

An essay on laughter, wherein are displayed its natural and moral causes, with the arts of exciting it.

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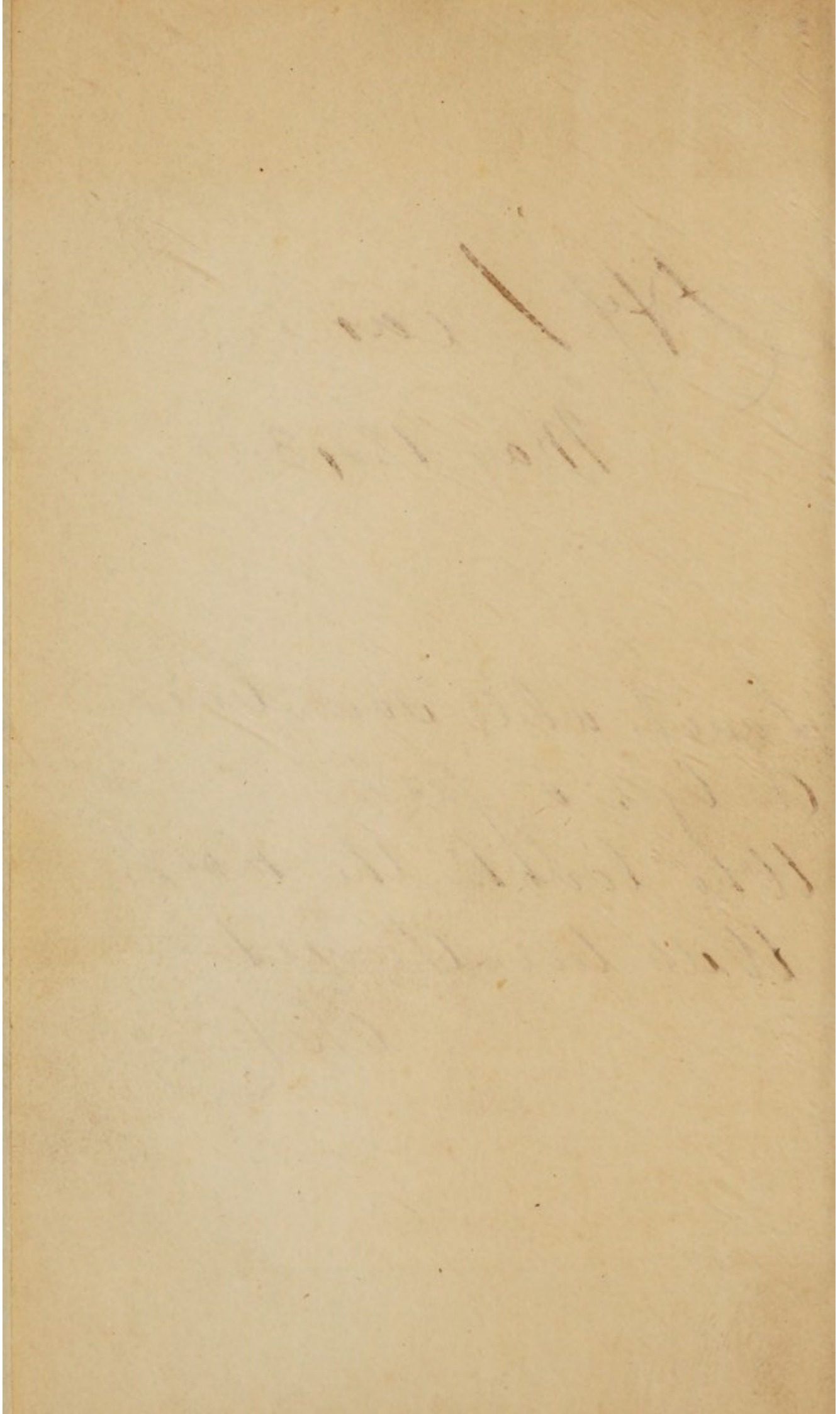


21855/A

My Dear

May 1843

Laugh while you live
As life's a jest
Who laugh's the most
Will live the best
O keep



86042

A N
E S S A Y
O N
L A U G H T E R,

WHEREIN ARE DISPLAYED, ITS

NATURAL AND MORAL CAUSES,

WITH THE

ARTS OF EXCITING IT.

QUID RIDES?

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR T. DAVIES IN RUSSEL-STREET,

COVENT-GARDEN, AND L. DAVIS NEAR

GRAY'S-INN, HOLBORN.

M D C C L X I X.



T O

SAMUEL FOOTE, ESQ.

S I R,

Never was an address prefixed to a subject with more propriety than this to you; since in no period of time, during the same number of years, hath the exertion of *Laughter* been oftener caused by any other individual, we have either read or heard of; whether through the agency of original characters brought on the stage, or an uncommon flow of humour, that, with a pleasing impetuosity, breaks forth in those convivial hours devoted to mirth and jollity; which so strongly rivals that displayed by you on the theatre, as to render it a moot point to which we ought to give a preference.

As duly qualified evidences for the former article, let MOTHER COLE hobble up to the bar of criticism; her undefinable apology for a foul, making ineffectual efforts towards heaven, but that through

the impediment of a gross and sinful body, as well as an habitual relapsing to vice, and the trafficking spirit of her trade, still gravitates to earth.

Next, let JERRY SNEAK be made to advance, escaping from the tyranny of a termagant spouse, and ruefully crying, “*Good Lord what a life I lead!*” while the pursuing lady is *convoied* by that genuine and lineal descendant of FALSTAFF, for boasting, lying, swaggering, and a grotesque aping of gallantry, the very laughable MAJOR STURGEON.

It would be impossible for *Stoicism* or *Melancholy* to refrain from *Laughter*, on seeing, with a Printer’s Devil clasped in his arms, your truly ridiculous archetype of all mistaken and convulsionary patriots, DOCTOR SQUIB, ardently vollying off his political crackers in outrageous compassion for his bleeding country! . . . and to the total neglect of his profession!

Many other instances might be quoted, but to avoid prolixity, the curious are advised, in order to conceive more adequate and entertaining ideas of them, than could here possibly be given, to see their dramatic exhibitions, with all the author’s concomitant energy, in his peculiar, and unprecedented style of acting.

Vouchers for the second article, viz. social festivity, are all persons of every degree, who have been so lucky as to enjoy your company; a favour, which

the translator of this work hath been indulged in with a friendly politeness for a series of years: wherefore he thought it would be an unpardonable oversight, nay, a species of ingratitude, not to seize on so very applicable an occasion as this, to pay a literary and acknowledging tribute, as well as to profess himself, what he really is,

S I R,

Your much obliged,

Most obedient,

And very humble servant,

THE TRANSLATOR.

T H E
F R E N C H
E D I T O R ' S A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

T O T H E P U B L I C .

The Manuscript of this Piece, which fell by accident into my hands, having no other title but that of *An Essay on Laughing*, I remained indifferent for a whole year about reading it, from an imbibed notion of its being only a light piece of drollery, a *jeu d'esprit*, or a mere frolicksome performance, and therefore own I deferred a perusal of it, until I should have more idle time on my hands.

However, a judicious friend of mine, who sets less value upon his time than I do, borrowed it from me, in order to examine its merit, and gave me an account of it, that served to prove how much I had been mistaken, from my having misconceived the true sense of the title. I therefore read it, and, with some degree of astonishment, was convinced of

my error, on discovering this short Essay to be, from the beginning to the end, a rational production, replete with researches, opinions, and useful investigation, in which the philosophical is not less interested than the dramatic world. I resolved on having it printed, from a persuasion, that to all persons of literature and taste, it must prove an agreeable present. To prevent others falling into the same mistake I did, I entreat the reader to consider, that an Essay on *Laughter* does not necessarily imply a mere facetious sally of the mind, nor is there any resemblance between a work calculated merely to provoke *Laughter*, and a rationally digested treatise on the hidden causes, as well as the moral principle, by whose energy we are excited to laugh: whence will result a more certain knowledge of the artificial means of causing *Laughter*, when thus arranged under a scientific method, and of which they had hitherto been judged incapable.

Should there, notwithstanding these forcible considerations, be found minds so far superficial and frivolous, as to take offence at this technical and philosophical Essay on *Laughter's* being written in a sober and rational style, I must take the liberty of asking such, if it has ever so happened to them, as to feel the effects of anger on reading Seneca's treatise upon that passion? Or, if it is to be supposed,

that the readers of an essay on the causes of a fever, are to be seized with that distemper?

It is then absolutely necessary to establish a difference between a picture and an analysis; between a joke that forces a laugh, and a dissertation wherein a cool and serious enquiry is made after the principle that compels us to laugh. Let it be remembered, that every analytical tract is a work of reflexion, and that consequently it would be absurd to disgrace it with the low buffoon style of a farce. It can be safely asserted, that the work now before us, is written in the properest style for a just conveyance of the very useful and deeply meditated researches, with which so valuable a performance is made to abound.

There needs no more to be said to the intelligent reader; to those of the contrary class, there can never be too much. It was then merely for the sake of the latter, that the resolution was taken of enlarging the original title, and calling this work, not barely *An Essay on Laughing*, but more amply, *An Essay on Laughter, wherein are displayed its natural and moral causes, with the arts of exciting it.*

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

O F T H E

T R A N S L A T O R.

On reading the French original, the translator was so highly entertained with the singularity of the subject, as well as with the novelty of the manner in which it is treated, that he concluded it would prove equally interesting to all curious readers.

The passages quoted from Greek and Latin poets, &c. without an English translator's name affixed, except that of page 18. he has taken the liberty of translating a-new, and has indulged himself in the farther freedom of paraphrasing in some places, of compressing in others, and of substituting in more, that this work, in an English dress, might appear with the easy and unrestrained air of an original, rather than with that of a manacled and cramped literal version.

It seems from the best information as yet received, that this meritorious production is but little known among the French.

The celebrated reflections of L'ABBÉ DU BOS ON *Poetry* and *Painting*, were unattended to by his own countrymen, till after the favourable reception they met, and the good character they were honoured with in England: thenceforward they became, and now are, objects of study and admiration, not only in their native country, but in every other region where the *Belles Lettres* flourish.

Happy would the translator be, if his weak effort could produce a like effect for this learned and ingenious performance, which appears to have been written at the request of a lady, to satisfy her curiosity on so interesting a subject.

A N
E S S A Y
O N
L A U G H T E R.

To Madem. *****.

M A D A M,

Your boundless passion for all the refined departments of human knowledge, as well as a superior taste for the polite arts, have always influenced you to enquire into the cause of that pleasure which you derive from them. For, after having enjoyed the luxurious perspective, which their ever-varying picture exhibits successively to the ravished eye; straight from that visual, transient, and but momentary satisfaction, you turn your mind to a more important consideration; arising from a laudable desire of penetrating into the secret cause of that magic power, whose impressive energy upon us, however wonderful, is yet accountable for, by the actuating of certain hidden springs in nature, now first to be revealed.

Madam, the object of your present research, is this secondary knowledge, with which you wish to

be made thoroughly acquainted; and that doubtless you will attain, however laborious the study, and however thick the clouds may appear to be, with which nature hath seemingly enveloped the first principles of things. Because I dare to aver, that the arts can keep nothing a secret from a lady who loves not only to cultivate, but makes the study of them her chief delight; and therefore eminently deserves not only to be admitted into, but also to be the means of extending their limits: and finally, of throwing a new light upon what has hitherto been deemed the mysterious part of them.

This treatise, Madam, will lead you into a world of pleasing discoveries, and the first matter now of debate for your known estimable curiosity in every article relating to the polite arts, will give a new spur to your mind's impatience of still making farther acquisitions.

The comic muse, whose productions are an inexhaustible source of useful entertainment, diverts by giving us moral lectures, and instructs us, by exposing to our view, an exact picture of our faults and vices.—*Laughter* is her favourite attribute, through whose efficacy she gains that very commendable end, of correcting mankind by diverting them.

Laughter, in despite of what some persons may erroneously think, is not a matter of so little importance, as that the most rigid philosophers, may not

rather think it an object of attention than of contempt; and this I dare take upon me to affirm for a truth.

It might seem, perhaps, not improper to some that we should have set off, by giving a description of *Laughter*, previously to our treating of its origin. But as nothing satisfactory hath ever yet been advanced upon so extraordinary an effect, it will be more methodic first to ascertain its primitive cause, which once laid open, will serve as an enlightening guide to conduct us in the discussion proposed, which I must own labours under many obstacles. For great is the uncertainty about the origin of *Laughter*. The hitherto mistakenly apparent sources of it are now disclaimed; and no wonder then that it should be attended with so much difficulty; since if the *principles* or first cause which we are now in search of, had not been kept, down to our time, a closely reserved secret of nature, mankind could not have remained ignorant of it during so many ages. A Democritus, an Aristotle, a Cicero, a Cæsar, would not have declined to give a definition of it. The silence of Moliere upon this subject is not a little surprising, and implies in a striking manner how difficult a task it is to establish the exciting principle of *Laughter*.

I know, Madam, that from your innate goodness, you cannot help looking with an eye of

compassion upon me, now environed with so much difficulties, and whence there appears no ready or inviting escape. To confess the truth to your Ladyship, I have plunged myself into a strange labyrinth, and without the interfering of an extraordinary assistance sent by mere chance, I should have renounced the pursuit, rather than expose myself to the shame of failure in it.

But since a lucky incident has furnished me with an opportunity of receiving all those lights necessary, to dissipate the so long incumbent darkness upon this curious subject, I will now cheerfully communicate them to you, having first premised the fortunate event by which I acquired them; otherwise I might be charged with a kind of enigmatic imposture.

A friend of mine took me one day with him to the house of the late Mr. TITON DU TILLET, a gentleman justly celebrated in the literary world, for that famous monument in brass, which he had caused to be erected in honour of letters and the polite arts, and with which our King has lately adorned his library. It turned out indeed, a very lucky day to me, for not to make mention of the many celebrated artists whom I then saw for the first time; I enjoyed, Madam, the additional, and exquisite pleasure of finding myself in company with several of the first names, both for learning and

genius, whose works are equally the objects of my delight and admiration.

Here personages of no less consequence than a DES-TOUCHES, a FONTENELLE, and a MONTESQUIEU, displayed all the powers of eloquence before me, in support of their respective opinions. I could listen for ever to such bewitching orators; for as they spoke, I felt, kindling within me, an encreasing ardour for those studies that embellish the human mind.

The style of DES-TOUCHES was unaffected, pure, graceful, and copious, yet natural. FONTENELLE shewed more of art, was florid, fertile, subtle, elegant, and remarkably ingenious. MONTESQUIEU's manner of speaking was agreeably diversified, now grave, now gay, now serious, now sublime.

Such were the speakers whom I had the happiness to hear. They amply discussed the chosen theme of *Laughter*, which is now become so much the object of your curiosity. I carefully collected their different sentiments on a subject, about which they had differed for a long time. My business now, Madam, is to make a faithful recital to you of their arguments in this debate. Be pleased then to remember, that it is their several opinions which I lay before you, not my own. The following accident gave rise to so interesting a controversy;

and thus the greatest things often owe their origin to trifles.

A gentleman of the company having *laughed* without any apparent cause, another maliciously rallied the transgressor for so unprovoked an escape, by asking, *What do you laugh at?* This rebuking question was purposely made by him, to serve as a signal to bring on a warfare of wit. For all the company uniting against *the Laugher*, they instantly formed an offensive league, in order to compel him to declare the cause of such an overt indiscretion. The involuntary culprit being shy, would fain play off, and apologize for his trespass, but an almost general resolution was taken not to let him off, or shew him any mercy. Whereupon a tender hearted lady, in compassion for the embarrassment and confusion of the impleaded offender, thus cut the matter short. *What a noise, what a bustle is here? Why the gentleman laughed at our curiosity!*

This well-timed and defeating expedient, dispelled the gathering storm, and gave the persecuted *Laugher* breathing time to recover himself; who being a man of wit, made a very good use of the lady's kind interference, to extricate himself from any charge of impoliteness that might be laid to his account: and addressing himself to the company, *Ladies and Gentlemen, I am ready*, said he, *to declare to you all what made me laugh, provided*

you can tell me what Laughter is, or the reason why you yourselves laugh.

DES-TOUCHES jumped in opinion with him, said the demand was just, and that it would be ill-natured to refuse complying with it.

FONTENELLE interrupted *Des-touches* by asking him, *if he would declare his opinion concerning that topic.*

Certainly, replied DES-TOUCHES, *if you will promise to do the like.*

I have no objection, answered the author of the plurality of worlds, *if the president here will consent to be of the party, and make a third in the debate.*

MONTESQUIEU, aroused by these questions and answers from one of those amiable reveries to which that great man was very subject, and being made acquainted with the nature of the business, said with a smile of assent, *that truly he never refused taking share in any debate of his academical colleagues.*

The convivial entertainment which had been prepared for the company, being now over, and they all descended to the *Saloon of Parnassus* * ; the above mentioned three gentlemen made a tour into the garden, to recollect their thoughts and be the better enabled to

* It was there Mr. Titon du Tillet had erected a monument in brass representing the French Parnassus.— Thither he was often pleased to invite gentlemen of literary merit.

acquit themselves of the task they had undertaken. — On their return, was to be seen on every face of an expecting audience, that curious anxiety which is wont to be caused by an earnest desire of hearing celebrated orators harrangue; who on their sides proved so obliging, as not to make the company wait long; and thus they, in succession, proceeded conformably to the order of precedence which they had fixed on, among themselves. The first speaker who rose up, was

DES - TOUCHES.

SOCRATES in his gayer moments was wont to define man a ridiculous animal; which definition it is obvious he derived from the very nature of *Laughter*; for in truth, is there a more laughable object to be seen than this vain-glorious self-dubbed king of animals, proudly strutting and setting himself up as the only interpreter of *nature* and yet, at the very time that he makes the most parading boasts of his having victoriously penetrated into her most *mysterious secrets*, be obliged to hesitate and stop short, when called upon for an explanation of any sympathy peculiar to his species; nay, what is more surprizing still, not to be able to unfold to others, or form a clear idea even to himself of what

causes *Laughter*, which faculty notwithstanding he so frequently puts in practice.

The men endowed with the most eminent abilities in all past ages, have made many ingenious efforts in order to investigate its source, but all to no purpose. For after a variety of painful researches, they found themselves induced to the necessity of declaring, that it was a subject which eluded their utmost sagacity, and seemed to them to be placed beyond the reach of human understanding.

What Socrates himself, what the greatest philosophers, and most celebrated poets have not ventured to give an elucidation of, shall I attempt to define? No, for to succeed in such an arduous undertaking, is beyond the sphere of my pretensions. But, however, as it is the duty of all those, who like me, dedicate their laborious researches to the advancement and glory of literature, not to dread exposing themselves to the chance of a mistake, if thence any profitable light may be derived for the general good of society; in conformity with such a sentiment, I now step forth to unfold my opinion of a subject that lies whelmed under such perplexing obscurity. Therefore, gentlemen, from what I am going to say, you will be able to infer, whether from the result of thirty years study, application, and labour, I am able to throw any lustre, or even a glimmering ray, upon so intricate a subject.

The more I reflect upon the nature of *Laughter*, the more I feel an internal conviction, that *this convulsion of the human organs is the effect of joy*.— I am not at the same time without apprehension, that the like fate may befall this too long debated axiom, as did that concerning *sensation*, which the *Eleatic* sect of *philosophers*, would fain reduce to a probability.

The prevailing curse now a days of disputing upon every thing even in contempt of evidence, misleads reason, defeats the information of our senses, and replunging us into the original chaos, substitutes chimeras instead of realities, and renders us the slaves of disputation and doubt.

