

BOOK II.

ORNAMENTS OF COMPOSITION.

152. "When we have acquired that ease of diction and harmony of numbers which I have explained," says Cicero, "our whole style of oratory is to be adorned and frequently interspersed with brilliant lights, as it were, of thoughts and language" (*De Or.*, iii. 52). The principal of these ornaments are figures. Quintilian thus defines them: "**Figures** are departures from the ordinary mode of expression for the purpose of adorning our style" (*Inst.*, ix. 1). By 'adorn-
ing' he means bestowing on style additional clearness, strength, or beauty.

153. Frequently all **three effects** at once are produced by figurative language. For instance, Pope wishes to say that vice is in reality loathsome, and that every one at first shrinks from committing sin; yet that, by sinning often, a person may lose this horror and become fond of vice. He expresses this more strikingly, pleasingly, and clearly by means of figures:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

This imagery is beautiful, yet it is not perfect. There is in the whole conception a flaw which might have been avoided. We are said to embrace the monster through pity; it would have been more correct to say that we are attracted by its deceptive charms, which become more se-

ductive in proportion as familiarity with vice lessens our horror for its guilt. The figure would be far more beautiful without this inaccuracy.

154. Let us take an example in prose. Dr. Johnson writes:

"If he who considers himself as suspended over the abyss of eternal perdition only by the thread of life, which must soon part by its own weakness, and which the wing of every minute may divide, can cast his eyes round him without shuddering with horror, what can he judge of himself but that he is not yet awakened to sufficient conviction?"

Here are some striking and appropriate images: a man in danger of eternal loss is compared to a man suspended over an abyss; his life to a thread; this thread is so frail that it must soon part by its own weakness; a minute is a winged creature, to denote its swiftness, etc. But these figures are not consistent: we cannot conceive a man as hanging by a mere thread, especially by one so weak that the wing of a little creature, as we necessarily conceive a minute to be, can divide it. Such flaws, and even more serious faults, are not uncommon in the works of brilliant writers, and are very numerous in extempore speeches. To learn how to use figures with as much correctness as brilliancy requires very careful study.

Figures are thus classified:

155. 1. Those which *turn* or change words from their literal meaning; these are called **tropes** (*τρόπος*, a turning).

2. Those which leave words in their original meaning; these are of two kinds:

(a) **Figures of words**, also called figures of diction, which consist in the mode of expression; they depend on the words themselves or on their position.

(b) **Figures of thought**, which consist in some peculiarity of the thoughts, independently of any special mode of expression.

We shall treat: 1. Of *tropes*; 2. Of *figures of words*; 3. Of *figures of thought*.

156. It is well to remark, for the sake of avoiding confusion, that **the ancients** did not include tropes under the head of figures (*figura, σχήματα*), while we do, with moderns generally. Still, like the ancients (Quintilian, ix. 1), we consider tropes as neither figures of words nor figures of thought, but as a distinct kind of figures, subject to special laws, and therefore requiring special treatment.

CHAPTER I.

TROPES.

157. **Tropes may be thus defined:** "Figures in which words are turned or changed from their literal meaning"; or, "Words used in meanings not their own, with a peculiarly happy effect." Thus when Thomson writes:

"But yonder comes the powerful king of day,
Rejoicing in the East, . . ."

he uses "king of day" for "sun"; and no one can fail to notice the happy effect produced.

158. **The pleasure arising from the use of figures** is due to two principal causes:

1. **One cause is the play of our imagination.** For as children, by a wise dispensation of Providence, rejoice in running and jumping, and other bodily exercises conducive to their health and physical development, so all men find delight in the play of their fancy or imagination; the exercise of which faculty, if properly directed by reason, becomes a source of great mental development.

159. 2. **The second cause** of pleasure is the introduction into the composition of such **new images** as add special strength or beauty. Thus, in the example quoted, not only the sun is presented to our minds, but also the image of a powerful king. From the consideration of these two sources of pleasure we readily infer that the following rules must direct the use of tropes.

160. **Rule 1.**—The new images introduced must be really suited to add strength or beauty. Hence we should not