



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

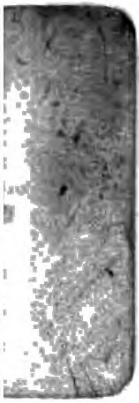
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

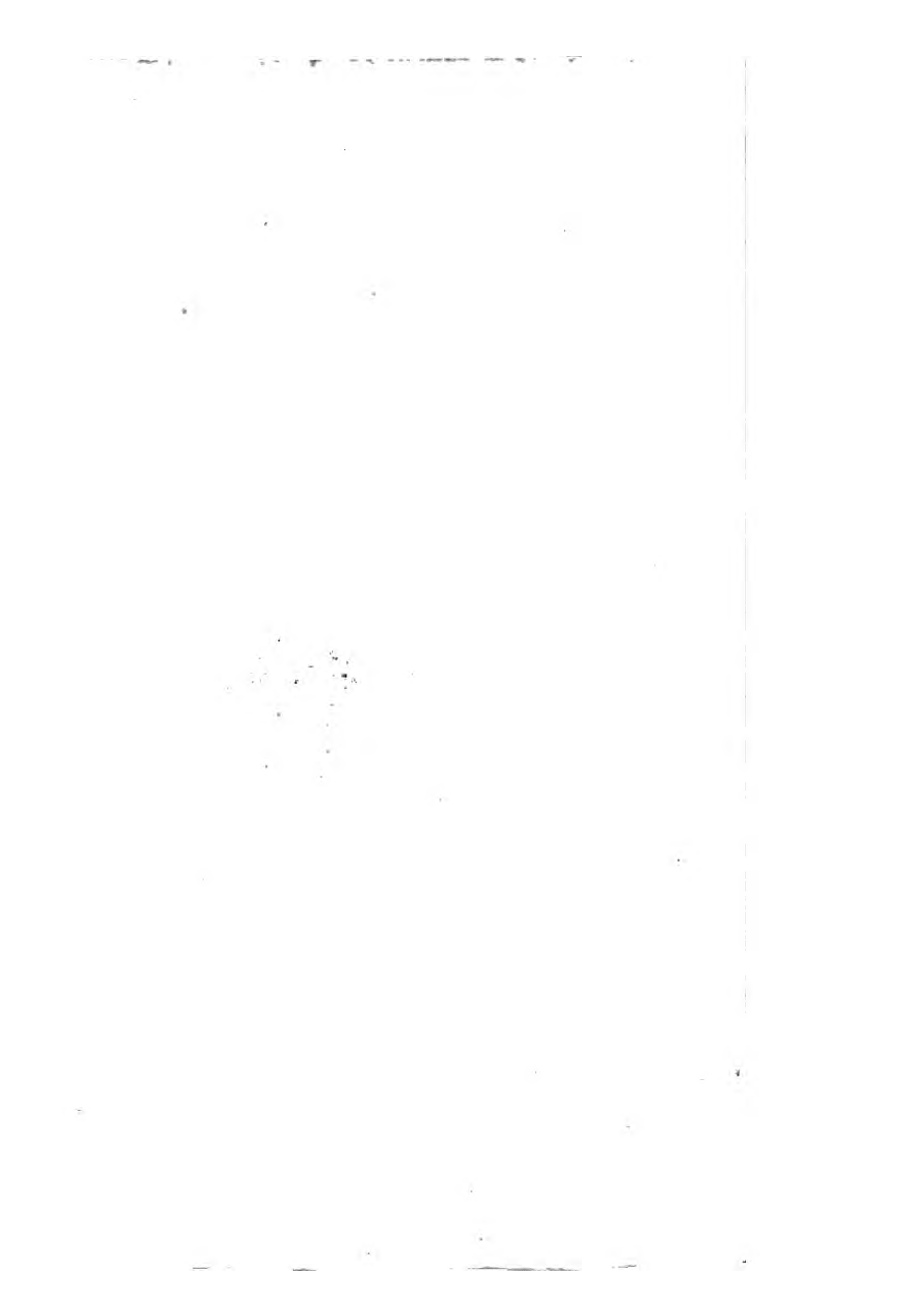


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.



G.P. 795



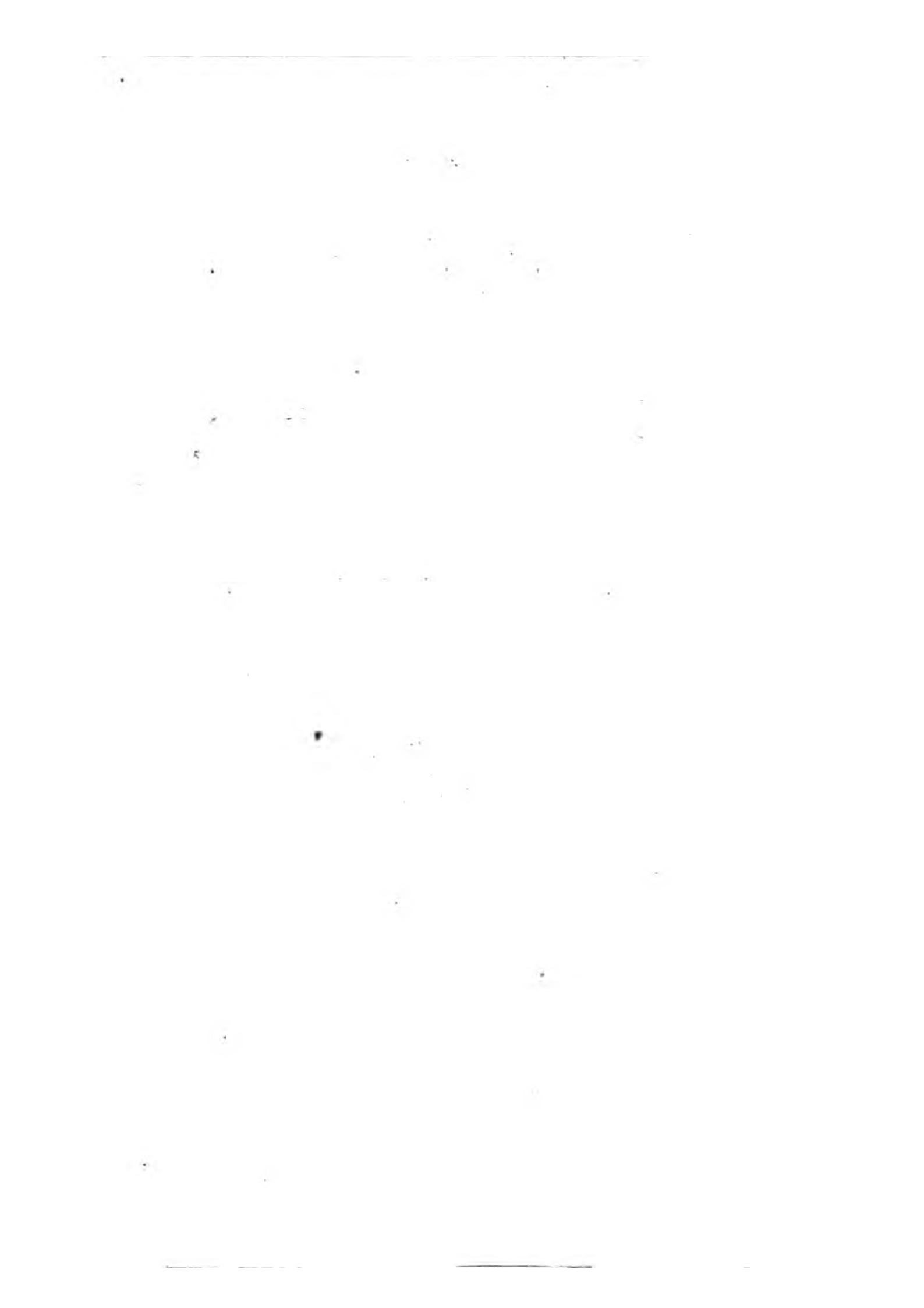


A N
E S S A Y
O N
R I D I C U L E.

Jocandi recte sapere est principium et fons.



L O N D O N:
Printed for A. MILLAR in the Strand.
MDCCLIII.



Advertisement.

THE following Essay was written by a man of business, for his winter evenings amusement, and belongs to a series of tracts, all tending to shew the usefulness and necessity of experimental reasoning in philological and moral enquiries.

As he is but a young trader in the way of literature, and his goods of a fabric somewhat new, he does not think it prudent to risque much of his stock upon one bottom. From the returns of approbation, which he shall receive from this small venture, he will be better enabled to judge
what

what the demand is at market ; and will then know, with some degree of certainty, whether he ought to export any more of the same kind ; whether he should work up the materials, still on his hands, in another fashion ; or, which is most likely to happen, whether he had not better reserve them altogether for home consumption.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

SECT. I. *THE various methods of treating the subject of Ridicule. That it is a mode of eloquence, and that there are two kinds of it.*

II. *Of Eloquence.*

III. *Of argumentative Ridicule, true and false.*

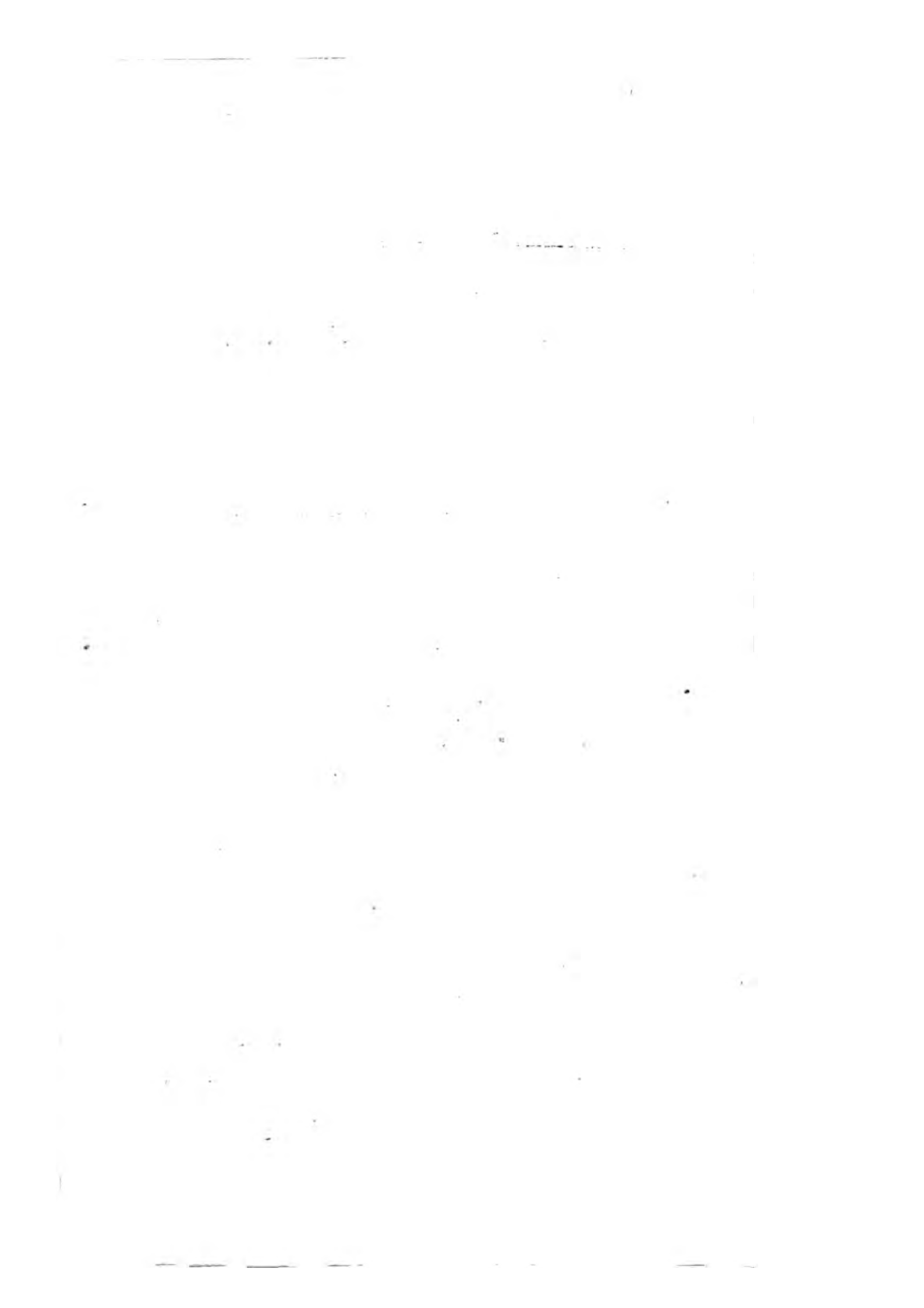
IV. *Of the means of distinguishing true from false Ridicule.*