Whenever we undertake the examination of any question, wherein the organization of man is so immediately concerned, as in the present, our first care should be to exclude all logical subtleties, and receive our conviction from the guidance of unsophisticated nature. Because while we deviate not from the paths which she points out to us, we shall keep clear from any error relative to the cause of *Laughter*, and the general opinion will declare *joy* to be its true origin. This truth may very easily be established by the rule of *contraries*; since the act of *Laughing* is in direct opposition to that of *weeping*, wherefore, as *sorrow* is undoubtedly the cause of

weeping, so is *joy* the unquestionable source of *Laughter*.—

But if bursts of *Laughter* should sometimes break out where there is no apparent cause of gaiety, it must then be concluded, that too extraordinary an impulse must have arisen from some secret cause of joy within us. The causes of human actions do not always manifestly appear, and must be carefully searched for in the deep recesses of the heart.

When from a countenance engloomed with sorrow we perceive an escaping fally of *Laughter*, we are not hastily to decide, that it arises not from some concealed sensation of joy.—If however it can be proved that this escape of *Laughter* proceeded not from any impulse of joy, and that the soul was quite sunk in sorrow, then may we safely pronounce that the *Laughter* was not real, but surreptitious, having no general relationship with that faculty; that it is a contradiction, a monster in nature, which ought to be ranked in the class of distorted grimaces, and involuntary explosions of air.

I now proceed; by separating from my definition of *Laughter*, every thing that is foreign from its nature. For in fact, how can we conceive that there exists any analogy between a sensation agreeable to the soul, and the capricious effects of some poisonous herbs; between a symptom of joy and the sting of an insect; between the pleasing effect of a bon-

mot, and the sense of pain caused by a penetrating incision made into the interior parts of the body.

Therefore, the strange effects which are said to have been caused by the *tarantula*, as well as by the poison contained in the *Laughter-exciting* herb which grows in Sardinia; or by wounds made in the diaphragm; and which, in the too affected patients, are said often-times to provoke such violent fits of involuntary *Laughter*, as to hurry them out of life; are phænomena that have no manner of affinity with the *Laughter* that arises from *joy*: as in a like manner the tears springing from an exquisite sense of pleasure, have no congeniality with those that flow from wringing sorrow, or excruciating anguish.

The many disputes which the subject I am now treating of has given rise to, and the manifold errors into which have strayed those very sages who took the greatest pains to investigate its origin, warn us how cautiously we ought to proceed in the midst of such conflicting opinions, naturally destructive of each other; and that the only true compass we have to steer by, is experience founded on conviction: and that the ultimate solution of so long puzzling a problem, is to be sought for in the heart, not in the mind of man.—

Aristotle cannot be said to have precisely declared what *Laughter* is. His definition leaning thereto,

amounting to no more than to that of ridicule, viz. *Deformity without sense of pain*. This intended explanation, however, if we are to take it for such, is to the full as obscure, as the subject in question which it was meant to clear up, but leaves quite undetermined—because were we to take our departure from the obvious and natural meaning of these words, it must then follow that all the objects of *Laughter* must be *deformed*.

Notwithstanding the authority of so great a name, this quality, which he supposes to be the only one essential to ridicule, seems to me in no way whatever calculated to excite within us the sentimental joy that generates *Laughter*.

The most remarkable part in the description of the *sphinx*,

This triple monster with a human voice,
Is eagle, woman, lion, all at once;

tallies exactly with the conditions required by Aristotle's definition; yet will never excite *Laughter* in any human being, no more than *Ovid's* very ingenious and poetical picture of chaos.

Before the seas and this terrestrial ball,
And heav'n's high canopy that covers all;

One was the face of nature, if a face ;
 Rather a rude and indigested mass :
 A lifeless lump, unfashion'd, and unfram'd,
 Of jarring seeds, and justly chaos nam'd.
 No sun was lighted up, the world to view ;
 No moon did yet her blunted horns renew :
 Nor yet was earth suspended in the sky ;
 Nor pois'd, did on her own foundation lye :
 Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown,
 But earth, and air, and water were in one.

This air was void of light, and earth unstable,
 And waters dark abyss unnavigable.
 No certain form on any was impress ;
 All were confus'd, and each disturb'd the rest.
 For hot and cold were in one body fixt,
 And soft with hard, and light with heavy mixt.

DRYDEN.

All these singular images wear a complexion of *deformity*, without any thing *horrible* in them, and yet have as little relationship with *Laughter*, as with either joy or pity ; wherefore there needs no other proof now, that Aristotle's definition is both an erroneous and a bad one. Let it be at the same time remembered that objects merely agreeable, and without any alloy or mixture of deformity in their composition, impel us gently, and as it were of themselves, to that sentimental delectation,

that is always accompanied with a *smile*; which light and gentle alteration of our features, is not to be excepted from the denomination of *Laughter* in its true sense: because the latter and the former differ only in the degrees of more or less, and we have daily opportunities of observing how the same objects that provoke *Laughter* in some folks, excite but a *smile* in others.

The truth of this doctrine being once uncontrovertibly established, I shall make no difficulty of allowing, that *Laughter* is often occasioned by a *deformity that is not shocking*, but shall never accede to a declaration of its being the true, and much less to its being the principal and only cause of that faculty's exertion.

Some authors have assigned the cause of *Laughter* to *admiration*. This, though an error, is however somewhat excusable, as will appear, when we shall have duly considered its cause, which is derived from the flattering circumstance constantly attendant on the works of the most excellent comic writers; who at long-run, fail not to produce the sentimental veneration that is ever concomitant with the applause of a whole people, and the successive suffrage of many centuries. For in truth, after a perusal of that exquisite comedy *Tartuffe*, we are as deeply penetrated with sentimental esteem for the comic poet *Moliere*, as we are for the tragic bard

Corneille, after having read his meritorious tragedy of *Cinna*.

But sure it would be wrong hence to infer, that *Laughter* owes its birth to admiration, or that these two emotions can either with propriety, or of necessity co-exist. Would it not be much more agreeable to truth to assert, that the one is almost ever exclusive of the other, and that as soon as respect or admiration begins, *Laughter* expires.

Moliere is now much more an object of admiration than he was in his own time: but we know too by tradition, that he made people *laugh* much more than. I shall now urge the same argument against admiration, which I did against deformity, by quoting that famous passage from the poet *Lucretius*, on which is impressed every characteristic feature of those objects chiefly that are the best adapted to excite our *admiration*.

Long time men lay oppress'd with slavish fear,
 Religion's tyranny did domineer,
 And, being plac'd in heav'n, look'd proudly down,
 And frighted abject spirits with her frown.

At length a mighty man of Greece began,
 T'assert the nat'ral liberty of man,
 By senseless terror, and vain fancies led
 To slav'ry: straight the conquer'd fantom fled,

Not the fam'd stories of the deity,
 Not all the thunder of the threaten'g sky
 Could stop his rising soul; thro' all the past,
 The strongest bounds that pow'rful nature cast;
 His vigorous and active mind was hurl'd,
 Beyond the flaming limits of this world,
 Into the mighty space, and there did see,
 How things begin, what can, what cannot be;
 How all must die, all yield to fatal force,
 What steady limits bound their nat'ral course,
 He saw all this, which others fought in vain;
 Thus by his conquest we our rights regain,
 Religion he subdued, and we now reign.—

CREECH.

Now I protest in opposition to all the warm advocates for the system of *admiration*, that I cannot descry, in these noble lines, the least room for *Laughter* to figure in.

The contrary indeed happens when objects which artists labour to make appear great, exhibit to a judicious eye, a picture, not of the true sublime, but of the capriciously strained, or of the absurdly enormous: all which, *admiration* disclaims as quite unworthy of her cognizance. No example more apposite or convincing can be cited here, than those very famous verses *Terwa mimalloneis*, &c. of Nero, that instead of acquiring what he had wished for,

the *admiration*, exposed him to the *Laughter* of the Roman empire, for having been guilty of such turgid fustian, such ridiculous bombast.

————— “ The bacchanalian crew,
 “ Their wreath’d horn *blew*, and after PENTHEUS
 “ *slew*.
 “ The scornful calf! it is *decreed*, must *bleed*;
 “ His mother’s angry knife shall do the deed,
 “ His sisters joining in the mixed band,
 “ With-ivy armed hand the subject lynx command,
 “ And *Evion* cry; ’tis *Evion* all around:
 “ Eccho repairs, and babbles back the sound.”

The opinion of those who would fain make *surprize* to be the cause of *Laughter*, is equally inadmissible; because we frequently see it to be productive of quite different effects, such as horror, anxiety, consternation, and pain; *Laughter* may indeed sometimes follow in the train of *surprize*, which can never be assigned for its origin.

In vain then to support this opinion may dissentients from us advance, “ that *Laughter* never exists
 “ but in consequence of a *sudden attack*, and, as it
 “ were, a *beguiling* of the mind; which is known
 “ to be the constant effect of gestures or words ridiculous; that (according to this doctrine) appear
 “ so to us, for no other reason, but because they

“ are unusual, opposite to long imbibed notions,
 “ to what we had expected was coming, and to
 “ our general way of feeling: they for the most
 “ part presenting to us an air of novelty, that
 “ surprizes the mind by an unforeseen attack, and
 “ unfought for crisis. Now a strong testimony for
 “ this doctrine can be educed from the effects of
 “ *accidental tickling*, inasmuch as no man can tickle
 “ himself into a laughing fit: because an individual
 “ cannot be the cause of any thing new or foreign
 “ in its own person.”

But there is so little foundation for the averring
surprize to be the cause of *Laughter*, that this emo-
 tion is often extorted from us by jokes already known
 to us, or by others so naturally arising from the sub-
 ject of discourse, that we are sometimes in thought
 before hand with the utterer of them. There are
 much less grounds then to establish for the immediate
 cause of *Laughter* in us, words or gestures unusual,
 opposite to long imbibed notions, &c. as above;
 since we are not more liable to a violent explosion of
Laughter, at the sight or description of grotesque,
 fictitious, and whimsical objects, than when we are
 presented with a view of others, displaying more
 pleasing but *unaffected* features, and though inge-
 niously formed upon the true model of nature, have
 nevertheless a powerful sway in exciting the *comic*
 and *ridiculous*.

In regard now to an *involuntary tickling*, it is not always (as may be verified by experiment) accompanied with surprize. For, when by way of pastime, and in sportive moods of society, the play of *tickling* is allowed, yet the persons best prepared to undergo it, cannot help *laughing* while the operation lasts; but the reason why we cannot provoke the same violent effect in ourselves, when we attempt to inflict such a pleasing pain, is, that our organization recoils at the attack, and we are naturally too self-complaisant, and have too good an understanding with ourselves, to pursue any thing that would prove in the least disagreeable to our own dear persons.

Another argument against the advocates for *admiration* and *surprize*, may be alledged from the brute creation; for of all sensible beings, man alone is endowed with the faculty of *Laughter*; while other animals, though not deprived of the sentiments of *surprize* and *admiration*, which they enjoy in common with us, have never expressed by *Laughter*, either the one or the other: even at times too, when there was room for us to judge that these internal emotions in them, were accompanied with an agreeable sensation. Hence follows an incontestable proof, that *Laughter* in man does not arise from the situation of his soul, at the rencounter of objects, that either surprize him or challenge his admiration.

This reason will appear still more solid and cogent when we reflect, that beasts are endowed with exterior signs to express the diversified colourings of their passions: and that their organs (those of the voice excepted) are as perfect as ours; wherefore it appears more than probable, that the *principle of Laughter* in the human species, is not to be found among animals.

Now, gentlemen, we are got into a labyrinth from which we must extricate ourselves as well as we can. If the beasts are not endowed with that principle which makes mankind *laugh*, the inference then is natural, that we cannot discover in it any of those passions which they have in common with us; *joy* being one of that number, we must consequently renounce the assertion of its being the origin of *Laughter*.

Now in order to find out the solution of this difficulty, let us keep nature closely in view, and consider well the essential difference existing between the rational and the brute part of the creation: for when we shall have made a thorough enquiry into what constitutes the characteristic difference that distinguish them from us, nobody will then hesitate in asserting, that the faculty of reason alone constitutes this immense barrier: and thence, as if stricken by a newly discovered wonder, we must acknowledge, that *Laughter* springs from *rational*

joy, which must in consequence be specifically appropriated to the *reasoning species*.

Now two sorts of *Laughter* arise from this *rational joy*; the one pure, innocent, modest, and ingenious: the other hath a vicious tendency, and is said to imply a mixture more or less intense of pleasure and malignancy. This contrast in the characteristics of *Laughter* arises from the diversity of occurrences that gives birth to *rational joy*, since the object causing them are either laudable or faulty. Wherefore it is by no means indecent to take pleasure in the one; but it is thoroughly consistent with virtue to delight in the other. This might be a disquisition very proper for casuists to enter upon; but for me to take such a course, would be steering wide from the subject matter, as I mean to treat it; whose nature being repugnant to long and serious digressions, I shall proceed more agreeably to it, by confining myself to the following reflexion.

Joy in itself is a laudable sensation. It is the smallest homage that can be paid by mankind to Providence for the daily benefits which they receive; nay more, *joy* is the sure testimony of a conscience that is pure and free from the taint of remorse; it is the natural state of the complexional happy man.

JULIUS CÆSAR was wont to say, that “ He
“ always distrusted those affectedly severe stoics,

“ with a pale countenance, scowling eyes, and
 “ who never unwrinkled their foreheads into a
 “ smile: but that he dreaded nothing from men of
 “ a gay, convivial disposition, who loved to spend
 “ their festive hours in jollity (*Laughter*) and the
 “ round of enlivening pleasures.” For the like reason, *Epicurus* had made the principal part of his moral philosophy consist in *rational joy*: yet this great man was so austere self-denying, as to decline all the pleasurable enjoyments of life, except the *laugh of reason, and the joy springing from a guiltless mind.*

The *Laughter* flowing from such a source is by the calmness of its nature, far preferable to the violent bursts of immediate fits, commonly arising from that species of joy attendant on vicious or defective objects; the former but gently insinuates itself into well-bred minds, under the recommendatory conveyance of ideas not illiberal, a portraiture of manners not indecent, and the additional heightening of ingenuity's unartful features. There being, on the one hand, hardly any boundaries for the loud and continued roars exhibited at the sight of defective or vicious objects; on the other, delicate expression of virtuous joy being in a manner imperceptible to most people, we are to remain no longer surprized why so few have ever set about,

or even now seriously think of reviving among us *the Laughter of the golden age*.

In the stead of that to be wished-for inoffensive gaiety, and which by means of its extreme delicacy, is rendered so difficult to be reduced into practice, I believe, we may be indulged in the not being so over scrupulous, as not to suffer ourselves to be entertained by a display of the imperfections and malignancy of human nature. For, in my sense, to *laugh* at malicious words or actions, is a manifestation of the *deformity* which we discover therein, and of the *moral turpitude* to which it is annexed.

Therefore such *Laughter* considered in this light, deserves, in my opinion, not only to be absolved from the charge of criminality, but ought rather to be complimented with the title of the scourge of vice, and the defender of virtue. However, I do not offer this opinion as a principle to be implicitly received, but as a sentiment which I am not ashamed to avow, and which is moreover supported by a number of very respectable authorities.

It was from the same motives that the ancient philosophers excused their not suppressing the *laughing* faculty's exertion; nay, whole nations paid a religious worship to it. The inhabitants of Hipara in Thessaly, celebrated an anniversary festival in honour of it. And although the brachmans had

it banished from the extensive territories of India, yet that grave legislator Lycurgus, had statues erected to it in Sparta, where due homage was paid to the newly introduced divinity; and the Lacedemonians, who never acted in so derogatory a manner from themselves as to become the objects of *Laughter*, knew perfectly well how to excite it at the expence of others.

Cleomenes, who a long time after Lycurgus, reformed the government of Sparta, re-established the ancient discipline in his country, and though he rigorously prohibited the custom of public diversions to his fellow citizens, yet continued to them the privilege of provoking *Laughter* by the dint of irony and sarcasm.

But let us now return to the true origin of *Laughter*, which, as I have already observed, can be found no where else but in *rational joy*, — what, I pray, is the reason, that we never, or indeed but very seldom, *laugh* when alone? *Solitude*—because its unsocial privation of objects rendereth us serious, and it is not qualified to set the springs of gaiety in action.

One argument more presents itself in auxiliary support to my doctrine of *rational joy*, and that is, if *Laughter* were not under the influence of judgment, what would hinder us from abandoning ourselves entirely to its forceful sway, and continually

laughing in open defiance of discretion, when challenged thereto by those pleasant images, with which the mind amuses itself in the midst of silence, or by those entertaining objects that chance throws before us in our retirement.

The check by which we are restrained in such circumstances, is neither more nor less than *reason*, whose influence is never more strongly felt by man, than when he is insulated from the noisy commerce of his fellow-creatures.—Now all these observations conspire to prove, (with a kind of emulation as it were) that *joy* is the origin of *Laughter*, but under the auspice of reason; and when that supreme intellectual power does not exert its utmost authority upon us.

But in order that this principle may be the readier, and more universally admitted, there remains one obstacle more to be removed, and that is in regard to *infancy*; whose peculiar attribute seems to be that of *laughing*, and cannot be deemed susceptible of that admixture of *reason*, circumstances, and condition so essential to *Laughter*.

1. We are induced by appearances to think, that an infant (before we are pleased to allow him the use of reason) *laughs* only by imitation, that is in consequence of the analogy which his features, organs, and conformation hath, with those of the

person he sees *laughing*.

2. When after some time he begins to compare together several ideas proportioned to his young perception, it is more than probable that he then begins to *laugh*, and if not so very a-propos, at least, from some known cause his childish fancy has conceived; wherefore we have no longer a right to pronounce his *Laughter* to be no more than a copy of ours.

3. Reason (notwithstanding appearances to the contrary) is certainly born with man, and though not arrived to a state of perfection in infancy, yet from that early period does it begin to enforce its influence over all our actions, though in a more or less obscure manner.

Be it also remembered, that when I attribute *Laughter* to *rational joy*, I do not hence infer, that it is the result of perfect reason, but chuse to leave the question undecided, whether it be the effect of the use, or of the abuse of reason. Now an abuse of reason cannot be committed by any person who is not more or less possessed of that faculty.

Hence consequently arises my belief that animals do not *laugh*, because they are devoid of *reason*; that man *laughs* because he is endowed therewith; and that infants *laugh* from their making a good or a bad use thereof.—A man is not to be called

blind because his sight is become dim and infirm; for the same reason that we cannot deny that a twilight's weak lustre, is as evincing a proof of the light's existence, as is the full meridian splendor of the sun.—In this place too may be alledged the comparison of a pendulum, whose motions indicate the springs that make it act, whether it points out the hours regularly or not.

It has been at all times observed, that women are more prone to *Laughter* than men; young people more than the old; fools more than the wise; those of a bilious and sanguine temperament, more than those of a melancholly one: and indeed how could it be otherwise, since the first, from being more inclined to joy, must necessarily be more disposed to *laugh*. In tracing this observation to its source we find, that young people and those of a bilious temperament are more inclinable to *laugh*, than the prudent and the old, because being by their nature more lively and inconsiderate, they do not sufficiently examine into the motives of their *joy*.

In general there is reason to believe, that all complexional *Laughs* yield to the impulse of this faculty from one common cause, as for instance, The ignorant and the foolish *laugh* from a fault in discernment, which either conceals from, or disguises to them some part of the objects, and only permits them to see that which is the most flat-

tering to them. Women and men of a sanguine temperament *laugh* because the manner of contemplating objects, is so entirely dependent on one's conformation; and the organisation of such persons being of a more sensible and delicate nature, it uncontrovertibly follows, that they must more rapidly seize on the agreeable side of a picture, than others of more gross intellects can.

