it. If we do not sacrifice to this great object every ill-timed ornament that may occur to our fancy, we are unpardonable; and though children and fools may admire, men of sense will laugh at us and our style.

In the last place, I cannot conclude the subject without this admonition, that, in any case, and on any occasion, attention to style must not engross us so much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts; "*Curram verborum*," says the great Roman critic, "*rerum volo esse sollicitum*."\* A direction the more necessary, as the present taste of the age in writings, seems to lean more to style than to thought. It is much easier to dress up trivial and common sentiments with some beauty of expression, than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and useful thoughts. The latter requires

\* "To your expression be attentive; but about your matter be sollicitous."

true genius; the former may be attained by industry, with the help of very superficial parts. Hence, we find so many writers frivolously rich in style, but wretchedly poor in sentiment. The public ear is now so much accustomed to a correct and ornamented style, that no writer can, with safety, neglect the study of it. But he is a contemptible one, who does not look to something beyond it; who does not lay the chief stress upon his matter, and employ such ornaments of style to recommend it, as are manly, not foppish: "*Majore animo*," says the writer whom I have so often quoted, "*aggreddenda est eloquentia; quæ, si toto corpore valeat, unguis polire et capillum componere, non existimabit ad curam suam pertinere. Ornatus et virilis et fortis et sanctus sit; nec effeminatam levitatem et fæco ementium colorem amet: sanguine et viribus niteat*."\*

## LECTURE XX.

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

I HAVE insisted fully on the subject of language and style, both because it is, in itself, of great importance, and because it is more capable of being ascertained by precise rule, than several other parts of composition. A critical analysis of the style of some good author will tend further to illustrate the subject; as it will suggest observations which I have not had occasion to make, and will show, in the most practical light, the use of those which I have made.

Mr. Addison is the author whom I have chosen for this purpose. The *Spectator*, of which his papers are the chief ornament, is a book which is in the hands of every one, and which cannot be praised too highly. The good sense, and good writing, the useful morality, and the admirable vein of humour which abound in it, render it one of those standard books which have done the greatest honour to the English nation. I have formerly given the general character of Mr. Addison's style and

\* "A higher spirit ought to animate those who study eloquence. They ought to consult the health and soundness of the whole body, rather than bend their attention to such trifling objects as paring the nails and dressing the hair. Let ornament be manly and chaste, without effeminate gaiety, or artificial colouring; let it shine with the glow of health and strength."

manner, as natural and unaffected, easy and polite, and full of those graces which a flowery imagination diffuses over writing. At the same time, though one of the most beautiful writers in the language, he is not the most correct; a circumstance which renders his composition the more proper to be the subject of our present criticism. The free and flowing manner of this amiable writer, sometimes led him into inaccuracies, which the more studied circumspection and care of far inferior writers have taught them to avoid. Remarking his beauties, therefore, which I shall have frequent occasion to do as I proceed, I must also point out his negligences and defects. Without a free, impartial discussion of both the faults and beauties which occur in his composition, it is evident this piece of criticism would be of no service: and from the freedom which I use in criticising Mr. Addison's style, none can imagine, that I mean to depreciate his writings, after having repeatedly declared the high opinion which I entertain of them. The beauties of this author are so many, and the general character of his style is so elegant and estimable, that the minute imperfections I shall have occasion to point out, are but like those spots in the sun, which may be discovered by the assistance of art, but which have no effect in obscuring its lustre. It is, indeed, my judgment, that what Quintilian applies to Cicero, "*Ille se profecisse sciat, cui Cicero valde placebit*," may, with justice, be applied to Mr. Addison; that to be highly pleased with his manner of writing, is the criterion of one's having acquired a good taste in English style. The paper on which we are now to enter, is No. 411, the first of his celebrated essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination, in the sixth volume of the Spectator. It begins thus:—

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

This is an excellent introductory sentence. It is clear, precise, and simple. The author lays down in a few plain words, the proposition which he is going to illustrate throughout the rest of the paragraph. In this manner we should always set out. A first sentence should seldom be a long, and never an intricate one.