V. *Of the use of Ridicule in religious controversies.*

VI. *Of the use of Ridicule in the critical examination of poetical images.*

PART II.

Of Ridicule, when applied to the manners and actions of men. Conclusion.



A N
E S S A Y
O N
R I D I C U L E.

P A R T I.

S E C T I O N I.

AFTER a curious subject has been unsuccessfully treated by philosophers, poets, physicians, and divines of reputation, it might seem presumptuous in one to attempt it, whose necessary studies have been of a nature little connected with deep erudition, and who has but few hours of leisure, from his ordinary occupation, to put together the little he may have accidentally pickt up ; were it not known,

B

at


PART at the same time, that many valuable and
 I. surprising discoveries have accrued to man-
 kind by the means of those from whom they were least to be expected. It is a trite observation, that printing was discover'd by a soldier, and gun-powder by a monk; from which, and many other instances, we may conclude, that the most extraordinary inventions were rather the effect of chance and subsequent trial, than of any profound forethought and contrivance.

The question, *whether Ridicule be a test of truth*, is one of those which have divided the learned for some years past, without producing any thing satisfactory, for or against it; and if I should in the following sheets cast any new light upon the subject, it is by means not unlike those of the discoverer of gun-powder. He felt, when perhaps his reflection was otherwise employed, that this composition had an uncommon force and quickness, called to mind what were its ingredients, and was only the historian of his crucible.

Those who have already handled the subject of Ridicule, have taken a very different method,

ON RIDICULE.

3

method, and, instead of examining what it SECT.
 was composed of, have not so much as I.
 settled, with any precision, what the thing 
 was which one party so much extolled, and
 the other so much depreciated.

Lord SHAFTSBURY, who, by his recommending Ridicule as a test of truth, first gave rise to this controversy, expresses himself so variously, that it is as hard to guess what he means to recommend, as upon what grounds. In his *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, he opposes it to formality, gravity, and melancholly, and calls it chearfulness, pleasantry, and good humour. Chearfulness is certainly an excellent quality in itself, and a disposition of mind very proper for those who are to enter into any enquiry; but how it should any way be a test of truth, more than a test of gold, wine, silk, or other valuable commodity, it is difficult to conceive. In his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, where one expects to see something more explicit, he rather seems to retract what he had so warmly asserted; speaks of bounds and limitations to this test of truth; hints at *a kind of defensive raillery*

PART which is, as he explains it, some evasive method to keep truth, when discovered, from certain persons. And altho' he had said in his *Letter on Enthusiasm* *, 'Tis only in a free nation, such as ours, that imposture has no privilege, and that neither the credit of a court, the power of a nobility, nor the awfulness of a church, can give her protection, and hinder from being arraign'd in every shape and appearance: yet, in his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, he jumbles raillery, burlesque, and ridicule together, and makes them the necessary language of slavery †.

Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis----

As this very ingenious nobleman has been commonly looked upon as the great patron and supporter of Ridicule, I thought it incumbent upon me to point out in a few words, how he has, or rather how he has not treated it. Those who want to see a more full examination of what his lordship has advanced upon that head, will find it in

* Sect. II. near the beginning.

† Sect. IV. at the end.

ON RIDICULE.

5

a book of *Essays* lately published, in opposition to his opinions in general *. But altho' I agree with the writer of those *Essays* in many of his remarks upon what Lord SHAFTSBURY has advanced concerning Ridicule; yet I shall take the liberty to dissent from him with regard to the subject itself: which I shall endeavour to prove to be what his Lordship at first asserted; one of *the tests of truth* (by its detection of falshood) and, as such, to be indulged without any limitation.

SECT.

I.

I am extremely sensible how difficult it is, even for the best writers, to convey their ideas with certainty by the means of general terms only. I shall therefore, in the prosecution of this work, endeavour to ascertain my meaning by the help of examples; so that, if I should happen to mean nothing to the purpose, (a thing very common among essay writers) it will be immediately apparent.

Had the celebrated writers who have exercised their pens upon the different sides of


* *Essays on the Characteristics*, by JOHN BROWN, M. A. second edition.

PART this controverfy, taken to the tract here
 I. pointed out, to wit, the examination of the
 various examples of Ridicule, as they really exist
 in the works of men of acknowledged wit; it is scarce possible but that they must, long e'er now, have come to a better understanding. They could not have spent much time in the scrutiny, without observing, that there are two forts of Ridicule; one of which is employed in discussing propositions, or matters of enquiry; and another, which has manner and actions for its province. A complaisance both for the vulgar language, and for that which has been used by the best authors, obliges one to call both these things by the name of Ridicule; tho' it will appear, that their nature and properties are very different. I shall therefore treat of them separately, beginning with that kind which is employed in matters of enquiry; because it is the most important in itself, and because it is that which gave rise to this controverfy; being the only kind of Ridicule which can so much as pretend to be admitted as a test of truth.

Whatever then may hereafter befall the other, this Ridicule may be defin'd, *the art*
of

ON RIDICULE.

7

of shewing that to be ridiculous which is really SECT.
so. Perhaps I shall be told by some body, I. 
that this is the proper office of reason and
argument. Whoever he be, I most heartily
agree with him; having long thought that
those advocates for Ridicule, who put her in
opposition to reason, did her cause very little
honour or service. I likewise join with the
author of the *Essays on the Characteristicks*,
in enrolling Ridicule among the modes of
eloquence; but as he has chosen to separate
eloquence from argument, I must endeavour
to reconcile them, before I can hope to have
Ridicule received as a test of truth; a praise,
which is certainly due to argument alone,

SECTION II.

PART
I.

THE Essay writer, in his division of the several kinds of composition, has assigned to argument the province of convincing by reality; and to eloquence, that of persuading by fictitious appearances. That is, that eloquence or oratory is, some how or other, the art of dazzling or deceiving the understanding.

I do not profess in this Essay, as he has done in those he has published, to criticise the opinions of any author, except where my subject calls upon me; else I should perhaps be able to show, that what he advances, with regard to eloquence, might very well pass for a satire upon publick speaking in general, and upon that from the pulpit in particular. Indeed to do him justice, he does not continue long in that opinion, but having sufficiently decried eloquence, in order to condemn Ridicule as one of its accomplices, he afterwards makes it amends, by acknowledging that eloquence is of the most excellent sort, when it is found-
ed

ed upon argument drawn from the real existence of things; so that there is no difficulty in concluding, that what he before said of eloquence in general, is only true of false eloquence.

SECT.
II.

But there is nothing in all this learned perplexity about *eloquence* and *argument*, *conviction* and *perswasion*, *judgment*, *passion* and *imagination*, but what may be easily unravel'd; provided we do not suffer ourselves to be intangled in other people's opinions, but examine into the nature of the subject itself. I will therefore enter upon it as if it had never been touched before; at the same time with that brevity which becomes an episode, and an episode which perhaps is very little necessary.

Eloquence is the art of convincing and persuading. These two properties of eloquence do not so much denote two different kinds of it, as the two different purposes to which it may be applied. This will appear from an enquiry into the proper meaning and application of the words, and likewise from the practice of the best orators.

When

PART When any opinion is to be examined; or
 I. any assertion to be proved, then the sole aim
 of oratory is to convince. When any action
 is to be performed, or let alone, then the
 aim of oratory is to persuade. We say,
persuade to a thing, in this latter case; and
convince of a thing, in the former. When-
 ever a truth is to be investigated, the under-
 standing alone is concerned; and therefore
 eloquence applies itself to the understanding
 only, with intention to convince. When-
 ever an action is to be promoted, eloquence
 applies itself to the two springs of human
 action, the understanding and the passions,
 alternately; endeavouring both to convince
 and persuade. From this necessity of mixing
 the argumentative eloquence on occasions of
 persuasion, the word *persuasion* receives a
 double signification; for it is common to say
persuaded of a thing as well as *persuaded*
to it: whereas the argumentative eloquence
 being simple and uncompounded, the word
convince cannot be applied to any, but its own
 peculiar purpose of convincing the under-
 standing of the truth or falshood of a position.
 It was therefore from its more comprehensive
 use, and by way of abbreviation, that elo-
 quence

quence was called by some great men, the *art of persuasion*, taking *persuasion* both in its proper and less proper sense*. And, had either CICERO or QUINTILIAN, put the art they taught in so ridiculous a light, as to deny, that it was likewise *the art of convincing by argument* †; we should, *ipso facto*, despise their

SECT.
II.



* Much of that sort of cunning nonsense, usually called wit, owes its being to the corruption and abuse of language. The double meaning of the word *persuadere* gave birth to that quaint expression recorded of St. AUGUSTIN, *Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris*; which has no meaning at all, or only means, *Although you should convince me of the truth of what you advance, yet you shall never persuade me to take any step in consequence of such conviction*. The self same phrase is to be found in the *Plutus* of ARISTOPHANES; where one of the old men says to POVERTY, in answer to her harangue, ΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΠΕΙΣΕΙΣ ΟΥΔ' ΗΝ ΠΕΙΣΗΣ, and is explained as above by the Greek scholiast upon that passage.

† There cannot certainly be a more absurd attempt than that of persuading in matter of speculation without argument; and yet there are frequent phænomena that apologize, in some measure, for those who think it both practicable and easy. They may have perhaps observed the multitude persuaded of the truth of what the orator asserted, when there was nothing in his discourse that had the least appearance of argument; nay, when it was quite unintelligible.