After having taken a sufficient survey of what *true Laughter* is, in all the principle points of view which it presents to us, nothing now hinders us to resume that department of the *laughing* faculty, which we had detached and laid aside from our research hitherto, as almost foreign from it; what I mean, is that *Laughter* which is extorted by *violent tickling*, the *involuntarily laughing bursts* caused by a *delirium*, by the tarantula, or by wounds of the *diaphragm*.

But having already declared, that these phenomena were alien from my subject, and were therefore thence purposely separated, seeing that they are directly opposite, it cannot now be expected I should enter into a long description of them. Let this declaration then suffice in regard to those particular cases, viz. *joy* always comes in for a share, in whatever species of *Laughter*, even where *pain* prevails, because it can never exist without the

blending some agreeable sensation, and a being as it were intimately mixed with pleasure.

Let us now suppose Hannibal, Lucan, Seneca, or the unfortunate Andronicus, compelled, as was really their fate, to make away with themselves, and left to chuse the means. Let us farther suppose, that one of those unhappy victims to politics or tyranny gives the preference to poison, but is anxious at the same time to disguise to himself the rigour of so cruel a necessity, and desirous (if we may be allowed the expression) of seeing death approach under a more agreeable form, he therefore chuses to take the poison determined on, in a glass of hydromel.

The so compounded draught, it must be allowed, will cause a mixed sensation of pleasure and pain; of pleasure, from the inseparable quality of the liquor in which the poison is masked; of pain, or rather horror, from the bitterness or shock which must always strike us at the thought of self-destruction.

A like mixture will be found in all *forced Laughter*, whether the violence that occasions it give pain, or be the cause of death. It is proper to remark, that in the torture and death which unhappy sufferers, so devoted, undergo, by too violent a shock; their *Laughter*, from whatever circumstance aris-

ing, is never caused but by an agreeable vibration in the region of those very muscles, which are designed by nature to display the exterior symptoms of gaiety, and that may be looked upon as the instrumental *chords of joy*, which whenever touched, cannot avoid exciting a local pleasure, however painful at the time the soul's situation may be. Thus, sweet things that are offered to a child against his will, flatter his taste, although his capricious forwardness rejects them.

Some people may ask, how is it possible that *involuntary Laughter* should cause death, if its having been accompanied with an agreeable sensation were true? But such an objection is so far from invalidating my system, that it but the more firmly establishes it, since there are so many proofs of persons who have died through *joy*, as the historians copiously inform us.

Chilo, a very eminent citizen of Sparta, and who had even aspired to the throne of Lacedemon, expired suddenly with *joy*, on receiving the news of his being conqueror at the Olympic games. Denis the soul's tyrant died of excessive *joy*, on hearing that his poem was honoured with the crown of success at the same assembly: Philippides, a comic poet, died of a similar cause: Diagoras, whose three sons proved conquerors the same day in combatting with the Cestus, died on the spot where the agreeable

news was repeated to him : a mother, after the battle of Cannæ, dropt down dead, on seeing a son arrive, who, she had been told, was slain there.— If mere joy can be productive of such terrible effects, what must be the case, when the soul finds herself divided and torn by contending passions.— However, let not *death* be held as the only effect which a too intense joy is capable of causing, because we have instances of its defeating disorders, and saving the patient's life.

Few readers are ignorant of that cardinal's history, who being reduced to the point of death by an abscess, was forsaken by his physicians, and left for dead by his domesticks, yet owed his sudden and unexpected recovery, to the whimsical disguise of his monkey. The sagacious animal, observing the servants every where busy in stripping the house of its furniture, muffled himself up in the cardinal's hat, and other articles of his attire; resolving in imitation of them, to come in for his share of the plunder. So grotesque an appearance, provoked in the dying person an irresistible desire of *Laughing*; and the convulsion, in consequence, was so great, that it burst the coats of the abscess in a moment, by which extraordinary event, the cardinal's life was saved. Yet the *Laughter* to which he was indebted for his recovery, was a violent concussion in which

his will could claim no share. The dejection of his spirits, the suffering of his body, the anguish of his soul, the ingratitude of his domestics contending about the spoil before his death, presented a very afflicting picture to his mind. Notwithstanding which, on the unexpected appearance of his monkey's grotesque equipment, by its assailing in him those very organs, whose office, as I have above hinted, is to reveal the symptoms of joy, there ensued an involuntary fit of *Laughter*, which even the horror of death could not repress, and whose salutary eruption opened a speedy discharge to the contained humours, thereby recalling life and health. This *Laughter*, abstracted from the happy circumstances with which it was attended, is to be considered as an extraordinary blending of local pleasure, and reflected pain; because it could not put the joy-exciting springs in play, without super-inducing into those parts a kind of delight, in its nature contrary to the then contiguous or adjunct sensations of anguish.

Involuntary tickling causeth also the double sensation I have mentioned; for though it makes the soul suffer by disquieting, troubling, and tormenting her so far, that it may truly be called pain, yet its effect is produced by the interference of pleasure, because *tickling* depends chiefly on a delicate *touching*, that proves agreeable to the epidermis. No-

body can dare to assert, that this slight and intermittent impression, wounds or even hurts the skin in any shape; on the contrary, by being gently continued, it invites sleep; and in pressing on the fibres more forcibly, no hurt is done to them.

We are now obliged to admit, that by a kind of incomprehensible contradiction, the soul shrinks from this operation when too violent, yet takes pleasure in despite of herself, and to such a degree, that by the means of *Laughter*, she is forced to give a manifest proof of the involuntary gratification that is thence derived.

This inexplicable alliance of counter-acting impressions, is every day observable in the *Sardonic laugh*, where the combined stamp of these two contrary passions is visible; with this difference however, that the two principles of which we are now speaking, are in this species of *Laughter* derived from reason; whereas in *forced involuntary Laughter*, the pleasure mingled with this violent commotion, and as if it were against our will, is merely sensitive, and appertains not in the least to the intellectual power.

The extent of this pleasure spreads no farther than to the mechanical agents of *Laughter*, setting some of its springs a going in a kind of blind manner, without any certain aim or consequence proposed, and without any acquiescing assent from the throne of reason. Hence then a distinction in due

form arises of the *Sardonic laugh*, from that which is known to be provoked by *tickling*, convulsions, a delirium, a particular kind of herb, the use of saffron, the tarantula's bite, and wounds of the diaphragm.

Not one of these several *Laughters* flow from the *reasoning principle*, but are all the natural effects of some involuntary accidents, happening in some enteriour or interiour parts of the body; and therefore the *Laughter-provoking herb*, that grows in *Sardinia*, does not appear to me to furnish the most probable etymology for the true *Sardonic laugh*; this word but badly suits with the diversity of the two-fold species, one of which is the obscure effect of a merely *physical accident*, the other is a *feeling result* from two moral causes.

I am inclined now to think, that as far as the nature of the subject will permit, I have demonstrated, that *true Laughter* has its source in *rational joy*; but that the *forced, and the involuntary*, is the effect of a mere machinal operation.

I do not doubt, but the two illustrious personages who are to speak after me, have acquired upon this matter a much more extensive knowledge than I can pretend to; wherefore, actuated by a just and implicit desire of profiting myself by their instructions, I hasten, gentlemen, to abdicate the title of orator, and sit down among you in the humble character of an auditor.

F O N T E N E L L E.

Words are wanting to express my surprize, on hearing you, my much honoured friend, labour so strenuously to establish for the *true origin of Laughter*, a *cause* that has been unanimously rejected by all philosophers. For if in joy were to be found the origin of *Laughter*, if even this opinion were probable, by what strange mistake, or erring propensity of the human mind, have men of the most cultivated genius, not only disclaimed, but looked upon it as absurd? Were they deficient, either in penetration to make the discovery, or in eloquence and judgment to support it when once started. But, since on the contrary, they have all confederated against this opinion, is it not then probable they found it most inadequate to what they sought for?

It must however occur to every body, that the first idea which presents itself to persons debating on the nature of *Laughter*, is, that in all likelihood it arises from *joy*.—Yet this problem, when judiciously examined, is embarrassed from the very off-set with a multitude of contradictions; and of which here follow some glaring instances.

1. If *Laughter* were the necessary consequence of *joy*, it must always accompany it, which is not the

case.— 2. It must excite *Laughter* as often as, and during all the time that it exists, which it does not. 3. It could not be raised to any excess, without exciting a like excess in *Laughter*, and that, experience is against.—4. In fine, it would be the sole efficient and determining cause of *Laughter*, which you yourself deny.

I shall enter into no discussion with you at present about these several articles, which I cheerfully resign to the president's superior sagacity, because therein would be implied an analysis of the passions, and I am not presumptuous enough to undertake a formal examination of so intricate a subject especially in his presence.

I will therefore make a transition to what I find myself more equal to; and that is, the second part of your discourse, in which it appears, that yourself, being stunned at the many obstacles with which the system of simple *joy* is clogged, had immediate recourse to the subterfuge of *rational* or *reflecting joy*; an admirable expedient it must be owned, and by whose intervention, as by a legerdemain finesse, you shift the moral siege of *Laughter* from the heart to the head.

I have, Sir, no objection to this dexterity of yours; no: on the contrary, it puts you more in my power... Against this then, your head quarter, I mean to point my chief battery. But I shall in-

dulge myself no farther in the attack I intend to make against *simple joy*, than in opposing to it, the physical delineation of *Laughter*, as made by some of the most able physiologists during the investigation of its nature and symptoms.

Since then, according to your own assertion, *Laughter* arises from *joy*, endeavour to make out if you can, wherein any resemblance between the two exists. I am sure that nobody except yourself, perhaps in the portraiture thereof which I am going to present you with, will be able to find any. Now pray attend to this description, or if it should rather so appear to you, this anatomical description of *Laughter*.—

“ Upon examining the countenance, things appear in this manner:—The fore-head expands itself, the eye-brows are depressed, the eye-lids narrow themselves near the corners of the eyes, and all the neighbouring skin becomes wrinkled and unequal. The eye being thus compressed, and half shut, owes its lustre to a forced-out moisture with which it is suffused. Even those persons from whom grief could never extort tears, are then compelled to shed some. The nose is contracted, and terminated more or less in a point; the lips are drawn backwards and lengthened; the teeth are displayed; the cheeks are elevated, and tending to overstretch their

“ muscles, which by the interstitial hollows caused
 “ by the resistance or retraction of their fibres,
 “ cause those dimples so pleasing in the cheeks of
 “ some, so disagreeable in those of others unfavoured by nature.

“ The mouth now obliged to be open, shews
 “ the tongue in a suspended state, and continually
 “ agitated by forcible vibrations. The voice
 “ is no longer articulate, and renders only broken
 “ sounds, now loud and piercing, now low and
 “ plaintive. The neck swells and becomes short,
 “ all the veins are full and distended; from the
 “ blood's being hurried in a tumultuous manner
 “ into the smallest vessels of the epidermis or scarf-
 “ skin, spreads over the countenance the hue of a
 “ violet red, which is the neighbouring symptom of
 “ suffocation. Yet all these effects are moderate,
 “ when compared to the violent exertion felt in
 “ other parts. The breast is so vehemently actu-
 “ ated, as to labour under the greatest difficulty,
 “ nay, of an almost impossibility of letting an ar-
 “ ticulate word be uttered; a violent pain is felt
 “ in the sides; the bowels feel as if they were torn,
 “ and the ribs as if rent asunder.

“ During this outrageous crisis, the whole body
 “ is bent, twisted in a manner, and as it were
 “ crumpled together; the hands throw themselves
 “ upon the sides, and there closely fasten; the face

“ is soon dewed over with sweat; the voice is converted into groans, and breathing into smothered sighs.”

“ Sometimes the over violence of this agitation produceth kindred effects to those of a mortal beverage, such as bolting bones out of their joints, dreadful swoonings, and sometimes death. While this kind of torture lasts, the head and shoulders undergo the same fatiguing emotions, which the breasts and sides do. Their agitation at first is perceptible and irregular; then all on a sudden, as if exhausted of their vigour, they drop nerveless into quiet. The hands hang listless, the legs have no power to move, and the whole machine languisheth as in a state of inaction.”

Such is the picture of *Laughter*, as communicated to us by the most accurate observers. It will be of no service to you to reply, that this is the portraiture of *vehement Laughter*, but not that of *moderate Laughter*, nor even of a *smile*, because according to your own reflexion, *immoderate Laughter*, and a *smile*, are homogeneous, all difference being only in the greater or less degree.

You will not, I am sure, pretend to deny, that all the frightful phenomena which we have recited as inherent to *immoderate Laughter*, are displayed also by *moderate Laughter*, though in a milder degree,

and are likewise manifested by a smile though as in miniature.

You will not in the least embarrass me now, by painting the peculiar graces to be seen in the last, because it would not be a less absurd way of reasoning, than if you were to define the fever an agreeable vermilion diffused over the countenance, inasmuch as its beginning is always accompanied with this slight symptom, it would be equally erroneous to pretend defining the nature of *vehement Laughter*, by that of a *gentle smile*, as it would be to expect your discovering the masculine and regular features of a man, in the yet unfold sketch and delicate fibres of an infant.

Since you yourself cannot deny but that *common Laughter* resembles more or less the extraordinary or violent, whose description we have given, and since also nothing similar is to be met with in the symptoms of *joy*, even when it proves to be the harbinger of death; therefore must necessarily vanish the likenesses which you would fain establish between *it* and *Laughter*, and your adoption of the one synonymously for the other, has no foundation in truth.

You may indeed respite for some short time the total overthrow of your system, by asserting that in *joy*, as well as in *Laughter*, the forehead constantly dilates itself, which according to your no-

tion of things, may perhaps be sufficient to constitute a manifest resemblance.

But you cannot avail yourself of such an evasion, because I am sure this very proposition must draw upon your back the greatest part of the faculty, who will most certainly demonstrate to you, that in these two occasions the forehead is dilated in a different manner, and by the agency of springs quite opposite to each other, so that finally the appearances are quite dissimilar.

Physiologists will inform you, that in *joy* there is derived an afflux of spirits to the forehead, that with an instantaneous uniformity, sets in motion a multitude of little muscles, harmoniously corresponding in every sense with the forehead's exterior tegument, by the means of whose gentle inhibition, all these minor springs are kept in the most perfect equilibrium, whence beams forth that attractive serenity, that pleasing smoothness observable in the superior part of the human countenance.

But in *Laughter*, on the contrary, that very tegument alluded to, although dilated on the forehead, is so but in a constrained manner by the forcible and foreign compression which it undergoes from the contraction of the eye-lids, accidental wrinkling of the temples, by the swollen jutting out of the cheeks, and the general contraction of the muscles, with which it is not immediately con-

nected.—Hence follows, that in *joy* the forehead is dilated because it is equally filled ; and in *Laughter*, because the same degree of violence to which it is subject, draws it alike on every side.

Your own good sense having foreseen the greatest part of these difficulties, in order to elude any dispute concerning them, took immediate shelter under the new paradox of *rational joy*. But how can you hope that the likeness which is denied to exist betwixt *Laughter* and *joy*, should be received as applicable between *Laughter* and *reason* ? for our business now is to dwell not upon the appearances, but upon the reality of things. If *Laughter*, and the cause of it, as by you assigned, have any affinity, our judgment on that head must be guided by an investigation of their undoubted essence.

I might be troublesome to you at setting out about the natural propriety of certain terms, and begin by asking, if the epithet *rational* or *reflected* can have any accurate connexion with the rapid and lively sensation of *joy* ? But not to be severe upon you, I will indulgently for your sake admit the alliance of these two expressions, although I shall never be prevailed on to think that *joy* in a man is the result of a *rational* or *reflecting* principle ; because the quickness of its emotions, and the eruptions of *Laughter* are too impetuous for any body's

consenting to attribute their cause to the flow, and circumspect progress of judgment.

I am therefore induced to think, that the meaning of your words is very limited; they may imply indeed for instance, that reason, by having more or less influence upon all creatures endowed with rationality, must necessarily come in for some share in the action of *Laughter*; whence perhaps will be inferred, that we never *laugh* but in consequence of a sedulous operation of our judgment, and a slight return of complaisance to ourselves. Nay, I will stretch my indulgence still farther, by not insisting that any more is meant by your expressions, than that *Laughter* springs so suddenly from the *intelligent principle* productive of it, as that there is no possibility of ascertaining the epocha or different times of this sudden operation; and that by a special privilege, the fits of *Laughter* are always co-instantaneous with the *rational* or *reflecting sentiment* that excites them.—But here, lest I should be mistaken by you, I must declare, that allowing this to be the true meaning of your definition, it seems, however, to be still labouring under numberless inconveniencies, and liable to a multitude of objections, that present themselves to me from every side of the question.

You maintain forsooth, that the influence of reason is necessary to the act of *Laughter*; which

according to you is prepared and proposed as it were by *joy*; then coolly intervenes *reason* to determine the emotions in consequence of a judgment sometimes ripe, and sometimes premature.—But the adoption of such a strange doctrine must fundamentally destroy your own favourite system.

Although *Laughter*, as some people will tell you, may sometimes exist by the approbation of reason, and consequently to an examination more or less accurate of the motives which may have excited thereto; yet that can happen only in some particular cases. But what answer have you to make to an opponent who should object to you, that we *laugh* much oftner, nay, more frequently without the approbation of reason, nay, when she interiously blames us for so doing, and even when sometimes we unite our utmost efforts to her rebuking admonitions, in order to avoid the scandal and offence which must result from *ill-timed Laughter*, whether in regard to the circumstances of the place where we are, or of the persons with whom we are in company.

Now pray, Sir, what shield have you wherewith to blunt the poignancy of so powerful an objection.—Is it really your intention to prove, that the influencing power of reason always abets *Laughter*? How far you may have already succeeded towards obtaining that end, as well as every desirable con-

sequence to ensue, are now defeated by the starting of this single difficulty.

Your wonted subtleties will be of little or no avail to you here, for although you suppose, that *Laughter* may be equally produced *by the use, as well as by the abuse of reason*, it is evident that you do not understand by the word *abuse*, what every body does by its synonymous expressions of *privation* and *absence*; but you employ it in the different sense of *error* and *precipitation*; nay, you seem very anxious that this interpretation should be received, and not the least doubt remain about it.

Never sure could a greater absurdity be contended for, than on one hand to assert, that *Laughter* is always produced by a more or less perfect operation of *reason*, and on the other to declare, that there are occasions where *reason* has nothing to do with *Laughter*. Now you are reduced to the dilemma of fixing your choice upon one of these two assertions, a very perplexing alternative, and from which I do not perceive you can be extricated with any advantage to your cause.

Is not this boldly asserting a fact to be and not to be at the same time, by your declaration that *reason* is both what does and does not determine us to *laugh*. Now if it can be proved that we *laugh* ofteneft in despite of her, and her strongest repugnance to any such ill-timed emotions, you

must then be forced to acknowledge, that neither jointly with, nor separately from *joy*, is the intellectual faculty to be considered as the primitive cause of *Laughter*.

I confess however on my side, that there are many occurrences in life, where sometimes a meer simple and vague sensation of *joy*, and that sometimes springing from a *peculiar motive*, seem to be, if not the causes, at least the immediate occasions of *Laughter*. But it happens almost as often that we *laugh* without having any pretext of *joy* for so doing, or even without any *motive* arising from *reason* or *reflexion*.

