

chiefly of the ecclesiastical preferments in his disposal.—There are four bishoprics.—That of *Avignon* is reckoned worth 3000*l.* Sterling *per annum*.

The town of *Avignon* has no magistracy nor jurisdiction; but they are allowed to enjoy certain privileges, and have right to an annual revenue of no less than 25,000*l.* Sterling.—This revenue is faithfully administered by three consuls; one chosen by the Pope, one by the nobles, and one by the burghers.—They compute that five or six thousand of this revenue is necessarily and actually expended every year in erecting new, and repairing old bulwarks, to defend this town and fertile country from devastations by the two rivers *Rhone* and *Durance*.—Sometimes this expense amounts to great sums.—From 7 to 8000*l.* is annually necessary and expended to support their three great hospitals.—The river *Durance* is very remarkable for its rapid violent and destructive waite through all its course.—The people have this common proverb, “That the country of Provence is afflicted by three plagues; the parliament, the mental winds, and the river *Durance*.”—They complain of vexatious delays, and excessive expense of law suits, carried on before that parliament.—The papal nobility within this territory of *Avignon* are few in number, and inconsiderable in wealth.—The land property is mostly divided into small estates.—The rich and great at *Avignon* are French nobility, generally from *Provence*, *Languedoc*, and *Dauphiny*; who by their residence here are entitled to certain privileges, without affecting their rights as French subjects.—They keep up the distinctions of rank and birth to a high pitch.—They avoid intercourse or society with burghers and other untitled people.—They even condemn the papal nobility, and in derision call them by the name of *Papists*.

* The *Parliament* in France are merely courts of justice; not properly legislative assemblies, as in Britain.

“on the *Essential* (To be continued) *poetical*
Genius,” *The Bee, or Literary Intelligence*,
5 (1791), 177-81.

On the Essential Qualities of Poetical Genius.

The second & Competition Essay.

To the Editor of the *Bee*.

SIR,

IN an age so much addicted to poetry and criticism as the present, it may not be improper to ascertain and illustrate the *Essential Qualities of Poetical Composition*. Are they not fully, though briefly, expressed by *Horace* in the two following lines?

“*Ingenium cui sit, cui mens, divitiar, argue on*
Magna locustorum; des nominis hujus honorem?”

In these lines three particulars are mentioned;—*Ingenium*—*mens divitiar*—or *magna sensuatum*. Invention, a strong mind, or a mind unusually elevated, and talents of powerful expression. We shall make some observations on each of these separately.

I. By *ingenium* may be here understood invention, industry, or that great creating power of the poet which depends on imagination. It is by this talent that the poet makes a proper choice and arrangement of those circumstances in an object, which, in suggesting it he means to employ. For though we ascribe to him creative powers, it is not meant that he forms beings altogether new, or of materials that never existed till he produced them: we only mean that he works on the materials presented to him by nature; he separates and throws them into new combinations. He thus by altering, and new modelling, makes new objects; with a view to excite stronger emotions than they would otherwise occasion.

Poetic genius is distinguished by the exercise of invention and imitation; for they are in fact the same. The poet *invents*, that is, he throws circumstances into new form; but that form is intended to represent, fo

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as to make a stronger impression, something that does exist, or has existed. The great object of all imitation is Nature, either inanimated, such as woods, valleys, and rivers, or animated, as birds, beasts; but above all, the actions of mankind. It is not enough merely to describe, the poet must *imitate*. He is not only, for example, to display anger by describing the pale face and quivering lip; but he must, by speaking the language, display the feelings of the angry man. As he chiefly imitates human nature he must suppose himself the very character he invents. He must speak what every one of the persons he represents would naturally speak, and seem to perform actions familiar to what the person would have done in that situation.

The pastoral poet, for instance, has to imitate the manners and customs of the country life. If any objects are introduced that are not connected with the pastoral life, they are improper. The objects from which the poet borrows his imagery must be such as are within the sphere of the shepherd's knowledge. If they suppose great improvement in the sciences, they are improper, and cannot make a part of a pastoral poem. The characters too must be such as are suited to that state; the passions described must be modified so as to be consistent with the situation of the speaker. To say the must be always gentle, is improper; because shepherds are often repented, and with justice, as being cruel and violently incensed. But it would be improper to represent them as very ambitious, or carrying per to represent them as very ambitious, or carrying their resentment to violent or bloody excess. The same thing may be illustrated in epic, dramatic, and every species of poetical composition. In all of them the poet must employ fiction; but in all of them he must adhere to probability; and while he *invent* he must *imitate*. He is to excite feelings, and this can only be done by describing particular natural objects.

II. But the poet must not only invent,—he must naturally have ingenuity and those talents which depend

imagination, he must *feel*,—he must have sensibility,—he must have the *men diviner*. This I conceive to be the meaning of the term. The expression is general; *men diviner*, a very divine mind, a more than usually human mind. How comes that to signify sensibility? and is not the meaning too arbitrary? By attending to the following particulars we shall perhaps judge otherwise.

1st, What is it that excites a mind, or makes it, so to say, divine? Is it not such sensibility as flows out in exquisite feeling or fine affection? Ah, or most men, have sensibility to the circumstances that befall themselves; but he whose mind is so susceptible as to be as deeply affected with what befalls others, and with imaginary events, as other persons are with real, may be said to have fine sensibility, or the *men diviner*.

2d, The poet, in this passage, speaks like a critic: it is rare he is not to be suspected of writing loosely. He usually distinguishes very accurately, and expresses himself very correctly. He is not to be suspected of distinctions without difference, or of using words that have no meaning, or are redundant. The difference, for example, between the *ingenium* and *et magna scelerum* is distinctly marked. Is it fair, then, to suppose that he means no more by the *men diviner* than the *ingenium*? By every rule of candid criticism we must suppose that he means something different; and not only so, but something essential. He is making an important enumeration: what is this second particular in his enumeration? This leads us to remark, 3dly, That the poet, in other parts of his works, where he delivers critical doctrines, dwells very particularly on sensibility. He says explicitly, in his epistle to the *Pylæ*, that without this it is impossible to enter into human passions and affections, so as to imitate them, and so as to move other persons. “*Si vis me flere, (says he,) delendum est primum tibi tibi.*” Now, the meaning of a writer is always best known by

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comparing him with himself, so to say, and since Horace sets so high a value on sensibility, and since here he does not mention it in a formal enumeration of po-

ind, to his subject. He must have the *et magna sonatur*. This quality, so essential in poetry, as it is most capable of cultivation, deserves the more to be at-