This

PART their testimony, as coming from men whose
 II. profession was to deceive.

OF

This is, no doubt, a common fact; tho' it is not owing to any delusive power of eloquence upon the imagination and passions, but acts by the bare force of personal credit and authority. The orator, by founding periods, learned terms, a pompous manner, an earnestness of gesture, and a look of sincerity, convinces those simpletons (for upon no other audience will such oratory pass) that he is a great, a learned, and an honest man; and then uses this credit, so acquired, to fasten any opinion he pleases upon them. But this ridiculous sort of prepossession is not peculiarly the consequence of eloquence; it will be found to follow also upon rank, riches, and many other advantages, where no superiority of speech or understanding is pretended: whatever is said by a prince or a peer, carries with it great degree of persuasion from the rank of the person only. The same persuasion is generally attendant upon riches, *Et bene nummatum decrat suadela*. I lately heard a young gentleman relate an unlikely piece of news, in a company where it was received with some hesitation; upon which, he affirmed with great earnestness, that it was certainly true, for he had heard it from a man of 4000*l.* a year. Handsome women have the same privilege of persuading without argument, and by the like means; for, as their poet says,

*Whatever they approve is sweet,
 And all is sense that they repeat.*

Fine

Of the argumentative eloquence we have SECT.
II. examples in the works of ISOCRATES, LUCIAN, and other orators; who have had questions in philosophy, law, speculative politics, or philology for their topics. Of the mixed kind we find numberless examples in the historians, and in the orations of those who have engaged in pleading causes, or in the practice of war, divinity, or politics. Amongst the most famous in that way are DEMOSTHENES and CICERO; of whom, DEMOSTHENES apply'd himself chiefly, if not altogether, to the understanding of his auditors; even in those orations, his *Philippics*, where he meant to animate and rouse them

Fine cloaths, a decent gown and band, a diamond ring, are all instruments of great energy in promoting this sort of conviction. Nay, there are assemblies, tho' I believe, only of the fanatical sort, where the reverse of all those; to wit, the orator's bad language, awkward delivery, poverty, mean condition, and unfashionable apparel, will give him great credit in the eyes of his hearers, and produce conviction out of falshood and absurdity. So that this persuasion, when it is produced, is not so much a proof of the power of eloquence, as of the weakness of understanding in the generality of men; who have seldom any opinions, but what are obtruded upon them by authority.

PART them to action; whilst CICERO, adapting

I. himself to the times in which he lived, often throws in a greater share of the pathetic than would have succeeded with a people in whom the reasoning faculty was more cultivated. This is the cause, as the Essay writer observes, *that severe and able judges have prefer'd DEMOSTHENES to CICERO; for, as the imagination and passions are then most refined and just, when they bear to the same point with reason; so that species of eloquence is the noblest, which tends to conduct them thither**.

In my next section I shall endeavour to show, in what manner Ridicule becomes a branch of this *noblest species of eloquence*; and cannot conceive, upon what grounds my Lord SHAFTSBURY's antagonist gave it a place amongst the pathetic, or those which act by an application to the passions. He says it
excites

* It is remarkable, that the words used to express the eloquence of Greece and Rome, convey a just idea of their several characters. In Greek, a piece of eloquence, let the subject be what it will, is called *logos*, a *discourse*; and the person who delivers it, *rhetor*, or *speaker*; whereas, in Latin, the performance is called *oratio*, from *orare* to entreat, plead, or beg; and the performer is called *orator*, an entreater, pleader, or beggar.

excites the passion of contempt. Allowing him that contempt and laughter (the latter of which Ridicule never fails to excite) are both of them passions; a very little reflection will convince us, that Ridicule is not therefore to be ranked amongst the pathetic kinds of eloquence; because, in pathetic eloquence, the passions are the instruments, upon which the artist plays, in order to produce that persuasion he aims at: whereas, contempt and laughter, call them what you will, are, in matters of enquiry, the consequences of the detection of that sort of falshood, which we call the ridiculous; and are not the means, but the end †.

SECT.
II.



† Some people may imagine, because pathetic is derived from *pathos* passion, that therefore every thing, wherein passion is concerned, either as cause, means or consequence, must be pathetic. At this rate a slap in the face would be pathetic; if either he who received, or he who gave it happened to be in a passion. But this is trusting too much to the infallibility of syllables.

SECTION III.

PART I. **W**HEN a general marches his army into the enemy's country, he never thinks it consistent with prudence to leave any fortified place behind him untaken, unless the garrison is very contemptible. In like manner, he who strives upon paper to extend the dominions of truth, should take care to obviate all the objections that have been offered against the cause he undertakes, however groundless they may appear to him, while they are so plausible as to have the countenance of some men of sense. It is for this reason, that a section of this short work has been wholly employed in adjusting certain differences betwixt eloquence and argument, suggested by the author of the essays; a task, which would not otherwise have been necessary: since whatever is employed in the search of truth, whether it be addressed to men's knowledge or their prejudices, whether it tends to conduct or mislead, must ever be addressed to the understanding; and, if eloquence, of that

that sort of eloquence which consists of argument alone.