An illustrious example is to be seen in the celebrated and most pathetic passage of *Homer's Iliad*, when Hector *laughs* at the terror which young *Astyanax* feels, on beholding the terrible appearance of his father's helmet. It will not be an easy matter to persuade people, that this *laugh* had its source in joy, and much less in a *rational* or *reflecting joy*. The affecting situation of this great warrior, extorts tears from the most insensible:—*joy* certainly can come in for no share in the tender adieus of the rival of Achilles, and the melting sorrow of Andromache.—Moreover, the influencing power of reason, appears to be very incompatible here with the respective situations of the several actors in this very moving scene, that exhibits on every counte-

nance a perturbation of mind, with a struggle of the passions, and the noble efforts of heroic courage almost subdued by conjugal and paternal fondness, a confused mixture of weakness, generosity, love, and despair.

I chuse on this occasion to quote another striking instance of *Laughter*, wherein *joy* cannot throw in a plea for the least pretext of having caused it, and that is, when VENUS is made to *laugh* at her son Cupid's being pricked by the sting of a *bee*. This agreeable idea, and charming fiction are taken from the Greek poet *Theocritus*.

Fair Venus laugh'd; then whisper'd in his ear,
Ha! do you smart? who'll pity you my dear—
Thou, who this cruel bee's true emblem art,
Delight'ft in tender breasts to plunge thy ruthless dart.

It cannot be said that the goddess *laughed* on this occasion from any *joy* such an accident could have caused in her mind, or that she had the least shadow of a reason for *laughing*. However, this *laugh* of the parent deity, whether *rational* or not, is within the feelings of nature; and this ingenious fiction is the abridged history of most mother's behaving towards their children for slight causes of anxiety.

Now if there appear to be but a limited number of cases wherein *joy* and *reason* are absolutely neu-

tral in regard to the art of *Laughter*; there are doubtless a thousand other instances, wherein *Laughter*, so far from consulting with, or waiting for their advice, exerts itself in an outrageous and obstinate contradiction to them; of which to give a detail would take up too much time at present; but it may be easily collected from the vicious habitude we are prone to of *laughing* at several objects, which rather deserve compassion in the eye of reason; such as drunkenness, deafness, imperfections, deformities, blunders, accidents, falls, errors *, mistakes; in fine, the most part of natural infirmities, and generally speaking, all those objects at which we cannot help *laughing* in despite of the interior reproach our conscience seems to make to us on such indelicate occasions. Were I to dwell upon every one of these articles, I could not avoid educing new proofs from them, that *reason* and *joy* are almost always at variance with *Laughter*.

It is now time to proceed to your third division, or rather to your exception against *Laughter*. For you have found out the secret of insinuating, that there is a true *laugh*, and another, whose only merit

* Illum et labentem Teucres risere netantem
Et saleos rident removentem pectore fluctus.
Virgil *Æneid*.

The Trojans laugh'd as they beheld him fall,
And, swimming, vomit up the briny draught.

is to resemble it; so that the latter, according to your doctrine, is not to be looked upon as identical with the former. This is one of your new fangled subtleties, by whose sliding and evasive means you attempt an artful escape, as it were, by surprize, from the most capital objections brought against your system of *rational joy*.

True Laughter then, according to you, is a result felt intimately, and from a two-fold moral cause; and the other sort is no more than a machinal accident, a meer natural emotion. But this distinction appears quite frivolous to me, since you afterwards make no difficulty of allowing, *that these two sorts of Laughter actuate the same springs, cause the same phenomena, and produce the same sensations in the sensitive part of our frame.*

Since you, Sir, are so fond of making comparisons, permit me to follow your example.—Suppose now, that you were called upon to give an analysis of pleasure, and after assigning for a definition, so desired, that *it is a sensation agreeable to the soul*, you should be then more closely pressed upon to declare, what is your sentiment on this subject so far as it relates to the senses; I now pray you to tell me, would you give for answer, *that this article ought to be retrenched from the question, as being alien from, and bearing no affinity to it.*—Would it not on the contrary have been more natural to presume in

your favour, that from these two branches making but one, you would have thus defined pleasure: *a situation agreeable to the soul, whether she acquires it by the means of her own faculties, or that she finds herself in such a state of delight occasioned by her senses, and the organs with which she is so intimately connected.*—From a parity of reasoning *Laughter* ought to be thus defined: *a sufficient commotion of certain springs, which are agitated either by a moral cause, viz. the influence of the soul upon our organization, or by a physical cause, that is, the accidental vibration of those very springs.*

Although such an explanation might doubtless have appeared more rational, it must nevertheless have thrown you into the necessity of seeking out some one common principle for the several classes of *Laughter*; and that is a perplexity you carefully shunned involving yourself in, from a tacit conviction of its rendering your system of *joy* impracticable.

But as reason seems to demand, that the same effect should have but the same cause, and that as the seat of seeing is always in the eye, that of tasting in the palate, that of hearing in the ear, that of feeling in all the exterior parts of the epidermis or scarf-skin; in a like manner some particular, and unvarying place in the human organization must be assigned to the faculty of *Laughter*.

Several authors have made diligent enquiry to discover where the permanent scene may be fixed, where the primitive vibration is exerted which is so soon communicable to almost every part of the body.—These persons who seem to have the most judiciously reasoned upon the subject, unanimously agree in declaring, that the physically appropriated region of *Laughter* is in the *diaphragm*: thus we call the membranous separation of the breast from the lower belly, whose situation is liable to be easily changed, and in different manners.

In the first place it may be caused by a momentary derangement of the heart, to whose containing case, the *pericardium*, this membrane is annexed; while the heart continues in its natural movement it is observed to have a kind of tender regard for its envelop, which it seems in a manner fearful of offensively touching, and changes in general to remove itself as to cause no unusual impressions thereon.

But when *Laughter* takes place, this equipoise exists no longer. The agitation spreads, and the heart, with its case, feels the effects thereof. The latter is closely connected with the *diaphragm* by the means of muscles, much larger in mankind than in animals: and as no part of the human fabric is easier to be shaken than the *diaphragm*, it is soon deranged by the means of a more or less violent

convulsion, which communicates itself to the breast through the mediation of other muscles, that by progressively acting one upon the other, impress an immediate correspondence on those of the lips, cheeks, nose, forehead, and of all the face. Hence arise all the symptoms attendant upon *Laughter*, and which we have now sufficiently enumerated.

In the second place we are to observe, that the diaphragm may be agitated by two different causes, 1. *Exteriously* by the impression of *tickling* and of *wounds*; 2. *Interiorly*, by the violent effect of some dangerous beverage, or by the intestine conflict of certain humours. But in all these cases it is evident, that *Laughter* is always the same, and that its name ought not to be changed on account of these varying circumstances; and it is a meer matter of indifference as to the essence of this operation, whether it be effectuated by an exterior agent, or an internal cause.

When the agitation we are here treating of, is visibly caused by an extraordinary commotion of the heart, it then but little imports to the definition of *Laughter*, to distinguish whether this movement of the heart be excited by a physical or a moral cause, both the one and the other being equally capable of producing it.

The essential object of our present research, is to be able to ascertain which is the true region of

Laughter; and since every thing conspires to prove that the *diaphragm* is: we must adhere to this discovery, as being the true principle of the physical *Laughter*; that of the moral principle can doubtless be only accelerated thereby.

Let me then be permitted to declare, until such time as I shall have proceeded to the last part of my discourse, that *Laughter* springing from whatsoever cause, must be ascribed to the agitation of the *diaphragm*.

I have made mention that the muscular springs by whose agency this membrane is drawn nearer to the heart, are larger in mankind than in animals; let it now be added, that they are also shorter; a sufficient distinction to justify man's exclusive right to the appropriated faculty of *Laughter*, which appears now to depend merely upon organization.

This remark duly attended to will inform us, that man *laughs* because his stature is erect, and that he walks upon two feet; for it is this continual habitude of the body, that disposes of our interior parts in a different manner from those of quadrupeds: and agreeable to this notion we see, that some birds can imitate *Laughter* to a certain degree. But independently of all other reasons which debar them of enjoying this privilege compleatly, we must consider that their feathers render them inaccessible to *tickling*, and that, moreover the fixed shape

of their beak is not properly fitted to imitate that disposition of feature observable in the human countenance, when *Laughter* is occasioned.

Whenever the muscular parts administering to *Laughter*, are thrown into agitation against our will, this forced emotion, ever accompanied with pleasure and pain, forms the *Sardonic laugh*, an expression whose origin hitherto no body has properly elucidated.

Some grammarians, and *Danet* among the number refer this manner of speaking to a Latin proverb; yet Cicero, who has sometimes made use of it, never quoted it but in Greek. It is not at all improbable, that the epithet *Sardonic* was equally of foreign extraction among the Greeks, as among the Romans, and owes its origin to the entire destruction of the kingdom of Lydia, under their defeated sovereign Cræsus.

This haughty nation, by rebelling against Cyrus, their conqueror, provoked his anger to subdue them a second time; wherefore, entering sword in hand into Sardi, the capital city of Lydia, and in order to punish the inhabitants for their revolt, he forbid them the use of arms, and left them no other resource to subsist by, but their industry. The Sardians, thus humbled, dared not to think any more of a revolt, and for their subsistence embraced mercenary professions, such as those of publicans,

of dealers, of stage-players, &c.

It is not unnatural to believe, that those late masters of Asia, reduced to earn a livelihood by buffoon arts, acquitted themselves at first but in an aukward manner, and that perchance may have given rise to the proverb of the *Sardonic laugh*, in order to express this kind of *constrained Laughter*, that goes no farther than the lips.

However there is no reason absolutely prohibiting us to believe, that the word *Sardonic* is derived from the word *Sardinia*, on account of the *Laughter-causing-herb*, which is said to grow in that island, were there not sufficient motives to make us doubt of its existence. We are to observe too, that the *Laughter* excited by such an herb, owes its cause either to a delirium, or to an agitation of the nerves, and that there is hardly any country which does not produce herbs capable of provoking such effects.

Saffron, through its too great degree of heat, is endowed with this quality.—All spirituous liquors taken to a certain quantity, are known to produce this phenomenon; and the *Laughter* to which drunken people are liable, is certainly of this kind. There may probably be found in *Sardinia*, as there is in most other climates, an herb, which taken inwardly, throws people into a delirium, and those thus affected expire sometimes of convulsions in an excessive fit

of *Laughter*; but that would be no authenticating proof, that the *Sardonic Laugh* is the undoubted progeny of *Sardinia*.

What has preceeded, leads us, as it were by the hand, to enquire into the cause of another kind of *Laughter*, that is ascribed to the bite or sting of an insect called the *tarantula*.—But in this as in every other article, it is a hard matter to conquer prejudice.

Through the sagacity of a learned *Swede*, this error which had too long deceived the nations of Europe, misleads no more; and of which indeed he himself was cured, but in consequence of a philosophical visit to, and enquiry made in those parts where the mischief is said mostly to prevail. I have transcribed his narrative of this operation, as addressed to my Lord N— with whom he corresponded. This nobleman communicated to me an extract of it, which I have here abridged, with a view, that it may not exceed the limits that I prescribed to myself in this research.

“ There are very few English, who have not
 “ heard, at one time or other, mention made of the
 “ baneful effects attributed to the tarantula. What
 “ had been promulgated upon that head, has often
 “ excited my compassion for curious travellers,
 “ through the regions where this dangerous insect
 “ vents its rage. But I have been relieved from all

“ such anxiety, by a perusal of Doctor *Kockler*'s
 “ excellent dissertation on that subject, and whose
 “ veracity cannot be doubted.—He composed it
 “ for the Swedish Academy of Sciences *.

“ He says, that in travelling through *Apulia*,
 “ where he made some stay, he took particular
 “ pains to get information concerning the nature
 “ of that cruel indisposition, which is said to be
 “ caused in the human frame, by the bite, prick-
 “ ing, or sting of an extraordinary kind of spider.
 “ In the description which he gives of the malady,
 “ so far as concerns the symptoms, he agrees with
 “ all other writers, but he does not believe it to
 “ be caused by the *Tarantula*. He looks upon it
 “ rather as a vapourish affection, entirely depend-
 “ ing on the climate. He affirms that the supposed
 “ malignity of the *Tarantula* is a vulgar error :
 “ nay, he asserts, that none of those persons suffer-
 “ ing under this disorder, confess their having been
 “ attacked by the *Tarantula* ; and that the malady
 “ is attributed to that cause through the igno-
 “ rance of the true one, and that too when the
 “ delirious symptoms are in their highest degree.

“ Moreover, the *Tarantula* is never seen but in

* See the Memoirs of the Swedish Academy, and
 No. 19, of *Journal Britannique* of the year 1767, where
 mention is made of Doctor *Kockler*'s Dissertation.

“ the open fields, and very few of the inhabitants
 “ there, are ever infected with the *Tarantism*. It is
 “ in towns, and especially at *Tarentum*, where pa-
 “ tients suffering under this affliction, are to be
 “ seen. It attacks in general sedentary people,
 “ such only as use little exercise, and principally
 “ women; for among a thousand sick of this ma-
 “ lady, scarce one male has been observed.”

Thus we see reduced to nothing, all the pretended
 prodigies reported of the *Tarantula*.—Now, con-
 cerning the *laughing* effect of wounds made in the
diaphragm, it would but ill become me to rise up
 in opposition against so respectable an authority as
 that of Hippocrates, who warrants the fact, and
 declares himself to have been an ocular witness.
 This celebrated physician says, that the patient he
 speaks of, burst into a fit of *Laughter*, from the
 moment he had been wounded in that part, and a
 long time too before the delirium and convulsions
 made their appearance, which did not happen till
 on the third day.

I think I may now spare myself the trouble of
 entering into any disquisition about the article of
tickling, which you, Sir, have already treated of
 in so satisfactory a manner, as to leave nothing
 more to be wished for upon that head. I cheerfully
 acknowledge with you, that in this mixed sensation
 there is a two-fold impression of pleasure and pain,

which is indeed a strange and monstrous assemblage of contrarieties, which, however, I do not despair of reconciling in some measure, by revealing to you my manner of thinking relatively to the *moral principle of Laughter*.

I am now going to hazard myself in a perilous attempt, and to tell you the truth, with much less confidence than I have dared to make a parade of hitherto, in attacking your adopted opinion. From this moment, therefore, I renounce that air of security which censors are fond of assuming. — I am now set adrift at sea in my own bottom, exposed to every blast of the critics breath, and can apply to myself what *Hannibal* said when transplanted from Rome to Carthage.

The ground's advantage's not the same for me,
There I wag'd war, here war is wag'd with me.

I do not flatter myself with the most slender hope of receiving any illustration from the ancients on the *moral cause*, I am now about to establish. *Democritus*, the only person from whom we might have had any reason to expect such information, has carried the secret of his own failing with him to the other world. This *Laugher*, by excellence, has left us no treatise upon *Laughter*. It must then have been either a natural disposition in, or else an ingenite folly born with him, which in all like-

lihood, he indulged as most people do, and perhaps without ever once thinking of any investigation as to its cause;—wherefore we may not improperly conclude, that he had no clear idea of what he so much practised, and concerned him so nearly, and that the truth we are now in search after, appeared to him to be among the number of those which he said were *hidden in the bottom of a well*.

We should have real cause for regretting the loss of those Grecian books, wherein *ridicule* was treated, as well as of what the Sicilians, the Rhodians, and Byfantins, had composed upon the same subject, if Cæsar, who at the same time that he justly allowed them all the praise their wonderful talent at repartee and bon-mot deserves, had not declared that they had left us nothing after them, but what was contemptible both as to their *method, and their reflections on the origin of Laughter*. Not much more favourable was his judgment in this cause, of that ingenious people, called by pre-eminence the Arbiters of Delicacy, and to whom all other nations paid an emulous homage for their superior merit as to *attic salt, and refined pleasantry*.

Uninstructed, unsupported, without the encouragement of example in so benighted a voyage, and having but the uncertain pilotage of my own conjecture, I am fool-hardy enough to attempt what Cæsar's self shrunk from undertaking: and

yet that great, that universal genius, and than whom perhaps none other more eminently possessed the art of exciting *Laughter*, as well as admiration, owned that he became quite serious, whenever an enquiry into the *origin of Laughter* was started; and if we may believe Cicero, he one day absolutely refused attempting a definition of it, saying, *As for the origin and nature of Laughter, I refer the curious on that subject to Democritus.* This was a manifest declining on *Cæsar's* side, inasmuch as the Abderitan philosopher had been dead some centuries.

By the adequate idea which I think I have conceived of *Laughter*, I am induced to conclude, that all those great men who, like *Cæsar*, have declined giving a definition thereof, were influenced to make such a refusal from quite another motive, than either their uncertainty or ignorance of its cause. And what makes me the readier give into the opinion, even now when I think I have discovered the *true origin of Laughter*, is, that I feel an unwillingness in myself to publish my sentiment upon that head.

Nothing then can be more probable than that a similar motive silenced those celebrated genii, who for an illustration of the point in question, must have been much better qualified than I can pretend to be. I cannot set the prudent reasons of their silence on this occasion in a juster point of view, than by exposing my own indiscretion

in communicating my newly adopted opinion. Know then, that the truth which they concealed from us, is a kind of affront to the human-race—in imitation of them, therefore, I myself would fain retract my promise, but that I am now too far advanced to recede; and to my own regret, as well as to your astonishment, I must declare, that *the origin of Laughter is folly.*

Gentlemen, you will be less shocked at this alarming paradox when I shall have convinced you, that it is not the result of my particular way of reasoning, but of the many capricious circumstances, which all reflecting persons must have observed in *Laughter.*

What judgment are we to form of its ever attendant symptoms, features deranged into a kind of grimace, sounds inarticulate, and a seeming conflict between pleasure and pain. What can be meant by such an universal convulsion of the machine, excited too by objects for the most part contemptible? How can we account for an irrational and capricious fit of *Laughter* so powerfully subduing the soul, as to deprive her of every faculty, and that too on the most frivolous occasion? How shall we explain that kind of vertigo or frenzy of the mind, which by a sort of magic, so raises our thoughts when immersed in melancholy to the sportive raptures of fancied joys, and that sometimes acts in

so contradictory a manner to itself, as to compel grief and despair to assume a pleased countenance, and display the exterior signals of gaiety.

What judgement, I say, can we form of an emotion, that is sometimes so coy, as to refuse listening to our most ardent wishes; while, partially indulgent to others, we think that we behold in them the residence of happiness: and yet at other times, it will rush so unexpectedly upon us even in the shackles of anguish, the arms of philosophy, the asylum of solitude, and the engloomed abyss of profoundest meditation.

What can be positively determined in regard to such a Proteus, that has nothing permanent as to its very being, form, or times of appearing; nay, is so little consistent with itself, as, that resentment, indignation, revenge, are not less qualified to rouse it occasionally into existence, than joy, pleasure, and all the agreeable sensations? Now I ask what originating cause can be assigned for such a mixture, or rather struggle and confusion of opposite passions observable in *Laughter*? With your leave, gentlemen, I repeat, for answer, my opinion, that *folly*,—*folly* is the principle we are to adopt for the solving of such multiplied contradictions.

I do no longer hesitate to declare, that *folly* is the cause of *Laughter*, as wine is that of drunkenness; a glass or two of which liquor, excites in the be-

ginning, but a slight fermentation in the spirits, which may be considered as nothing more than the first symptom of a delirium; so it is with *Laughter*: for if we cannot declare it to be absolute folly, we cannot at least deny its being a kind of prelude to it.—A due examination of, and minute enquiry into this principle will not be amiss.

Although I have advanced that *Laughter* is closely allied to extravagance, yet grant that it is sometimes observed to deviate more or less from that connection; and in a proportional degree to its moderation, will it less incur the reproach of that origin which we have assigned to it? I allow too, that it is very fertile in ingenious disguises to impose on the unwary; for sometimes this seeming deserter from folly, artfully shews itself under the banner of reason: but be pleased to mark, that it is always unknown to her, nor does it ever presume to appear as one of reason's retinue, but in her absence.

