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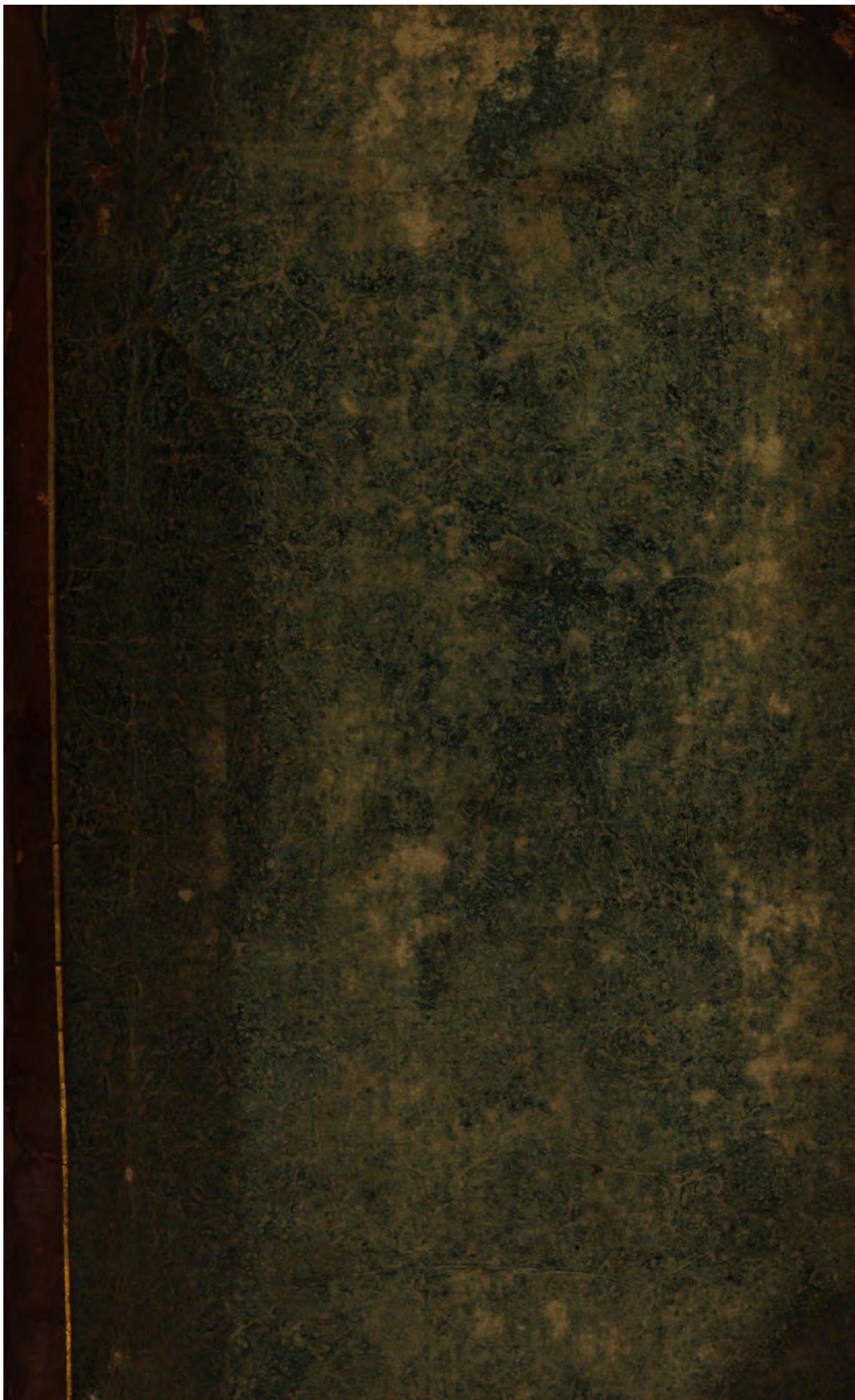
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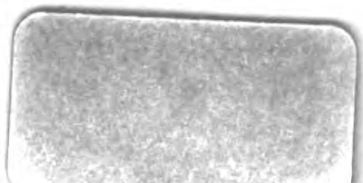


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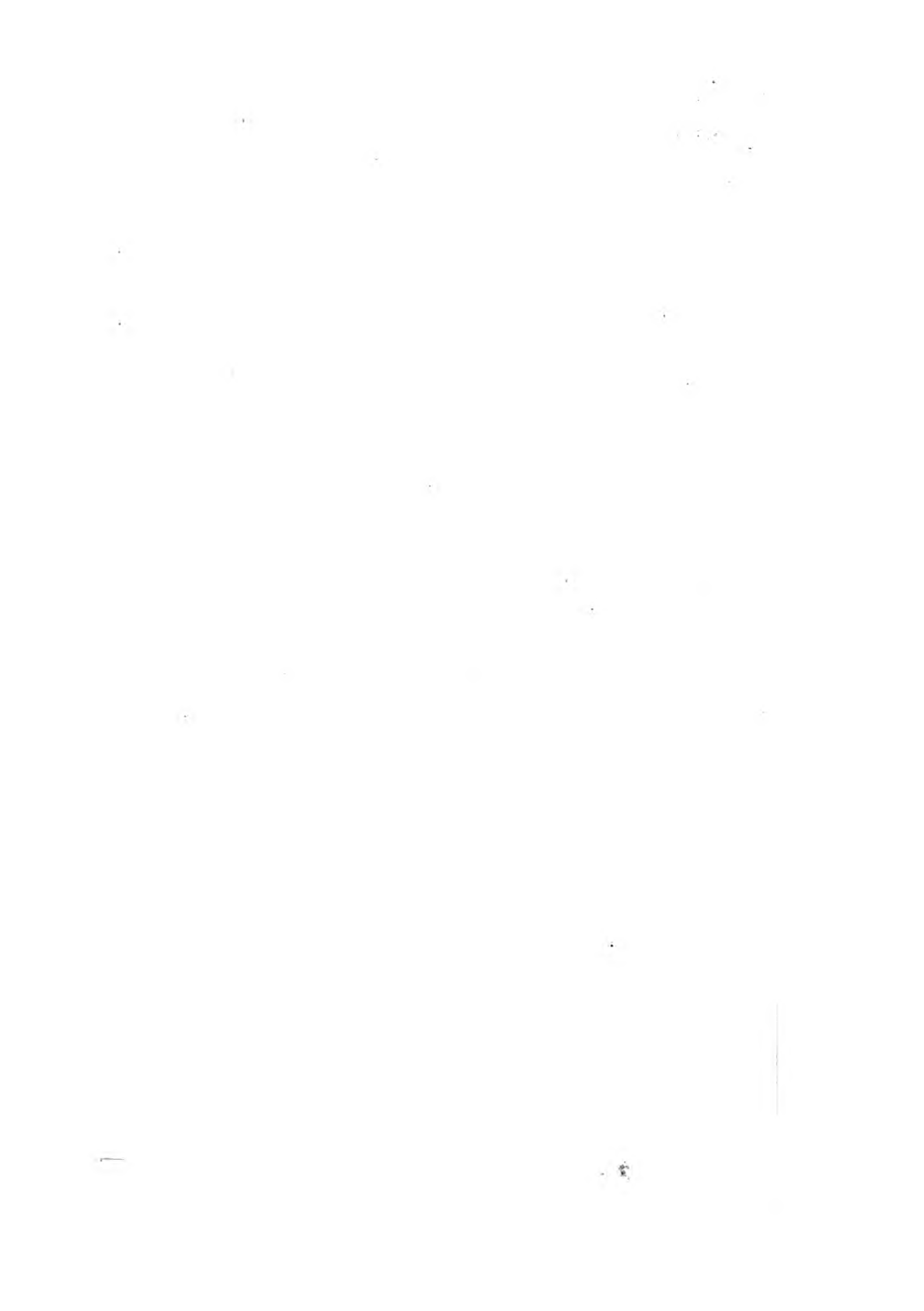
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Anker Smith sculp.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, L.L.D.

