CHAPTER V. — FIGURES.

THE terms Trope and Figure have often been confused. Metaphors are called "figurative" language, and Trope is often just as loosely understood. But the distinction is useful and just. A trope deals with the expressions themselves; a figure, with their relations and arrangement.

Figures may be based on *Repetition*, on *Contrast*, or on *Combination*.

§ 1. FIGURES OF REPETITION.

The repetition of certain relations of sounds is, as we shall see, the basis of metre; there is also a harmony and poetic effect gained by repetition of words and phrases.

1. *Iteration.* — Single words are repeated. This is very common in dirges and in passages expressive of deep emotion. The tendency is to dwell on one name or thought. *Lycidas* is very remarkable in this respect: —

> "For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
> Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
> Who would not weep for Lycidas?"

The poem is full of such iteration.

So in *Paradise Lost:* "though fall'n on evil times, On evil times though fall'n and evil tongues." The strong passion and wonder of Hamlet find expression by dwelling on two words: —

> "Oh villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
> My tables — meet it is I set it down
> That one may smile and smile and be a villain."

For sacred poetry, see the song of Deborah, *Judges* v. 26-28.

Without any reference to emotion, iteration is used for the harmony of verse.

> "Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet."

> "See golden days fruitful of golden deeds."

Both are from *Paradise Lost.* Milton thoroughly understood such cadences and harmonies. More involved iteration is seen in the following: —

> "Increasing store with loss and loss with store."

> "Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide."

Or George Puttenham's example: —

> "Much must he be beloved that loveth much;
> Feare many must he needs, whom many feare."

In these latter examples we find *antithesis* also. *Cf.* § 3 of this chapter.

2. This iteration may vary the application of the word.

> "Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
> If it doth prosper, none dare call it treason."

> "When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
> For I have more." — Donne.

> "And every fair from fair sometimes declines." — Shakspere.

> "How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
> Sorrow more beautiful than beauty's self." — Keats.

3. Finally, this becomes *word-play*. So Antony, when he looks upon the body of Cæsar, cries out: —

> "Here wast thou bay'd, brave hart;
> Here didst thou fall. . . .
> O world! thou wast the forest to this hart;
> And this indeed, O world! the heart of thee."

Thence we come to the regular *pun*. The prince of pun-makers in verse is, of course, Thomas Hood. Where the pun is confined to one word, as is usual, it is not an example of repetition. But otherwise with

> "They went and told the sexton,
> And the sexton tolled the bell."

4. Whole sentences are repeated. The arrangement and matter are generally the same, but the expression is slightly changed. This figure is called *Parallelism*. It is very common in the Bible and in our Anglo-Saxon poetry: —

> "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
> The God of glory thundereth. . . .
> . . . The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars;
> Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon."

In Anglo-Saxon poetry, this figure is combined with the trope of *Variation*. An example from Milton of Parallelism, though with order reversed for metrical reasons, is the beginning of the Morning Hymn (*Par. Lost*, 5. 153): —

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty, thine this universal frame,
> Thus wondrous fair."

§ 2. FIGURES OF CONTRAST.

Here the arrangement is different from the expected and ordinary arrangement. Hence, through surprise, a stronger impression. Thus, we usually speak of an absent person or thing in the third person. If we suddenly address it in the second person, as if it were present, we have *Apostrophe*.

1. *Apostrophe*. — Literally, this means a turning away from something. Quintilian says its origin was in the custom of orators, pleading in court, who were wont to turn from the judge and suddenly address some one else. Cicero, as we know, was pleading for Ligarius, when unexpectedly he broke off his argument and turned to the accuser, who was present, saying: — "Quid enim, Tubero, tuus ille destrictus in acie Pharsalica gladius agebat?"

This stricter sort of apostrophe abounds in poetry.

> "Within a month, —
> Let me not think on't — Frailty, thy name is woman —
> A little month," etc.

In a wider sense, apostrophe is any case where an absent person or thing is addressed as if present. Banquo, in his soliloquy, turns to Macbeth as if the latter were present: —

> "Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all
> As the weird women promised; and I fear
> Thou playd'st most foully for it."

So Macbeth, about to murder Duncan, who sleeps in another room, hears the bell ring, and cries: —

> "Hear it not, Duncan!"