He might have said—"Our sight is the most perfect and the most delightful."—But he has judged better, in omitting to repeat the article 'the.' For the repetition of it is proper chiefly when we intend to point out the objects of which we speak, as distinguished from, or contrasted with, each other; and when we

want that the reader's attention should rest on that distinction. For instance; had Mr. Addison intended to say, that our sight is at once the most "delightful" and the most "useful" of all our senses, the article might then have been repeated with propriety, as a clear and strong distinction would have been conveyed. But as between "perfect" and "delightful," there is less contrast, there was no occasion for such repetition. It would have had no other effect, but to add a word unnecessarily to the sentence. He proceeds:

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

This sentence deserves attention, as remarkably harmonious and well constructed. It possesses, indeed, almost all the properties of a perfect sentence. It is entirely perspicuous. It is loaded with no superfluous or unnecessary words. For "tired or satiated," towards the end of the sentence, are not used for synonymous terms. They convey distinct ideas, and refer to different members of the period; that this sense "continues the longest in action without being tired," that is, without being fatigued with its action; and also, without being "satiated with its proper enjoyments." That quality of a good sentence which I termed its unity, is here perfectly preserved. It is "our sight" of which he speaks. This is the object carried through the sentence, and presented to us in every member of it, by those verbs, "*fills, converses, continues*," to each of which, it is clearly the nominative. Those capital words are disposed of in the most proper places; and that uniformity is maintained in the construction of the sentence, which suits the unity of the object.

Observe, too, the music of the period; consisting of three members, each of which, agreeably to a rule I formerly mentioned, grows, and rises above the other in sound, till the sentence is conducted, at last, to one of the most melodious closes which our language admits; "*without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments*." "*Enjoyments*," is a word of length and dignity, exceedingly proper for a close which is designed to be a musical one. The harmony is the more happy, as this disposition of the members of the period, which suits the sound so well, is no less just and proper with respect to the sense. It follows the order of nature. First, we have the variety of ob-

jects mentioned, which sight furnishes to the mind; next, we have the action of sight on those objects; and lastly, we have the time and continuance of its action. No order could be more natural or happy.

This sentence has still another beauty. It is figurative without being too much so for the subject. A metaphor runs through it. The sense of sight is, in some degree, personified. We are told of its "conversing with its objects; and of its not being "tired" or "satiated" with its "enjoyments;" all which expressions are plain allusions to the actions and feelings of men. This is that slight sort of personification, which, without any appearance of boldness, and without elevating the fancy much above its ordinary state, renders discourse picturesque, and leads us to conceive the author's meaning more distinctly, by clothing abstract ideas, in some degree, with sensible colours. Mr. Addison abounds with this beauty of style beyond most authors; and the sentence which we have been considering, is very expressive of his manner of writing. There is no blemish in it whatever, unless that a strict critic might perhaps object, that the epithet "large," which he applies to "variety"—"the largest variety of ideas," is an epithet more commonly applied to extent than to number. It is plain, that he here employed it to avoid the repetition of the word "great," which occurs immediately afterwards.

The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours; but, at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects."

This sentence is by no means so happy as the former. It is, indeed, neither clear nor elegant. "Extension and shape," can with no propriety, be called "ideas;" they are properties of matter. Neither is it accurate, even according to Mr. Locke's philosophy (with which our author seems here to have puzzled himself), to speak of any sense "giving us a notion of ideas;" our senses give us the ideas themselves. The meaning would have been much more clear, if the author had expressed himself thus: 'The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us the idea of extension, figure, and all the other properties of matter which are perceived by the eye, except colours.'

