

CHAPTER II.

POETIC DICTION.

761. The **poetic diction** of the English language is extensive and rich. Many words and forms of expression are restricted to poetry, or at least recognized as peculiar to poetic language. Orators sometimes use them, but they are then understood to borrow the graces of poetry to beautify their thoughts.

762. The **licenses** granted to the poet, as well as the restrictions laid upon him, are learned best in the study of the best authors. The following are some of the liberties they use:

1. Frequent *omissions of words*:

(a) Of the *article*:

"Like [a] shipwrecked mariner on [a] desert coast."

(b) Of *pronouns*:

"For is there aught in sleep [which] can charm the wise?"

"[He] Who does the best his circumstances allow."

(c) Of *verbs*:

"Does well, acts nobly. Angels could [do] no more."

"To whom thus Adam [spoke]."

2. Frequent *inversions*:

"Where echo walks steep hills among."

"A transient calm the happy scenes bestow."

"Heaven trembles, roar the mountains, thunders all the ground."

"When first thy sire to send on earth
Virtue, his darling child, designed,
To thee he gave the heavenly birth,
And bade thee form her infant mind."

"Come, Nymph demure with mantle blue."

"His praise, ye brooks, attune, ye trembling rills."

"His prayer, he saith, this holy man."

"Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My soul detests him, as the gates of hell."

"Now storming fury rose,
And clamor such as heard in Heaven till now
Was never."

3. *Intransitive verbs are made transitive*:

"Still in harmonious intercourse they lived
The rural day and talked the flowing heart."

"I fly these wicked tents devoted."

4. *The first and third person imperative are used*:

"Go we to yonder hill."

"Perish he who calls me traitor."

5. *The nominative is repeated*:

"The night it was still, and the moon it shone
Serenely on the sea,
And the waves at the foot of the rifted rock
They murmured pleasantly."—*Kirke White*.

6. *Or is used for either, and nor for neither*:

"Nor pain nor joy shall rend us."

"Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po."—*Goldsmith*.

7. *Adjectives are joined to nouns which they do not qualify*:

"The ploughman homeward plods his weary way."

8. *Adjectives are used for adverbs :*

" Slow moves the solemn train."

9. *Newly compounded epithets are used :*

" In hollow-sounding dales."—*Thomson*.

" Sphere-descended maid."—*Collins*.

10. *Foreign idioms are sometimes used :*

" To some she gave
To search the story of eternal thought."

" Never since created man
Met such embodied force."

11. *A syllable is omitted or added :*

Amaze, for amazement ; 'gan, for began ; wail, for bewail ; e'er, for ever ; lone, for lonely ; morn, for morning ; dread, for dreadful ; darkling, for dark ; disport, bedim, etc. ; yon, for yonder ; eve, for evening ; font, for fountain, etc.

12. *Antiquated words and phrases* are used, and words purely poetical :

Haply, inly, oft, blithe, dun, fell, lithe, rife, twain, fain, withouten, whilom, passing rich, passing strange, etc. Yore, sheen, behests, core, benison, bourne, ire, ken, meed, welkin, ingle, the whiles, in sooth, etc.

Ween, wot, ken, ycleped, to weet, what likes me best, etc.

CHAPTER III.

VARIETIES OF POETRY.

763. Poetry is either **subjective** or **objective**. The former utters the thoughts or the feelings that exist in the poet's soul ; the latter represents what is outside of him, whether the poet speaks in his own person or in the person of others. Hence we have four species of poetry :

When the poet utters his thoughts, he gives us *didactic* poetry ; when he utters his feelings, he gives us *lyric* poetry ; when he states in his own person what is outside of him, *narrative or descriptive* ; when he speaks in the person of others, *dramatic* poetry. We shall treat of these four species in so many articles, and we shall add a fifth article on some accidental variations of poetical composition.

ARTICLE I. NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

§ 1. *Narrative and Descriptive Poetry in General.*

764. The ancients did not cultivate **descriptive poetry as a distinct species** : their descriptions occur only incidentally as parts of other compositions. Dante wrote the first great work of the descriptive kind—viz., his wonderful account of "Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory," a work of the highest literary merit. Thomson in his "Seasons," Milton in his "Allegro" and "Penseroso," and many others have made description the chief object of their poetical writings, and they have produced real masterpieces.

765. **As parts of Narrations, Dramas, Odes, etc.,** both an-