THE
LIFE OF JOHNSON,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THE admission of Dr. Johnson's poems into the supplement to his own collection, published in 1793, renders some account of his life necessary in this place. I am aware that the following is short and may not be thought satisfactory, for what can be satisfactory to those who have read Mr. Boswell's very interesting volumes, and who that has read them is unacquainted with the mind, the habits, the genius of Dr. Johnson? Still as some account is indispensable to preserve the uniformity of our plan, an attempt has been made to compress the leading events of his life in a short narrative, which may perhaps refresh the memory, although it can add nothing to the vast fund of information already before the public.

This highly distinguished writer was born on the 18th of September 1709, at Litchfield in Staffordshire, where his father Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, was at that time a bookseller and stationer. His mother, Sarah Ford, was a native of Warwickshire, and sister to Dr. Ford, physician, who was father to Cornelius Ford, a clergyman of loose character, whom Hogarth has satirized in one of the prints of his *Modern Midnight Conversation*.

Our author was the eldest of two sons. Nathaniel, the youngest, died in 1737, in his twenty-fifth year. The father was a man of robust body and active mind, yet occasionally depressed by melancholy, which Samuel inherited, and, with the aid of a stronger mind, was not always able to shake off. He was also a steady high-churchman, and an adherent of the house of Stuart, a prejudice which his son outlived in the nation at large, without entirely conquering in himself. Mrs. Johnson was a woman of good natural understanding, unimproved by education, and our author acknowledged, with gratitude, that she endeavoured to instil sentiments of piety as soon as he was capable of any instruction. There is little else in his family history worthy of notice, nor had he much pleasure in tracing his pedigree. He venerated others, however, who could produce a recorded ancestry; and used to say, that in him this was disinterested, for he could scarcely tell who was his grandfather.

That he was remarkable in his early years has been supposed, but many proofs have not been advanced by his biographers. He had, indeed, a retentive memory, and soon discovered symptoms of an impetuous temper, but these circumstances are not enough to distinguish him from hundreds of children who never attain eminence. In his infancy he was afflicted with the scrophula, which injured his sight, and he was carried to London to receive the royal touch from the hand of queen Anne, the last of our sovereigns who encouraged that popular superstition.

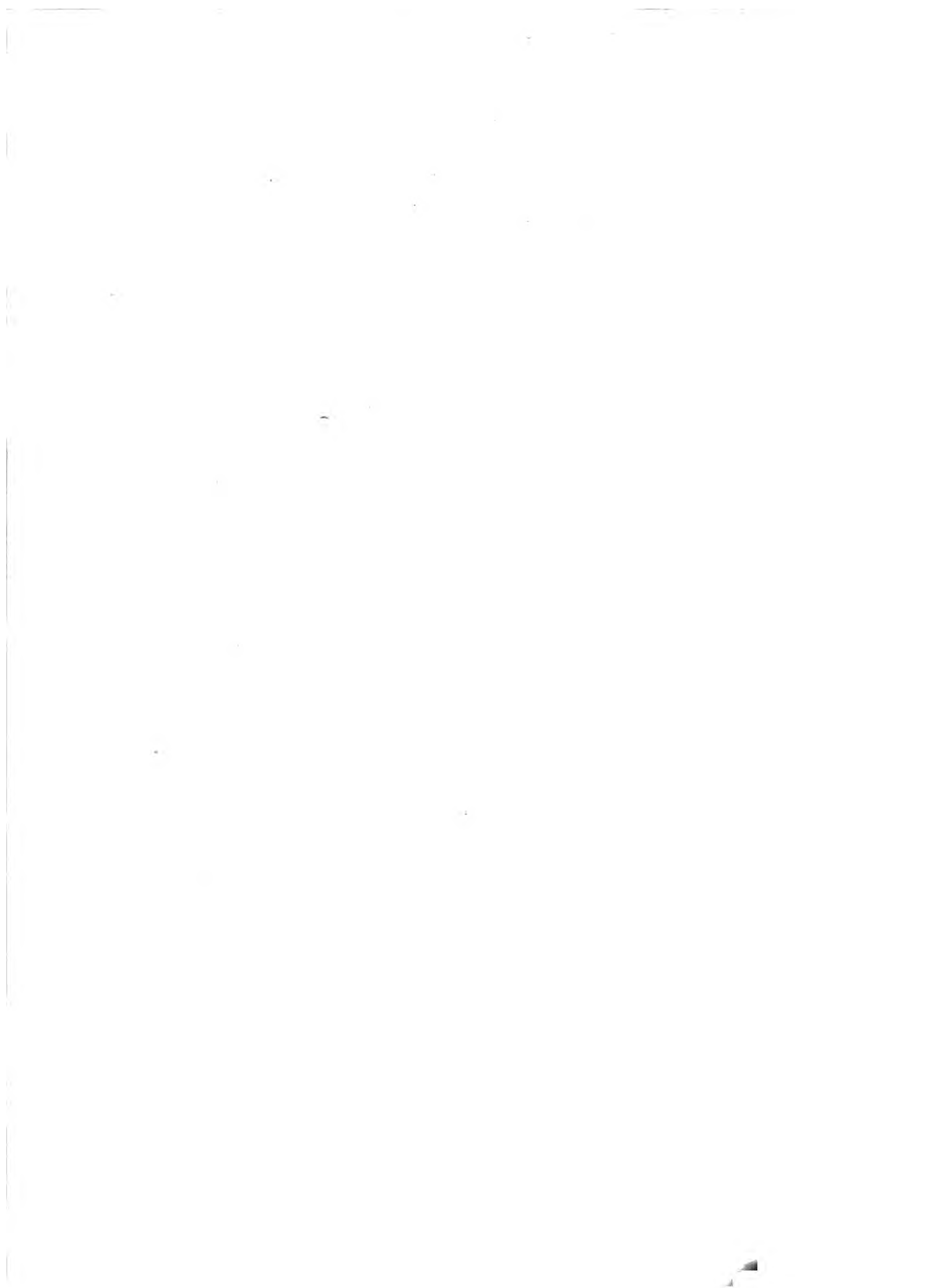
He was first taught to read English by a woman who kept a school for young children at Litchfield, and afterwards by one Brown. Latin he learned at Litchfield-school, under Mr. Hunter, a man of severe discipline, but an attentive teacher. Johnson owned that he needed correction, and that his master did not spare him, but this instead of being the cause of unpleasant recollections in his advanced life, served only to convince him that severity in school-education is necessary, and in all his conversations on the subject, he persisted in pleading for a liberal use of the rod.

At this school his superiority was soon acknowledged by his companions, who could not refuse submission to the ascendancy which he acquired. His proficiency, however, as in every part of his life, exceeded his apparent diligence. He could learn more than others in the same allotted time, and he was learning when he seemed to be idle. He betrayed an early aversion to stated tasks, but, if roused, he could recover the time he appeared to have lost with great facility. Yet he seems afterwards to have been conscious that much depends on regularity of study, and we find him often prescribing to himself stated portions of reading, and recommending the same to others. No man perhaps was ever more sensible of his failings, or avowed them with more candour, nor, indeed, would many of them have been known, if he had not exhibited them as warnings.

His memory was uncommonly tenacious, and to his last days he prided himself on it, considering a defect of memory as the prelude of total decay. Perhaps he carried this doctrine rather too far, when he asserted that the occasional failure of memory in a man of seventy must imply something radically wrong; but it may be in general allowed that the memory is a pretty accurate standard of mental strength.

Although his weak sight prevented him from joining in the amusements of his school-fellows, for which he was otherwise well qualified by personal courage and an ambition to excell, he found an equivalent pleasure in sauntering in the fields, or reading such books as came into his way, particularly old romances. For these he retained a fondness throughout life, but was wise and candid enough to attribute to them, in some degree, that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his fixing in any profession.