The latter part of the sentence is still more embarrassed. For what meaning can we make of the sense of feeling being

"confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects?" Surely, every sense is confined, as much as the sense of feeling, to the number, bulk, and distance of its own objects. Sight and feeling are, in this respect, perfectly on a level; neither of them can extend beyond its own objects. The turn of expression is so inaccurate here, that one would be apt to suspect two words to have been omitted in the printing, which were originally in Mr. Addison's manuscript; because the insertion of them would render the sense much more intelligible and clear. These two words are, "with regard."—"it is very much straitened, and confined, in its operations, with regard to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects." The meaning then would be, that feeling is more limited than sight 'in this respect;' that it is confined to a narrower circle, to a smaller number of objects.

The epithet "particular," applied to "objects," in the conclusion of the sentence, is redundant, and conveys no meaning whatever. Mr. Addison seems to have used it in place of 'peculiar,' as indeed he does often in other passages of his writings. But "particular" and 'peculiar,' though they are too often confounded, are words of different import from each other. "Particular" stands opposed to 'general;' 'peculiar' stands opposed to what is possessed 'in common with others. "Particular" expresses what in the logical style is called *species*; 'peculiar' what is called *differentia*. 'Its peculiar objects,' would have signified, in this place, the objects of the sense of feeling, as distinguished from the objects of any other sense; and would have had more meaning than "its particular objects." Though, in truth, neither the one nor the other epithet was requisite. It was sufficient to have said simply, 'its objects.'

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

Here again the author's style returns upon us in all its beauty. This is a sentence distinct, graceful, well arranged, and highly musical. In the latter part of it, it is constructed with three members, which are formed much in the same manner with those of the second sentence, on which I bestowed so much praise. The construction is so similar, that if it had followed immediately after it, we should have been sensible of a faulty

monotony. But the interposition of another sentence between them, prevents this effect.

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

In place of, "it is this sense which furnishes,"—the author might have said more shortly, 'this sense furnishes.' But the mode of expression which he has used, is here more proper. This sort of full and ample assertion, "it is this which," is fit to be used when a proposition of importance is laid down, to which we seek to call the reader's attention. It is like pointing with the hand at the object of which we speak. The parenthesis in the middle of the sentence, "which I shall use promiscuously," is not clear. He ought to have said, 'terms which I shall use promiscuously'; as the verb "use" relates not to the pleasures of the imagination, but to the terms of fancy and imagination, which he was to employ as synonymous. "Any the like occasion"—to call a painting or a statue "an occasion," is not a happy expression, nor is it very proper to speak of "calling up ideas by occasions." The common phrase, 'any such means,' would have been more natural.

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

It may be of use to remark, that in one member of this sentence there is an inaccuracy in syntax. It is very proper to say, "altering and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision." But we can with no propriety say, "retaining them into all the varieties;" and yet, according to the manner in which the words are ranged, this construction is unavoidable. For "retaining, altering, and compounding," are participles, each of which equally refers to, and governs the subsequent noun, "those images;" and that

noun again is necessarily connected with the following preposition, "into." This instance shows the importance of carefully attending to the rules of grammar and syntax; when so pure a writer as Mr. Addison could, through inadvertence, be guilty of such an error. The construction might easily have been rectified, by disjoining the participle "retaining" from the other two participles in this way: 'We have the power of retaining those images which we have once received: and of altering and compounding them into all the varieties of picture and vision;' or better perhaps thus: 'We have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received; and of forming them into all the varieties of picture and vision.'—The latter part of the sentence is clear and elegant.

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

"There are few words—which are employed."—It had been better, if our author here had said more simply,—'Few words in the English language are employed.'—Mr. Addison, whose style is of the free and full, rather than the nervous kind, deals, on all occasions, in this extended sort of phraseology. But it is proper only when some assertion of consequence is advanced, and which can bear an emphasis; such as that in the first sentence of the former paragraph. On other occasions, these little words, 'it is,' and 'there are,' ought to be avoided, as redundant and enfeebling.—"Those of the fancy and the imagination." The article ought to have been omitted here. As he does not mean the powers of "the fancy and the imagination," but the words only, the article certainly had no proper place; neither indeed was there any occasion for the other two words, "those of." Better, if the sentence had run thus: 'Few words in the English language are employed in a more loose and uncircumscribed sense, than fancy and imagination.'