The figure is used also of things : —

"Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up." — *Hamlet.*

2. Apostrophe was a change of person. We may also have a change of *number.* For singular, we have the plural. Such is the "royal 'we.'" So the ordinary second-person plural is now used altogether for the older "thou."

3. The change may be in *tense.* Present is used for past, — the *historical present.* Events are narrated as if taking place before the eye.

"Behind the arras hearing something stir,
H' whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension, kills
The unseen good old man." — *Hamlet,* IV. I.

This figure is effectually used in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* of Burns. — Present may be used for future. So in ordinary talk: "I go away to-morrow." In poetry we have such pronounced examples as (*Ham.* V.) : —

"Horatio, *I am dead;*
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright."

4. The speaker describes an absent thing, not in the second person, indeed, as in *apostrophe,* but as if it were present, though the third person is retained. The speaker seems to see the thing. Hence the figure is called *Vision.* Famous are the stanzas in *Childe Harold,* beginning

"I see before me the gladiator lie."

In Gray's *Bard,* in Pope's *Messiah,* are fine examples of continued Vision. Naturally, the figure is not restricted to what one sees. The poet looks upon the rows of muskets in an arsenal and "hears even now the infinite fierce chorus," that has been sung in all ages by the voices of war. — In imperative form, this figure is very common. The *Nativity Hymn* affords an example : —

"See how from far . . . the star-led wizards haste."

5. Instead of the simple *order* of words, as we naturally form any proposition, with subject, predicate, and so on, some other order is adopted. This is just as familiar to prose as to poetry. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" is infinitely more forcible than "Diana of the Ephesians is great."

But in poetry there is far greater freedom of inversion and involution than in prose. The imitators of Milton found it easy to make up a quasi Miltonic style, simply by scattering inverted constructions broadcast through the verses. But Milton could be simple and direct when there was need for naked force : —

"He called so loud that all the hollow deep
Of Hell resounded."

On the other hand, take that description of the gate of lost paradise : —

"With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms."

In neither case can we change without infinite loss.

There is one poetical inversion, however, that needs special notice. Besides such cases as Abbott (*Shaksper. Gram.* § 423) notices, *e.g.,* "thy cause of distemper" for "the cause of thy distemper," we have inversions like

"The fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the *silent manliness of grief.*"

Goldsmith means "manliness of silent grief." So Tennyson's Princess moves to the window "Robed in the long night of her deep hair," *i.e.*, "deep night of her long hair." When Milton speaks of "flowering odors" he means "odorous flowers"; and a somewhat similar figure is, "The *flowing gold* of her loose tresses," unless we take it as implied simile.

Shakspere is fond of this construction: *cf.* Son. 77: "by thy dial's *shady stealth*," = stealthy shade.

6. Almost touching the trope Hyperbole, is a figure in which the statement taken as literal grammatical construction is impossible, but in loose construction is possible and intelligible.

> "Adam, the goodliest man of men since born,
> His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve."
> — *Par. Lost*, 4. 323 f.

> "Of all men else I have avoided thee." — *Macbeth*, v. 7.

> "So these two brothers *with their murdered man*
> Rode past fair Florence." — Keats, *Isabella*.

In the last example, the meaning is 'the man whom they were about to murder.' This anticipation, or *Prolepsis*, can be a mere matter of grammar, not of sense. Thus in Byron's *Giaour:* —

> "These scenes, their story not unknown,
> Arise, and make again your own."

Shakspere often used this figure: "What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly" (*All's Well*, II. 1); what is infirm will fly, and the part thereby *become* sound.

7. Instead of the *kind of sentence* that we expect, we find some other: as a question instead of a statement.

"Hath not a Jew eyes," asks Shylock, "hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" This is stronger than the statement, "A Jew hath eyes," etc.

> "Am I not, am I not here alone?" — Tennyson, *Maud*.

> "Is it not monstrous that this player here
> But in a fiction," etc. — *Hamlet*.

We expect an affirmative answer to these. Otherwise with

> "Lives there who loves his pain?" — *Par. Lost*, 4. 888.

8. The *Parenthesis* is common everywhere.

> "For I this night
> (Such night till this I never passed) have dreamed,
> If dreamed," etc. — *Par. Lost*, 5. 30.