About the age of fifteen, he paid a long visit to his uncle Cornelius Ford, but on his return his master, Hunter, refused to receive him again on the foundation of Litchfield-school; what his reasons were is not known. He was now removed to the school of Stourbridge in Worcestershire, where he remained about a year, with very little acquisition of knowledge but here, as well as at Lichfield, he gave several proofs of his inclination to poetry, and afterwards published some of



these juvenile productions in the Gentleman's Magazine. From Stourbridge he returned home, where he remained about two years, without any regular application. His time, however, was not entirely wasted, as he employed it in reading many of the ancient writers, and stored his mind with so much various information, that when he went to Oxford, Dr. Adams said he "was the best qualified for the university that he had ever known come there."

By what means his father was enabled to defray the expense of an university education has not been very accurately told. It is generally reported that he went to assist the studies of a young gentleman of the name of Corbet. His friend, Dr. Taylor, assured Mr. Boswell, that he never could have gone to college, had not a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his school-fellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion, though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman. He was, however, entered a commoner of Pembroke College on the 31st October 1728. His tutor was Mr. Jordan, a fellow of Pembroke, a man whom Johnson mentioned with respect many years after, but to whose instructions he did not pay much regard, except that he formally attended his lectures, as well as those in the College-hall. It was at Jordan's request that he translated Pope's Messiah into Latin verse, as a Christmas exercise. Pope is said to have expressed his high approbation of it, but critics in that language, among whom Pope could never be ranked, have not considered Johnson's Latin poems as the happiest of his compositions. When Jordan left college to accept of a living, Johnson became a scholar of Dr. Adams, who was afterwards the head of Pembroke, and with whom Johnson maintained a strict friendship to the last hour of his life.

During the vacation, in the following year, he suffered severely by an attack of his constitutional melancholy, accompanied by alternate irritation, fretfulness and languor. It appears, however, that he resisted his disorder by every effort of a great mind, and proved that it did not arise from want of mental resources, or weakness of understanding. On his return to the university, he probably continued his desultory manner of reading, and occasionally formed resolutions of regular study, in which he seldom persisted. Among his companions he was looked up to as a young man of wit and spirit, singular and unequal in temper, impatient of college rules, and not over respectful to his seniors. Such at least seems to be the result of Mr. Boswell's inquiries, but little is known with certainty, except what is painful to relate, that he either put on an air of gaiety to conceal his anxious cares, or secluded himself from company that that poverty might not be known which at length compelled him to leave college without a degree.

He now (1731) returned to Litchfield, with very gloomy prospects. His father died a few months after his return, and the little he left behind him was barely sufficient for the temporary support of his widow. In the following year our author accepted the place of usher of the school of Market Bosworth in Leicestershire, an employment which the pride of sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron, soon rendered irksome, and he threw it up in a disgust which recurred whenever he recollected this part of his history. For six months after, he resided at Birmingham as the guest of Mr. Hector, an eminent surgeon, and is supposed during that time to have furnished some periodical essays for a newspaper printed by Warren a bookseller in

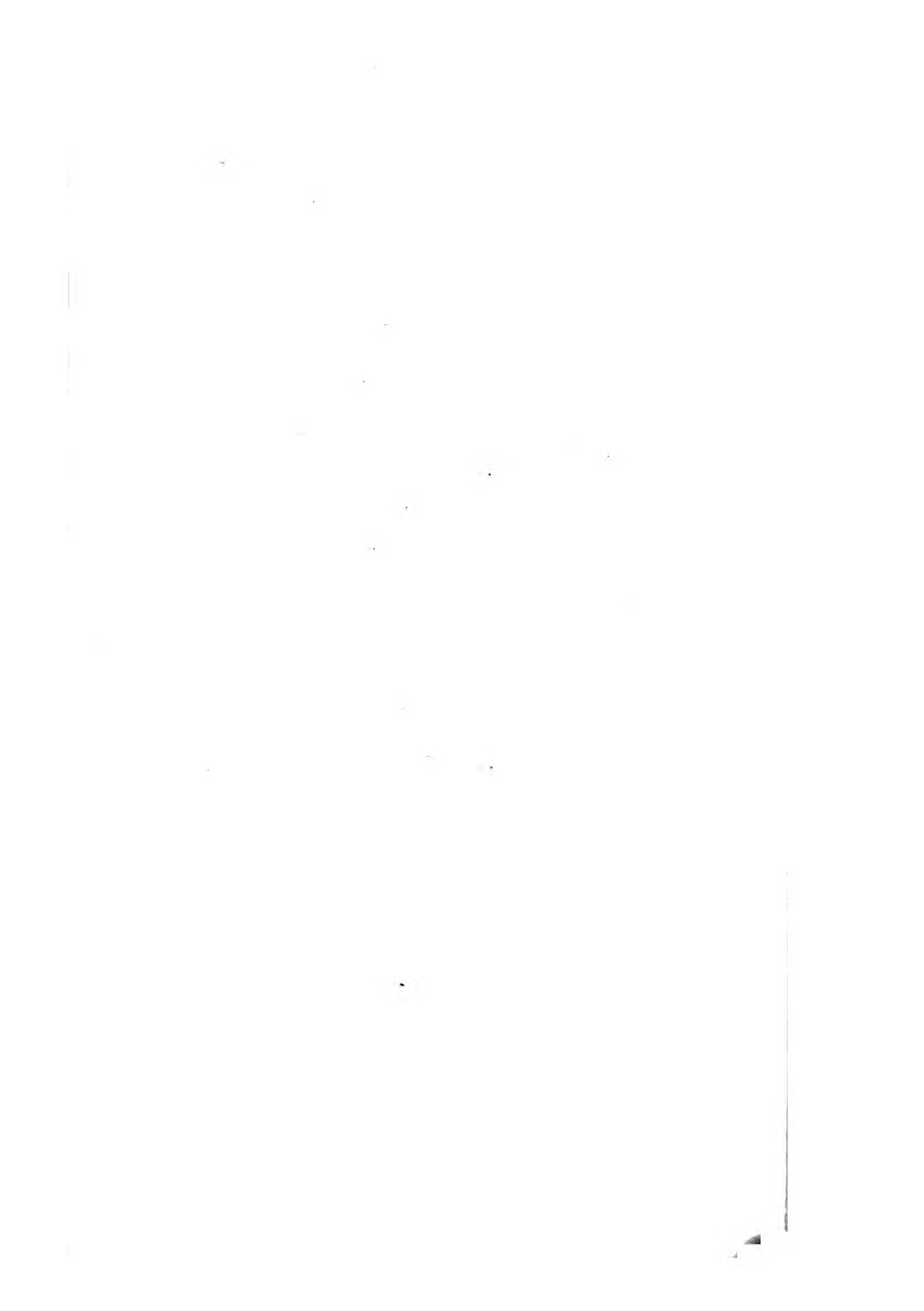
Birmingham. Here, too, he abridged and translated *Father Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia*, which was published in 1735 by Bettesworth and Hitch in Paternoster Row, London. For this, his first literary performance, he received the small sum of five guineas. In the translation there is little that marks the hand of Johnson, but in the preface and dedication are a few passages in the same energetic and manly style which he may be said to have invented, and to have taught to his countrymen.