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

Though "fix" and "determine" may appear synonymous words, yet a difference between them may be remarked, and they may be viewed, as applied here, with peculiar delicacy.

The author had just said, that the words of which he is speaking were "loose" and "uncircumscribed." "Fix" relates to the first of these, "determine" to the last. We 'fix' what is 'loose,' that is, we confine the word to its proper place, that it may not fluctuate in our imagination, and pass from one idea to another; and we 'determine' what is 'uncircumscribed,' that is, we ascertain its *termini*, or limits; we draw the circle round it, that we may see its boundaries. For we cannot conceive the meaning of a word, nor indeed of any other thing, clearly, till we see its limits, and know how far it extends. These two words, therefore, have grace and beauty as they are here applied; though a writer, more frugal of words than Mr. Addison, would have preferred the single word 'ascertain,' which conveys, without any metaphor, the import of them both.

The "notion of these words" is somewhat of a harsh phrase, at least not so commonly used, as the "meaning of these words."—"As I intend to make use of them in the thread of my speculations;" this is plainly faulty. A sort of metaphor is improperly mixed with words in the literal sense. He might very well have said, 'as I intend to make use of them in my following speculations.' This was plain language; but if he chose to borrow an allusion from "thread," that allusion ought to have been supported; for there is no consistency in "making use of them in the thread of speculations;" and indeed, in expressing any thing so simple and familiar as this is, plain language is always to be preferred to metaphorical.—"The subject which I proceed upon," is an ungraceful close of a sentence; better, "the subject upon which I proceed."

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

As the last sentence began with—"I therefore thought it necessary to fix," it is careless to begin this sentence in a manner so very similar, "I must therefore desire him to remember;" especially, as the small variation of using, 'on this account,' or 'for this reason,' in place of "therefore" would have amended the style.—When he says, "I mean only such pleasures," it may be remarked, that the adverb "only" is not in its proper place. It is not intended here to qualify the verb "mean," but "such pleasures;" and therefore should have been placed in as close connection as possible with the word

which it limits or qualifies. The style becomes more clear and neat, when the words are arranged thus: 'by the pleasures of the imagination, I mean such pleasures only as arise from sight.'

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

It is a great rule in laying down the division of a subject, to study neatness and brevity as much as possible. The divisions are then more distinctly apprehended, and more easily remembered. This sentence is not perfectly happy in that respect. It is somewhat clogged by a tedious phraseology. "My design being first of all to discourse—in the next place to speak of—such objects as are before our eyes—things that are either absent or fictitious." Several words might have been spared here; and the style made more neat and compact.

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

This sentence is distinct and elegant.

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

In the beginning of this sentence, the phrase, "more preferable" is such a plain inaccuracy, that one wonders how Mr. Addison should have fallen into it; seeing "preferable," of itself, expresses the comparative degree, and is the same with more eligible, or more excellent.

I must observe further, that the proposition contained in the last member of this sentence, is neither clear nor neatly expressed: "it must be confessed, that those of the imagination are as great, and as transporting as the other."—In the former sentence, he had compared three things together; the pleasures of the imagination, those of sense, and those of the understanding. In the beginning of this sentence, he had called the pleasures of

the understanding "the last;" and he ends the sentence with observing, that those of the imagination are as great and transporting "as the other." Now, besides that "the other" makes not a proper contrast with "the last," he leaves it ambiguous, whether, by "the other," he meant the pleasures of the understanding, or the pleasures of sense; for it may refer to either by the construction, though, undoubtedly, he intended that it should refer to the pleasures of the understanding only. The proposition, reduced to perspicuous language, runs thus: 'Yet it must be confessed, that the pleasures of the imagination, when compared with those of the understanding, are no less great and transporting.'

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

This is a good illustration of what he had been asserting, and is expressed with that happy and elegant turn for which our author is very remarkable.