SECT.
III.
~~~~~

Having thus satisfied myself, and perhaps some of my readers, of one important truth, *that argumentative Ridicule is argumentative*, and consequently one of the methods of reasoning: I will venture a step farther, and assert, that it is one of the methods the best founded, the easiest comprehended, and the least subject to fallacy; for it will always be found, AN APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE by some familiar image or allusion, which convinces by the justness, while it pleases by the novelty and contrast of its application.

It is in this last quality, *novelty*, that distinguishes it from what is commonly called serious reasoning; and it is the first, *justness*, that distinguishes it from buffoonery or false Ridicule: for *false Ridicule is an appeal to false facts, or to true facts not parallel or applicable to the point in question*. Its name of Ridicule it receives only from a consequence, that never fails to attend it; for a serious falshood is never confuted by a sudden allusion to a trivial or domestic fact,

C

without

PART without raising a smile or laugh in the  
 I. hearers.

Those who are not willing to receive these properties of Ridicule upon my bare assertion, must look for the proof of them in the works of those authors, who have been most famous for their excellency in that way of writing. There it was that these assertions were formed, and thither I refer my reader; not imagining that he would rest the cause upon any instances, which I might partially chuse in its support. However, by way of illustration at least, I will give one instance of true, and another of false Ridicule; which I have chosen out of a great number, because they both belong to one transaction, and that of a nature very public and interesting.

When that famous bill, in the year 1733, called the Excise Scheme, was upon the point of being carried in the House of Commons, a number of the most substantial merchants of the city of London, agreed to sign a petition against it; and, that it might come with what they called greater weight, they proceeded in a long  
 train



train of coaches and chariots to present it themselves in a body. This petition, and the formidable cavalcade that attended it, were no sooner made known to the house than the chief minister stood up and spoke against the manner of presenting it with great eloquence and spirit; saying, amongst other things, That, altho' those gentlemen were contented in their writing with the title of humble petitioners, their appearance in Palace-Yard gave them more the air of another sort of petitioners, commonly known by the name of *Sturdy Beggars*. An image that gives a juster idea of the illegality and impropriety of their proceeding, than a regular oration of half an hour could have effected. For what ought to give weight to a petition in an affair of that importance to the nation, but the matter and reasons of the petition itself? And what could be more just than to call those *Sturdy Beggars*, who, under pretence of petitioning, meant to extort what they wanted, by intimidating the members of parliament, and bullying the legislature?

How then was this to be answered? It is, I must own, a puzzling question. And

PART yet an answer, of some sort or other, was  
 I. absolutely necessary, to prevent the party  
 from being delivered over to eternal laughter  
 and confusion of face. For, as POPE says,

*To vice and folly to confine the jest,  
 Sets half the world, God knows, against the  
 rest ;  
 Did not the sneer of more impartial men  
 At sense and virtue ballance all again :  
 Judicious wits spread wide the ridicule,  
 And charitably comfort knave and fool.*

With this humane design, one of the  
 ringleaders of the patriots, for the time  
 being, rose up ; and, without taking notice  
 of the intention of the minister's speech,  
 which was expressed in a manner not at all  
 ambiguous, laid hold, with great seeming  
 heat, of the word *Beggar* ; wondring to  
 hear any man call those *Beggars*, who were  
 the pillars of the national commerce, and  
 who had personally so great a share of the  
 national property ; enlarging much upon  
 their riches, which had never been brought  
 into question ; and finishing the harangue  
 with a history of the mischiefs that befel the  
 government of Flanders, by a governor  
 contemptuously

contemptuously bestowing the appellation of SECT.  
*Gueux* upon the citizens of Ghent. See all III.  
 on a sudden the tables turned. For this rea-  
 soning, such as it was, favoured the designs  
 of the party, and the then reigning preju-  
 dices of the vulgar; and, in consequence  
 of it, a ballad was composed, beginning

*Of all the trades of London  
 A beggar's trade's the best;  
 Since BOB allows us that trade  
 Who ruins all the rest;  
 And a begging we must go.*

Which acknowledged the merchants to be *beggars*, and put their beggary in a multitude of new and diverting lights, not very honourable for the man who had obtained, for many years, the sole administration of public affairs; and who had so insolently, as was supposed, upbraided them with that misery, of which he must have been the principal cause.

This, in a week's time, was spread over the most distant parts of the island, and raised an enthusiastic rage in the populace,

PART that might have been attended with the most  
I. cruel consequences, if any accident had put  
it in motion. For, as true Ridicule is one  
of the most forcible and expeditious of all  
the methods of reasoning; so false Ridicule,  
whenever it can be brought to take effect, as  
it is the quickest, is the most to be dreaded  
of all the methods of sophistry.

Had the chief minister really called the  
merchants of London *Beggars*, he would  
have furnished evidence, from his own  
mouth, for putting his administration in the  
most contemptible light; and the *ballad* would  
have been true Ridicule: but, as that pre-  
tended fact was known, to the sober and  
well informed to be false, the performance  
could not to any such appear otherwise, than  
as a sophistical piece of buffoonery.

S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

**I**T will probably be objected to Ridicule, SECT. that, even as it has been describ'd and IV. exemplify'd in the foregoing Section, it is capable of serving the purpose of screening imposture, as well as of exposing it; and therefore a very ambiguous and insufficient *criterion* of truth. This objection is not without foundation. But if we nicely examine the several instances of false Ridicule from whence it arises, the objection will be found not owing to any imperfection in the nature of Ridicule, but to the weakness and prejudice of those for whose conviction it is intended. He who should find out a method, by the immediate application of which fools and prejudiced persons might be enabled to distinguish truth from falshood, would find a philosopher's stone indeed. But there is no likelihood that such a *succedaneum* for good sense will ever be found, or that it was ever intended by the Almighty, who is equally the father of the wise and of the silly; and who has, no doubt, ordained all those diversities, which exist in nature, for the

PART happiness of the whole. It is he who has

I. given, according to the poet,

*Fear to the statesman, rashness to the chief,  
To kings presumption, and to crouds belief.*

*Mundus vult decipi* : and I write not for the many, whom it would be perhaps as unfit, as it is impossible to undeceive. What species of reasoning is there, the most serious and formal, that has not been made the channel for conveying error and absurdity to the understanding, under the appearance of truth? And when we say, that this sort of reasoning is least liable to be abused, it is saying as much for it, as can be said for most things, in which the frail race of man is concern'd. False reasoning, by the abuse of words, is very easy and common, because the ideas attached to general terms are very various, indistinct, and easily confounded; but the properties of things, especially those of a vulgar and domestic nature, in which the force and pleasure of Ridicule chiefly consists, cannot safely be summon'd for evidence to support any principle or general assertion, unless that principle be true, and consistent with the existence of things.

But



But, however excellent this specific may be, I will allow that, like other excellent remedies, it may become poison in the hands of a quack; and that it is of consequence to have an antidote always ready upon occasion. This we need not be long in search of, since there is one handed down to us in the works of a very ancient and eminent physician, and which I am able to recommend upon my own repeated experience, altho it has been discountenanced of late by several apothecaries; either because they did not understand the *recipe*, or because they had not those drugs in their shops, that were necessary for the composition.

To leave parables, and to explain myself like a man of this world, this *recipe* is no other than that rule of GORGIAS, quoted by ARISTOTLE, which the critic upon the *Characteristicks* has re-translated and new-applied after my Lord SHAFTSBURY, and which I shall take the like freedom of translating again, and new-applying after him; always however observing that good manners and deference, which is due to a living author.

The

PART  
I. } The passage in ARISTOTLE translated verbatim, runs thus, *But with regard to those things that excite laughter, since they seem to have their use in debate, we ought, says GORGIAS, to discuss the adversary's serious argument by Ridicule, and his Ridicule by serious argument; rightly speaking* \*.

But, having expounded this passage with sufficient accuracy, as far as regards the relation

\* The original words are, ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ ΤΩΝ ΓΕΛΟΙΩΝ, ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΤΙΝΑ ΔΟΚΕΙ ΧΡΗΣΙΝ ΕΧΕΙΝ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΩΣΙ, ΚΑΙ ΔΕΙΝ, ΕΦΗ ΓΟΡΓΙΑΣ, ΤΗΝ ΜΕΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΗΝ ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΝΑΝΤΙΩΝ, ΓΕΛΩΤΙ· ΤΟΝ ΔΕ ΓΕΛΩΤΑ, ΣΠΟΥΔΗ. ΟΡΘΩΣ ΛΕΓΩΝ. Rhet. lib. iii. cap. 18. And they are thus translated by the author of the *Essays*. *As Ridicule seems to be of some use in pleading, it was the opinion of GORGIAS that you ought to confound your adversary's serious argument by raillery, and his raillery by serious argument. And he judged well.* It were to be wished that the translator had inform'd us by what authority he has render'd the word ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ to *confound*, in a diametrical opposition to all the hitherto known meanings of it. For what can be more opposite than to *confound* and to *separate*? ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ in its most simple sense, means to *separate thoroughly*, and in all the usual applications



lation betwixt English and Greek words, my work will be but half done, unless I translate those words again into their precise meaning, and shew what relation they have to realities.

SECT.  
IV.

All men, who engage in any controversy with the candid intention of discovering truth, cannot fail of observing, how much their laudable endeavours are obstructed by the imperfection and abuse of language. I believe we may venture to say, that this is the very soul of controversy, and that thinking men could not disagree in their opinions concerning any thing that comes within the reach of human reason, if it were possible to find a number of signs, that should, with exactness, convey the same ideas from one person to another. Common language is far from being equal to this purpose; and the only remedy for the defect is, by definitions and examples to explain the principal terms that are to be employed; and then

plications very little deviates from this its original meaning. Such are to *demolish, consume, corrupt, discuss*. Of these I have made use of the last, as it has the additional authority and support of all the Latin translators of this passage, that have fallen into my hands.

it

PART it signifies little, what these terms are ; whether they are such as have been already used, or others arbitrarily devised for the occasion.

I.

The term *Ridicule* has been already defin'd and exemplify'd ; so that there can be no difficulty, at least with regard to my idea of it ; but the term *serious argument* bears so many different meanings, that to use it without the like caution would be to involve us in a labyrinth of confusion. However, before I pretend to define its proper meaning in the above sentence in ARISTOTLE, I will first point out, in a few lines, how this definition comes to be necessary ; and the rather, as the enquiry is not barely verbal, but will likewise throw some light upon the main subject.

There is, and no doubt always has been, in all places, in ancient Athens, as well as in modern London, a great number of shallow-pated people, who seeing the tribute of applause, and kind reception, that never fails to be paid to true wit and humour, are willing to have likewise their share of it ; but, not being blest with the lawful means,

*viz.*

*viz.* a lively fancy, and a sound judgment, employ such means as nature has bestowed upon them. Some of these facetious gentlemen will lay joint-stools in the way of their companions, pin their skirts to the table-cloth, archly flip away their chairs from under them, and abundance of other conceits, from whence nothing but a monkey could claim any merit. But those shin-breaking, clothes-daubing, chair-withdrawing wits, are each of them a CERVANTES or a CHESTERFIELD, in comparison of another sort of idiotical vermin, who to be thought witty, will deceive you by a direct lie; or keep you a considerable time in suspense by an ambiguity; and then laugh, and tell you *it was a joke*. The consequences of this pitiful practice are deplorable; for, by its frequency, not only the language is corrupted by the misapplication of words; but that innocence, confidence, and security, which constitute the great pleasure and dignity of conversation, amongst those of liberal minds, is often hurt and confounded. How often do we hear even men of tolerable breeding, ask one another, *Are you in jest or serious?* that is, *Do you lie or speak truth?* and yet by the common-

ness

SECT.

IV.



PART I. ness of this sort of jesting not incur the re-  
sentment, that would follow the question properly expressed.

We see therefore, that by *serious* is often meant *sincere* and *in earnest*; and by jesting, their opposites, *lying* and *trifling*; but in this treatise we allow no such meaning to them; and I trust that in this we walk hand in hand with ARISTOTLE. Ridicule, or true jesting, is, with regard to sincerity, as much serious, as any other method of reasoning; and the more apt to promote both its desired consequences of conviction and laughter, the more the sentiment of the dispenser is sincere, and his deportment grave. What then is it which distinguishes, what we call *serious argument* from *Ridicule*? That will be easily found, if the reader will give himself the trouble of turning back to that place, where I account for the name of *Ridicule*; he will there find, that it is so called *from its exciting laughter in the bearers*; so, in like manner, the other sorts of reasoning are called *serious*, from their *not exciting laughter*, without any regard to their being sincere or otherwise.

Having

Having thus fully explained my terms, I SECT. will proceed to illustrate the rule of GOR- IV. GIAS, by shewing *that a jest, that will not bear a serious examination, is certainly false wit*; and likewise, however *hardy* it may appear to the critic upon Lord SHAFTSBURY, *that an argument, that will not bear Ridicule, is certainly false logic*. In other words, *that gravity is the proper test of Ridicule, and Ridicule the proper test of gravity*; even as the rule of addition is the test of subtraction, and subtraction of addition. I hope that gentleman will not call this likewise, *a see-saw sort of proof*, and say, it is *trying the justness of the square by the work that is formed by it* \*.

But one short story will clear up this matter better than a volume of dry terms; and one now occurs to my memory, which, I believe, I have formerly met with in the Cambridge jests, or some other valuable repository of that kind.

\* *Essay on the Characteristics, Sect. IX.*

PART As an Oxford scholar was sitting at supper,

I. in the Christmas vacation, with his father  
 and mother, plain sensible country-people,  
 the discourse fell, as is natural, upon the  
 university ; and led the youth insensibly in-  
 to a declamation in praise of learning in ge-  
 neral, and particularly of logic. I should  
 be glad to know, says the father, what this  
 same logic is, you are so mightily fond of.  
 It is, says the scholar, the art of making  
 people believe whatever we please. Ay, says  
 the old man, that's curious indeed. Prithee,  
 Tom, give your mother and me a short  
 flourish of it, that we may have some rea-  
 son to admire as well as you. Just as he  
 spoke, a couple of minc'd pyes being set  
 upon the table ; I will prove, says the scho-  
 lar, that here are three pyes. That will  
 oblige us extremely, says the old folks. No-  
 thing more easy, says the son. You will  
 grant me, that this is one. Yes. And that  
 this is two. No doubt. Why then, says this  
 young Plato, if you put one and two to-  
 gether, they make three. O wonderful !  
 cries the farmer. Then, my dear, conti-  
 nues he, addressing himself to his wife, you  
 shall



## ON RIDICULE.

33

shall take one pye, I another, and Tom shall have the third, to encourage him in the pursuit of such excellent studies. SECT.  
IV.

Here is an example of *serious argument* without truth in itself, or sincerity in the person by whom it is used ; and here is *Ridicule* to demolish it, which is true, and in earnest. If any one objects to my example, that what I call *serious argument* is in reality ridiculous and silly ; it is fit, that I inform such an objector, once for all, that it is only such serious argument, that *Ridicule* pretends to destroy ; and that it is only such serious argument, that shuns and disclaims the test of *Ridicule*. Had our scholar contented himself with proving, that two pyes and one made three, he might have set all the *Ridicule* of RABELAIS at defiance. So much for logic, now for *Ridicule*.

This diverting manner of reasoning, altho the least fitted, as has been before observed, to convince people of what is contrary to the nature of things ; has been nevertheless sometimes employed for that purpose, and perhaps not without some success,

D

upon



PART upon minds weak and prejudiced : and being of a rapid and collective nature, it is necessary to stop its progress by some method of reasoning more slow and analytical ; which may, like FABIVS against HANNIBAL, *cunctando restituere rem*.

Dr. SWIFT, whose works afford many examples of *true Ridicule*, now and then gives us an instance of the *false*, chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the force of party-spirit ; which never fails to incline those, who are under its influence, to a perversion of truth, let their good sense and natural love of truth be ever so great. It was this spirit which prompted that ingenious writer, born with a disposition the most remote from slavish, to endeavour to ridicule the whig principle of *the right in the people of resisting tyrants* ; a principle which is in reality the sentiment of human nature, and which by an appeal to numberless facts throws the Ridicule with irresistible force upon its opposers. What then could those expect, who were so rash as to engage common sense at her own weapons, but to leave a sad example of the insufficiency of human wit, when improperly and unworthily applied ?

This

This waggery has for title, *Mrs. BULL'S* SECT. IV.  
*vindication of the indefeasible right of Cuck-*  
*oldom incumbent upon wives, in case of the ty-*  
*ranny, infidelity, or insufficiency of their hus-*  
*band's ; being a full answer to the Doctor's*  
*sermon against Adultery.* And it is intro-  
 duced into that excellent piece of allegorical  
 humour, *The History of John Bull*, of which  
 it makes a part ; as a wen makes a part of  
 the fair body that is disgraced by it.

To detect the fallacy of this pretended  
 piece of Ridicule, let us follow the advice  
 of ARISTOTLE, and reduce it to the for-  
 mality of a syllogism or two. As thus : First,  
 the author ironically informs you, that

A wife is to her husband, what a nation  
 is to its king :

Now, it being lawful for a nation to shake  
 off its king whenever it is displeas'd with  
 him, and to take another in his room :

*Ergo*, it is lawful for a wife to renounce her  
 husband, whenever he incurs her dis-  
 pleasure, and to confer her favours upon  
 any one she likes better.

**PART** To make this ironical syllogism serve the purpose of the party, the faithful reader is charitably supposed to resolve it into the following; which he will not fail to do, *coute qui'l coute*, if he be a true son of **SACHEVE-REL.**

It is contrary to all order and the common sense of mankind, that a wife should, upon any occasion, think herself authorized to abjure her fidelity to her husband.

And a nation being exactly to its king, what a wife is to her husband :

*Ergo*, it is contrary to common sense to believe, that any failure in a king can ever absolve his subjects from their allegiance. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

It requires very little scrutiny to discover, wherein the fallacy lies of this reasoning; for it appears, at the first glance, that the whole is founded upon a supposition, that a king stands in the same relation to the people he governs, that a husband does to his wife: which is so manifestly otherwise, that it were an abuse of paper to shew in how many points the difference consists.

Besides,

Besides, the author, for the sake of this absurd buffoonery, has destroyed that allegorical consistency which is so divertingly preserved throughout the rest of the performance. And whereas Mr. *Bull*, in the body of the work, represents the English nation, and Mrs. *Bull* the parliament; in this excrescence Mr. *Bull* is forced to represent the king of England, and Mrs. *Bull* the nation. An algebraist, who, in the progress of his calculation, makes the letter *b* sometimes stand for one number and sometimes for another, has no chance of producing a solution, that will do him credit. And, for my own part, if I may be admitted an evidence, as well as counsel, in this case, I declare, that I never found, in reading these two chapters of SWIFT, any more inclination to laugh, than to be convinced; and therefore doubt not, but the verdict will be brought in, *False Ridicule*, and consequently no test of truth.

SECT.  
IV.

## SECTION V.

PART I. IT is not enough, that a position is false; to make it ridiculous, and a proper object for Ridicule, it must likewise be IMPORTANT. When HORACE says, *Parturiant montes, nascitur ridiculus mus*, he does not mean, that the mouse was ridiculous in itself; but that it only became so by the mighty expectations, which this pompous and important delivery had occasioned. And although *importance* or *gravity* is not, as Lord SHAFTSBURY asserts, *the essence of imposture*; it is so far the *essence* of the *ridiculous*, that it is easy to produce a multitude of instances, where Ridicule has justly fallen upon sayings, that were not otherwise false, than as they were not adequate, nor of a piece, with the solemnity of the design.

One of these examples is recorded of DIOGENES the Cynic, which I shall relate at length, for the benefit of such of my readers, as may not be particularly read in the history of those *wags*, whom the ancients called

called *philosophers*; and who, in reality, de-  
 served that honoured name much better, than  
 some of their more serious brethren, for  
 reasons already hinted.

SECT.  
 V.  


PLATO having defined a man *A two-legg'd animal without feathers*, in the hearing of DIOGENES, the description appeared to him extremely ridiculous, and he resolved to expose it to the laughter of the public. To do this effectually, he cast about in search of some contemptible animal, that might answer the description; but could find none. Convinced at last, that he could not attack his rival on the side of *falsehood*, he gave over that search; but, as he still lay open on the side of *insignificance*, by a definition so unbecoming the real dignity of the subject, the supposed dignity of the philosopher, and the scientific pomp of words in which it was dressed; he resolved to make that example, which he strove in vain to find ready made. So having stript a cock of its feathers, he hid it under his cloak, and setting it suddenly upon its legs, before PLATO and his ad-



PART mirers, he cryed out, *Behold the man of*  
 I. PLATO!

This was thought a witty thing, at the time, and has been handed down as such through many generations. It was certainly true Ridicule, as to *importance*; and yet the thing ridiculed was not shewn to be otherwise false, but the contrary; as the ridiculer was obliged to appeal, not to the nature of things, but to what was manifestly artificial.

But, to make Ridicule compleatly triumphant, it is necessary, that it should be employed upon what is compleatly ridiculous; that is, what is both *false* and *important*. It is for this reason, that of all the different absurdities, which have disgraced the human species, there is none, that has been the cause of so much true wit and Ridicule, as *false religion*. And indeed how is it possible for those, on whom the Almighty has bestowed faculties of mind superior to others, to employ them more properly than in vindicating his honour; and endeavouring to communicate their own just sentiments in a familiar



familiar way to those of their fellow creatures, who are less happily endowed?

SECT.  
V.




How necessary a task this has been, let all history testify. For, from the most early times, there never has been wanting a set of impostors, who made it their business to practise upon the fear, ignorance, and credulity of the weaker and more numerous part of mankind, by representing the Eternal Being not such as he appears in his glorious works, but such as best suited their base purposes. And yet *in no time was God without witness*, as St. PAUL expresses it; as there have been found in every age some men of superior sense and honesty, who have endeavoured, and often with success, to withdraw their weak brethren from that impious yoke, by exposing to laughter those lies and absurdities, which had been imposed upon them instead of fact and argument.

LUCIAN, one of the most correct writers amongst the ancients, and the greatest master of that sort of analogical reasoning, which we call Ridicule, has employed his  
wit,

PART wit, with great success, against the foolish  
 I, worship and abominable notions of the  
 Deity, as by law and custom established in  
 his days. And, before him many others,  
 particularly the Latin Satirists, JUVENAL,  
 PERSIUS, and HORACE, thought it their  
 duty to turn those serious matters into merri-  
 ment. To eke out this short treatise, in the  
 German fashion, with thread-bare scraps of  
 Latin, and by quoting from authors, that  
 are intimately known to all those, who under-  
 stand the language in which they are written,  
 would be tiresome and impertinent. I will  
 therefore exemplify this part of my subject  
 by a piece of Ridicule, much more excel-  
 lent, as well as more ancient, than any that  
 is to be found in the authors above men-  
 tioned, which is preserved in the latter part  
 of the 13th chapter of *The wisdom of SOLO-  
 MON*. I shall insert the whole of it, that I  
 may be sure of indemnifying my reader for  
 his trouble, by presenting him with a piece  
 of most compleat *eloquence*, which might  
 not otherwise have fallen into his hands.

1. *Surely*

1. Surely vain are all men by nature, who SECT.  
 are ignorant of GOD, and could not out of the V.  
 good things that are seen, know him that is:   
 neither by considering the works, did they ac-  
 knowledge the work-master;

2. But deemed either fire, or wind, or the  
 swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the  
 violent water, or the lights of Heaven to be  
 the Gods which govern the world.

3. With whose beauty, if they being de-  
 lighted, took them to be Gods; let them know  
 how much better the Lord of them is: for the  
 first author of beauty hath created them.

4. But if they were astonished at their  
 power and virtue, let them understand by  
 them, how much mightier he is that made  
 them.

5. For by the greatness and beauty of the  
 creatures, proportionably the maker of them is  
 seen.

6. But

PART 6. *But yet for this they are the less to be*  
 I. *blamed: for they, peradventure, err seeking*  
 ~~~~~ *GOD and desirous to find him.*