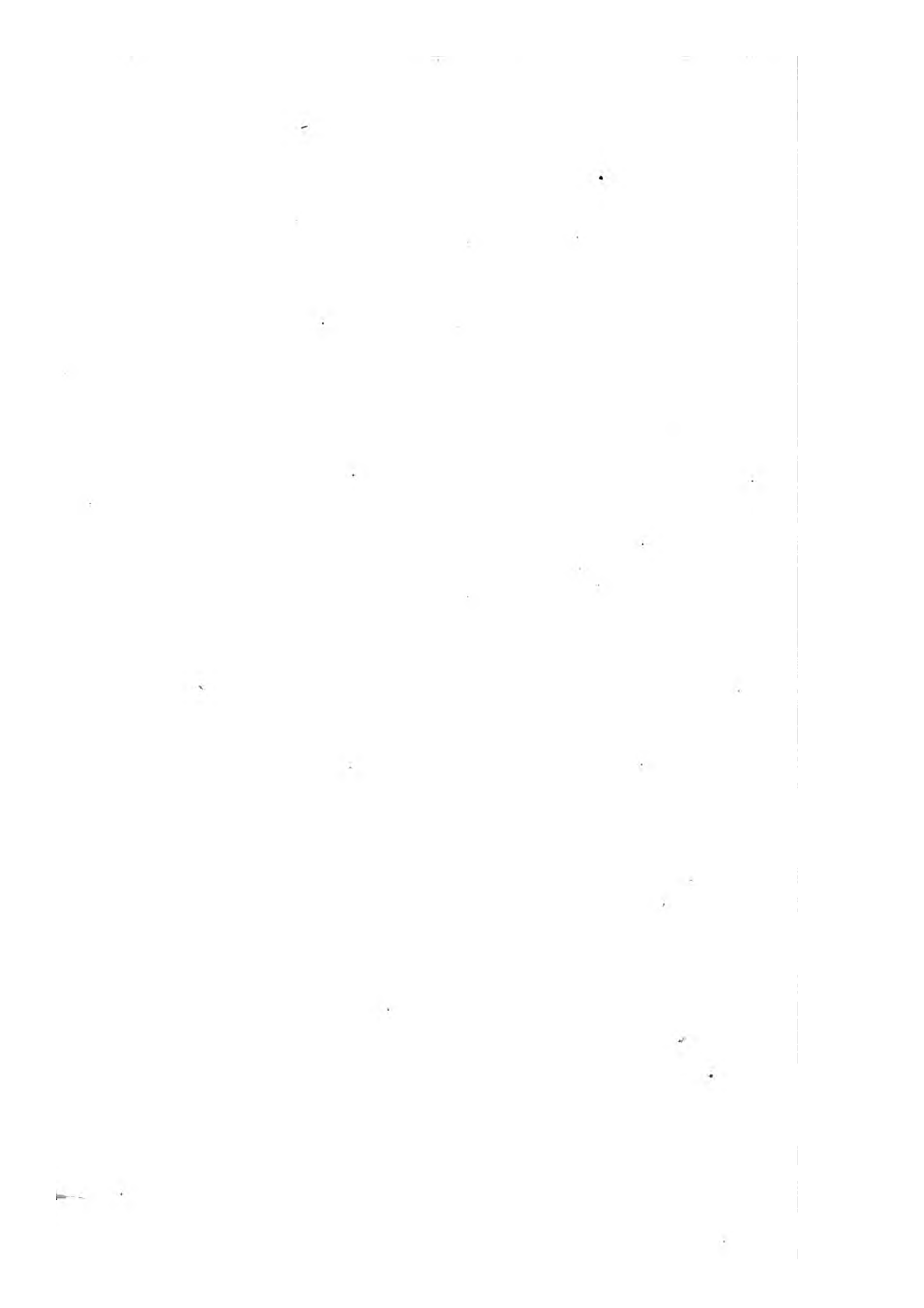
In 1734, he returned to Litchfield, and issued proposals for an edition of the Latin poems of Politian, with the history of Latin poetry, from the era of Petrarch to the time of Politian, and also the life of Politian; the book to be printed in thirty octavo sheets, price five shillings. Those who have not attended to the literary history of this country will be surprised that such a work could not be undertaken without the precaution of a subscription, and they will regret that in this case the subscription was so inadequate to the expense of printing as to deter our author from executing what probably would have made him known and patronized by the learned world.

Disappointed in this scheme, he offered his services to Mr. Cave, the proprietor and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, who had given some proofs of a liberal spirit of enterprize in calling forth the talents of unknown and ingenious writers. On this occasion he suggested some improvements in the management of the Magazine and specified the articles which he was ready to supply. Cave answered his letter, but it does not appear that any agreement was formed at this time. He soon, however, entered into a connection of a more tender kind, which ended in marriage. His wife, who was about twenty years older than himself, was the widow of Mr. Porter, a mercer of Birmingham, a lady whose character has been variously represented, but seldom to her discredit. She was, however, the object of his first passion, and although they did not pass the whole time of their union in uninterrupted harmony, he lamented her death with unfeigned sorrow, and retained an enthusiastic veneration for her memory.

She had a fortune of eight hundred pounds, and with part of this he hired a large house at Edial near Litchfield, which he fitted up as an academy, where young gentlemen were to be boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages. Gilbert Walmsley, a man of learning and worth, whom he has celebrated by a character drawn with unparalleled elegance, endeavoured to promote this plan, but it proved abortive. Three pupils only appeared, one of whom was David Garrick: with these he made a shift to keep the school open for about a year and a half, and was then obliged to discontinue it, perhaps not much against his inclination. No man knew better than Johnson what ought to be taught, but the business of education was confessedly repugnant to his habits and his temper.

During this short residence at Edial, he wrote a considerable part of his *Irene*, which Mr. Walmsley advised him to prepare for the stage, and it was probably by this gentleman's advice that he determined to try his fortune in London. His pupil Garrick had formed the same resolution, and in March 1737, they arrived in London together. Garrick, after some farther preparatory education, was designed for the study of the law, but in three or four years went on the stage, obtained the highest honours that dramatic fame could confer, with a fortune splendid





beyond all precedent. The difference in the lot of these two young men might lead to many reflections on the taste of the age, and the value of its patronage, but they are too obvious to be obtruded on any reader of feeling or judgment, and to others they would be unintelligible.

In what manner Johnson was employed for some time after his arrival in London, is not known. He brought a small sum of money with him, and he husbanded it with frugality, while he mixed in such society as was accessible to a friendless and uncourtly scholar, and amused himself in contemplating the manners of the metropolis. It appears that at one time he took lodgings at Greenwich, and proceeded by fits to complete his tragedy. He renewed his application also to Cave, sending him a specimen of a translation of the History of the Council of Trent, and desiring to know if Cave would join in the publication of it. Cave appears to have consented, for twelve sheets were printed for which our author received forty-nine pounds, but another translation being announced about the same period (1738) by a rival whose name was also Samuel Johnson, librarian of St. Martins in the Fields, our author desisted, and the other design was also dropped.

In the course of the summer he went to Litchfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson, and there, during a residence of three months, finished his tragedy for the stage. On his return to London with Mrs. Johnson, he endeavoured to prevail on Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury-lane theatre, to accept Irene, but in this was unsuccessful, and having no interest with any other manager, he laid aside his play in pursuit of literary employment. He had now become personally known to Cave, and began to contribute to the Magazine original poetry, Latin, and English translations, biographical sketches, and other miscellaneous articles, particularly the debates in parliament, under the name of the Senate of Lilliput. At that time the debates were not allowed to be published, as now, the morning after the day of meeting, and the only safe mode of conveying the substance of them to the public was by adopting a historical form at more distant periods. At first, Johnson merely revised the manuscript as written by Guthrie¹, who then supplied this department of the Magazine, but when Guthrie had attained a higher rank among authors, the whole devolved on his coadjutor. His only materials were a few notes supplied by persons who attended the houses of parliament, from which, and sometimes from information even more scanty, he compiled a series of speeches, of which the sentiments as well as the style were often his own. In his latter days he disapproved of this practice, and desisted from writing the speeches as soon as he found they were thought genuine.