"Besides, the pleasures of the imagination have this advantage, above those of the understanding, that they are more obvious, and more easy to be acquired."

This is also an unexceptionable sentence.

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

This sentence is lively and picturesque. By the gaiety and briskness which it gives the style, it shows the advantage of intermingling such a short sentence as this amidst a run of longer ones, which never fails to have a happy effect. I must remark, however, a small inaccuracy. A "scene" cannot be said to "enter;" an actor enters; but a scene 'appears,' or 'presents itself.'

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

This is still beautiful illustration; carried on with that agreeable floweriness of fancy and style, which is so well suited to those pleasures of the imagination, of which the author is treating.

"We are struck, we know not how, with the symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the beauty of an

object, without inquiring into the particular causes and occasions of it."

There is a falling off here from the elegance of the former sentences. We "assent" to the truth of a proposition; but cannot so well be said to "assent to the beauty of an object." 'Acknowledged,' would have expressed the sense with more propriety. The close of the sentence too is heavy and ungraceful—"the particular causes and occasions of it"—both "particular" and "occasions" are words quite superfluous; and the pronoun "it" is in some measure ambiguous, whether it refers to "beauty" or to "object." It would have been some amendment to the style to have run thus: 'We immediately acknowledge the beauty of an object, without inquiring into the cause of that beauty.'

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

"Polite" is a term more commonly applied to manners or behaviour, than to the mind or imagination. There is nothing further to be observed on this sentence, unless the use of "that" for a relative pronoun, instead of 'which,' an usage which is too frequent with Mr. Addison. 'Which' is a much more definite word than "that," being never employed in any other way than as a relative; whereas, "that" is a word of many senses; sometimes a demonstrative pronoun; often a conjunction. In some cases we are indeed obliged to use "that" for a relative, in order to avoid the ungraceful repetition of 'which' in the same sentence. But when we are laid under no necessity of this kind, 'which' is always the preferable word, and certainly was so in this sentence—"Pleasures *which* the vulgar are not capable of receiving," is much better than "pleasures *that* the vulgar," &c.

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



All this is very beautiful. The illustration is happy; and the style runs with the greatest ease and harmony. We see no labour, no stiffness, or affectation; but an author writing from the native flow of a gay and pleasing imagination. This predominant character of Mr. Addison's manner, far more than compensates all those little negligences which we are now remarking. Two of these occur in this paragraph. The first, in the sentence which begins with, "It gives him indeed a kind of property"—To this "it," there is no proper antecedent in the whole paragraph. In order to gather the meaning, we must look back as far as to the third sentence before the first of the paragraph, which begins with, "A man of a polite imagination." This phrase, "polite imagination" is the only antecedent to which this "it" can refer: and even that is an improper antecedent, as it stands in the genitive case, as the qualification only of a man.

The other instance of negligence, is towards the end of the paragraph—"So that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light"—By "another" light, Mr. Addison means, a light different from that in which other men view the world. But though this expression clearly conveyed this meaning to himself when writing, it conveys it very indistinctly to others; and is an instance of that sort of inaccuracy, into which, in the warmth of composition, every writer of a lively imagination is apt to fall; and which can only be remedied by a cool subsequent review.—"As it were"—is upon most occasions no more than an ungraceful palliative, and here there was not the least occasion for it, as he was not about to say any thing which required a softening of this kind. To say the truth, this last sentence, "so that he looks upon the world," and what follows, had better been wanting altogether. It is no more than an unnecessary recapitulation of what had gone before: a feeble adjection to the lively picture he had given of the pleasures of the imagination. The paragraph would have ended with more spirit at the words immediately preceding; "The uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures."

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

Nothing can be more elegant, or more finely turned, than

this sentence. It is neat, clear, and musical. We could hardly alter one word, or disarrange one member, without spoiling it. Few sentences are to be found more finished, or more happy.

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

This also is a good sentence, and gives occasion to no material remark.

