CHAPTER IX.


The grimaces and strange postures of the jougleurs seem to have had great attractions for those who witnessed them. To unrefined and uneducated minds no object conveys so perfect a notion of mirth as an ugly and distorted face. Hence it is that among the common peasantries at a country fair few exhibitions are more satisfactory than that of grinning through a horse-collar. This sentiment is largely exemplified in the sculpture especially of the middle ages, a long period, during which the general character of society presented that want of refinement which we now observe chiefly in its least cultivated classes. Among the most common decorations of our ancient churches and other mediæval buildings, are grotesque and monstrous heads and faces. Antiquity, which lent us the types of many of these monstrosities, saw in her Typhons and Gorgons a signification beyond the surface of the picture, and her grotesque masks had a general meaning, and were in a manner typical of the whole field of comic literature. The mask was less an individual grotesque to be laughed at for itself, than a perfonification of comedy. In the middle ages, on the contrary, although in some cases certain forms were often regarded as typical of certain ideas, in general the design extended no farther than the forms which the artist had given to it; the grotesque