The value of his contributions to this Magazine must have been soon acknowledged. It was then in its infancy, and there is a visible improvement from the time he began to write for it. Cave had a contriving head, but with too much of literary quackery. Johnson, by recommending original or selected pieces calculated to improve the taste and judgment of the public, raised the dignity of the Magazine above its contemporaries, and to him we certainly owe, in a great measure, the various information and literary history for which that miscellany has ever

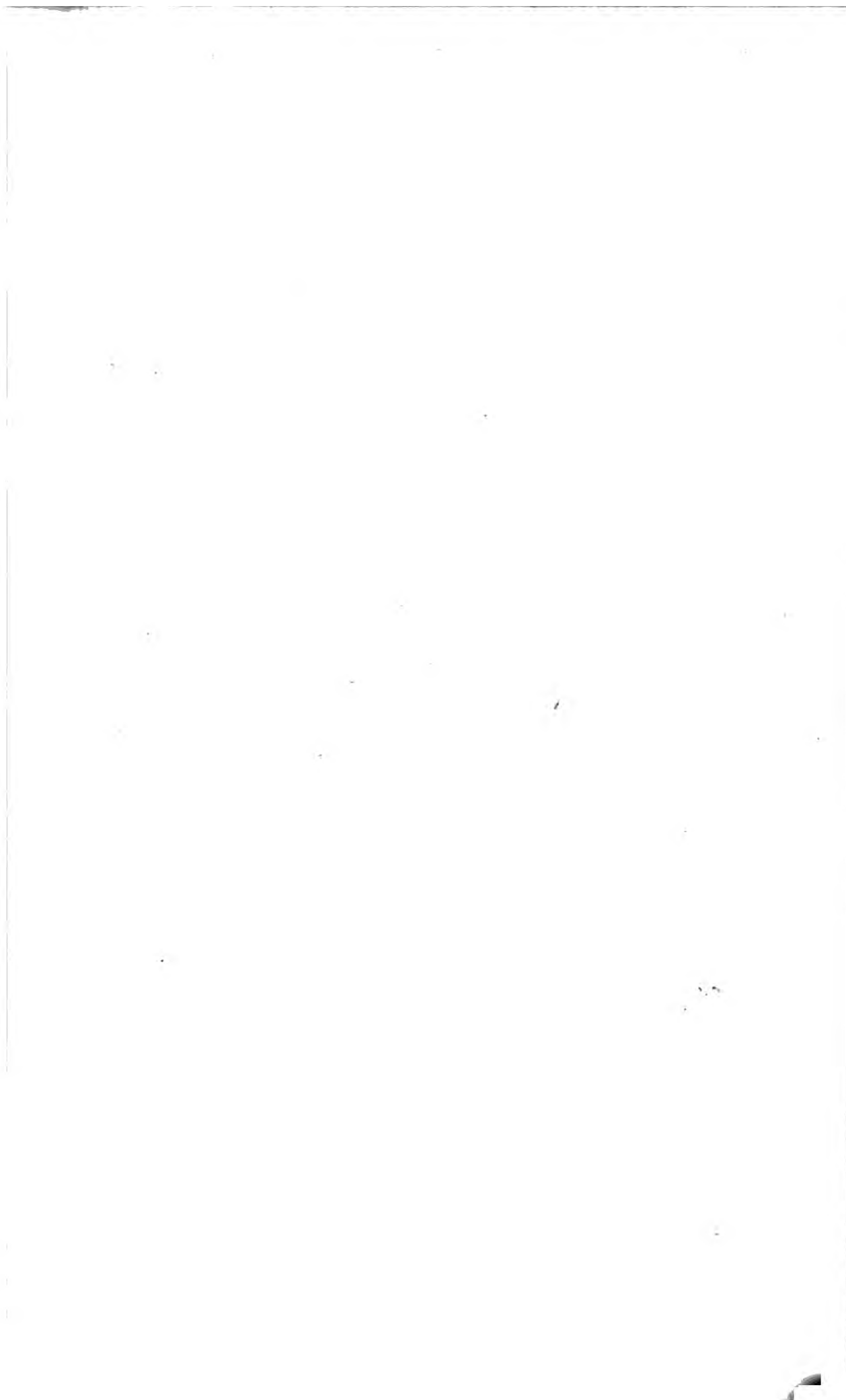
¹ Guthrie composed the parliamentary speeches from July 1736, and Johnson succeeded him November 1740, and continued them to February 1742-3. C.

been distinguished, and in which it has never been interrupted by a successful rival. By some manuscript memorandums concerning Dr. Johnson, written by the late Dr. Farmer, and obligingly given to me by Mr. Nichols, it appears that he was considered as the conductor or editor of the Magazine for some time, and received an hundred pounds per annum from Cave.

In the year 1738, he made his name at once known and highly respected among the eminent men of his time, by the publication of *London*, a piece in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal. The history of this publication is not uninteresting. Young authors did not then present themselves to the public without much cautious preparation. Johnson conveyed his poem to Cave as the production of another, of one who was "under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune," and as some small encouragement to the printer, he not only offered to correct the press, but even to alter any stroke of satire which he might dislike. Cave, whose heart appears to more advantage in this than in some other of his transactions with authors, sent a present to Johnson for the use of his poor friend, and afterwards, it appears, recommended Dodsley as a purchaser. Dodsley had just begun business, and had speculated but on a few publications of no great consequence. He had, however, judgment enough to discern the merit of the poem now submitted to him, and bargained for the whole property. The sum Johnson received was ten guineas, and such were his circumstances, or such the state of literary property at that time, that he was fully content, and was ever ready to acknowledge Dodsley's useful patronage.

The poem was accordingly published in May 1738, and on the same morning with Pope's Satire of Seventeen Hundred and Thirty Eight. Johnson's was so eagerly bought up, that a second edition became necessary in less than a week. Pope behaved on this occasion with great liberality. He bestowed high praise on the *London*, and intimated that the author, whose name had not yet appeared, could not be long concealed. In this poem may be observed some of those political prejudices for which Johnson contended more frequently afterwards. He thought proper to join in the popular clamour against the administration of sir Robert Walpole, but lived to reflect with more complacency on the conduct of that minister when compared with some of his successors.

His *London* procured him fame, and Cave was not sorry to have engaged the services of a man whose talents had now the stamp of public approbation. Whether he had offers of patronage, or was thought a formidable enemy to the minister, is not so certain, but having leisure to calculate how little his labours were likely to produce, he soon began to wish for some establishment of a more permanent kind. With this view an offer was made to him of the mastership of the school of Appleby in Leicestershire, the salary of which was about sixty pounds, but the laws of the school required that the candidate should be a master of arts. The university of Oxford, when applied to, refused to grant this favour. Earl Gower was then solicited in behalf of Johnson, by Pope, who knew him only as the author of *London*. His lordship accordingly wrote to Swift, soliciting a diploma from the university of Dublin, but for what reason we are not told, this application too was unsuccessful. Mr. Murphy says, "There is reason to think that Swift declined to meddle in the business: and to that circumstance Johnson's known dislike of Swift has often been imputed." That Swift declined to meddle



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in the business is not improbable, for it appears by his letters of this date (August 1738) that he was incapable of attending to any business: but Johnson's *Life of Swift* proves that his dislike had a more honourable foundation.

About this time Johnson formed a design of studying the civil law, in order to practise in the Commons, yet this also was rendered impossible for want of a degree, and he was obliged to resume his labours in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The various articles which came from his pen are enumerated in chronological series by Mr. Boswell. It will be sufficient for the present sketch to notice only his more important productions, or such as were of sufficient consequence to be published separately.

