

LITERATURE.

THE CAUSES OF LOOSE STYLE.

The great source of a Loose Style, in opposition to Precision, is the injudicious use of those words termed Synonymous. They are called Synonymous, because they agree in expressing one principal idea; but, for the most part, if not always, they express it with some diversity in the circumstances. They are varied by some accessory idea which every word introduces, and which forms the distinction between them. Hardly, in any Language, are there two words that convey precisely the same idea; a person thoroughly conversant in the propriety of the Language, will always be able to observe something that distinguishes them. As they are like different shades of the same colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by using them so as to heighten and finish the picture which he gives us. He supplies by one, what was wanting in the other, to the force or to the lustre of the image which he means to exhibit. But in order to this end, he must be extremely attentive to the choice which he makes of them. For the bulk of writers are very apt to confound them with each other: and to employ them carelessly, merely for the sake of filling up a period, or of rounding and diversifying the Language, as if the signification were exactly the same, while, in truth, it is not. Hence a certain mist, and indistinctness, is unwarily thrown over Style.—BLAIR.

ON THE GENERAL CHARACTERS OF STYLE.

That different subjects require to be treated of in different sorts of Style, is a position so obvious, that I shall not stay to illustrate it. Every one sees that treatises of philosophy, for instance, ought not to be composed in the same Style with Orations. Every one sees also, that different parts of the same composition require a variation in the Style and manner. In a sermon, for instance, or any harangue, the application or peroration admits of more ornament, and requires more warmth, than the didactic part. But what I mean at present to remark is, that, amidst this variety, we still expect to find, in the compositions of any one man, some degree of uniformity or consistency with himself in manner; we expect to find some predominant character of Style impressed on all the writings, which shall be suited to, and shall mark, his particular genius, and turn of mind. The orations in Livy differ much in Style, as they ought to do, from the rest of his history. The same is the case with those in Tacitus. Yet both in Livy's orations, and in those of Tacitus, we are able clearly to trace the distinguishing manner of each historian: the magnificent fulness of the one, and the sententious conciseness of the other. The "Letters Persannes," and "L'Esprit de Loix," are the works of the same author. They required very different composition surely, and accordingly they differ widely; yet still we see the same hand. Wherever there is real and native genius, it gives a determination to one kind of Style rather than another. Where nothing of this appears; where there is no marked nor peculiar character in the compositions of any author, we are apt to infer, not without reason, that he is a vulgar and trivial author, who writes from imitation, and not from the impulse of original genius. As the most celebrated painters are known by their hand; so the best and most original writers are known and distinguished, throughout all their works, by their Style and peculiar manner. This will be found to hold almost without exception.—*Ibid.*

ON THE AUSTERE, THE FLORID, AND THE MIDDLE STYLE.

The ancient Critics attend to these general characters of Style which we are now to consider. Dionysius of Halicarnassus divides them into three kinds: and calls them the Austere, the Florid, and the Middle. By the Austere, he means a Style distinguished for strength and firmness with a neglect of smoothness and ornament: for examples of which he gives Pindar and Æschylus among the Poets, and Thucydides among the Prose writers.

By the Florid, he means, as the name indicates, a Style ornamented, flowing and sweet; resting more upon numbers and grace, than strength; he instances Hesiod, Sappho, Anacreon, Euripides, and principally Isocrates. The middle kind is the just mean between these, and comprehends the beauties of both: in which class he places Homer and Sophocles among the Poets; in Prose, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Plato, and (what seems strange) Aristotle. This must

be a very wide class indeed, which comprehends Plato and Aristotle under one article as to Style. Cicero and Quintilian make also a threefold division of Style, though with respect to different qualities of it; in which they are followed by most of the modern writers on Rhetoric; the *Simplex*, *Tenuis*, or *Suble*; the *Grave*, or *Vehement*; and the *Medium*, or *temperatum genus dicendi*. But these divisions, and the illustrations they give of them, are so loose and general, that they cannot advance us much in our ideas of Style. I shall endeavour to be a little more particular in what I have to say on this subject.—*Ibid.*

ON THE CONCISE STYLE.

One of the first and most obvious distinctions of the different kinds of Style, is what arises from an author's spreading out his thoughts more or less. This distinction forms what are called the Diffuse and the Concise Style. A concise writer compresses his thoughts into the fewest possible words; he seeks to employ none but such as are most expressive; he lops off, as redundant, every expression which does not add something material to the sense. Ornament he does not reject; he may be lively and figured; but his ornament is intended for the sake of force rather than grace. He never gives you the same thought twice. He places it in the light which appears to him the most striking; but if you do not apprehend it well in that light, you need not expect to find it in any other. His sentences are arranged with compactness and strength, rather than with cadence and harmony. The utmost precision is studied in them; and they are commonly designed to suggest more to the reader's imagination than they directly express.—*Ibid.*

MISCELLANY.

ARAB CHRISTIANS.