Man seldom *laughs* when alone, being then more self-collected, and more intent upon consulting the internal oracle of his reason; but if any unforeseen object, or odd idea present itself, he feels an immediate distraction from what he was thinking on. The stretched nerves of attention suddenly slacken; *reason* steps aside, and *Laughter* breaks forth. This visible commotion of the organs, is but the exteri-

our manifesting of the disorder that has happened within, as well as of the secret defect of the intellectual faculty,

Let the rational power be any other way circumstanced, the history of *Laughter* will always prove invariable in regard to it; because reason can never be made to *laugh* but through surprize: and nothing in the world can be more contrary to *Laughter* than discernment and reflection.

Hence the motive appears why the Indians, who think and reflect a great deal, make a kind of vow to never *laugh*; but if such a misfortune happen to them sometimes, they are very sorry for it, look quite confounded on the occasion, and as if they had been guilty of an act of the *greatest folly*. Those proud and austere philosophers, sin through the too high opinion they have of the dignity of man, and from their not having observed, that the influencing power of judgment is not less intermittent than respiration.

It may be safely asserted, that although the presiding faculty is never entirely absent, it frequently flumbers; and is observed in a not unlike manner to that, with which its revolutionary ring obscures the planet *Saturn*; it being rendered liable to numberless eclipses by the neighbourhood of this annular terrestrial mass. From an obvious parity are we not founded to think, that *Laughter* is an eclipse of the

judgment: and needs there now any other proof than the observation already made, that this emotion has its origin in *folly*? Do not people frequently *laugh* without cause, at an improper time, in despite of one's self, and even at certain objects and circumstances, which upon reflection we are sorry for? To what other cause can we attribute this unaccountable, capricious impulse, that tyrannizeth us to act against every principle of reason so far, that they seldom or never make their appearance together, but are in continual hostility with each other.

But some may object to me, *You seem to admit that reason is at times reconciled to the noisy commotion of Laughter, and on some occasions to be entirely acquiescing.*—I own that there are circumstances in which *Laughter* appears to be decent and not misplaced, but proper and even judicious. Yet who can answer that the person who exerts it, is not flatteringly partial to his own judgment on this occasion, and that the intellectual faculty may that very moment be in a state of surprize and illusion. For pray let me ask, how often has it happened to us to dream, that we were waking while asleep? Have not the most consummate fools certain moments in which they imagine they have recovered their reason? And may it not so happen in a like manner to *Laughter*, that being once put into motion by *folly*, self-love, by a return of oblig-

ing complaisance, may compliment it with the epithet of *rational*; and in such a case *laughers* are not unlike some infatuated valetudinarians, who grow vainly secure in proportion as their malady becomes more dangerous.

I am now liable myself to the very objection which I made against the system of *rational* or *reflecting joy*; to wit, that we sometimes *laugh* in despite of the efforts which reason makes at the very time in order to suppress *Laughter*. But from the very moment that *reason* appears unable to enforce such an obedience, I conclude *folly* to be the prevailing cause of *Laughter*, and that the accompanying convulsion of the organs, is the certain proof of her victory.

The vain and fruitless attempts which a drunken man makes to recal his judgment, cannot vouch for his not being intoxicated: and the struggles which enamoured hearts endeavour to make against the pleasing passion of love, are too generally the proof of their being irresistibly enthralled. The more reason labours to oppose and stifle *Laughter*, the more its breaking forth proclaims it to be an attendant on folly. These reflections are, methinks, sufficient to prove, that *Laughter*, *Folly*, and *Deliriousness*, are very nearly synonymous expressions.

That such an opinion as this may be deemed strange and out of the way, is owing to its novelty,

as well as to its appearing for the first time in the systematic form, under which I now present it; and yet the chief, the leading principle of my doctrine, is felt and known even by the common people, though in an obscure way; yet the best adapted to their intellects. Are these not frequent expressions amongst the vulgar, *I have laughed like a fool, &c. The more fools are assembled, the more Laughter there will be, &c.* besides several other of the same proverbial tendency?—Sometimes in vulgar mouths these two words, *Laughter* and *Folly*, are so closely united, or rather confounded together, as to be rendered by a single expression, which can be exemplified in this trivial phrase—*I was seized with a fool's-laugh.*

The thoughts of Count Oxenstiern, that have no degree of affinity with the ideas of the common people in general, chime in with them, however, concerning this particular article; for according to his wonted manner of expressing himself, somewhere he says, *that Laughter is the trumpet of folly;* and he quotes on the occasion a Latin verse, which signifies,

Immoderate Laughter indicates a fool.

He concludes thus:

Every man of sense, and the sages more especially,

feel always an admonishing scruple when they LAUGH; because he that delights in LAUGHING much, becomes in the end ridiculous *.

I am well aware that the zealous advocates for *Democritus*, will not relish their being forced to believe, as the *Abderitans* had done before them, that their favourite philosopher was a fool. But whether his almost continual *Laughter*, were an habitual mask or studied grimace, or whether this celebrated personage (be it said with all due regard for his sect) were made like other men, or proved rather a whimsical compound of wisdom and folly; it is not a whit the less certain, that *Laughter* in general has its source in *human folly*.

An Italian astrologer, the *ABBE DAMASCENE*, published in the year 1662, a treatise of about six sheets, printed at Orleans, wherein he distinguished the different temperaments of mankind, by their different manner of *laughing*. The—*hi, hi, hi*, according to this droll essay, notifies melancholical people; the *he, he, he*, plegmatic persons; the *ho, ho, ho*, those of a sanguine disposition.

This author makes no mention of the *Laughter of fools*; it is therefore to be supposed, that he extended it to every department of *laughing*, or

* That nothing can be more insipid than an insipid laugh,—is a remark which had been made by *Catullus*, long before *Count Oxenstiern*.

that he had never made an analytical enquiry into his own practice of that faculty.

Virgil too, for I chuse to militate under the sanction of the most undeniable authorities, appeareth to confess a great analogy between *Laughter* and *Extravagance*, or *Folly*; for he constitutes it as a principal attendant on the orgia, which, as all classical people know, were a kind of Bacchanalian phrenzy, during which the soul is supposed to be entirely deprived of reason, as may be seen by passages quoted from the second book of the *Georgics* describing such original enthusiasts.

Verfes they make, that are of cadence void,
Their wide stretch'd mouths by *Laughter* are employ'd

A Thyrsus arms their hands, a mask each face
Conceals, and grinning adds to their disgrace.

Horace too, on the other hand demonstrates to us, by a very fertile image, that *Laughter* in man is the child of error; and that a sudden return upon ourselves is sufficient to make it cease. Every learned reader knows the celebrated stroke of the satyrist so often translated already by others, and of which I now chuse to give a new translation:

Tantalus, 'midst the water he pursues
 In vain, complains aloud of raging thirst:
 Why thoughtless reader laugh at his affliction?
 Change but the name, the fable's told of thee.

This poet in another place inveighs against *Laughter* by asserting, that the motives which excite it in man, are for the most part frivolous and irrational.—*If the barber, says he in one of his epistles, has cut my hair shorter on one side than the other, you immediately fall a laughing. If I have on me a shirt worn yesterday, or even a tunic of the same day, that sets you a tittering. If my togas is trussed up on the left side, and draggles on the right, then your laughing roar knows no end. How much more ample matter might you have, were you to enter into an interiour examination of, and sound my most secret thoughts.*

It is observable in the poems of *Anacreon*, that he frequently joins *Folly* to *Laughter*: the folly which he and I mean, is a sprightly unthinkingness, a frolicksome levity of mind, which the Greeks designed by a name alluding to the amusement of infancy. In *Terence* we have adopted a kindred expression, although in a more severe sense, viz. *to turn child again*, in order to intimate the progressive or entire demolition of the intellectual faculty: which is not, exactly speaking, the true purport and meaning of the word employed by *Ana-*

ερεον *, which with him extends no farther than signifying *to play the fool, to be gaily wanton*; and sometimes too, but then in a favourable sense, it means *extravagance and deliriousness*.

Regret, pain, care, anxiety, begone;
 Fly hence: and never dare approach me more.—
 Come pleasing folly, *Laughter*, and good wine;
 Death I defy, while I'm devoutly yours.

But should more proofs be wanted to convince those who may yet hesitate about *Laughter's* being not only the effect of *reason disturbed*, but also of *folly*, nay, of undeniable *phrenzy*, and even *madness*, the two following anecdotes cannot fail of making them profelytes.

Zeuxis, the celebrated painter, having taken it into his head to paint a woman in a ridiculous attitude, had no sooner finished his grotesque conception in colours, than he expired of an outrageous *laughing* fit, into which he had been hurried by the ludicrous child of his own provoking imagination. Another anecdote, not less astonishing, and not less ridiculous, is related of one Philemon, who died of violent *Laughter*, raised by an odd and fortuitous accident. Four authors of authenticity

* Παλζειν, to be, or act the child; whence is derived the Italian word *pazzia*—*folly*.

concur in averring this very extraordinary fact and its circumstances. The substance of their several accounts is, that *Philemon*, seeing an ass gravely advance into a saloon where he was, and then greedily hasten up to devour a basket full of figs, called the servants to come and drive away so rude and uninvited a guest. The servants came, but it was too late; the mischief had been already done. As they were driving the long-eared animal away, the basket being quite despoiled of its contents, *Philemon*, pointing to the wine, said, *O you may as well now present him with something to drink.*

This pretended attempt to, or rather abortion of a bon-mot, proved fatal to its author, who was so over-powered by the facetiousness of it, that not being able to put a stop to the torrent of his *Laughter*, he expired suddenly for want of breath. If this narrative be true, the affectedly witty, but very foolish *Philemon*, was duly qualified to figure among sequestered lunatics.

I by no means insinuate, that *Laughers* ought to be sent to mad-houses; or that a person is to be convicted of *folly* for having *laughed*;—not at all: and therefore it is necessary to lay our system under some restrictions. I am willing by way of accommodation to grant, that *Laughter* is

not always absolute folly, as in the instances of *Pbtlemon* and *Zeuxis*; but that in general it is a slight symptom of reason's being disordered; without, however, implying that any such transitory disturbance of the soul, will be attended with influential consequences on the rest of our conduct. For the *Laughter-struggle* being over, all things return to their proper order; and *reason* resumes her rights without seeming to have lost them.

This surely is the best method of conciliating matters; and I had taken care to secure to myself such a retreat, in order that we might conclude on this subject in a friendly, not an acrimonious manner. You must naturally think, gentlemen, that during this debate, it was never my intent to speak in contradiction to the general sense of mankind; no, I leave every body free to think and argue as they shall please upon this topic, without insisting upon their paying any deference to my opinion; being very indifferent on that head.

I am conscious to myself, that I might have offered more than one pretext for refusing to discuss a subject, in treating of which so many great men have erred. But it struck me, that a definition of *Laughter*, must contribute at least to encrease the number of *laughable* objects; and therefore to win the *laughers* over to my side, I from this moment

declare myself to be one of their party.—This declaration being made, my present advice is, that we all summon up our most serious attention, to hear the president's final judgment on this affair; and that on the occasion of his speaking, we strictly observe *Boileau's* important maxim with a kind of religious awe,

On this grave subject, let none dare—TO LAUGH!

M O N T E S Q U I E U.

Before I speak my sentiments in opposition to those of the two very ingenious gentlemen, who have preceded me in this enquiry, I think it not amiss to declare my wonder at a spirit of doubting, that seems to prevail so generally even in the most common questions, as well as an uncertainty of opinion, that seems to imply an imperfect state of all human knowledge. For while these two able advocates were pleading their cause, in a masterly and elegant manner, I found myself twice overtaken by surprize, as it were, and carried off as a renegado from my own judgment; to which I am now soberly returned, but not without some difficulty. However, my reason untrammelled as yet, and no way influenced by the sway of prejudice, I

mean, next to myself, to preserve you, gentlemen, free from the lure of seduction, and the yoke of error.

My first friendly admonition to you is, to beware of believing that *Laughter* hath its source in *rational joy*, or in *folly*; not but that it may be proved, at times, susceptible of the latter, as well as of the former, to a certain degree;—but neither of these two can be extended as a ruling principle for all sorts, modes, and occasions of *Laughter*. Although it may be sometimes made to appear, that this emotion is very near a-kin to those pretended causes; yet will it be proved to have a still closer relationship to causes of a quite opposite nature; in proportion as you advance in this research, therefore, your doubts will be multiplied.

It can be demonstrated, that there is not an affection of the soul, which, by being peculiarly circumstanced, may not become an occasional motive to *Laughter*. Hence at one time you will find yourself obliged to assign *surprize* for its cause, at another *admiration*, nay sometimes even *indignation* and *wrath*. But besides the impracticability of assigning any of these as the fixed and unvarying principle of *Laughter*, nature moreover must seem to act in absolute contradiction to herself, were she to make effects so contrary, to be derived from the same origin. It is necessary then to find

out some general cause that can embrace and conciliate the jarring discordance of these seeming difficulties, by referring them all to one principle.— It now occurs to you, no doubt, that if such can be hit on, it must be the child of some new and extraordinary doctrine; because no such resolving principle can be educed from any of the systems that have just passed in review.

How much soever any established prejudice may incline you to think, that the opinion which I am going to propose, must be of a paradoxical complexion, I have not on my side the least doubt of your being greatly surprized, when the true origin of *Laughter* in my sense, shall be declared.—Learn, gentlemen, that this *frivolous*, in appearances, this sportive emotion is derived from *a passion naturally serious*; that in a word, its extraordinary cause and hitherto mysterious principle, is nothing else but—*pride*.

I mean, first, but simply to propose my opinion, unattended by the many proofs on which I hope to establish it. Nor will it any way ruffle my temper, should it be treated as a chimerical reverie, until its truth shall be uncontrovertibly demonstrated; and that I purpose to do by supporting my doctrine on the very same arguments, which I chuse to employ in overturning the several systems heretofore advanced upon this subject.

My first attack is against the opinion that asserts

folly to be the principle of *Laughter*; which I shall prove to be so inadmissible as to induce even its own defender to thank me for having defeated it: for, in truth, seriously to attempt the defending such a thesis, is at best but ingeniously and designedly to go a-stray.

I dare take upon me to say, that the learned and eloquent academist, whose discourse tending to that purpose we have all heard, intended to give us rather a specimen of his boldly soaring fancy and fertile invention, than to lay down a solid system, not repugnant to the ideas which nature obviously suggests. At the same time I must do him the justice to declare, that all he has said concerning the *physiological region of Laughter*, is warranted by reason and experience. I am of his opinion too, that this emotion can never be caused without the concurring vibration of the *diaphragm*; and that this operation is performed in the very manner which he has most accurately delineated. But the *ingenious author of the Plurality of Worlds*, must, on his side, not take it amiss, if we doubt of his being serious in what he has asserted concerning the *moral principle of Laughter*. For I shall never be induced by any means, however well imagined, to think myself a *fool* when I *laugh*, though but during a single moment; and for the reasons that follow.

Fools do not always *laugh*, and their *ceasing* from

Laughter does not make them become reasonable men. *Folly* then cannot be called the constant cause of *Laughter*.—There are besides several sorts of *fools* who never *laugh*; but on the contrary, are the continual prey of an incumbent melancholy, or unremitting rage. But even in regard to those unhappy creatures, whose insanity of mind renders them prone to *Laughter*, it requires no great effort of human discernment to pronounce, that this emotion in them, is not precisely of the same nature with that of sensible people; that it is not excited by the same objects, nor does it know the same degrees or boundaries. In a word, the *Laughter* of a rational person wears always a stamp of judgment, which entirely discriminates it from that of ideots.

The proposition which we now assail would be much more defensible, if its author had contented himself in declaring, that *Laughter* has its source in a certain species of folly which is peculiar to it. But thence a necessity would arise of specifying this sort of folly, of giving it a name, of making an analysis thereof, and of distinguishing it from every kind of mental insanity. But all these articles have been omitted by the author of this system, thro' which neglect he has let slip the only possible means, he could have had, of approaching to the true principle of *Laughter*, and that, as already observed, is *pride*.

We ought not to refuse paying a due homage to the testimony of the ancients in behalf of *Democritus*, the rationality of whose views, the sublimity of whose morals, and the extent of whose knowledge, were sufficient without the collateral aid of such vouchers, to make us repudiate the ridiculous notion of his having been a fool; unless we have a mind to pass ourselves for such.

On the other hand it would be equally absurd to maintain, that *joy* was the source of this philosopher's *laughing*; a man continually absorbed in contemplation, and who was endowed with a genius so vast, so elevated, and so penetrating, as to embrace all the sciences: and who, in his unabating re-search after knowledge, travelled to the extremities of the earth. Can such a personage, I say, be reasonably suspected of so trifling a disposition, of such dissipated gaiety and giddy rejoicing, as that to which his *Laughter* was attributed? No, certainly; for if we run over the life of Democritus, we shall not find any vacancy throughout the whole of it, for joy to figure in, and fill up the place.

I should be glad to receive information of the place and time in which he could have indulged himself in this habitual joy.—Was it when he was under the tuition of the magi entrusted with the care of his youth, and who trained him up from his infancy to delight in a studious meditation on the

sublimeſt ſubjects *? Was it during the time of his laborious and almoſt incredible voyages undertaken by him for the ſake of inſtruction; or, when he went among the Scythians, the moſt aſtere of mortals; or viſited the Brachmans, thoſe celebrated Indian philoſophers, from among whom every kind of joy is proſcribed as criminal, and whoſe principal virtue conſiſts in gravity? Was it during his reſidence in *Abdera*, where, in order to plunge himſelf, as it were, more deeply in the abyſs of his abſtracted reflexions, he ſecreted himſelf from all commerce with the living; nay, from the light of day, and the better ſtill to avoid any cauſe of diſtraction, put out his eyes, if we may credit the hiſtorians who have related this fact.

Let us then candidly confeſs, although to the ſhame of our boaſted wiſdom, that the perpetual *Laughter* of *Democritus*, derived its ſource from his exceſſive *pride*; and the continual tears of *Heraclius*, flowed moſt certainly from the ſame cauſe. Theſe two philoſophers deſpised mankind. The one could deſcry in human life, nothing elſe but a ſhifting ſcene of affliction; and the other only a diverſified farcical exhibition. Each of them derived from his own

* Xerxes who had lodged at the houſe of *Democritus*'s father, in his way through the Thracian territories, complimented him with ſome magi of his retinue, to ſuperintend the education of his ſon.

vanity this sentiment of contempt, which is indeed the common principle of *Laughter and of Pity*.

The arguments which have been employed to defeat the system of admiration, appear to me insufficient, because the skill of an entertaining person to represent ridiculous actions, and to say smart things opportunely, or to give an imitation of gestures that excite *Laughter*, is not in itself less admirable, though not so useful as that of an artist, who in colours executes a finished picture, or of an orator who composes a masterly discourse, or of an architect who plans and directs the building of a stately and unexceptionable edifice. And hence it is, that the art of knowing how to make others *laugh*, challenges admiration from a reflecting mind; while those who are possessed of this knack, take great care to conceal the necessary cleverness, as well as the excellence of this operation under a natural air, with an easy, free, unembarrassed countenance, to avoid thereby the danger of exciting that sentiment of admiration which is here impleaded, and would infallibly prove detrimental to the act of *Laughter*. Now consequently to what has preceded, we may safely assert, that in order to excite this sensation, there must be united in the pleasing operator a happy choice, a lucky application, and a perfection in the manner, that are worthy of being admired; yet the chief purpose, that of *laughing*,

would be foiled, were admiration to interfere.

