Corneille, in his *Examen of the Cid,* anſwering an ob­jection, That his ſentiments are ſometimes too much re­fined for perſons in deep diſtreſs, obſerves, that if poets did not indulge ſentiments more ingenious or refined than are prompted by paſſion, their performances would of­ten be low, and extreme grief would never ſuggeſt but exclamations merely. This is in plain language to assert, that forced thoughts are more agreeable than thoſe that are natural, and ought to be preferred.

The S*econd* claſs is of ſentiments that may belong to an ordinary paſſion, but are not perfectly concordant with it, as tinctured by a Angular character.

In the laſt act of that excellent comedy *The Careless Husband,* Lady Eaſy, upon Sir Charles’s reformation, is made to expreſs more violent and turbulent ſenti­ments of joy than are conſiſtent with the mildneſs of her character.

*Lady Eaſy.* O the soft treaſure ! O the dear reward

of long-deſiring love. Thus ! thus to have you mine,

is ſomething more than happineſs ; 'tis double life, and madneſs of abounding joy.

The following inſtances are deſcriptions rather than ſentiments, which compoſe a *third* claſs.

Of this deſcriptive manner of painting the paſſions, there is in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, *act* v. an illuſtrious inſtance, *viz.* the ſpeech of Theſeus, upon hear­ing of his ſon’s diſmal exit. In Racine’s tragedy of *Esther,* the queen hearing of the decree iſſued againſt her people, inſtead of expreſſing ſentiments ſuitable to the occaſion, turns her attention upon herſelf, and deſcribes with accuracy her own ſituation.

Juſte ciel ! tout mon fang dans mes veines se glace.

*Act 1. sc.* 3.

Again,

*Aman.* C’en eſt fait. Mon orgueil eſt forcé de plier. L’inexorable Aman eſt reduit à prier.

*Esther, act 3. sc. 5.*

*Athalie.* Quel prodige nouveau me trouble et m’embarraſſe ?

La douceur de sa voix, son ensance, ſa grace,

Font insensiblement à mon inimitié Succeder Je serois senlible à la pitié ?

*Athalie, act 2. sc.* 7.

*Titus.* O de ma paſſion fureur desesperée !

*Brutus oſ Voltaire, act* 3. *ſc. 6.*

What other are the foregoing inſtances but deſcribing the paſſion another feels ?

The *fourth* claſs is of ſentiments expreſſed too early or too late.

Some examples mentioned above belong to this claſs. Add the following from *Venice Preserved, act 5.* at the dole of the ſcene between Bélvidera and her father Priuli. The account given by Belvidera of the danger ſhe was in, and of her huſband’s threatening to murder her, ought naturally to have alarmed her relenting fa­ther, and to have made him expreſs the moſt perturbed ſentiments. Inſtead of which, he diſſolves into tenderneſs and love for his daughter, as if he had already de­livered her from danger, and as if there were a perfect tranquillity :

Canſt thou forgive me all my follies paſt !

I’ll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,

Never more thus expoſe, but cheriſh thee,

Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,

Dear as thoſe eyes that weep in fondneſs o’er thee :

Peace to thy heart.

Immoral ſentiments expoſed in their native colours, inſtead of being concealed or diſguised, compoſe the fi*fth* claſs.

The Lady Macbeth, projecting the death of the king, has the following ſoliloquy :

The raven himſelf’s not hoarse

That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

Under my battlements. Come, all you ſpirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unſex me here,

And fill me from the crown to the toe, top full

Of direct cruelty ; make thick my blood,

Stop up th’ acceſs and paſſage to remorſe,

That no compunctious viſitings of nature

Shake my fell purpoſe. *Macbeth, act* 1. *ſc. 7.*

This ſpeech is not natural. A treacherous murder was never perpetrated even by the moſt hardened miſcreant without compunction : and that the lady here muſt have been in horrible agitation, appears from her invo­king the infernal ſpirits to fill her with cruelty, and to stop up all avenues to remorſe. But in that ſtate of mind it is a never-failing artifice off ſelf-deceit to draw the thickeſt veil over the wicked action, and to exte­nuate it by all the circumſtances that imagination can ſuggeſt : and if the crime cannot bear diſguiſe, the next attempt is to thruſt it out of mind altogether, and to ruſh on to action without thought. This laſt was the huſhand’s method.

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand ;

Which muſt be acted ere they muſt be ſcann’d.

Act 3. sc. 5.

The lady follows neither of theſe courſes, but in a de­liberate manner endeavours to fortify her heart in the commiſſion of an execrable crime, without even attempt­ing to colour it. This, we think, is not natural ; we hope there is no ſuch wretch to be found as is here repreſented.

The *last* claſs comprehends ſentiments that are unna­tural, as being ſuited to no character nor paſſion. Theſe may be ſubdivided into three branches : firſt, ſentiments unſuitable to the conſtitution of man, and to the laws of his nature ; second, inconsiſtent ſentiments ; third, ſentiments that are pure rant and extravagance.

When the fable is of human affairs, every event, eve­ry incident, and every circumſtance, ought to be natu­ral, otherwiſe the imitation is imperfect. But an im­perfect imitation is a venial fault, compared with that of running croſs to nature. In the *Hippolytus* of Euri­pides (act iv. *ſc.* 5.), Hippolytus, wiſhing for another ſelf in his own ſituation, “ How much (ſays he) ſhould I be touched with his misfortune !” as if it were natu­ral to grieve more for the misfortune of another than for one’s own.

*Oſmyn.* Yet I behold her—yet—and now no more. Turn your lights inward, eyes, and view my thought ; So ſhall you ſtill behold her—’Twill not be.