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

The beginning of this sentence is not correct, and affords an instance of a period too loosely connected with the preceding one. "Of this nature," says he, "are those of the imagination." We might ask, of what nature? for it had not been the scope of the preceding sentence to describe the nature of any set of pleasures. He had said, that it was every man's duty to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, in order that, within that sphere, he might find a safe retreat, and a laudable satisfaction. The transition is loosely made, by beginning the next sentence with saying, "Of this nature are those of the imagination." It had been better, if, keeping in view the governing object of the preceding sentence, he had said, 'This advantage we gain,' or, 'This satisfaction we enjoy, by means of the pleasures of imagination. The rest of the sentence is abundantly correct.

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

On this sentence nothing occurs deserving of remark, except that "worked out by dint of thinking," is a phrase which borders too much on vulgar and colloquial language, to be proper for being employed in a polished composition.

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

In the latter of these two sentences, a member of the period is altogether out of its place; which gives the whole sentence a harsh and disjointed cast, and serves to illustrate the rules I formerly gave concerning arrangement. The wrong-placed member, which I point at, is this "where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtle disquisitions;" these words should undoubtedly, have been placed, not where they stand, but thus: 'Sir Francis Bacon, in his *Essay upon Health*, where he particularly dissuades the reader from knotty and subtle speculations, has not thought it improper to prescribe to him,' &c. This arrangement reduces every thing into proper order.

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

These two concluding sentences afford examples of the proper collocation of circumstances in a period. I formerly showed, that it is often a matter of difficulty to dispose of them in such a manner, as that they shall not embarrass the principal subject of the sentence. In the sentences before us, several of these incidental circumstances necessarily come in—"by way of introduction"—"by several considerations"—"in this paper"—"in the next paper." All which are, with great propriety, managed by our author. It will be found, upon trial, that there were no other parts of the sentence, in which they could have been placed to equal advantage. Had he said, for instance, 'I have settled the notion (rather the *meaning*)—of those pleasures of the imagination, which are the subject of my present undertaking, by way of introduc-

tion in this paper, and endeavoured to recommend the pursuit of those pleasures to my readers by several considerations; we must be sensible, that the sentence, thus clogged with circumstances in the wrong place, would neither have been so neat nor so clear, as it is by the present construction.

## LECTURE XXI.

## CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN No. 412 OF THE SPECTATOR.

THE observations which have occurred in reviewing that paper of Mr. Addison's, which was the subject of the last lecture, sufficiently show, that, in the writings of an author of the most happy genius and distinguished talents, inaccuracies may sometimes be found. Though such inaccuracies may be overbalanced by so many beauties, as to render the style pleasing and agreeable upon the whole; yet it must be desirable to every writer to avoid, as far as he can, inaccuracy of any kind. As the subject, therefore, is of importance, I have thought it might be useful to carry on this criticism throughout two or three subsequent papers of the Spectator. At the same time I must intimate, that the lectures on these papers are solely intended for such as are applying themselves to the study of English style. I pretend not to give instruction to those who are already well acquainted with the powers of language. To them my remarks may prove unedifying; to some they may seem tedious and minute; but to such as have not yet made all the proficiency which they desire in elegance of style, strict attention to the composition and structure of sentences cannot fail to prove of considerable benefit: and though my remarks on Mr. Addison should, in any instance, be thought ill-founded, they will, at least, serve the purpose of leading them into the train of making proper remarks for themselves.\*—I proceed, therefore, to the examination of the subsequent paper, No. 412.

\* If there be readers who think any further apology requisite for my adventuring to criticise the sentences of so eminent an author as Mr. Addison, I must take notice, that I was naturally led to it by the circumstances of that part of the kingdom where these Lectures were read; where the ordinary spoken language often differs much from what is used by good English authors. Hence it occurred to me, as a proper method of correcting any peculiarities of dialect, to direct students of eloquence, to analyze and examine, with particular attention, the structure of Mr. Addison's sentences. Those papers of the Spectator, which are the subject of the following Lectures, were accordingly given out in