7. *For, being conversant in his works, they search him diligently and believe their sight: because the things are beautiful that are seen.*

8. *Howbeit neither are they to be pardoned.*

9. *For if they were able to know so much, that they could aim at the world, how did they not sooner find out the LORD thereof?*

10. *But miserable are they, and in dead things is their hope, who called them gods which are the work of mens hands, gold and silver to shew art in, and resemblances of beasts, or a stone good for nothing, the work of an ancient hand.*

11. *Now a carpen:er that felleth timber, after he hath sawn down a tree meet for the purpose, and taken off all the bark skilfully*
 round

ON RIDICULE.

45

round about, and hath wrought it handsomely, and made a vessel thereof fit for the service of man's life *.

SECT.
V.


12. And, after spending the refuse of his work to dress his meat, hath filled himself;

13. And taking the very refuse among those which served to no use, (being a crooked piece of wood and full of knots) hath carved it diligently when he had nothing else to do, and formed it by the skill of his understanding, and fashioned it to the image of a man;

14. Or made it like some vile beast, laying it over with vermilion, and with paint

* The kindred, which, in a carver's shop, a bench or stool may claim to a god, is no less obvious to the sensible few, than it is comical. We find it accordingly introduced by HORACE, who strikes at the whole pandæmonium of heathen idolatry, through the sides of their brother PRIAPUS,

Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum:

Cum faber incertus scammum faceretne Priapum,

Maluit esse Deum.

L. I. Sat. 8.

PART colouring it red, and covering every spot there-

I. in.

15. And when he had made a convenient room for it, set it in a wall, and made it fast with iron :

16. For he provided for it that it might not fall, knowing that it was unable to help itself, (for it is an image and hath need of help.)

17. Then maketh he prayer for his goods, for his wife and children, and is not ashamed to speak to that which hath no life.

18. For health, he calleth upon that which is weak : for life, prayeth to that which is dead : for aid, humbly beseebeth that which hath least means to help : and, for a good journey, he asketh of that which cannot set a foot forward :

19. And for gaining and getting, and for good success of his hands, asketh ability to do, of him that is most unable to do any thing.

Here

Here is truly *serious reasoning*, that tends by investigation to the knowledge of the Divine Being, as far as human faculties are capable to go, and which MOMUS himself would not be able to ridicule; and here is *Ridicule* to expose the absurdity of the popular notions and practices, that will stand the examination of ARISTOTLE with all his dialectics.

SECT.

V.

The Critic upon Lord SHAFTSBURY appears however to be a great enemy to this familiar way of trying religious opinions; and finishes the 7th section of his *Essay* with what he seems to think very much to its disadvantage, and the disadvantage of Ridicule in general, in these words: *It seems therefore, that his Lordship's observation (which contains the quintessence of his associate's work, and which probably was the leaven, that leavened the whole lump of malice and dulness) instead of being favourable to Ridicule, as a test of truth, can only tend to disgrace it. For since every religious and unbelieving sect have alike SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED IT IN SUPPORTING their respective tenets, and in rendering those of their adversaries contemptible; it follows, inasmuch as doctrines, which are essentially*

PART *essentially repugnant, cannot all be true; that*

I. *Ridicule is one of the most powerful engines, by which error can be maintained and established †.*

This is strong, pointed, and seems to conclude the argument as thoroughly as it concludes the section. What a pity it is, that it should have no better foundation than what the author himself owns to be in the former sentence, *a leavened lump of malice and dulness.*

† The observation of Lord SHAFTSBURY here alluded to, is to be found in his foregoing leaf, when speaking of modern zealots, he tells us, that *Whatever they think grave and solemn, they suppose must never be treated out of a grave and solemn way; though what another thinks so, they can be contented to treat otherwise, and are fond to try the test of Ridicule against any opinion besides their own.* But how the remarker should find in these words any thing concerning the support of different opinions, by the means of Ridicule, it is difficult to guess. He likewise accuses Mr. COLLINS, whom he calls *his associate*, of this gross absurdity; and perhaps he may be guilty of it. But as he has not quoted any passage, or so much as mentioned the name of the work where it is to be found; we have reason to doubt, whether he has not mistaken Mr. COLLINS, as much as he has my Lord SHAFTSBURY. But supposing Lord SHAFTSBURY and his associates to be as dull and malicious, as he has been pleased to represent them, what is it to the merits of Ridicule?