We can now explain why persons that are the first to *laugh* at what they relate, are generally disappointed; and it so happens, because by that means, they betray a great stock of pride, and commandingly seem to bid us remark the importance of their narrative, as well as to draw upon our *admiration*. Such a glaring indication of self-love in others proving offensive to our own, the latter takes a pleasure in baulking the former of its vain expectation.

But on a quite contrary plan proceed all phlegmatic persons; for they, by relating a facetious adventure with a grave countenance, never fail to excite *Laughter*. The undisturbed tranquillity of their features, and the collected calmness of their manner, give a new zest to the joke. Now the best reason we can assign for this effect, is that their seemingly artless, as well as unimposing air, leaves an ample scope for the *self-love* of others to enjoy itself; which is not at all alarmed, as in the other instance, by the presumptuous air of wanting to take the lead, and of anticipating the hearers pleasure.

What conclusion are we now to draw from all these observations? Why this, that the art of exciting *Laughter* is never more *admirable* than when it pos-

esses the *knack* of not awakening any *sense* of *admiration*, which in plainer terms implies, that the success in making people *laugh* is always in proportion to the homage, regard, and flattery that are judiciously paid to their *self-love*. For even as the external mover of this convulsion, is particularized to the *tickling* of certain muscles, so we may justly assert, that the moral principle of *Laughter* resides in the particular manner of *tickling* our *self-love*.

Be pleased however to observe, that by this expression I do not mean here the *love of ourselves*; that personal interest which all creatures feel for their own preservation; by no means. I mean only, that presumptuous and over-weening sentiment in our own behalf from a proud comparison made to the disadvantage of others, and in fine what every body understands by these two words, *vanity* and *pride*.

The system that adopts *surprize* or *astonishment* for the cause of *Laughter*, is, of all the false opinions which have been advanced upon that topic, the least improbable; but, notwithstanding, it falls to the ground by the cogency of an irresistible argument, viz. this cause does not always create *Laughter*. However, if we cannot acknowledge *surprize* to be the parent of this symptom, we need make no difficulty of allowing it to be the companion, in as

much as no two emotions of the human structure appear so frequently together. Now this way of reasoning may be illustrated by one of the most extraordinary and striking passages in HOMER'S ILLIAD. You are to know, previously to a perusal of it, that a very remarkable dispute having lately happened between *Jupiter* the sovereign of Olympus, and *Juno* his imperial spouse, the wrathful and splenetic goddess, after a severe reprimand from her lord and master, was reduced to a state of silence. For *know*, said the provoked son of Saturn, *that those, upon whom I lay these terrible hands of mine, no power can rescue, or yield succour to.*—*Juno*, remaining mute, was tacitly convinced, that it was no time for her replying after so tremendous a declaration.

The thund'rer spoke, nor durst the queen reply;
 A rev'rend horror silenc'd all the sky.
 The feast disturb'd, with sorrow *Vulcan* saw
 His mother menac'd, and the gods in awe;
 Peace at his heart, and pleasure his design,
 Thus interpos'd the architect divine.

The wretched quarrels of the mortal state,
 Are far unworthy, gods, of your debate;
 Let men their days in senseless strife employ,
 We, in eternal peace, and constant joy.

Thou, goddess mother, with our fire comply,
 Nor break the sacred union of the sky:
 Lest, rous'd to rage, he shake the blest abodes,
 Launch the red light'ning and dethrone the gods.
 If you submit, the thund'rer stands pleas'd,
 The gracious Pow'r is willing to be pleas'd.

Thus Vulcan spoke; and rising with a bound,
 The double bowl with sparkling nectar crown'd—
 Which held to JUNO, in a chearful way,
 Goddess, (he cried) be patient and obey.
 Dear as you are, if Jove his arm extend,
 I can but grieve, unable to defend.
 What god so daring in your aid to move,
 Or lift his hand against the force of Jove?
 Once in your cause, I felt his matchless might,
 Hurl'd headlong downward from th' ethereal height,
 Toft all the day in rapid circles round;
 Nor till the sun descended touch'd the ground:
 Breathless I fell, in giddy motion lost;
 The Scythians rais'd me on the *Lemnian* coast.

He said, and to her hand the goblet heav'd,
 Which, with a smile, the white arm'd queen receiv'd.
 Then to the rest he fill'd; and, in his turn,
 Each to his lips apply'd the nectar'd urn.
 Vulcan with aukward grace his office plies,
 And unextinguish'd *Laughter* shakes the skies.

POPE.

Be pleased to observe, that this passage quoted from Homer's Iliad, fully answers to the *conditions required by Aristotle*; according to whose definition, *ridicule is a deformity without pain*: but even this and all the other definitions are faulty, because they cannot embrace all the different sorts of *Laughter*.

Some particular persons have contended for *Laughter's* owing its birth to the *soul's undetermined state between two different impressions*; and their method of supporting such an opinion is not altogether unworthy of our notice. They admit, that when *joy is unmixed*, and raised even to an excessive degree, no *Laughter* ensues; no more than there arises from grief, when it is not blended with any other sensation. But if it so happen, say they, that the soul is in suspense between pleasure and pain, occasioned by any object of ambiguous and doubtful nature; then, during the conflict which the soul feels from the concurrence of these two impressions, she makes an effort to espouse one side or the other, and the emotion thereby excited in the organs produces *Laughter*.

What fine spun theory is here thrown away, and to no purpose! for supposing that it were possible to apply this principle to a few instances, there are a thousand others, which this doctrine can by no means be made to square with, and, at least, two thousand more that totally subvert it.

We are now gradually come to the system of *joy*, which I have purposely kept back for the last discussion, as what deserves to be the most essentially defeated, and principally on account of the natural inclination in most people, to look upon this agreeable affection of the soul, as the principle of *Laughter*. The distinction of *joy simple* or *unmixed*, and of *joy rational* or *reflecting*, seems to me quite idle on this occasion; inasmuch too, as I intend not to treat of the *joy* springing from insane minds.— I do not deny but that reason always exerts a more or less influential power on all the emotions happening in a rational being, and consequently on *Laughter*, that is a personal faculty, and appropriated to the human species.

If I were to be asked, why of all animals, mankind are the only ones privileged to *laugh*? My immediate answer would be this, that it is specifically allotted to humanity, as being endowed with an organization calculated for the exertion of that faculty, as well as with the *moral principle* whence *Laughter* derives its source. By this I mean, that man alone is constituted in this favourite manner, and that moreover, he is the only being capable of *the complaisant returns of reflecting self-love*; of that partial presumptuous and flattering retrospect to self, that so often *tickles* him even into a convulsion: which system will be the more solidly established, when I

shall have totally overthrown the one I now attack.

Laughter most certainly is not the effect of *joy*, but a phænomenon of a quite different nature, being at times more slow, or more transitory. It often takes the start of, or does not wait for it, and, in that, displays itself indifferently, either after or before, or at the same instant therewith. It must be owned however, that there exists a resemblance between them in several respects, but they are separated in the main by very distinct limits, which sometimes appear very contiguous without ever confounding themselves with each other. *Laughter* is so far independent of any *joyous* impression, that it breaks forth very often from the midst of affliction, and the most gloomy state of the mind, (as lightning flashes from a dark cloud) but without relieving the soul from the deep anguish which she suffers.

If *Laughter* were really the true indicating symptom of gaiety, should we ever find ourselves replunged into a melancholy mood after a loud discharge of *Laughter*? If it were also a circumstance essential to joy, numberless effects must ensue, and all contrary to those which we daily experience. In the tragedies of *Merope*, *Athalia*, and *Iphigenia*, *joy* is raised to its highest pitch, yet nobody is tempted to *laugh*. All our remarks hitherto concur to prove, that strictly speaking there is nothing common between them; because *joy* is sometimes

sublime and grave, while *Laughter* proves bitter and sorrowful. The reading some of our celebrated dramatic pieces, would be sufficient, methinks, to raise doubts in the minds of those who incline to think that *joy* is the source of *Laughter*. Can there be a subject imagined of a less gay tendency, or rather of a more sorrowful aspect, than the *Legataire Universelle* *, wherein are introduced the patient, a sick uncle, just at the point of death, and two notaries to make his will. I ask now, if the circumstances of his dingy offensive night-cap, of an apoplectic fit, and a lethargy ensuing, are proper objects for exciting gaiety? Doubtless they are not: yet from this very funereal apparatus for the regions of death, and even from the tomb of *Geront*, the author employs the art of arousing *Laughter*. It is therefore evident, that the emotion has not its source in *joy*.

There is a comedy acted on the English theatre, called *the Funeral*, or *Grief a-la-mode*; the scene in this play that excites the most *Laughter*, is that employed about fears, a funeral, death, a burial, &c. where the undertaker passes in review his hireling weepers, and makes them practice before him their grimaces and contortions, praising some,

* A French petite piece, from which *Wit's last Stake* is taken,

blaming others, and teaching all to perform their parts better. This I think is a masterly expedient, the artifice of which, as to the conduct of the whole, cannot be easily developed and seems to belong in a special manner to English genius. This example, as well as the foregoing, puts it beyond all manner of dispute, that *joy* is not the source of *Laughter*.

In several respects, however, the system of *joy* may be conciliated with that of *pride*, as likewise, on certain occasions, may be admitted that of *folly*; *pride* being a weakness that borders very nearly on a *mis-use of reason*, or *folly*, by means of those *joy-giving emotions* and a *secret satisfaction* that are felt by the soul.

To prevent any mistake arising about this matter, you are to observe, gentlemen, that *Laughter* is not excited by every sort of *pride*, but only by that sort which *applauds* itself. For in any circumstance where our *self-love* is offended, depend upon it no *Laughter* will be caused. Wherefore, *vanity* is the true origin of *Laughter*. But the intermediation of pleasure is so congenially annexed to it, that there are but very few occasions where *pride* can dispense with its assistance in the operation we are treating of.

For example-sake, I will communicate to you one particular instance, wherein *Laughter* is pro-

duced by *pride* without the intermediation of *joy*, that is, when folks *laugh* through meer *vanity*, and in order to make other people believe them happy. The *Laugh of dignity* *, and the *Laugh of civility*, are of this kind too, yet we cannot assert, that in these three particular occurrences, *self-love* is blended with any sensation of *joy*.

Can there now be adduced a more evincing proof, that this presumptuous sensation is the source of *Laughter*; since by decomposing *pride*, and making it pass as it were through the analytical dissection of a *prism*, we may discern, that this passion in its most simple state, when untainted by any impression foreign to it, bears the germinating seeds and true characteristics of *Laughter*? For in like manner as their varied tints are more frequently observable in nature, than the primitive colours are; so this species of *Laughter* derived from a simple principle, is met with most seldom of all: whence we may conclude in general, that *Laughter* owes its origin to that species of reason mis-used, and known by the name of *pride*, blended commonly with an agreeable sensation, and a certain degree of *joy*.

* In the *laugh of dignity*, prevails a foolish *self-love*, thinking it flatters that of other people. In the *laugh of civility*, prevails the desire, pretension and pride, of conforming one's self to the *bon ton*, the mode, and usages of the polite world.

We are to remember, that *self-love* is restrainable within us, by the awful presence of our judgment, which keeps it within bounds, by means of that serious attention, which every sensible man ought to have in constant practice, in order to account with himself for the emotions of his soul. Then our pride finds itself in a state of restriction and confinement. It suffers by being thus obliged to be constantly watchful over its feelings, dares not as yet to emancipate itself, and breathe freely as it were: but *joy* rushing in suddenly, destroys the equilibrium of reason, and breaks down all the banks that opposed themselves to the over-flowing of self-love. The mind yields itself willingly to the quick impulse, whose insensible sway hurries it on to a petulant extravagance of mind, that co-instantaneously makes *Laughter* fall forth.

But how pray, some people may object, can this system of Laughter produced by pride, and blended commonly with a sentiment of joy, be given for a new one? Are we to imagine, that it has never been hit upon or surmized by any of the ancients? If this be the only scruple that puzzles them, they shall be soon released from the uneasiness which it gives them, by a quotation from Homer's Odyssy, of a passage so very remarkable, and finished with so much art, as to have induced Virgil to judge it

an object not only deserving of his imitation, but even worthy of an almost verbal translation.

The fine passage here alluded to, is where *Latona* yields herself up to the secret transports of a presumptuous and over-weening joy, while she, with a maternal fondness, indulges herself in contemplating the transcendant beauty of her daughter *Diana* walking among the nymphs, and taller than the rest by the head. 'Tis poetry alone can bring forth imagery so delighting. Our readers who understand not the Greek original, must content themselves with the following translation by Mr. Pope.

As when o'er Erymanth *Diana* roves,
 Or wide Taygetus' resounding groves;
 A sylvan train, the huntress queen surrounds,
 Her rattling quiver from her shoulder sounds:
 Fierce in the sport along the mountain brow,
 They bay the boar, or chase the bounding roe;
 High o'er the lawn with more majestic pace,
 Above the nymphs, she treads with stately grace;
 Distinguish'd excellence the goddess proves,
 Exults *Latona*, as the virgin moves.

POPE.

What painter, although he were blessed with the genius of an Apelles, would be so vain as to hope he

could give a true portraiture of *Latona's* extatic situation, without the infused and additional heightening of a *smile*? It must now appear obviously to all understandings, that *Laughter* is here tacitly designed, triumphing as it were in the recess of *Latona's* heart: and that if the greatest of poets has affected not to specify it by name, it was designedly, because its result is personified in a manner by all those images with which they have adorned, animated, and rendered it a speaking picture. The perfection of their art consisted in making us behold *Laughter* diffused over, and wandering on the lips and features of *Latona's* countenance, without naming it. This sentimental description, therefore, hath always been, and is still revered by all true critics, as an immitable instance of the utmost sublime in poetry.

Racine, the just admiration of France, for the pathetic tenderness of his tragic scenes, hath attempted to rival it by that sentiment which he gives to haughty Agamemnon, when the perspective of approaching glory flattered his towering pride, and smilingly soothed his imperious hopes. It is expressed by two beautiful lines in the tragedy of *Iphigenia*;

*Ce nom de roi des rois, et de chef de la Grece,
Chatouilloit de mon cœur l'orgueilleuse foiblesse.*

Now, ye celebrated artists, by whom I have the honour of being heard, and whose works are worthy of being put in competition with those of a *Rubens* or a *Raphael*, create with colours upon canvass, exhibit to us *Agamemnon* on the shore of *Aulis*, intoxicated with such vain-glorious ideas.— But while ye are painting, will not a smile imperceptibly steal from your pencils, and insinuate itself over all the features of the Grecian warrior?

Ye must now be apprized, gentlemen, that my system gradually disentangles itself from the charge and intricacy of paradox, nay, makes large strides to attain, and establish itself in probability. It is then doubtless a very essential point for me to have been able to produce, as guarantees for my newly started opinion, such illustrious personages as *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Racine*, unimpeachable interpreters of nature, truth, and accurate scrutinists of the human heart.

After having demonstrated, that pride on those remarkable occasions was the principle of *Laughter*, there now remains with me to prove, that in every occurrence, *Laughter* owes its birth to *pride*, and this undeniable requisite is the distinguishing criterion of the true system: for which purpose there needs no more than to shew in the objects for *Laughter*, a quality that is pretty similar to *Aristotle's* definition; it cannot however be *deformity without*

pain, as this great philosopher would fain have to be the only established one. This condition would agree but badly with the example of *Agamemnon*; less still with that of *Latona*, and not at all with many other instances.

There now visibly results from the observations hitherto made, that this so necessarily inherent quality in all objects for the exciting of *Laughter*, springs from an apparent inferiority to ourselves in the object we laugh at; so that on their being presented to us, we can hardly keep under the involuntary sentiment arising from a vain and presumptuous comparison, made in our own behalf.

Hence it was that *Latona*, on beholding the superiority of her daughter *Diana* over all the other nymphs, felt that complaisant return of self-love in her bosom, which we have pronounced to be the true source of *Laughter*.

Agamemnon, in a like manner, could not, without the escaping of a haughty smile, behold a crowd of kings subjected to his power; as well as those titles, dignities, and honours, which had been conferred upon him. He must have made a *presumptuously favourable comparison of himself to them*, and those flattering ideas, according to *Racine's* expression, must have pleased the vanity of that monarch.

Among the many excellent observations which *Mr. Voltaire* has given us concerning the English

nation, is this remarkable one. A celebrated speaker in the House of Commons began a speech with these words: *The majesty of the people of England would be hurt, &c.* All the members present, who had heard him, burst into violent fits of *Laughter*. But the orator, no way disconcerted by such, not very polite, behaviour, repeated the same words with a more resolute tone of voice.—There was no more *laughing*. At the first onset, English ears not having been accustomed to such an expression, deemed it a mistake, a blunder of the speaker, which to them implied an *inferiority* of his judgment to theirs; but aroused by the manly repetition, they perceived the greatness of his views, and the *superiority* of his judgment over theirs. The enthusiastic idea contagiously spread itself through the assembly, and *Laughter* was converted into *admiration*.

The *Laughing* of *Venus*, occasioned by her son Cupid's having been stung by a bee, must also have been the consequence of a *presumptuous comparison* in her own behalf, founded on the *superiority* of judgment, she thought herself possessed of above that of her son; and therefore she *laughed* at him on account of an accident, which should have made her goddessship to weep. But *Venus* being a mama, and giving herself the airs of a duenna, she put in an unfair parallel, the *perfect* state of her intellects

against the imperfect one of her son, and therefore, very *mal a propos*, yielded herself up to the *presumptuous* and insulting emotion of *Laughter*.

In the fifth book of the *Iliad*, she herself meets with pretty near the same treatment from *Jupiter*, and on an occasion almost similar. Her beautiful deityship having been slightly wounded by *Diomedes*, made all Olympus ring with her shrieks and lamentations, the cause whereof being related to the great ruler of both gods and men, he could not, as *Homer* tells us, refrain from *Laughter*; looking upon the accident befallen to his daughter, in the same trifling light as she looked upon her son's having been stung by a bee. *Minerva*, too, made a malicious comparison of her rival's wound to *the scratch of a pin*, and induced all the gods to think so too. The excessive pain, *Venus* said she felt in consequence of this *scratch*, appeared before the tribunal of *Jove's superior* judgment, as a matter worthy of being ranked among ridiculous, and truly *laughable* objects.

The *smile* of a fond mother, on seeing a darling child, flows from the same fountain of *self-love*, and like every other species of *Laughter*, is the genuine impulse of *pride*, but mixed with joy, and confounded with tenderness. Conformably then to this notion, must a *Latona*, a *Cybele*, a *Niobe*, and

all mothers be painted, when viewing their children with eyes of retrospective self-complacence.

The unperceived and involuntary comparison which every being that thinks itself perfect, makes partially favourable to self, in regard of those it thinks inferiors, is the first mover of that sympathy which attracts us to children; and is the source of that secret inclination (which we all feel) of flattering, caressing, and *smiling* on them.

Parents have no doubt a double right to plume themselves on the *pride of comparison*, when they consider the property they have in them, their rights, and their immediate superiority over such tender creatures. But how much more elated will they be, if, in those weak objects, they descry unfolding graces, some confused and struggling efforts towards acts of kindness, or of any sketch of likeness to themselves. What mortal so austere as to be unaffailable by such becoming advances of *self-love*? For it is in such affecting moments, that a mother feels her proud heart swell with an expanding joy, while on her lips, a triumphant *smile* appears, which, though sprung from *pride*, is blended with *joy*, and struggled for by tenderness. For wherever *love* is seen, it absorbs and takes in all other passions. Every body knows the beautiful passage in *Virgil* :

Come, lovely babe, thy tender mother know,
From whose fond looks such smiles of kindness flow.