In 1739, he wrote *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage*, from the malicious and scandalous *Aspersions of Mr. Brooke*, Author of *Gustavus Vasa*: and a political tract entitled *Marmor Norfolciense*, or an *Essay on an ancient prophetic Inscription, in monkish Rhyme, lately discovered near Lynne in Norfolk*, by *Probus Britannicus*. These pieces, it is almost needless to add, were ironical, a mode of writing in which our author was not eminently successful. Some notice has already been taken of *Gustavus Vasa* in the *Life of Brooke*. The *Marmor Norfolciense* was a severe attack on the *Walpole administration* and on the reigning family: but whether it was not well understood, or when understood, considered as feeble, it certainly was not much attended to by the friends of government, nor procured to the author the reputation of a dangerous opponent. *Sir John Hawkins* indeed says, that a prosecution was ordered, but of this no traces can be found in any of the public offices. One of his political enemies reprinted it in the year 1775, to show what a change had been effected in his principles by a pension, but the publisher does not seem to have known how little change was really effected, and how little was necessary to render Johnson a loyal subject to his munificent sovereign, and a determined enemy of the popular politics of that time.

His next publication of any note was his *Life of Savage*, which he afterwards prefixed to that poet's works when admitted into his collection. With *Savage* he had been for some time intimately acquainted, but how long is not known. They met at *Cave's* house. Johnson admired his abilities, and while he sympathized with the very singular train of misfortunes which placed him among the indigent, was not less touched by his pride of spirit, and the lofty demeanour with which he treated those who neglected him. In all *Savage's* virtues, there was much in common with Johnson, but his narrative shows with what nicety he could separate his virt from his vices, and blame even firmness and independence when they degene. ed into obstinacy and misanthropy. He has concealed none of *Savage's* failings, and what appears of the exculpatory kind, is merely an endeavour to present a just view of that unfortunate combination of circumstances by which *Savage* was driven from the paths of decent and moral life; and to incite every reflecting person to put the important question "who made me to differ?"

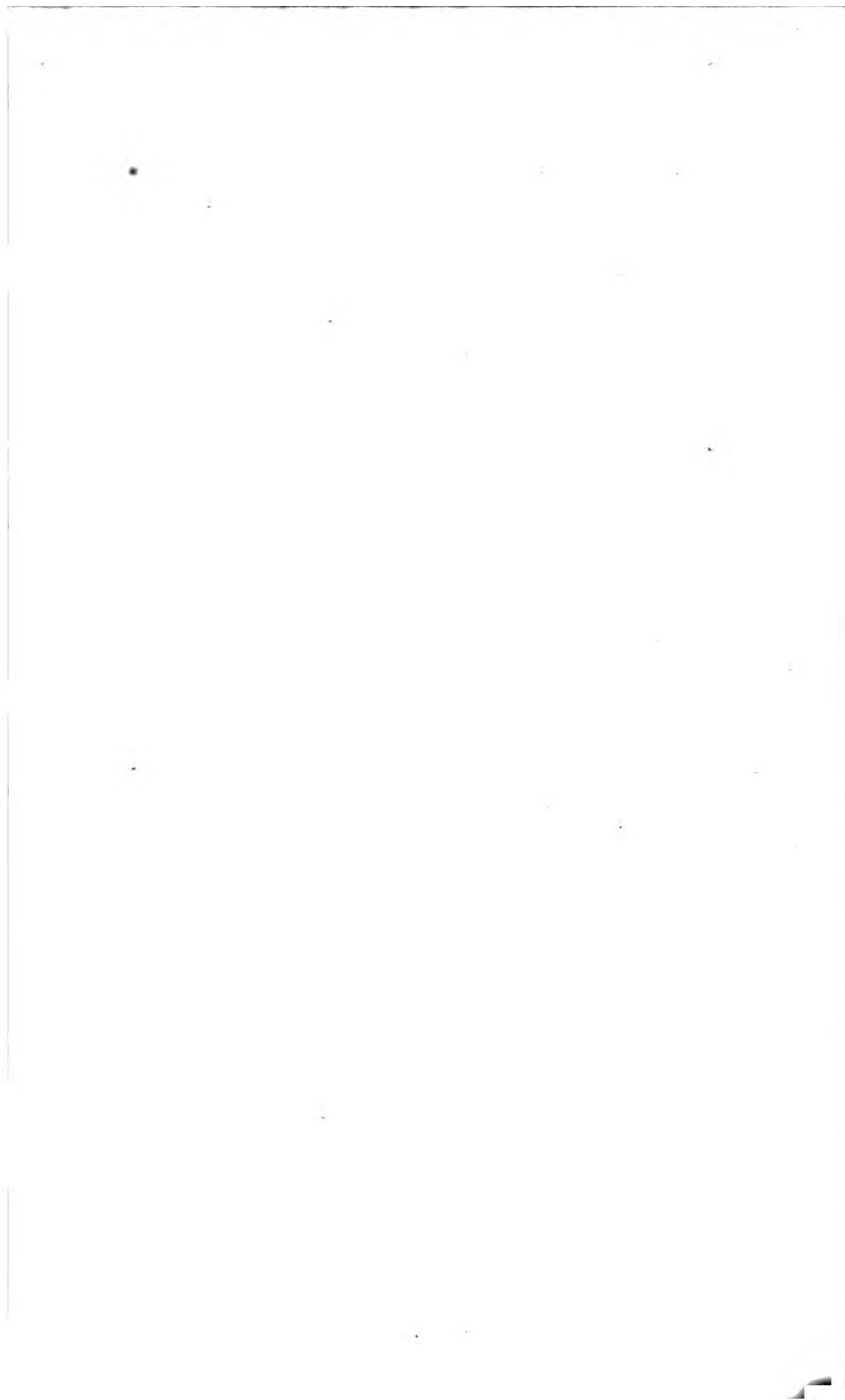
This *Life*, of which two editions were very speedily sold, affords an extraordinary proof of the facility with which Johnson composed. He wrote forty-eight pages of the printed copy in the course of a day, or night, for it is not very clear which.

His biographer who records this, enters at the same time into a long discussion intended to prove that Savage was not the son of the countess of Macclesfield ; but had this been possible, it would surely have been accomplished when the proof might have been rendered unanswerable.

In 1745, he published *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, with *Remarks on Sir Thomas Hanmer's edition of Shakspeare*, to which he affixed proposals for a new edition of that poet, and it is probable he was now devoting his whole time to this undertaking, as we find a suspension of his periodical contributions during the years 1745 and 1746. It is perhaps too rash to conclude that he declined writing in the Magazine because he would not join in the support of government during the rebellion in Scotland ; but there are abundant proofs in *Mr. Boswell's Life*, that his sentiments were favourable to that attempt. As to his plan of an edition of Shakspeare, he had many difficulties to encounter. Little notice was taken of his proposals, and Warburton was known to be engaged in a similar undertaking. Warburton, however, had the liberality to praise his observations on *Macbeth*, as the production of a man of parts and genius : and Johnson never forgot the favour. Warburton, he said, praised him when praise was of value.

In 1747, he resumed his labours in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and although many entire pieces cannot be ascertained to have come from his pen, he was frequently, if not constantly, employed to superintend the materials of the magazine, and several introductory passages may be pointed out which bear evident marks of his composition. In this year his old pupil and friend, Garrick, became manager of *Drury-lane theatre*, and obtained from Johnson a prologue, which is generally esteemed one of the finest productions of that kind in our language. In this year also he issued his plan for a *Dictionary of the English language*.

The design of this great work was at first suggested by Dodsley, and Johnson, having consented to undertake it, entered into an agreement with the booksellers for the sum of fifteen hundred guineas, which he was to receive in small payments proportioned to the quantity of manuscript sent to press. The plan was addressed to the celebrated earl of Chesterfield, who had discovered an inclination to be the patron of the author, and Johnson having made suitable preparations, hired a house in *Gough-Square*, engaged amanuenses, and began a task which he carried on by fits, as inclination and health permitted, for nearly eight years. His amanuenses were six in number, and employed upon what may be termed the mechanical part of the work, but their expenses and his own were so considerable, that before the work was concluded, he had received the whole of the money stipulated for in his agreement with the proprietors. In what time it might have been completed, had he, to use his own phrase, "set doggedly about it," it is useless to conjecture, and it would perhaps have been hurtful to try. Whoever has been employed on any great literary work knows, not only the pleasure, but the necessity of occasional relaxation ; and Johnson's mind, stored with various knowledge, and a rich fund of sentiment, afforded him many opportunities of this kind, in addition to the love of society, which was his predominant passion. We find accordingly, that during the years in which his *Dictionary* was on hand, he accepted





some inferior employment from the booksellers, and produced some of the most valuable of his original works.

