writer into a ſpectator, ſo as to figure, in some obſcure manner, an action as paſſing in his sight and hearing. In that figured ſituation, being led naturally to write like a ſpectator, he entertains his readers with his own reflections, with cool deſcription, and florid declama­tion ; inſtead of making them eye-witneſſes, as it were, to a real event, and to every movement of genuine paſſion. Thus moſt of our plays appear to be cast in the same mould ; perſonages without character, the mere outlines of paſſion, a tireſome monotony, and a pompous declamatory ſtyle.

This deſcriptive manner of repreſenting paſſion is a very cold entertainment ; our ſympathy is not raiſed by deſcription ;. we muſt firſt be lulled into a dream of reality, and every thing muſt appear as paſſing in our light. Unhappy is the player of genius who acts a part in what may be termed a *deſcriptive tragedy ;* af­ter aſſuming the very paſſion that is to be repreſented, how is he cramped in action, when he muſt utter, not the ſentiments of the paſſion he feels, but a cold deſcription in the language of a byſtander ? It is that im­perfection, undoubtedly, in the bulk of our plays, which confines our ſtage almoſt entirely to Shakeſpeare, notwithſtanding his many irregularities. In our late Engliſh tragedies, we ſometimes find ſentiments tole­rably well adapted to a plain paſſion : but we muſt not in any of them expect a ſentiment expreſſive of cha­racter ; and, upon that very account, our late perform­ances of the dramatic kind are for the moſt part into­lerably inſipid.

But it may be proper to illuſtrate this ſubject by ex­amples. The firſt examples ſhall be of ſentiments that appear the legitimate offspring of paſſion ; to which ſhall be oppoſed what are deſcriptive only, and illegiti­mate : and in making this compariſon, the inſtances ſhall be borrowed from Shakeſpeare and Corneille, who for genius in dramatic compoſition ſtand uppermoſt in the rolls of fame.

I. Shakeſpeare ſhall furniſh the firſt example, being of ſentiments dictated by a violent and perturbed paſ­ſion :

*Lear --* Filial ingratitude !

Is it not as if this mouth ſhould tear this hand

For lifting food toſt ?—But I’ll puniſh home ;

No, I will weep no more.—In ſuch a night,

To ſhut me out !—Pour on, I will endure.

In ſuch a night as this ! O Regan, Gonerill,

Your old kind father, whoſe frank heart gave all—

O ! that way madneſs lies ; let me ſhun that ;

No more of that.

*Kent.* Good, my lord, enter here.

*Lear.* Prithee, go in thyſelf, ſeek thine own eaſe, This tempeſt will not give me leave to ponder

On things would hurt me more : —but I’ll go in ;

In, boy, go firſt. You houſeleſs poverty

Nay, get thee in ; I’ll pray, and then I’ll ſleep—

Poor naked wretches, whereſoe’er you are,

That bide the pelting of this pitileſs ſtorm !

How ſhall your houſeleſs heads, and unfed ſides,

Your loop’d and window’d raggedneſs defend you

From ſeaſons ſuch as theſe ! Ο I have ta’en

Too little care of this ! take phyſic, Pomp ;

Expoſe thyſelf to feel what wretches feel,

That thou may’ſt ſhake the ſuperflux to them,

And ſhow the heav’ns more juft.

*King Lear, act 3 sc. 5.*

With regard to the French author, truth obliges us to acknowledge, that he deſcribes in the ſtyle of a ſpec­tator, inſtead of expreſſing paſſion like one who feels it ; which naturally betrays him into a tireſome mono­tony, and a pompous declamatory ſtyle. It is ſcarce neceſſary to give examples, for he never varies from that tone. We ſhall, however, take two paſſages at a venture, in order to be confronted with thoſe tranſcribed above. In the tragedy of Cinna, alter the conspiracy was diſcovered, Æmilia, having nothing in view but racks and death to herſelf and her lover, receives a pardon from Auguſtus, attended with the brighteſt circumſtances of magnanimity and tenderneſs. This is a lucky ſituation for repreſenting the paſſions of surpriſe and gratitude in their different ſtages, which ſeem naturally to be what follow. Theſe paſſions, raiſed at once to the utmoſt pitch, and being at firſt too big for utterance, muſt, for ſome moments, be expreſſed by violent geſtures only : ſo ſoon as there is vent for words, the firſt expreſſions are broken and interrupted : at laſt, we ought to expect a tide of intermingled ſentiments, occaſioned by the fluctuation of the mind between the two paſſions. Æmilia is made to behave in a very dif­ferent manner : with extreme coolness ſhe deſcribes her own ſituation, as if ſhe were merely a ſpectator ; or ra­ther the poet takes the taſk off her hands :

Et je me rends, Seigneur, à ces hautes bontés :

Je recouvre la vûe auprès de leurs clartés.

Je connois mon forfait qui me sembloit juſtice ;

Et ce que n’avoit pû la terreur du supplice,

Je fens naître en mon ame un repentir puissant,

Et mon cœur en secret me dit, qu’il y consent.

Le ciel a resolu votre grandeur suprême ;

Et pour preuve, Seigneur, je n’en veux que moi-même.

J’ose avec vanité me donner cet éclat,

Puisqu’il change mon cœur, qu’il veut changer l’état.

Ma haine va mourir, que j’ai crue immortelle;

Elle est morte, et ce cœur devient sujet fidele ;

Et prenant déformais cette haine en horreur,

L’ardeur de vous servir succede à sa fureur.

Act 5*. ſc.* 3

So much in general upon the genuine ſentiments of paſſion. We proceed to particular obſervations. And, firſt, paſſions ſeldom continue uniform any conſiderable time : they generally fluctuate, ſwelling and ſubſiding by turns, often in a quick ſucceſſion ; and the ſenti­ments cannot be juſt unleſs they correſpond to ſuch fluc­tuation. Accordingly, a climax never ſhows better than in expreſſing a ſwelling paſſion : the following paſſages may ſuffice for an illuſtration,

*Almeria.* How haſt thou charm’d

The wildneſs of the waves and rocks to this ;

That thus relenting they have giv’n thee back

To earth, to light and life, to love and me ?

*Mourning Bride, act* 1. *ſc.* 7.

I would not be the villain that thou think’ſt

For the whole ſpace that’s in the tyrant’s graſp,

And the rich earth to boot.

*Macbeth, act 4. ſc.* 4.