And a little farther on,

Each infant launch'd into the realms of light,
On whom his parents do not kindly smile,
The pledge of tender care for childish years,
Must never hope to taste of heav'nly nectar,
Or share th' immortal favours of a goddess.

But the objection to be started here is, that an infant *laughs* in the cradle. We cannot thence conclude, that his *Laughter* is caused by *vanity*, or that the human race bring that sentiment with them into the world. For is it possible, that a child can have, at so very tender an age, *this reflected self-love, this complaisant return upon one's-self, this discernment of presumptuous and partial comparison which constitute PRIDE?*

Supposing now, that a child could be susceptible of this combination, can he perceive any thing in or about himself, that does not tend to afflict and humble him; that does not teach him according as he receives information, how much his weakness, the infirmities of infancy, and ignorance, render him inferior and subordinate to all the other beings

wearing his own likenefs ?

To this objection, however specious, my answer is, that man is born with an hereditary pride, and that this passion is the more prevalent in him, proportionably to the little use he makes of his reason. No body can deny a child's having sensations of *pleasure* and *pain*. The stimulating principle of *self-love* is never separated from agreeable sensations. Man is then susceptible of *pride* from the very first moment of his breathing vital air. It cannot, however, in truth be asserted, that this impression is at first accompanied in him with any act of reflexion ; but *pride* being rather an infirmity of the mind, than an attribute of judgment, it naturally follows, that *self-love* waits not in man for the mature developing of his intellects.

An infant, notwithstanding what has been advanced, does not *laugh* till after an existence of 40 days, because his pride, as well as his senses, do not begin to unfold themselves before that period.

His weak machine is tost about for near ten weeks, in a storm of diversified anxieties, which keeps it quite unacquainted with any other sensation but that of a painful conflict.—For as yet the faculties of hearing and seeing are not completed. These two senses, which ought to be considered as the two doors of pleasure, and consequently as essential to the stimulating of pride, are

as yet drenched and nummed in a profound lethargy.

Hence the reason is assignable, why an infant *laughs* not till after it has received the free use of its organs. Then it forms to itself a tolerably distinct comparison of objects. It combines, chuses, rejects, and therefore it enjoys an almost perfect discernment of the physical good and evil; is consequently susceptible of *pride*; and being fraught with the *laughing* faculty, *laughs* in effect from that very epoch.

Now concerning an infant's reproached state of dependance, humiliation, ignorance, and frailty, in which nature has placed him; the weakness of his reason neither permits him thoroughly to feel, nor pay any attention to all these inconveniencies; and by the means of this insensibility and blindness, presumption finds a new avenue to his mind.

Here, the objector may cry out, "When I present any thing agreeable to a child's sight or taste, is it through the principle of *self-love* that it smiles at the view of such cheering trifles?" My answer is in the affirmative, and without any shadow of doubt.

The child's soul in regard to these pleasing trifles is, proportionably, in the same situation that we ourselves are at the sight of those objects which we the most desire, and that a lucky stroke of fortune

presents at last to our ambitious views. Trifles please children: dignities, riches, honours, are the luring objects, the hobby-horses of manhood.

If a nurse or a governante contradicts the will of a child, its pride is immediately irritated; it weeps, is disconsolate, and, with inarticulate cries, expresses the displeasure it feels.—Have you a mind to appease it? there is one, and a very ready way—make it believe that you scold and beat the offender for its sake: from that moment of triumph, the child is quiet; its fears are stopped, its pride is flattered; a pleasing satisfaction takes possession of its soul, and its little mouth opens spontaneously to form an agreeable smile.

Be it then received as a constant principle, that *Laughter* flows from presumption, pride, or vanity, as its true and only source. That Ovid seems to have had some notion of it, at least, appears by the sense of the following verses:

Wine from all hearts can banish care,
 From its gay presence flies despair,
 To *Laughter* fear resigns the place,
 And courage gilds a pauper's face.

Art of Love.

In another place this poet evidently declares, that

objects of *ridicule*, are always placed in a situation of *inferiority* to ourselves. It is thus imitated :

When *Fanny* or *Poll* unexpected appear,
 The orator stammering no one can hear,
 And *Venus* laughs loud at the very droll scene,
 Of patron so bold turn'd a client so mean.

I now return to that *audacity* or boldness occasioned by *drunkenness*, and which is established by *Ovid* as a faithful adherent to *Laughter*. It cannot be denied, that wine inspires a petulance fit to awaken the dormant springs of *pride*. At the end of a repast, the guests grown warm, begin to interchange earnest looks at each other, in order to find out the properest person to be made a butt off, for their humour and pleasantry. They set off with light sparrings that soon degenerate into a struggle of wit, sprightliness, and *Laughter*. If there should be reasons for their acting with a cautious respect towards each other, then a kind of general convention is entered into, that the absent only shall be the objects of their raillery ; who on all such occasions, are, it seems, condemned (by *default* of not being present) to undergo the pointed battery of *ridicule*. For absence places them relatively to us in a point of view, that surprizingly lessens them in

our estimation; as if we looked at them through a glass, that both lessens and removes objects from us. Such a change caused in our manner of seeing, perverts our judgment, and produceth in us either *exaggerated esteem* or *sovereign contempt*.

In all social feastings, *self-love* being then less constrained than at other times, maketh us willingly indulge the suggestions of *contempt*, which, if it cannot be safely levelled at those around us, soon emancipates itself from all restraint, and seeks abroad among the absent, for matter to feed itself upon. It was in order to prevent such abuses, that several antients had engraved on the doors of their convivial apartments, a maxim that is known and quoted by many, practiced but by few;

“ *Speak ill of neither th’ absent, nor the dead.*”

An actor who is to play a part that must characteristically provoke *Laughter* at its own expence, will never obtain the end proposed, but by an artful *degradation* of himself; by so composing the features, tone of voice, and deportment of his person, as to insure for them the *Laughter* of all beholders; and in this consists the chief talent of *Armand*, and was the only claim to merit which *Poisson* could boast of *, whose very appearance frequently

extorted a *laugh* from the spectators, before he had spoken a word, every body crying out, *What a droll fellow!* which was the highest encomium that could be given to him, and such applause is founded on this maxim, whose truth we all acknowledge—*the more an acting personage MALE or FEMALE appears to derogate from their natural consequence, the more certainly will they extort Laughter from an applauding audience.*

An undeniable reason why the most part of our present dramatic writers do not excite the same bursts of *Laughter* by the exhibition of their comedies, as those of Moliere and Regnard are wont to do, is because their characters, even those that were intended to be most diverting, unartfully preserve some remaining features of dignity. The like fault is reproachable to the terse and elegant comedies of the Greek Menander, of the Latin Terence, and alas too, too much so, in most of the late mis-called comic productions in France and England.

The celebrated Roman orator Crassus, in a circumstance very favourable for the exertion of his pleasantries, repressed the impulse jointly through a

* Two low comic performers; *Preville*, an excellent comedian, had not made his appearance on the stage at the time Montesquieu is supposed to have pronounced this discourse.

due regard to *Scævola*, and a proper respect for himself.—An effect not quite dissimilar from this will happen, as often as grave personages are introduced into a comedy, unless they be *travestied* or *degraded* for the purpose of rendering them the sportive victims of *Laughter*, in imitation of *Aristophanes*, who did not scruple to sacrifice to the entertainment of the public, *Socrates*, *Cleon*, *Euripides*, *Lamachus*, *Aminias*, the embassadors of the republic, as well as those sent from the sovereign of Persia. They were all present at the exhibition *!

The original intention of comedy (which was and should always be, by the means of its dramatic business) to excite *Laughter*, is rendered sickly and unnerved, by the interweaving of any serious and distressing *interest*. It is indeed not only difficult, but very dangerous to make two such different and almost incompatible agents to operate kindly together; because each being ambitious to shine alone, they seem reciprocally to exclude each other from the scene.

The only place where they may be sometimes

* Those personages were no doubt the most considerable the poet could have attacked; for not to dwell upon *Socrates* and *Euripides*, whose fame is sufficiently known, *Lamachus* and *Cleon* were generals of the military forces, and the archont *Aminias* was at that time invested with the sacred character of *Head of the Republic*, and *Supreme Magistrate*.

introduced with any propriety together, is in a third species of comedy called the *agreeable* or *gently entertaining*, which is no more than the *pastoral poems* of the ancients disguised; for, the most part of those written by *Theocritus*, *Moschus*, *Bion*, and *Virgil*, are the primitive comedies of this class. But the quintessence of art, and an inexpressible delicacy, are required in the writer, who would hit on the happy temperature, that is indispensable for a mixed production of this nature. The smiles of the graces, which *Anacreon* celebrates, could, doubtless, be painted with so much ease by none other but himself.

Beneath a pleasing breezy shade,
 By clust'ring vines for pleasure made,
 Paint the young Cupids now unarm'd,
 And by the smiling graces charm'd.

Yet from such *bland* and *soothing ideas*, from such *smiling graces*, to those more strongly featured, and that excite *Laughter*, there is a discriminating interval, which happens to be but very rarely seized upon and filled up, except by those who are possessed of such natural, pleasing and delightful fallies of genius, as *Virgil* hath enriched his eclogues with, in representing the disputes of shepherds, and their amusements.

Let two quotations, for the present, suffice, and they indeed are of the utmost delicacy, and of a *nai-veté* well worthy of the *comic muse*; the first, under an artful suppression of words, conveys a very farcaſtic innuendo.

We know where you were *ſeen*, friend—in what grove!—
—But—the *mild* nymphs *laugh'd* only at—*your*
love.—

The ſecond inſtance repreſents to the life, the cunning and artful tricks of a young girl, and is ſpoken by a villager.

When the dear girl has play'd me ſome arch tricks,
She ſportive runs to hide her 'mong the trees ;
Yet hopes, ſhe's not ſo hid, but I may ſpy her.—

Horace, who ſeems, in one paſſage of his works, to hint that *Virgil* was excluſively poſſeſſed of the *graceful comic* in writing, enjoyed alſo himſelf this rare and difficult talent to the higheſt degree; and for a convincing proof of this my opinion, I refer the curious to his Latin text, or to a tranſlation of that charming picture, where a lover is preſſingly deſirous of a kiſs, which is refuſed by his miſtreſs, with an affected coynefs.

Who sweetly turning from, denies to grant
A kiss; she wishes he would snatch by force.

These are, methinks, complete models of the *agreeable comic* style; but the scarcity of such admirable strokes, even in the poets of the first class, but too cogently prove the extreme difficulty there is to succeed in this kind of writing. However, we are to observe, that the *smiles* resulting from these examples, must be ascribed to the principle which I have laid down. In these, and like instances, it is true, that there prevails a certain degree both of slyness and innocence, that are at best but qualities of a second class, and to be ranked below *the presumptuous sentiment in behalf of our own discerning faculty*; for our readily obtained judgment, that these objects are comic, proceeds from a *proud and partial comparison*, that induceth us to esteem our own manner of conceiving and reasoning, superior to that which occurs to us to have been necessary to the producing of those ideas here presented to our readers.

That very *Philemon*, who is reported to have expired in a violent fit of *Laughter*, at what he had imagined to be a *bon-mot* of his own engendering, is a corroborating proof in behalf of my system, and strongly evinces the influence of *self-love* in the art of *laughing*.

Zeuxis, without an amazing stock of *pride*, could never have found such an excess of *comic merit*, resulting from the ridiculous attitude in which he had represented his old woman.—For it must be obvious to every understanding, that this excellent painter, and the uningenious *Philemon*, were both enraptured at their own insipid and darling absurdities, for no other reason, but because they were the authors of them.

The following objection may be started on this occasion: “Although it be pride that makes us
 “ *laugh* at our own droll jokes and conceptions, are
 “ we thence to conclude, that we are instigated
 “ by the same principle when we *laugh* at the *bons*
 “ *mots* of others? Our *Laughter* is a manifest appro-
 “ bation of such sayings, and a suffrage of this
 “ nature seems to be less the effect of a partial
 “ presumption for ourselves, than of candidly sa-
 “ crificing one’s *self-love*, by such a tribute of ap-
 “ plause paid to another’s merit.”

However specious the assigning of such a cause may appear, yet it is not the true one; which must be sought for in another source: and thus, by our adopting the facetious fallies, and approving the *bons mots* or witty sayings of others, we, by the rebound, arrogate to ourselves, as it were, the glory of them. For then a secret vanity makes us turn such approbation to our own advantage, and becomes the

flattering handmaid of our *pride*, for not letting them have escaped our encouraging notice.

This appearing homage on our side, when duely scrutinized, will be found to be but an indirect tribute at best, and that the applause, however just, which we express at the ingenious sallies of others, and the happy invention of other authors, is kindly reflected in part on ourselves, by way of complimentary incense to our own judgment. The praise due for a happy hit-off, a brilliancy of imagination and expression, we freely resign to the author's ready invention; but the merit of adequately feeling, discerning, and judging, we claim as our own right. — Who then will dare to dissent from my assertion, that it is overweening *pride* which compels us to *laugh* at the wit and pleasantry of others?

Why were you so pleased at that comic exhibition, during which, *Laughter* almost incessantly flowed from you, till you began to discover that your own character was struck out? Your notes were then soon altered; and why pray? — Because *self-love* gratified delights in *laughing*, but when offended, loseth all relish for such grating raillery; and this too is an incontestable proof that *pride* is the true principle of the *laughing convulsion*, peculiar to the human frame; which it has an equal power of exciting or stopping. At the display of any comic portraits, we are alike interested in the cause of our

friends, who if we find to be attacked therein, our *Laughter* immediately ceases.

You count me mad in fashion, you forbear
 To *laugh*, nor think I need a doctor's care,
 Or guardian from the *prætor*, tho' my friend
 On whom my fortune and my life depend,
 My chief support, in short, my only guard;
 And who art vex'd to see my nails ill par'd.

CREECH.

Now either take off a person's manner of *laughing*, or rebuke him for *laughing* mal-a-propos, rely upon it, you sting him most sensibly... Why? Because you interrupt him in the secret enjoyment of his pride; you cruelly surprize him in, and expose him for the shameful abuse of his self-love—whereof the glaring reason occurs—*that pride is the source of Laughter*.

What fathers we have seen with enraptured tenderness, and mothers with almost idolatrous fondness, caress a darling babe, and cheer its infancy with continued smiles; why? because while in this helpless condition, it appears in a natural state of subordination to them; which inferiority was not displeasing to their vanity—but when the child has reached the age of thirteen or fourteen years, and begins to reason in consequence of daily expanding

ideas, that bring him in new recruits of knowledge, it remains no longer implicitly obedient to the will of parents, but frequently rises in opposition to it, nay, demands more convincing arguments from their side, who, from that epoch of a child's resistance to their mandates, begin to abate gradually of their parental affection, which not rarely on such occasions becomes totally extinguished: for from that moment their self-love is chagrined, their pride is piqued. Then the fathers, in order to recover their lost authority, substitute harshness and severity in the place of their late fondness and complacency. Such is the supreme, universal, and invariable law established by nature. The bear fondles its nursling cubs but while they cannot help themselves. The eagles turn away from their young progeny as soon as they are able to fly and procure sustenance for themselves.

But if a child so circumstanced as we have hinted above, come to distinguish himself in society by his eminent qualities, or any lucky occurrence, tending to flatter the vanity of his parents, their love is kindled anew; and this revival of affection for their child, is but the returning complaisance of their own *self-love*, that re-plumes itself for the flattering acquisition of a long forgotten object, now no longer beheld without a smile of conscious pride.

From this principle too, we draw the satisfactory reason for that partial predilection, which parents are wont to have for the last born children. There needs no great effort I presume to convince ye that it is *pride*. All our favours, affections, and careffes, desire to be free grants; and therefore to be able to confer them *when*, and *on whom* we please, administers not a little to our vanity.—We are jealous in the extreme of our sovereign and arbitrary right to fix or change our liking as we please. Wherefore, what we take off from one side, we add to the other, and the actuating principle of all such vicissitudes is to be set down to the article of *pride*. Certainly *pride* persuades us that we are the absolute masters of every choice we make, and of all our affections. Through its agency we find a flattering pleasure in thus freely disposing of our tendernefs.

Observe how a mother of many children behaves in her family, and the influence we here inculcate will surprizingly appear.—For while corrections and reprimands fall to the lot of the eldest born, kindness, careffing, and *smiles*, are lavished on the younger children.—*Pride*, let me say it once for all, *pride* is the secret principle of man's inconstancy in friendship, and in love; but this is a matter foreign from the present subject, and would make us deviate therefrom, too much, were I to pursue it.

Another proof of *self-love* being the source of *Laughter*, is our readiness to *smile* at the ideas of others that are conformable to our own: because we most obligingly to ourselves seem to be the authors of them. Thus *Juno* in the *Æneid*, having proposed the raising of a storm, that should force *Æneas* and *Dido* to take shelter in a cavern, where being unobserved and alone, they might interchange mutual proofs of their passion for each other; *Venus*, according to the poet,

The scheme approving, *smiles* at JUNO'S fraud.

Cicero remarks, that a sooth-sayer could not look at another without laughing, because whenever these gentry met, they diverted themselves at the expence of mankind's imbecillity, and the people's superstition in consequence.

Persons of a gay and frolicksome disposition, are less liable to take offence, than those who are of a graver; because the former trouble their heads less about the formalities of *decorum*. Moreover, the confidence and security which are copiously supplied to them by their *self-love*, makes them to be less upon their guard, and more open to the impulse of *Laughter*.

Of this truth we have a proof in the example of those nymphs whom *Virgil* represents as deities, not

over nice or severe, because they but *laughed* at certain familiarities, that had been practiced in their grotto. — *Minerva*, *Juno*, *Diana*, and all the goddeffes of the first rank, would not have treated such an affair in so light and so *laughing* a manner. — For instance, *Cybele* changed *Hippomenes* and *Atalanta* into lions, for having tasted the first sweets of hymen in her temple.

Sure if a fault, it might for pardon plead;
But unrelenting *pride* can ne'er forgive. —

We are not, however, averse from *laughing* sometimes at an intended affront having lost its aim. — This kind of unresenting clemency arises too from the sentiment of our own *superiority*; and hence an infant's attempt to beat us, excites our *Laughter*.

We *laugh* also at an offence, in which we are immediately concerned, if there thence results any disadvantage or disgrace to others of which our *pride* may avail itself. Such persons as may doubt of this truth, I refer for conviction to *Horace*; let them implead, if they can, that beautiful ode in which this most elegant poet complains of *Barine's* infidelity.

For Venus laughs at all thy wiles;
The gentle nymphs behold with smiles,

And with the blood of some poor swain
 By thy perfidious beauty slain,
 Young Cupid whets his burning darts
 For thee, to wound new lovers hearts.—

FRANCIS.

The thought conveyed in the first stanza of this ode, is not uncommon among the poetic tribe; for according to *Ovid*,

Jove, from Olympus' top, but *smiles*
 At *perjur'd* lovers *broken* vows.

TIBULLUS said nearly the same thing, though in other words:

Jove, *pleas'd*, beholds the stormy winds
 Whirl through th' air love's *perjur'd* oaths.

This smile of *Jupiter* can be ascribed to no other source but *disdain*, whose engendering principle is *pride*.

It is amazing how far the *presumption* of man extends itself; for not satisfied in *laughing* at the expence of others, his vanity instigates him some times to *laugh* at his own cost; and such an instance may be called a triumph over *self-love*: because that very *pride* which induceth us to think ourselves in

general superior to our equals, influenceth us also in certain occurrences to think, that we are superior even to our usual selves.

When our *self-love* is equally affected by a mixed sensation of pleasure and pain, the *laugh* that is extorted pending such a conflict is called the *Sardonic* or *Sardonian*. This laugh, gentlemen, is of a truly mixed nature, and exactly such as it has been delineated, with this exception, that the pain and the pleasure are in fact no more than circumstances, but that *pride* is its veritable cause.