9. Finally, the most abrupt contrast arises when the construction comes suddenly to an end, is broken off violently, and a new sentence begins in a new direction. The famous Vergilian example is where Neptune rebukes the winds, and begins to threaten, but leaves the threat unfinished: —

> "Quos ego — sed motos præstat componere fluctus."

> "Ay me, I fondly dream!
> Had ye been there — for what could that have done?"
> — *Lycidas*.

> "But her eyes —
> How could he see to do them?"
> — *Merch. of Ven.* III. 2.

§ 3. FIGURES OF COMBINATION.

Here the effect is made by the arrangement and mutual relations of the different parts of the sentence.

There is no repetition; there is no turning from the proper tense or number; but the joining of the parts differs from that of common speech.

1. Chief of these figures is *Antithesis*. Two expressions are placed in close relation, so that each throws the other into strong relief. Sometimes we have two verses; sometimes the antithesis is shut in a single verse. In prose, the figure should be sparingly used; a case of undue abundance is John Lyly's *Euphues and his England* (1579) which riots in antithesis and alliteration. But sparingly used, antithesis has a pleasant effect. Keats says (*Endymion*) he will

> "... *Stammer* where old Chaucer used to *sing*."
>
> "Have eyes to wonder but lack tongues to praise."
> — Shakspere, *Sonnet*.
>
> "And my large kingdom for a little grave."
> — *Richard II*. III. 4.
>
> "His back was turned, but not his brightness hid."
> — *Par. Lost*, 3. 624.
>
> "Saw undelighted all delight." — *Par. Lost*, 4. 286.
>
> "New laws from him who reigns new minds may raise
> In us who serve." — *Par. Lost*, 5. 680.

This figure was carried to excess in the formal poetry of Dryden and Pope. Still the theme may often excuse the figure. So in Pope's masterpiece: —

> "Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
> If she inspire and he approve my lays."

Pope is very fond of *parallel constructions*: —

> "Hang o'er the box and hover round the ring."
>
> "When music softens and when dancing fires."

> "On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore
> Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore."

So Dr. Johnson: —

> "All Marlborough hoarded or all Villiers spent."

Dryden: —

> "He had his wit and they had his estate."

Prior: —

> "If 'tis not sense, at least 'tis Greek."
>
> "They never taste who always drink:
> They always talk who never think."

So Swift and many other poets of the Eighteenth Century.

Another use of the antithesis is to sharpen satire. It brings incongruous things together as if they were congruous. Pope: —

> "Forget her prayers or miss a masquerade."
>
> "Or lose her heart or necklace at a ball."

Another use is to point a moral. Dryden: —

> "Resolved to ruin or to rule the state."
>
> "But wild ambition loves to slide, not stand,
> And Fortune's ice prefers to Virtue's land."
>
> "He left not faction, but of that was left."

The antithesis is much used in the *Epigram*: —

> "On parent's knees, a naked new-born child,
> Weeping thou sat'st, while all around thee smiled
> So live, that, sinking in thy long last sleep,
> Calm thou may'st smile, while all around thee weep."

A peculiar antithesis is the sneer of Richard after he has murdered the king: —

"What, will the aspiring blood of Lancaster
Sink in the ground? I thought it would have mounted."
— 3 *Henry VI.* v. 6.

The antithesis generally brings out an *opposition* in the meaning — as in the foregoing examples. But there is a similar figure which brings out a likeness — a sort of parallel. Thus Chaucer: —

"Up roos the sonne and up roos Emelye."

"When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept."
— *Julius Cæsar.*

The great merit of the antithesis is the same as the merit of its chief masters, Dryden and Pope, — *conciseness* and *clearness.* It presents an idea in brief but forcible expression. But its faults are also the faults of Pope and Dryden, — lack of naturalness, a tendency to labored manner, a striving after effect. In poor hands (imitators of Pope) it becomes intolerable.

2. The antithesis is not necessarily a contradiction. But there is a figure (something like the hyperbole among tropes) where a seeming contradiction in terms brings out vividly the general idea.