In 1749, he published his second imitation of Juvenal, under the title of the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, for which, with all the fame he had now acquired, he received only fifteen guineas. In his London, we have the manners of common life; in the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, he has given us more of his own mind, more of that train of sentiment, excited sometimes by poverty, and sometimes by disappointment, which always inclined him to view the gloomy side of human affairs.

In the same year, Garrick offered to produce his *Irene* on the Drury-lane theatre, but presumed at the same time to suggest such alterations as his superior knowledge of stage-effect might be supposed to justify. Johnson did not much like that his labours should be revised and amended at the pleasure of an actor, and with some difficulty was persuaded to yield to Garrick's advice. The play, however, was at length performed, but without much success; although the manager contrived to have it played long enough to entitle the author to the profits of his three nights, and Dodsley bought the copy right for one hundred pounds. It is now added to his poetical works, as it has ever been admired in the closet, for the propriety of its sentiments and the elegance of its language.

In 1750, he commenced a work which raised his fame yet higher than it had ever yet reached, and will probably convey his name to the latest posterity. He appears to have entered on the *Rambler* without any communication with his friends, or desire of assistance. Whether he proposed the scheme himself, is uncertain, but he was fortunate enough in forming a connexion with Mr. John Payne, a bookseller in Paternoster Row, and afterwards chief accountant in the Bank of England, a man with whom he lived many years in habits of friendship, and who on the present occasion treated him with great liberality. He engaged to pay him two guineas for each paper, or four guineas *per week*, which at that time must have been to Johnson a very considerable sum; and he admitted him to a share of the future profits of the work, when it should be collected into volumes: this share Johnson afterwards sold. As I have given a full history of this paper in another work², it may suffice to add that it began Tuesday, March 20, 1749-50, and closed on Saturday, March 14, 1752. So conscious was Johnson that his fame would in a great measure rest on this production, that he corrected the first two editions with the most scrupulous care, of which specimens are given in the volume referred to in the note.

In 1751, he was carrying on his *Dictionary* and the *Rambler*, and besides some occasional contributions to the *Magazine*, assisted in the detection of Lauder, who had imposed on him and on the world by advancing forged evidence, that Milton was a gross plagiarist. Dr. Douglas, the late bishop of Salisbury, was the first who refuted this unprincipled impostor; and Johnson, whom Lauder's ingenuity had induced to write a preface and postscript to his work, now dictated a letter addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of contrition, which Lauder subscribed. The candour of Johnson on this occasion was as readily ac-

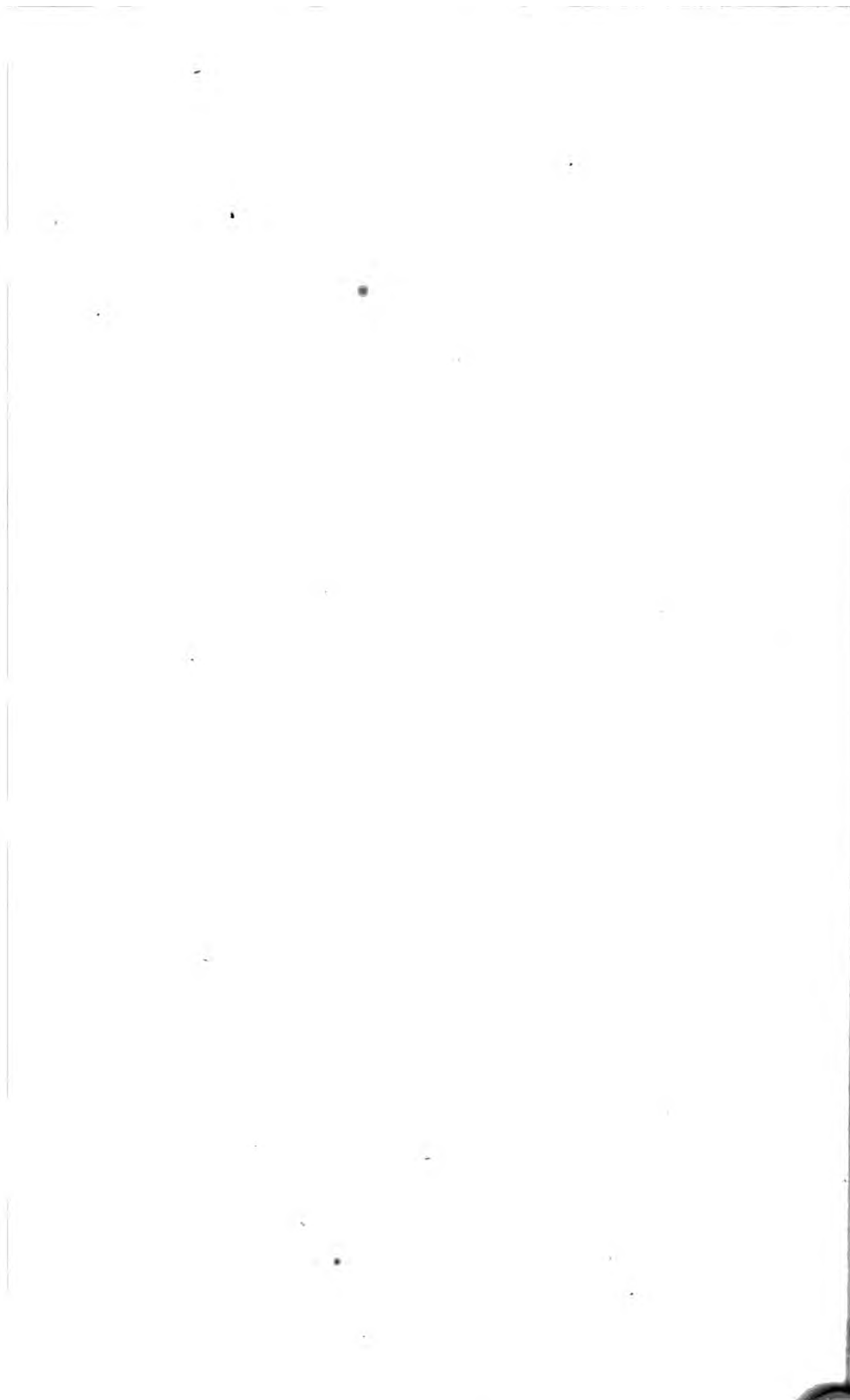
² *British Essayists*, vol. xix. Preface to the *Rambler*. C.