The tracing of an origin for the epithet *Sardonian*, is not less problematic, than has hitherto proved the very subject of *Laughter*. Those persons who would fain derive this word from the island of *Sardinia*, on account of the *Laughter-exciting herb* that is said to grow there, do not appear to me to have paid a due attention to the antiquity of this proverb, which took its rise in regions very remote from *Sardinia*, and long before that island had acquired any degree of celebrity.

NICANDER, in his poem upon Antidotes, wherein he treats of the different sorts of poisons, mentions not a word of the *Apium risus*, the *Laughter-causing herb* *, or of its effects, we must therefore

* The Greek name was Σαρδάνιος πόνος; the Latin, *Apium risus*, or *Sardonian herba*, *scelerata herba*, &c.

look upon the account given of it, as a vulgar error, and of a date much posterior to the time of this poet, and still more so of many other Greek writers, who had flourished long before *Nicanter*, yet quote the *Sardonic laugh* as a well known proverb in their times.

Homer, the most ancient of all the poets whose names have been transmitted to us, calls it the *Sardanian*, but not *Sardonian*, which is a proof that this word hath undergone several alterations, and that it can by no means be derived from the word *Sardinia*; that island having been always called by the Greeks *Sardi*, but not *Sarda*. — *Callimachus* moreover represents it as an enchanted place, and the cradle of the graces, but does not glance, in the least, at any thing noxious to be found there:

Now behold *Sardi*, beauteous isle,
On which fair VENUS chose to land;
When she retreated from the sea,
And brought her infant charms to shore.

It is through a corruption of the word made by authors since *Homer's* time, that this species of *Laughter* has been called *Sardonic*, or *Sardonian*, which alteration has given birth to two false conjectures; the one, that this epithet alluded to *Sar-*

Alnia, and the other, that it was derived from *Sardonyx*, which in the Greek language, as well as in the French, signifies a precious stone: and there was some semblance of reason for the last conjecture, because as the *Sardonyx* is of a mixed colour, so the *Laughter* now treated of, is produced by the concurrence of different passions.

But all such interpretations disappear of themselves, as soon as we begin to reflect, that they are founded upon surreptitious variations, that have stolen in from time to time in the manner of writing and pronouncing this truly enigmatical expression. The authority of *Homer*, in this case, must bear down all other by the superior weight of its antiquity. It is moreover certain, that the Greeks used commonly to say, that such a one *Sardanized* *, meaning thereby, that his *Laughter* was not sincere. We are also to observe, that the word *Sardanaphalus* †, signified in this sense to be *jovial*, a buffoon, a jester, and that this epithet was given to all persons who were *entertaining* or *comical* by profession.

It would lead us to believe in the first place, that we ought to write and pronounce *Sardanic Laughter*, and in the second, that this proverbial expression

* Σαρδανιζειν, *Sardanium videre*, to laugh *Sardanically*.

† Σαρδαναφαλος, *morio, scurra, risus concitator, bistris*.
—A buffoon, a jester, one that excites *Laughter*, a stage-player.

owes its birth to the taking of *Sardi*, the fatal epoch that humbled the *Lydians* to have recourse to the degrading employment of buffoons, mimes, and farce-players; but on the other hand, I do not see how we can possibly adopt this system, since *Homer*, who mentions the *Sardanic laugh*, had lived near two hundred years before the reduction of *Lydia*.

If I may be permitted to hazard a conjecture, gentlemen, here is mine.—Since *to Sardanize*, imports to *laugh* in a particular manner, and that *Sardanaphalus* means a person exciting *Laughter*, I am inclined to think, that the word *Sarda* expressed a peculiar kind of *laugh* among the most ancient nations of the East; that by *Sardi* was implied a city of *Laughter*, or a laughing city; that by *Sardo* was meant a smiling island; and that the surname *Sardanaphalus*, was given by derision to the last effeminate and ridiculous king of *Affyria*. Therefore, from the word *Sarda*, signifying *Laughter*, joined to the word *Ania*, signifying grief, the Greeks may have naturally enough composed the word *Sardonian*, and have justly annexed it to that species of *Laughter*, wherein *Joy* or *Laughter* is confounded with *grief*, our *self-love* then being equally affected with *pleasure* and *anguish*.

We meet with an allusion to the *Sardanic laugh* in the *Iliad*, and another in the *Odyssy*. These two pas-

sages are very remarkable, being finished in a masterly manner. This species of *Laughter* is characterized there, with striking features ; although it be not absolutely named in the *Iliad*, yet there is no possibility of mistaking it.

Vex'd Juno takes her seat among the gods,
Her screw'd-up mouth would fain force out a smile,
But her stern forehead, and her fullen brow,
Betray the secret anguish of her heart.

In the *Odyssèy*, this species of *Laughter* is expressly named. *Ulyssès* having foreseen the insult that the rude *Ctesippus* was meditating to discharge upon him, avoided it in a very adroit manner :

So turns it off, defeats, and shews his joy
With a *Sardanic laugh*.

There is another instance in *Homer*, that bears evident marks of the *Sardanic* or *mixed laugh* ; it is in the very pathetic moment of *Hector's* going out at the *Scaean* gate, when he returns his young son *Astyanax*, to the arms of *Andromache*, the child's afflicted mother.

Hector returns t' Andromache's fond arms,
Her much lov'd son ; she takes the pleasing charge :
Tears mix'd with smiles express her silent joy.

In all these examples it is obvious to discern, that *pride is the cause of Joy or Laughter*.—In the first, *Juno* makes effort through mere vanity, and in order to mask the grief that preyed upon her heart.—In the second, *Ulysses* smiles, because he applauds himself for the error into which *Ctesippus* is to fall, and the proposed certainty of his having vengeance on that traitor.

In the third instance, nothing can be more natural than the *smile* of *Andromache*, in looking at her son, whom *Hector* bids her to behold as his second self, the future support of *Troy*, as the promise of a rising hero, whose arm, invincible in war, should one day lay at his mother's feet the bloody spoils of their country's vanquished foes. Such were the words of *Hector*, and from such pride-infusing ideas as they must have given birth to, arose *Andromache's* smile; her mind being cheered with the glorious prospect: but then the anxiety into which she is suddenly cast, by her husband's immediate departure, dashes her joy, and depresses all her soaring hopes. Therefore, the *smile* of *Andromache* on this occasion, is to be classed with the *Sardanic laugh*.

The *laugh* of irony or of sarcasm, unquestionably belongs to it, because it bears the twofold impression of *pleasure* mixed with bitterness.—And as a proof at hand, turn your eyes one moment, gentlemen,

to the bust of *DESPREAU*X, one of *Girardon's* master-pieces, and one of the principal curiosities that adorn this elegant saloon in which we are assembled *. The artist hath so happily expressed the mixed passion now treated of, that irony, as if writhing with pain, seems to reside upon the mouth and lips of this severe critic, while he enjoys a cruel satisfaction at the same time, for the many victims he had immolated.

I now flatter myself, gentlemen, that I have so far convinced, as that ye can no longer harbour any doubt of *Laughter* having its source in *pride*, and that this principle is to be extended to every species thereof; all which, in my opinion, may be ranged under the following heads:

1. The wide-mouth'd or indecent laugh.
2. The gracious laugh, or the smile.
3. The laugh of dignity or protection.
4. The silly or simple laugh, which must be distinguished from the naturally ingenuous.
5. The self-approving laugh, or that of sheer-vanity.
6. The laugh of courtesy, civilized compact, or fashionable usage.
7. The laugh of affectation or disdain.

* Mr. *Titon de Tillet* had in his possession the original marble bust of *Despreaux*, by *Girardon*.

8. The laugh of sincerity, openness, invitation, and serenity, that in a pleasing manner diffuses itself over the whole countenance.

9. The laugh of hypocrisy or dissimulation, or (according to the vulgar phrase) in one's sleeve, which must be distinguished from

10. The *laugh* of determined and absolute malice.

11. The laugh constrained, is that observable when we make effort to repress an unseasonable impulse.

12. The laugh extorted, or machinal, is brought on by excessive tickling, or by wounds of the diaphragm, or by certain noxious beverages.

13. The laugh caused by a sourness of the mind, despite, resentfulness, desire of revenge, mixed with a certain pleasure that is in near alliance with *pride*. — This species of *Laughter*, as well as the extorted or forced, rank under the denomination of *Sardanic*, which is common to them.

13. *Lastly*, The laugh *inextinguishible*, as Homer calls it in Greek, but that in our vulgar phrase may be expressed by the outrageous or horse-laugh, whose explosive bursts we cannot stop. They so violently agitate our sides and breasts, as to throw the whole body into a kind of convulsive agony.

Of all these several *classes* of *Laughter*, that of the *extorted, forced, or merely machinal*, is the only one that seems not to spring directly from the influence of *self-love*, having no other affinity with the *pride-begotten-Laughter* in general, but that of setting the same springs or muscular agents in motion, aided by the diaphragm's vibratory change of situation; the will opposing in vain.

This extraordinary and singular *class* of *Laughter* is in regard to pride, as would be, in regard to harmony, under the fingers of an able musician, a false note fortuitously caused by the derangement of a chord; yet this accidental dissonance would prove nothing in the main against the artist's skill, or justness of the air.—If any person become desirous of giving a solution of the gesture, or action that is hereby occasioned, and should thus define it, *an effect free from, or uninfluenced by the will*: this explanation would certainly be a just one; because a foreign force had put the *Laughter* under the compulsive necessity of yielding to gestures contrary to his intention. The very name of a *forced laugh*, implies the exigency of ranging it in the class of exceptions, since it truly forms a real contradiction in nature.

I have advanced, that *pride* in the operation of *Laughter* scrupled not to admit the auxiliary concurrence of other passions, but kept under a due

subordination. Be it remarked, that among these various means designed for the exciting of *Laughter*, none is so effectual as SURPRIZE,—for (according to Cicero's judicious observation) *unexpected pleasures delight us most; and we never laugh with a better grace, than when we feel our soul agreeably surprized at the unforeseen occurrence of some extraordinary event.*

The art of exciting in the soul this kind of sudden commotion, requires a particular study, that consists in attaining a particular and accurate knowledge of the practically known oratorical means in speaking or writing, called by the grammarians, *tropes*, or figures.—I think it not improper to give a few examples of the several ways by which *Laughter* may be excited, with the concurrence of surprize.

1. By the means of an extempore—as from the *Plutus* of *Aristophanes*, in the unforeseen reply of the valet *Caries*.

CHREMYL.

You tower which from hence we can descry; and which, at our expence, Timotheus is reported to have built.

CARIES.

May it make choice of thee to fall upon.

2. By a contradiction in terms, as *Sofia* uses in *Amphitryon*.

Nay, for that matter, I swear I was here, before I came.

3. By a contradiction implied, as in the French comic piece called *L'Épreuve Reciproque, the Reciprocal Trial*, where the imposing financier says to the imposing countess,

“ Yes that woman costs me sixty thousand crowns . . . or nothing.”

4. By redundancy, as in the same piece where *M. Patin* says,

“ I should have married her, I believe, but for an old husband—and that for me was more than obstacle enough.”

5. By mistaking the sense, as when the miser says,
We ought to eat to live, but not live to eat.

He corrects himself,

We ought to live to eat, but not eat to live.

6. By effrontery, as in *Crispin his master's rival*.

“ Forgive me this fraud on account of my being accustomed to such exploits.”

7. By *opposition*, as in this verse of Regnard,
One cannot refrain from weeping—or laughing at it.

8. By *rejoining*, as when the orator *Crassus* pleaded against *Lucius Helvius Lamia*. The latter was a kind of misshapen dwarf; upon his attempting to reply, *Let us hear*, said *Crassus*, *this pretty little gentleman*. *Lamia*, stung by such raillery, answered somewhat angrily, *That it had not been in his power to cure the faults of his body, but that he had taken care none should be charged to his understanding.*—*That being the case*, rejoined *Crassus*, with a settled air of phlegmatic contempt, *let us hear this man of understanding*. So sneering a rejoinder, made *Lamia* lose all patience; it threw him into a grating perplexity and confusion, that made the audience almost to expire with *Laughter*.

9. By *contradiction to an established usage*, as in this phrase,

You are a very whimsical man, you have a cottage in town, and a palace in the country.

Also in the following:

How! would you have me convert my kitchen-garden into a parterre!—Why then, what vegetables would you have me to put in my soup?—ho,—tulips I suppose!

10. By a *progressive*, or *consequential contradiction*, as in this instance related by Cicero.—Quintus Opius, on seeing the young Egilius going by, whose effeminate figure made him to be suspected of irregularities in love, sneeringly accosted him, *My dear Miss Egilia, when will you come to my house to amuse yourself with spinning and needle-work?* To which Egilius replied with a modest archness, *Good madam, I dare not for the world: my mama has absolutely forbidden my keeping company with naughty ladies.*

11. By *using the same terms*; as in the following instance, taken from the above-mentioned author. Scipio Nasica having presented himself at the door of Ennius the poet, to ask if he were at home, the servant-maid answered, *That her master was gone out.* However, Scipio, from her manner, concluded that he was at home, but took no notice of it to her. A few days after, *Ennius* went to Scipio's house to visit him, who, upon the first hearing of the other's voice, cried aloud, *That he was not at home.*—*Why, how can that be,* replied Ennius, *don't I hear your voice?* To which Scipio answered, *Why, really you must be a most unreasonable man, to expect I should believe your servant-maid telling me you were abroad; and yet refuse to credit my own declaration to you, that I am not at home.*

12. By *exaggeration*, as in the following quotation from Aristophanes.

CHREMYL.

So then, if, according to your wish, destiny were to prove no longer in hostility with the human virtues, and would restore fight to you,

PLUTUS.

Why, then, I should take back immediately all my favours that have been injudiciously lavished on the worthless part of mankind.

CHREMYL.

And the good, how would you treat them?

PLUTUS.

Heap every blessing on them. I would spare no pains to contribute to their happiness, for indeed I have not heard of one that could be called so, for a thousand years past.

CARIES.

Then that species of beings must be very rarely seen, or else the mould in which they were formerly cast, must have been long lost; for to say the truth, I myself

have a tolerable good sight, and I wish I may be hanged if ever I have seen one.

CHREMYL.

In the name, then, of good people, whose number is so small, be not niggard of bestowing your gifts on me, for if probity, honour and sincerity, are the requisites to deserve your favours, my house, which you see yonder, will fix your attention; for believe me, that throughout Athens, you would seek in vain for an honestier man than I am.

PLUTUS.

This is the common cant of every needy varlet, who stands in need of my assistance; their discourse teems with the words probity, honour, and sincerity; but from the moment that I am seduced to look upon them with a favourable eye, then do the caitiffs turn their backs upon virtue for ever after.

CHREMYL.

I know there are such scoundrels, and therefore abandon them to your resentment—but sure there are others—who—

PLUTUS.

No, no, you are all alike, nor will I allow of one exception.

13. By a circumlocutory or round-about explanation of a matter, like this ingenious example, taken from the same comedy.

CARIES.

And what are you afraid of, pray?

PLUTUS.

Why truly this affair in which they want to engage me, deserves to be seriously considered.

CARIES.

Fy, how can you let escape such symptoms of fear?

CHREMYL.

It is not then without reason that people say you are fearful.

PLUTUS.

I fearful? how can you mistake me so?—I must tell you, I see the cause of my being so called.—A certain light-handed industrious pilferer, had laid a scheme to rob me of my treasure; but thanks to my own sagacity and vigilance, he was defeated in his wicked purpose: for in lieu of my drawer where I usually kept my money, and of which he had got intelligence, I lodged it safely in a strong coffer in another

part of my house. Wherefore the disappointed impudent thief has reported, that I had done so through fear, and misrepresented my prudence as a rascally want of courage.

14. By an abuse of words, as when Cæsar was called, *The husband of every wife, and the wife of every husband.*

15. By an incongruous assemblage of words *.

16. Finally, by a conclusion unexpected, as appears in this fragment of Nævius. An old man is stricken with compassion, on beholding a young man carried to prison for debt. The veteran miser is just on the point of releasing him from the cruel fangs of the law, but feels an immediate check to his generosity at the simple mention of the sum for which the youth had been arrested; and so earnestly retracts his intention, as to enforce his refusal by intimating it twice in the same phrase; in a manner too as different as unexpected: and heightens the pas-

* The instance in the original, if translated, would be unintelligible. It may be illustrated by an humorous fally of Mr. Foote's. "The White-Conduit-house, or any of the other *Bread and-butter-manufactories.*"

sage with a smack of that true salt of pleasantry, in which the ancients delighted so much. There is moreover in this fragment, unhappily for us too short, a *vis comica* in the situation of the parties concerned, that renders it well worthy of being preserved, as must indeed have been the entire performance from which it was taken. We are to represent to ourselves the circumstance of the dejected youth's being conveyed to prison, the immediate joy that diffuses itself over his countenance, on the miser's entering into a bargain for his deliverance, with his almost co-instantaneous surprize, resentment, and indignation, at being left in so mortifying a crisis.

CHREMES.

I really am moved with compassion for the hard fate of this young man, I am indeed. For what debt, friend, have you had him arrested? tell me, come let me know the sum.

CREDITOR.

The sum, good sir, is a thousand crowns.

CHREMES.

I have nothing more to say You may take him along with you.

If the old recreant had been satisfied with replying, on turning away from them, — *I have nothing more to say*, it would have had no relish of any extraordinary comic force.

But avarice being in its nature a merciless, cruel, and tyrannizing passion, it actuates Chremes, in this case, with a co-ercive and resistless authority, so far as to make him reproach himself, in a manner, for his having been guilty of any escape of the least symptom of generosity: and that this vice might be made to appear with all its native and pitiless deformity, it was necessary that the tantalizing monster should add the grating and brutal expression:

You may take him along with you.

C O N C L U S I O N.

Here ends our detail of all the causes of *Laughter*; and there is not one among them but proves, that man never laughs but in virtue of a flattering retrospect to himself, as well as of a more or less partially presumptuous comparison, which he forms of himself with the present object of his ridicule; therefore *self-love* being flattered, is in every cir-

cumstance of life, the hidden source, the constant spring, in a word, the natural, as well as the moral principle of LAUGHTER.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 1. *To Madem.* add *oiselle*. P. 4. l. 1. for *much*, read *many*. P. 2. l. 7. after *too*, read *strongly*. P. 22. l. 4. read *ingenuous*. l. 9. read *objects*. l. 12. for *it is*, read *is it*. P. 25. l. 22. dele *and it*. P. 31. l. 23. before *being*, read *son's*. l. 24. dele *souls*. l. 28. read *cestus*. P. 32. l. 1. for *repeated*, read *related*. P. 35. l. 3. read *exteriour*. P. 38. l. 13. read *dissection*. P. 41. l. 12. read *unfolded*. P. 45. l. 16. read *ourly*. P. 49. l. 24. read *Teucri*. l. 25. read *Salfos*. P. 52. l. 18. for *changes*, read *chases*. P. 65. l. 17. read *to remark*. P. 72. l. 12. read *toga*. l. 21. for *In*, read *From*. P. 94. l. 15. for *insensible*, read *irresistible*. P. 96. after the two French verses, this omitted translation;

The name of king of kings, supreme of Greeks,
Flatter'd my swelling heart's ambitious pride.

P. 101. l. 17. dele *or of*. l. 22. to *ap*, add *pears*.
P. 105. l. 3. for *When*, read *If*. P. 107. l. 18.
for *its*, read *his*. P. 114. l. . for *out* read *at*.
P. 115. l. 3. instead of *first you*, read *they*. P.
117. l. 12. read *actuating*.