It

It is certainly true, that many religious sects have successfully employed Ridicule, in rendering the tenets of their adversaries contemptible; but how is it possible that an instrument, whose professed use is to pull down, should be employed in supporting any sect of religion, except there were only two sects of religion in the world, and one of them necessarily true; whereas it is possible there may be five hundred, and all, but one, false and ridiculous. Was there ever any author so weak as to fancy, that where two men of war are pelting one another, either of them proposes to mend his own rigging by the shot, which he pours into his adversary? Is the worship of VENUS or GANYMEDE at all more established by the excellent jokes, which JUVENAL has thrown at the crocodile and onion gods of the Egyptians? Or suppose a Catholic should raise the laugh ever so properly against the worship of FUM HO, and the Chinese should return it full upon St. ANTHONY of Padua; would any one be more convinced of the truth of the Chinese or Popish idolatry, than he was before? Did PASCAL'S admired Ridicule of the Jesuits prove any thing towards the truth of Janse-

SECT.
V.



PART nism? No. After all his wit, their doctrines

I. of the *grace of congruity*, and *grace of efficacy*, continue to be equally unintelligible, and equally as uselefs as ever: and both sides were exposed to the Ridicule of more unpassionate minds; by whose means, as VOLTAIRE observes, France was eased of a dispute that equally disgraced christianity, learning, and the human understanding*.

Indeed when two sects, in the same country, while they appear to be contending for the truth of their several opinions, are in reality contending for power and riches; that sect, which destroys its adversary by any means, direct or sinister, by seriousness, ridicule, or blows, establishes itself as effectually as it desires; and huzzas, like a victorious ship, that has sunk its enemy; tho',

* *On se souvient, avec quel mepris le duc d'Orleans et son ministre parlaient des querelles qu'ils appaisèrent; quel ridicule ils jetterent sur cette guerre de controverse. Ce mepris et ce ridicule ne servirent pas peu a la paix. On se lasse enfin de combattre, pour des querelles dont le monde rit.*

Siecle de Louis 14. chap. du Jansenisme.

with

w th twenty shots in its own hull, half its
men slain, and not a mast standing.

SECT.
V.


It is much to the honour of the present state of this country, that, notwithstanding the universal toleration, the liberty of the press, and the security with which all opinions may be canvassed, there is little or nothing offered tending to ridicule the religion, that is either by law established or tolerated. It has not been so always, and, I believe, it will be found, that the books and papers of Ridicule upon religious subjects, have been much more numerous at any time, between the reformation and the accession of his present majesty, than they have been during his happy reign. And the reason seems to be obvious. For, in former reigns, the factions which tore the bowels of the nation, were formed of certain religious sects, who carried creeds for their banners, differing often in the meere trifles; which trifles however being the bond of union of each party, as well as the pretended cause of division, were magnified into matters of the greatest IMPORTANCE by their several leaders and trumpeters; so that

E 2

they

PART they became from contemptible excrescences

I. to be the whole, almost, of the religion of
 the times.


In this every way polemical state of our unhappy country, when the spirit of controversy descended so low, as to excite little misses of ten years old, to pull caps about *the divine right of episcopacy*, or *the validity of lay baptism*; when it rose so high, as to make one of the greatest epic poets that any age has furnished, introduce the Almighty discoursing like a school-divine*, and the devils amusing themselves in hell with metaphysical cunnundrums†; when the friends of peace and liberty were by turns terrified with the prospect of anarchy, from the hair-brained enthusiasm of the sectaries; and of popish tyranny, under a bigotted king. Then it was, that BUTLER, TINDAL, TRENCHARD, GORDON, and many others rose up

* MILTON'S *Paradise-Lost*, Book III.

† *Others apart sat on a hill retir'd
 In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
 Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
 Fixt fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;
 And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.*

Book II.

to

to reap this fat harvest, which the heats of SECT.
 the times had brought to maturity; then it V.
 was, that Dr. SWIFT wrote his *Tale of a* 
Tub, to aid the serious pen of Archbishop
 TILLOTSON and other learned and good men,
 whose manner of writing was not so calcu-
 lated to produce the contempt which they
 aimed at, and which the safety and happi-
 ness of our church and state required*.

But of late years the persons, who have
 had the administration of public affairs, have
 found, that government can be maintained
 with more security by other means, than by
 making

* Lord ORRERY has summed up the excellency of
the Tale of the Tub in the following words: *Throughout*
the whole piece there is a vein of Ridicule and good humour,
that laughs pedantry and affectation into the lowest degree
of contempt; and exposes the character of JACK and
PETER, in such a manner as never will be forgiven, and
never can be answered.

Remarks on Dr. SWIFT, Lett. xxiii.

It does however more than barely laugh at pe-
 dantry and affectation, which is properly the office of
 that sort of Ridicule, whose object is manner and action;
 and of which I shall treat in the second part of this
 essay. *The Tale of the Tub*, like *Don Quixote*, is of the
 argumentive kind of Ridicule, whose business is to oppose
 false opinions; and operates by raising up fictitious cha-

PART making a stalking-horse of religion ; so that

I. those trifling distinctions, invented and kept up to enflame the populace on either side, losing their intended effect, lost by degrees their IMPORTANCE, and by ceasing to be important, have ceased to be the objects of Ridicule. Religion is now become in England, almost † what it was at first intended to be ; not a tool for the politic and the seditious to work withal, but a matter entirely of private

racters to act in familiar occurrences in life, upon principles false and chimerical, and by representing the obvious consequences of such a proceeding, convincing the reader of the falshood and absurdity of such principles and opinions. This is called, in common language, with great propriety, *putting those opinions to the proof*; and is, of all the modes of Ridicule that ever were found out, the fairest as well as the most diverting.

† The word *almost*, although unmusical in the sentence, cannot, with a safe conscience, be left out ; because we can never be said to be *altogether* in that state of liberty and common sense, to which the constitution of this kingdom has been verging for this hundred years past, while there is any law in force to punish those, who differ in opinion from their rulers in matters merely speculative. Perhaps there are people, who will be surpris'd when they hear the word *punishment*, fancying that it has no other meaning than to burn, fine and imprison. But their surpris'e will perhaps cease, when


ON RIDICULE.

55

private concern, subject to no jurisdiction, SECT.
but that of conscience or private opinion; V.
which will ever be most respectable when most
divested of worldly power and riches; and
will ever most deserve the approbation of the
wise and virtuous, the less noise it makes.

when they are put in mind, that to declare a man incapable of holding any place of trust or profit under the government, is often decreed in court as a punishment for very great offences: and, whilst a law subsists to inflict such a stigma upon useful subjects, who dissent from the parliamentary creed, the toleration is far from being compleat.

S E C T. VI.

PATT
I.  BESIDES philosophical truth, which is required in positions that are presented immediately to the understanding, there is a thing called POETICAL TRUTH, which is required in those images, which are presented to the fancy, either to beautify or illustrate compositions in poetry, of which they may be called the essence. These pass commonly by the name of *allegories*, *metaphors* or *similies*; and are always to be condemned as false, whenever they present any idea to the imagination that is absurd, mean, or unsuitable.

To men of a lively and orderly fancy, to whom every word produces the idea, of which it is a sign, with distinctness and precision, every incongruity of that sort is immediately manifest; but, to those who are not blest with this faculty, which is often called *taste*, in so eminent a degree, some foreign help is necessary, in order to furnish their judgment with more perfect materials to exercise itself upon. And, of all the methods suggested
by

ON RIDICULE.

57

by critics for this purpose, there is none SECT.
quicker or surer, than one recommend in V.
the *Spectator*, N^o. 595, and that is, to
call in the assistance of the pencil, and try
what effect such metaphors or imagery would
have, when exhibited upon canvass. This
is nothing but that APPEAL FROM WORDS
TO FACTS of which I have been hitherto
treating; and which will be a constant de-
tector of the false and ridiculous, whenever
it obtrudes itself.

Suppose, for instance, the friends of the church of England should have a desire to expose the wild and absurd expressions, used by the growing sect of Moravians in their public worship. In what manner is this most effectually to be done?

According to my Lord SHAFTSBURY'S system of Ridicule, PUNCH would be employed to sing a hymn out of their *Salt-book* in broken English, accompanied with a thorough bass upon the *Salt-box*, instead of an organ; and, to render it more favourable, to change the words here and there into others, for which his oratory is chiefly admired,
While

PART While this was performing, the mob of
 I. Smithfield, and, perhaps, politer people
 would laugh; but it would be at PUNCH
 for his nastiness and monkey-tricks, while
 the brethren would escape unhurt.

This is not Ridicule, but only burlesque
 and waggery. But if any man has a mind to
 raise an effectual laugh at these devout pro-
 ceedings, let him open the book at page 53,
 and with a composed countenance, and a
 tone of voice fit for the lesson of the day,
 read aloud :

*Lovely side-hole take in me,
 Let me ever be in thee ;
 O side-hole's wound, my heart and soul
 Does pant for thy so lovely hole.
 Lovely side-hole take in me,
 Let me ever be in thee :
 If I once securely fit,
 In the lovely side-hole's split,
 O then I for ever dwell
 In the lovely PLEURA'S cell :
 O then I, &c.*

OR;

O R,

SECT.
VI.

*Ye children, where do you dwell, where is
your ground,
Where is the best care for such little ones found?
We dwell in the wound-holes, in JESU'S flesh
made,
The holy church cares for, and lends us her aid.*

*But will for such number of doves room be
found,
In the narrow space of the holy side's wound?
O yes, and besides there is room for to fit,
In all the holes of the lamb's hands and feet.*

*What is it that in all your meetings resounds?
One speaks, hears, and sings here at all times
of wounds;
One speaks, hears, and sings here at all times
of wounds;
Wounds, wounds, again wound-holes, and no-
thing but wounds: &c. &c. &c.*

This is burlesque enough of itself, and would alone be sufficient to raise laughter in every one, who felt the proper force of the words;

PART words ; but it is as certain, at the same time,
 I. that there are thousands, in whom they raise
 rapture and enthusiasm. From whence can
 this strange effect, upon a particular set of
 people, proceed? I make no doubt, but
 that it is caused by long and early habi-
 tude, which has destroyed or changed the
 ideas in their minds, upon this occasion,
 which those words naturally excite at other
 times, producing no image, but what is con-
 fused, indistinct, and no doubt very different
 in one of the society, from what it does in
 another. But let any engraver adorn their
 hymn book with a few cuts, let him draw
 men, women and children creeping into the
 side-hole, and nestling in it like wasps in
 a hollow tree ; and there is great reason
 to believe, that there are none of the
 faithful, however damaged in their under-
 standing, but would see the absurdity and
 nastiness of this their allegory ; and would
 either laugh or be angry, according as pride
 happened to be more or less predominant in
 their several constitutions.