When the contradictory terms are brought sharply together, the figure is called *Oxymoron;* when they are not so closely joined, *Paradox.* Keats is a poet fond of such figures: —

". . . and then there crept
A little *noiseless noise* among the leaves
Born of the *very sigh that silence heaves.*"

"A half-heard strain
Full of *sweet desolation, — balmy pain.*"

To these striking examples we may add: —

"O heavy lightness, serious vanity!"
— *Romeo and Juliet,* I. 1.

Chaucer: —

"And smale fowles maken melodie
That slepen alle night with open eye."

Pope: —

"And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake."

Milton: —

"By merit raised to that bad eminence."

"With wanton heed and giddy cunning."

Shirley: —

"Upon death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds."

Mrs. Browning: —

"He denied
Divinely the divine."

Example of Paradox is: —

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage." — Lovelace.

3. *Climax* and *Anticlimax.* — The great art in prose or verse is to leave on the reader's mind the most distinct and sharp impression possible (*cf.* H. Spencer *On the Philosophy of Style*). To do this, great care must be exercised in the arrangement of thought and expression. The most important part should, as a rule, come last, and thus leave itself in the mind without anything following to mar the impression. So Eve says to Adam: —

"But neither breath of Morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistring with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful Evening mild, nor silent Night
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon
Or glittering starlight, *without thee is sweet*."
— *Par. Lost*, 4. 650 ff.

We see how far better is this arrangement than if Eve said, "Nothing without thee is sweet, — neither," etc.

This figure of *Climax*, — a gradual rising in power to a conclusion that towers above all that precedes, — is very common. Note the order of terms in the following: —

"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind." — *Tempest*, IV. 1.

One form of climax is that which leads us, by one particular after another, up to the main fact of a statement: —

"When, fast as shaft can fly,
Bloodshot his eyes, his nostrils spread,
The loose rein dangling from his head,
Housing and saddle bloody red,—
Lord Marmion's steed rushed by." — Scott, *Marmion*, VI.

For *oratorical climax*, Nichol calls Marc Antony's speech to the citizens, the most remarkable instance in English. "Of more purely poetical climax," he says, "there is no finer example than the concluding lines of Coleridge's *Mont Blanc*."

We may add that the finest *dramatic* climax is the last speech of Othello. — The conclusion of Pope's *Dunciad* is another famous climax, and was especially admired by Dr. Johnson.

Climax, we see, strengthens the impression of any great or striking part of a statement. But it is also used to make littleness appear yet more little, the laughable or mean still more laughable or mean. This is called *Anticlimax*. We ascend nearly to the height of the climax, the sublime, — then fall either to the absurd, mean, or to some other unexpected end.

"Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast
When husbands or when lapdogs breathe their last."
— Pope, *Rape of the Lock*.

"Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,
That from her working all his visage wann'd,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!"
— *Hamlet*, II. 2.

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind." — Pope.

For purposes of *sarcasm*. Pope: —

"Go teach eternal wisdom how to rule,
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool."

For purposes of mere wit: —

"When late I attempted your pity to move,
What made you so deaf to my prayers?
Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But, — why did you kick me down stairs?"

These examples of intentional anticlimax are, of course, to be held apart from the *rhetorical fault* of the

same name, — which is simply a bad climax. With the infinite blunders and bad uses of figurative poetry we are not concerned, as the aim of our study is to find out all that is peculiar to the style of good poets.

PART III.

METRE.

CHAPTER VI.

THE science of verse is the most difficult part of Poetics, and yet it is the most important; for metrical form is "the sole condition . . . absolutely demanded by poetry." The chief difficulty lies in the great confusion of opinion about the essential laws and tests of verse. There is no fixed use of terms, no full agreement even on some of the simplest elements of the science. We must therefore proceed carefully, accepting only the more generally admitted facts, and refusing to follow those sweeping changes of recent writers, which are in so many cases merely destructive of old theory without offering solid basis for new rules.

§ 1. RHYTHM.

A *Syllable* is a body of sound brought out with an independent, single, and unbroken breath (Sievers). This syllable may be *long* or *short*, according to the time it fills: compare the syllables in *merrily* with the syllables in *corkscrew*. Further, a syllable may be *heavy* or *light* (also called *accented* or *unaccented*) according as it receives more or less force or *stress* of