Buckingham, whose lectures on the East India Trade, have attracted so much attention lately in London, gives in his *Travels* a curious account of a set of Christians met within the region around the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. Their dress, their language, and general manner, so exactly resemble the manner of the Mahomedan Arabs, among whom they dwell, and their unsocial religious tenets and the privacy in which they perform their worship, make it impossible to distinguish them by their exterior, and successive travellers might pass through the country which they inhabit, without ever dreaming of their existence. Mr. Buckingham, however, succeeded in obtaining some knowledge of their religion belief, their tradition, and their rites, and the following is his account:—

The chief seat of these Subbees is Kourna, at the conflux of the Tigris and Euphrates; and at that place their bishop and upwards of a hundred families reside. There are also some few at Shookashoah, a large Arab town higher up, and they are scattered over the plain country of Khustan, at Shooster, Dezhpool, and other places there, but their limits are very narrow, and their whole body collectively is thought to be less than a thousand families. They possess a Gospel of their own, which is written in a dialect of the Chaldaic, but with characters peculiar to themselves, of which Mr. Niebuhr has given an alphabet, though he seems to have collected no other information regarding them.

This gospel enters at large into the genealogy, birth, and education of John the Baptist, with his separate history until the time of his baptizing Jesus, when the histories and acts of both are treated of in continuation; but in what particular their version accords with, or differs from any of those received among us, I could not learn; as, in the first place, the book itself is not easily to be procured from the priests, and in the next, it would require either a knowledge of their language, or a translation of it by them into Arabic, to understand it, neither was it in my power to obtain. This gospel is attributed by them to John the Baptist himself, and it is their sole authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. They have besides, however, a book of prayers and precepts, with directions for ceremonials, which they ascribe to the learned men of their sect, who immediately succeeded their great leader. They admit the divinity of Jesus, as Christ, the Son of God, and conceive that John the Baptist is to be honored as his forerunner, and as the person selected by God to perform the most holy sacrament of

baptism on his child, but what are their notions regarding the Trinity I could not learn. They are distinguished from all other Christians by their frequent repetition of this sacrament on the same persons who, in other churches, would receive it but once. It is said, even, that every individual of their body is baptised annually on some particular occasion; but whether this is a fixed day for all, or particular festivals chosen by the individuals themselves, does not appear. This, however, is certain, that on all important changes, or undertakings, or events of their life, baptism is re-administered. The child at its birth is baptised; when named it is baptised again; on completing the age of puberty it is also baptised, and whether contracting marriage, becoming the parent of children, undertaking a journey, recovering from sickness, or any other important event, as well as after death, and before interment, baptism is re-administered with the same solemnity as at first.

The prayers used at their marriages and funerals are said to be long: the first is a ceremony performed among themselves in some degree of privacy, but the latter is conducted openly, without their being interrupted in it by any one. They have no standing church, since their places of worship must be newly erected for every new occasion. It is, therefore, usual with them, when these occasions occur, to make an enclosure of reeds, when, after a most tedious process of purification, the ground becomes consecrated, and they perform their worship therein, secluded from the eyes of strangers, after which the building is pulled down and destroyed. Their attention to the purity of their food is carried on to an extraordinary degree, and equals that of the highest caste of Bramins in India. No water that is not drawn from the river by themselves in their own vessels, and even after that suffered to subside, and be otherwise purified by their own hands, can be drunk by them. If honey or other similar articles are obtained by them in the Bazaar, it must have purified water poured on it, and remain a certain time covered, to be cleansed before it can be eaten, and even fruit, though fresh from the tree, must be similarly washed to be purged of its defilement. It is, however, singular enough, that, while they carry this attention to religious purity of food to a degree altogether unknown to any other sect of Christians, abstinence and fasts should be held in abomination by them; and that contrary to the general Christian notion of this being always acceptable to God, and tending to purge the soul, as well as the body, of impure passions and desires, the Subbees regard it as a heinous sin, as a profanation of the gifts which the Creator has so bountifully provided for his creatures.

In the moral character, they are neither esteemed more upright nor more corrupt than their neighbors. One of their most distinguished virtues is mutual confidence in each other; and a breach of trust in any way is said to be regarded by them as a more damning offence than murder, fornication, and adultery combined. It is, no doubt, this peculiar tenet, added to their notion of defilement from strangers, and the constant intermarriage of their sons and daughters with each other, which keeps them together, like the Jews, and all others unsocial castes of religion, who seek not to augment their numbers by converts, yet by the selfishness of their institutions, preserve them from being lessened by mingling with others.

The heads of the few families of Subbees here are mostly mechanics and handicrafts more particularly as smiths and workers in metals: and even in the towns enumerated, where their community is more extensive, they generally confine themselves to the exercise of these and similar trades, without attaching themselves to agriculture or the profession of arms; in which particular they resemble the Jews of Europe, where the stock-broker, or loan-raiser, the art of the goldsmith or jeweller, and the occupation of the pedlar, are those mostly followed, rather than the Jews of Asia, who confine themselves to dealing in general merchandise, and are seldom seen as mechanics or handicrafts in any way.

A SCENE IN SWITZERLAND.

It was on a sweet evening in the summer of —, that I was summoned by the dear and valued friend, who had been the favored instrument of God to her