It is not the performance alone of those High German artists, that ought to be examined by this rule; it is a certain test for the soundness of every piece of poetry whatsoever; but a test so severe, that the best of them all will sometimes shrink at it. There are many descriptions in the great MILTON, which pass very currently in blank verse, and yet would make but a poor or disgusting appearance in colours, and some of them entirely incapable of delineation.

Perhaps HOMER himself may not be, upon every occasion, exempt from this charge. His description of NEPTUNE'S progress from Somothrace to Æge (240 miles) in four strides *, has been much admired by some critics

* ΤΡΙΣ ΜΕΝ ΟΡΕΖΑΤ' ΙΩΝ, ΤΟ ΔΕ ΤΕΤΡΑΤΟΝ
ΙΚΕΤΟ ΤΕΚΜΩΡ
ΑΙΓΑΣ. Iliad, 12.

*From realm to realm three ample strides he took,
And at the fourth the distant Æge shook.* POPE.

Madam DACIER has omitted this in her translation; for which Mr. POPE condemns her; not for want of fidelity, but want of taste, in passing over a stroke of poetry

PART critics for its sublimity ; but it is certainly not

I. in the power of APOLLO or RAPHAEL to paint a God bounding across the Ægean sea, in any manner, that he shall not appear as like a man skipping over a kennel, as one egg is like another. An image altogether mean and ungodlike.

Wherein then consists the sublimity of this passage ? Probably in words only ; and that any effort of the mind, to turn those words into imagery, would give it, instead of pleasure, that uneasiness, which it suffers during the restless slumbers of a fever. The human mind cannot create any thing ; it can only reflect, like a looking-glass, but a looking-glass where the images remain after the objects are removed : and the pleasure we receive from the works of art, either in po-

etry that did honour to her author. LONGINUS, however, seems rather to side with her, as in his commendation of HOMER'S Neptune, he has quoted some lines that precede, and some that follow this passage, without taking notice of it. So great a contrariety of sentiment amongst celebrated judges, ought to convince us of the insufficiency of meer TASTE ; and the necessity of looking for some rule, by which it may be directed:

etry

etry or painting, is greater or less, accord- SECT.
 ing as the images produced by the artist do VI.
 more or less resemble those contained in
 this repository †: Or, as POPE says,

*True wit is nature to advantage drest,
 Which oft was thought, but ne'er so well
 exprest.
 Something whose truth, convinc'd, at sight
 we find,
 That gives us back the image of our mind.*

And the greatest poet, whenever he mistakes
 the bounds of his art so much, as to endea-

† Mr. ADDISON, whose papers upon *The Pleasures of the Imagination* deserve great encomiums, has, nevertheless, lost much of the consistency which might have appeared on that subject, by not establishing a constant attachment to TRUTH, as the leading and inseparable principle in all the works of art. For instance, he says, N^o. 421. *Those different allusions are but so many different manners of similitude; and, that they may please the imagination, the likeness ought to be very exact, OR very agreeable; as we love to see a picture where the resemblance is just, or the posture and air graceful.*

He is here as unfortunate in his illustration, as in his principle; for the *agreeable*, in those cases, cannot be separated from the *exact*: and a posture, in painting, must be a *just resemblance* of what is graceful in nature, before it can hope to be esteem'd *graceful*.

YOUR


PART your to represent to others, what the eye
 I. hath not seen, nor the ear heard; altho'
 he may flatter himself, like BAYES, that his
 attempt is *great*, yet the application of
 the rule, suggested in this Section *, will
 never

* I suspect that HORACE had an eye to this method
 of criticism in the commencement of his art of poetry.

*Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
 Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas,
 Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
 Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne;
 Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici?
 Credite, Pisones, isti tabulæ fore librum
 Per similem, cujus, velut ægri somnia, vanæ
 Fingentur species; ut nec pes, nec caput uni
 Reddatur formæ. Pictoribus atque poetis
 Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.
 Scimus; et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.
 Sed non ut placidis coeant immitia; non ut
 Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni.*

Here, as in many other places, that excellent critic
 illustrates the beauties and defects of poetry, by allu-
 sions made to painting; which he is generally thought
 to do, only because poetry happen'd to be his theme
 at that time; and that, had he been to treat of paint-
 ing, he would have *vice versa* illustrated painting, by
 allusions made to the operations of the sister art.
 There may be perhaps, another reason assigned that
 may make the allusions in the case actually before us
 more

never fail to convince the judicious of its being monstrous and ridiculous.

SECT.
VI.


more proper and conducive than if the case were revers'd. The use of allusions, as has been already hinted in this Essay, is to establish obscure or dubious truths, by the aid of similar truths that are more obvious. Lines and colours are of a more determined nature, and strike the mind more immediately than words; which, before they can produce any effect, must be form'd by the mind itself, into pictures; and consequently require a more tedious, and more difficult process. This HORACE himself expresses, in another part of the same work, where speaking of theatrical representations, which are a mixture of poetry and painting, he says,

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quæ
Ipse sibi tradit spectator.*

Upon this consideration it is, that he makes use of a similitude borrowed from the art of painting, which condemns the extravagancies and incongruities of certain poets, by shewing that the like would be in a painter unpardonable and ridiculous.

The hopes of finding something to confirm my conjecture concerning the meaning of this passage of HORACE, induced me to look into many of his commentators, particularly DACIER and SANADON, but I found nothing there that pointed towards it. I observed however at the same time, that those learned Frenchmen, in their translations, had entirely passed over the word

F

æqua,

PART *æqua*, which is join'd to *poteſtas* in the 10th line; and

II. that the former underſtood *petimusque damusque viciffim*,
 to relate to poets and critics. In this he appears to have
 very much miſtaken his author's meaning; as there had
 been no mention at all of critics, and that it would have
 been very abſurd in HORACE to have ſaid, that critics
 claim'd a right to boldneſs and invention, that put them
 upon a level with poets. I will therefore endeavour
 to give a general ſenſe of thoſe 13 lines, in a man-
 ner that will make them conſiſtent with the truth of
 things, with one another, and probably with the inten-
 tion of the author.

“ If to a human face a painter ſhould join the neck
 “ of a horſe, with wings of various colours; collecting
 “ in like manner, the other members from different
 “ animals, ſo that the breaſt of a fair woman ſhould
 “ terminate in a fiſh's tail: would not you, who are
 “ connoiſſeurs, think the ſpectacle extremely ridicu-
 “ lous? And yet, believe me, nothing can be more
 “ akin to this picture, than a poem, whoſe unaccount-
 “ able images, like a ſick man's dreams, are ſuch,
 “ that no one part has any manner of relation to
 “ another. Painters and poets have always had an
 “ equal right to be bold in their compositions.
 “ This we know, and it is by this equal right, that we
 “ poets muſt not dare to write, what a painter would
 “ not dare to paint; nor does the painter, on the other
 “ hand, expect any indulgence, but what he is willing
 “ to grant to his brother poet. But this indulgence
 “ never extends itſelf to thoſe, who loſe ſight of na-
 “ ture; nor allows either of the artiſts to introduce
 “ the dove ſporting with the ſerpent, nor the lamb
 “ with the tiger.”

A N

A N
E S S A Y
O N
R I D I C U L E.
P A R T II.

LAUGHTER, as I have before observed, *is the consequence of Ridicule*, from whence it receives its name; but it is proper to take notice, that it is only a symptom, and not its distinguishing character. For laughter is produced upon many occasions, where nothing like Ridicule is applied. A slap on the face may raise a laugh in the by-standers; but if they were to burst their sides, it has no more pretension to Ridicule, than it has to *pa-*

PART *thetic eloquence* *. It is reported of a man
 ii. } once eminent for his love of the public, that
 he was never known to laugh in the course of
 his life, but once ; and that was, upon see-
 ing his brother fall and break his arm. And
 there is nothing more common, than to ob-
 serve people in health and affluence, laugh
 and sneer at the bodily infirmities, weakness
 of intellects, thread-bare cloaths, and other
 marks of the distress or poverty of those,
 who accidentally come in their way. Is this
 Ridicule ? Those refin'd philosophers, who
 have discover'd in Man *moral feelings* and
instincts, which are to serve him as a *crite-
 rion* of right and wrong, and are satisfied to
 receive this into the number ; much good may
 it do them. There is great reason to believe,
 that JUVENAL would join with me in say-
 ing, *Hæc nostri pars PESSIMA sensus* ; and that
 there are few greater symptoms of moral
 turpitude in human nature. And yet my
 Lord SHAFTSBURY's antagonist, by making
Contempt and *Ridicule* synonymous terms,
 has employed some pages of his book in
 proving, that this inhuman folly can never

* See the last Note of Sect. II.

be the test of truth †. Men of the best PART
 sense will never fail to confound themselves II.
 and others, when they are not at pains, by
 definitions and examples, to ascertain the
 meaning of their terms. When we see Ri-
 dicule understood to be *pathetic eloquence* in
 one page, in another *contempt*; why not per-
 jury, a goose, a gridiron, or a chest of
 drawers? By such skilful management any
 one thing may be proved to have none of
 its own properties, but all the properties of
 any thing else, to the great advancement of
 knowledge.

A man who even laughs at folly or vice,
 which are certainly the objects of pity or de-
 testation, to sound and liberal minds, gives
 us as bad a sample of his morals as of his
 understanding. How comes it then, that a
 Ridicule of those very follies and vices is fol-
 lowed by a laugh or smile from the most
 humane? To me it appears very plain, that
 the laugh, in this case, is not a laugh arising
 from the contempt of the person or thing
 ridiculed; but a laugh of pleasure, from the

† *Essays on the Characteristics*, Sect. V. at the be-
 ginning.

PART art itself, and of applause to the artist. There
II. are some philosophers, who have derived
laughter from pride, and from the pleasure
which we receive in comparing our own
strength with the infirmities of others. I
know not upon what they ground this opi-
nion, and it is foreign to my present subject
to enter deep into the enquiry. But I am
thoroughly convinced, from many observa-
tions, external and internal, that the mo-
tives I have here assign'd are true in the case
of Ridicule, and perhaps it may serve as a
hint for further discoveries. Why should we
indulge ourselves in meer conjectures, to the
disadvantage of the human heart? Perhaps
the sneer and laugh of contempt which we so
often with abhorrence observe, is not na-
tural; but only affected, and put on to shew
superior parts and discernment. It is most
commonly to be seen, not so much among
the proud and ill-natured, as among the
empty, the half-bred, and the half-witted;
who I fancy are often led into this mean and
monkey-like practice, by hearing men of
acknowledg'd wit celebrated for *laughing at*
persons and things; which they take literally,
not knowing that by these words is meant,
exposing

ON RIDICULE.

71

exposing those persons and things in a new and artful manner, and thereby exciting laughter in all those whom they thus entertain, while they themselves preserve the greatest seriousness and modesty of countenance.

PART
II.


Thus much was necessary to premise, before we enter upon the second kind of Ridicule, which consists in the bare *representation of what is improper in manners or actions*. It may be stiled, SIMPLE, DIRECT, or UNREFLECTED RIDICULE; and if it comes under the description of the *art, which shews that to be ridiculous which is really so*, it is only by bringing the ridiculous out of obscurity, and placing it in open day-light. And, indeed, as POPE says,

*Vice is a creature of so vile a mien,
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen.*

For this sort of Ridicule is one of those which ARISTOTLE, in his *Poetics*, calls *mimic arts*; and owing all its merit to its obvious likeness, to what it proposes to represent, has not the least pretence to be received

PART II. ceived as a test of truth; with whatsoever usefulness it may be otherwise attended. It may be divided into several branches; but chiefly into the NARRATIVE, GRAPHIC, and DRAMATIC. I shall exemplify all these separately; beginning with the GRAPHIC, or what is produced by the painter.

And of all those artists, who have employed their pencils in representing what they thought ridiculous in the manners of men, I know of none, who deserves to be mentioned upon this occasion, but the incomparable HOGARTH. Other there are, Dutch, Flemish, French and Italians, who have painted life in all its calamitous circumstances, of poverty, oppression, bodily sickness, and deformity. But ARISTOTLE*, and common sense have long ago told us, that these things are not ridiculous; and to all, but the unfeeling, are the objects of com-

* Η ΔΕ ΚΩΜΩΔΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ, ΩΣΠΕΡ ΕΠΙΘΟΜΗ, ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΥΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ ΜΕΝ, ΟΥ ΜΕΝΤΟΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΛΗΡΗΝ ΚΑΚΙΑΝ, ΑΛΛΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΧΡΟΥ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ ΜΟΡΙΟΝ. ΤΟ ΓΑΡ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΜΑΡΤΗΜΑ ΤΙ, ΚΑΙ ΑΙΣΧΟΣ ΑΝΩΔΥΝΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΟΥ ΦΘΑΡΤΙΚΟΝ. *Arist. Poetic. cap. 5.*
passion,

passion, and not of laughter. It was reserved for our ingenious countryman, to expose upon immortal canvass the fashionable follies, vices and affectations of his contemporaries. He has gone still farther, and by producing his representations in serieses, and shewing the frightful, tho natural tendency of those follies, has administer'd one of the most practical incitements to virtue, and fulfilled the most material duty of a moral philosopher ; and that by a language, which all men understand, and which makes the quickest and strongest impression upon their minds*.

PART
II.

This is employing a very extraordinary talent in a way, which greatly deserves the thanks of the public. Let us see next, whether this talent, like many other good things, may not be abused in its turn ; and render'd hurtful to society, by ridiculing those actions which are innocent or praiseworthy.

* See the last Section of Part I. with the notes upon it.

PART II. But when we consider the nature of this sort of Ridicule, ever so slightly, it will appear, that whenever it takes effect at all, it is always from its being *true Ridicule*; that is, *giving a representation of what is truly ridiculous*. And such is its simplicity, that there never can be any fallacy attending it, except by the means of a downright lie, in attributing an action or circumstance, in itself ridiculous, to a person, to whom it does not belong.

For instance, suppose Mr. HOGARTH, to expose the odiousness of drunkenness and quarrelling in men of important stations, should paint two magistrates in their furbrowns sprawling on the floor, and battering one another, with countenances that breathed *scoundrel* and *rascal* as emphatically as if the words flowed in labels out of their mouths; should HOGARTH, I say, delineate such a midnight conversation, with all the natural circumstances of torn cravats, spilt claret, and broken tobacco-pipes, which his lively fancy would presently suggest to him, the piece could not fail of being useful as well as comical. But should he, to serve
the

the vile purposes of a party, or to gratify a PART private grudge, (I beg his pardon for the sup- II. position,) should he write under these figures, *This is Mr.----- and this is Mr.-----* using the names of two men most eminent for their sobriety and discretion; or, if instead of writing, he should insert the features of those worthy magistrates, the general Ridicule would be still as just as it was before; and the artist would receive, at York or Carlisle, his usual tribute of praise: but they, who were better instructed in the affairs of London, would be shocked at the performance, and would withdraw from the author that esteem, which the rest of his conduct had so justly acquired.

This, I will venture to say, is the plain state of the case, with regard to the abuses, that may happen in all the different species of REPRESENTATIVE Ridicule. And it is particularly the case of SOCRATES, which has been so often quoted to the disadvantage of Ridicule in general, altho most unjustly; as it will easily appear, that SOCRATES fell not a sacrifice, as is pretended, to
wit

PART wit and Ridicule, but to falshood and mis-
 II. representation.



Those who are acquainted with the character of that great man ; his moderation and universal benevolence ; his justness and elegance of thought ; his courage and unshaken fidelity in the defence of his country ; and his constant endeavour to render all men as moderate, as virtuous, and as useful members of society as himself : must be satisfied that such a character had nothing in it, that was ridiculous, and that it was entirely out of the reach of Ridicule. Of this the conduct of ARISTOPHANES was likewise a proof. He was very sensible of the difficulties, he had to encounter ; he knew, that his talents could not be employed with success against any thing, that was not ridiculous in itself ; and therefore took advantage of the ignorance of the multitude, already prejudiced by the heathen priests, and the leaders of a faction ; and exhibited to them a SOCRATES of his own creation, ridiculous to an extreme degree ; and in every respect the opposite of him, whom it was said to represent. If the event of this representation proved fatal to
 that

that excellent philosopher, we must blame **PART**
 the villany, not the wit of the poet; and we **II.**
 must not lay to the charge of Ridicule a mis-
 fortune, which will equally attend the most
 serious indictment, when it happens to be
 founded upon facts, that are either feigned or
 unfairly stated.

So much for the **GRAPHIC** and **DRAMA-**
TIC *.

Of the **NARRATIVE** Ridicule there are in-
 stances in the *Characters* of **THEOPHRASTUS**,
LA BRUYERE, **PETRONIUS**, *Memoirs of the*
house of **Brandenburgh**, &c.

* Under the article of *dramatic Ridicule*, may be properly put those philological pieces of Ridicule, which are meant to expose affectation, awkwardness, and bad taste in writing and discourse, and which have been often, and successfully employed by the best critics. Of this sort are the *Lexiphanes* and other pieces of **LUCIAN**; the *Limosin* and other chapters of **RABELAIS**; **SWIFT**'s *Memoirs of P. P.* His *Tritical essay on the faculties of the mind*; *Polite conversation*; *Meditations on a broom-stick*, &c. and, like all the different species of this kind of Ridicule, are capable of being misapplied, by having the names of persons affixed to them, whom perhaps they resemble not at all, or only in part.

These


PART These species of mimic Ridicule are
 II. sometimes to be found single, sometimes
 compounded; and often acquire a new name
 by the composition. As,

The THEATRICAL Ridicule, which is a compound of the *graphic* and *dramatic*; the actor performing the function both of the painter and poet. This sometimes likewise receives the narrative Ridicule; as, when an actor, in the character of Sir *John Falstaff*, gives a description of his recruits in his march to Coventry.

Sometimes the NARRATIVE Ridicule, is interspersed with the DRAMATIC, as in the *Trimalchio* of PETRONIUS, *Paysan parvenu* of Marivaux, *Joseph Andrews*, *Pompey the little*, &c. †

It

† *Don Quixote*, for some things, may be ranked amongst those *representations of real life*, as in the character of *Sancho*, and others. There are likewise strokes of the *argumentative Ridicule* in the character of *Parson Adams*, and other characters in those instructing novels written by Mr. FIELDING. The intention of the present *Essay*, is not to enumerate all the different
 ways

It would be endless to relate the various PART
 shapes in which this REPRESENTATIVE Ridi- II.
 cule has appeared; but they all agree so much 
 in the general character of being *pictures of*
life and manners, and are so much the same
 in their nature and properties, that there does
 not appear occasion for more than one short
 section to explain the whole theory of
 them. It is a sort of Ridicule, that may be
 of use in giving lively impressions of known
 truths; but whoever is at the pains to prove,
 that it can never be a test of truth, will
 have the pleasure of arguing without the
 trouble of an opponent; since it never was
 applied in subjects of speculation, and, even
 in its own province of representing the de-
 formities of life and manners, cannot prove
 its own justness, with regard to the ap-
 plication, but by extraneous evidence and
 assistance.

There is reason however to suspect, from
 several passages in the *Essays upon the charac-*

ways, in which the different kinds and species of Ridi-
 cule may be mixed, but only to give some general hints
 of those principles, by which a more exact discussion
 may be made.

teristicks,

PART *teristicks*, that, while the author speaks of

II. Ridicule in general, he only means this

MIMIC sort, as in page 46. *Again, it may be observed, that the consequences of Ridicule, with regard to speculative instruction and enquiry, are of a very different nature from those which relate to morals and action: to the first it must ever be an enemy; but to the latter it may be an enemy or a friend, according as it is fairly or dishonestly applied.* If he means, I say, only the *MIMIC* Ridicule, his assertion has been sufficiently confirmed and exemplified in this section. The subject is too simple to admit of any difference of opinion concerning it; and cannot, in itself, incur either praise or blame. The only Ridicule, whose legality is worth the disputing, is that which has been treated of in the first part of this *Essay*. It was that alone, which could give rise to this controversy; being a weapon often used by the learned and ingenious, who never seem in fact, as has been observed by Lord SHAFTSBURY, to have questioned its lawfulness, unless when it happened to be in the enemy's hands.

To

To conclude. It has been often recom-
 mended to those, who take upon them the
 instruction of mankind, that they should
 convey their lessons in such a way, as might
 render them *agreeable* as well as *useful*: tho'
 this was meant, like putting sugar into a
 bitter potion, only to render it more palata-
 ble, and to be more willingly swallowed by
 the patient; without its being looked upon
 as any part of the medicine itself. But, if
 what has been set forth in the first part of
 this *Essay*, with regard to the ingredients
 which compose Ridicule and pleasantry in
 writing, is found to be true; if *appeals to*
experience are the best test of truth; if those
 appeals are *least subject to fallacy*, when
 made to *facts the most vulgar and familiar*;
 if in the most *serious* questions, such wherein
 the welfare of mankind is chiefly interested,
the entertainment rises in proportion to the
familiarity of the known truths, by the appli-
 cation of which any falshood in those
important points is detected: if, I say, these
 things are so, then it will be easy to perceive
 a more than accidental connection betwixt

G

the

PART the *utile* and the *dulce*; it will be easy to
II. perceive, that in speculative, as well as in
~ active life, *the ways of Wisdom are really*
ways of pleasantness; and that a true philo-
sopher, that is, a man of candour, sense
and knowledge, has a better chance than
ordinary of improving the understandings
of those with whom he converses, at the very
instant that he makes them laugh.

F I N I S.