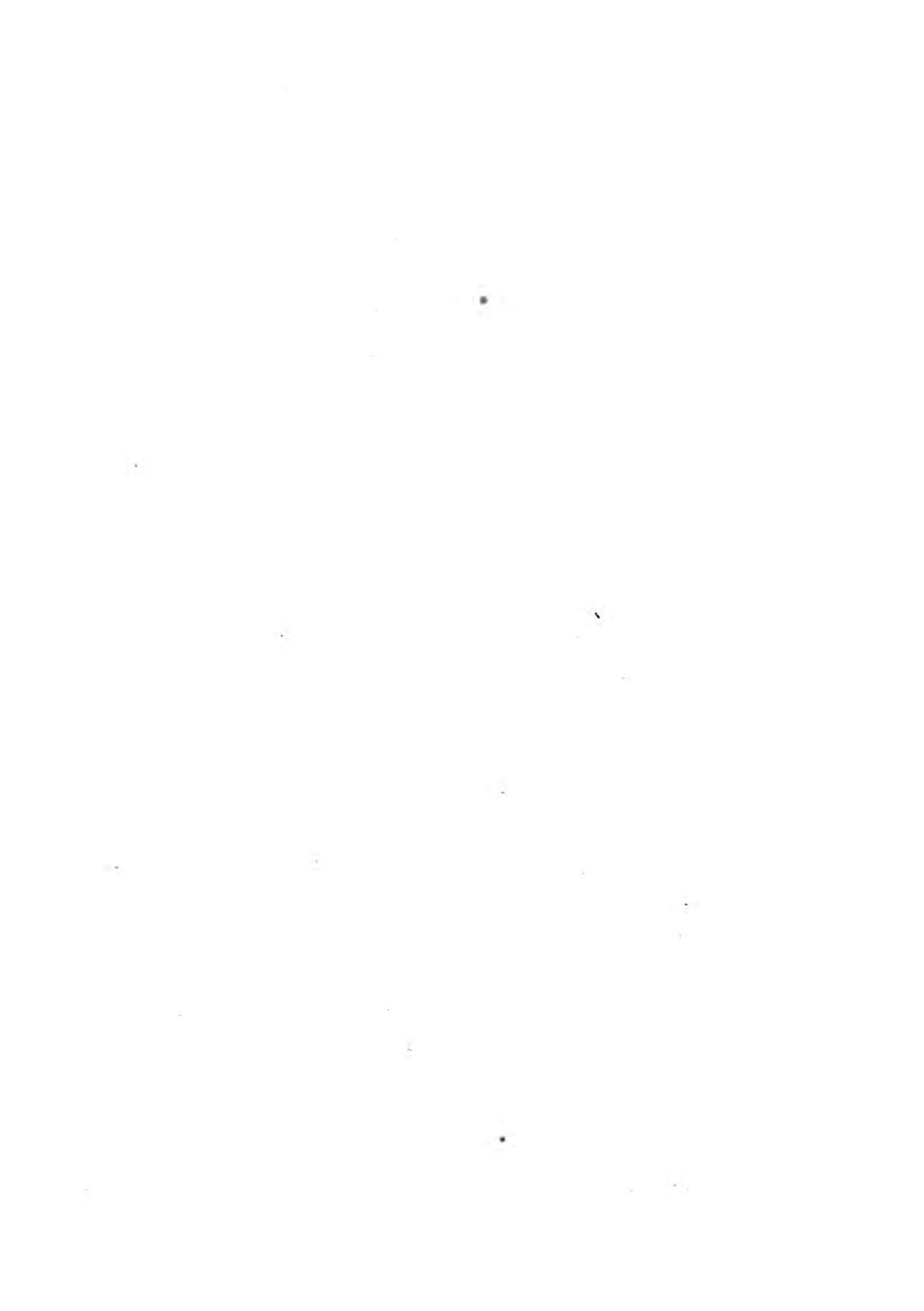
known at that time, as it has since been misrepresented by the bigotted adherents to Milton's politics. Lauder, however, returned to his "dirty work," and published in 1754, a pamphlet entitled *The Grand Impostor detected, or Milton convicted of Forgery against Charles I.*, which was reviewed with censure, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year, and probably by Johnson.

The *Rambler* was concluded on March 14, 1752, and three days after, the author's wife died, a loss which he long deplored, and never at the latest period of life recollected without emotion. Many instances of his affection for her occur in the collection of *Prayers and Meditations* published after his death, which, however they may expose him to ridicule, combine to prove that his attachment to her was uniformly sincere. She was buried at Bromley, and Johnson placed a Latin inscription on her tomb. She left a daughter by her former husband, and by her means our author became acquainted with Mrs. Anne Williams, the daughter of Zachary Williams, a physician who died about this time. Mrs. Williams was a woman of considerable talents, and her conversation was interesting. She was left in poverty by her father, and had the additional affliction of being totally blind. To relieve his melancholy reflections, Johnson took her home to his house in Gough-Square, procured her a benefit play from Garrick, and assisted her in publishing a volume of poems, by both of which schemes she raised about three hundred pounds. With this fund, she became an inmate in Johnson's house, where she passed the remainder of her days, protected and cheered by every act of kindness and tenderness which he could have showed to the nearest relation.

When he had in some measure recovered from the shock of Mrs. Johnson's death, he contributed several papers to the *Adventurer*, which was carried on by Dr. Hawkesworth and Dr. Warton. The profit of these papers he is said to have given to Dr. Bathurst, a physician of little practice, but a very amiable man, whom he highly respected. Mr. Boswell thinks he endeavoured to make them pass for Bathurst's, which is highly improbable³. In 1754, we find him approaching to the completion of his *Dictionary*. Lord Chesterfield, to whom he once looked up as to a liberal patron, had treated him with neglect, of which, after Johnson declined to pay court to such a man, he became sensible, and, as an effort at reconciliation, wrote two papers in the *World*, recommending the *Dictionary*, and soothing the author by some ingenious compliments. Had there been no previous offence, it is probable this end would have been answered, and Johnson would have dedicated the work to him. He loved praise, and from lord Chesterfield, the *Mæcenas* of the age, and the most elegant of noble writers, praise was at this time valuable. But Johnson never departed from exacting the just respect due to a man of letters, and was not to be appeased by the artifice of these protracted compliments. He could not even brook that his lordship should for a moment suppose him reconciled by his flattery, but immediately wrote that celebrated letter which has been so much admired as a model of dignified contempt. The allusion to the loss of his wife and to his present situation, is exquisitely beautiful: "The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind: but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it:

³ See this matter explained in the Preface to the *Adventurer*, *British Essayists*, vol. xxiii. C.





till *I am solitary*, and cannot impart it: till I am known, and do not want it." Lord Chesterfield is said to have concealed his feelings on this occasion with his usual art, conscious perhaps that they were not to be envied.

In 1755, the degree of master of arts was conferred upon him by the university of Oxford, after which (in May) his Dictionary was published in two large volumes folio. Of a work so well known, it is unnecessary to say more in this place, than that after the lapse of half a century, neither envy has injured, nor industry rivaled its usefulness or popularity.

In the following year, he abridged his Dictionary into an octavo size, and engaged to superintend a monthly publication entitled the *Literary Magazine, or Universal Register*. To this he contributed a great many articles enumerated by Mr. Boswell, and several reviews of new books. The most celebrated of his reviews, and one of most his finished compositions, both in point of style, argument and wit, was that of Soame Jenyns's *Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*. This attracted so much notice that the bookseller was encouraged to publish it separately, and two editions were rapidly sold. The Magazine continued about two years, after which it was dropt for want of encouragement. He wrote also, in 1756, some essays in the *Universal Visitor*, another magazine which lasted only a year. His friend Cave died in 1754, and, for whatever reason, Johnson's regular contributions appear no more in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. But he wrote a very elegant life of Cave, and was afterwards an occasional contributor. This, it would appear, was one of his worst years as to pecuniary matters. We find him, in the month of March, arrested for the sum of five pounds eighteen shillings, and relieved by Mr. Richardson. His proposal for an edition of *Shakespeare* was again revived, and subscription tickets issued out, but it did not go to press for many years after.

In 1758, the worthy John Newbery, bookseller, who frequently employed Johnson in his literary progress, began a newspaper called the *Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette*, in conjunction with Mr. John Payne. To give it an air of novelty, Johnson was engaged to write a short periodical paper, which he entitled *The Idler*. Most of these papers were written in haste, in various places where he happened to be on the eve of publication, and with very little preparation. A few of them express the train of thought which prevails in the *Rambler*; but in general they have more vivacity, and exhibit a species of grave humour in which Johnson excelled. When the *Universal Chronicle* was discontinued, these papers were collected into two small volumes, which he corrected for the press, making a few alterations, and omitting one whole paper which has since been restored.

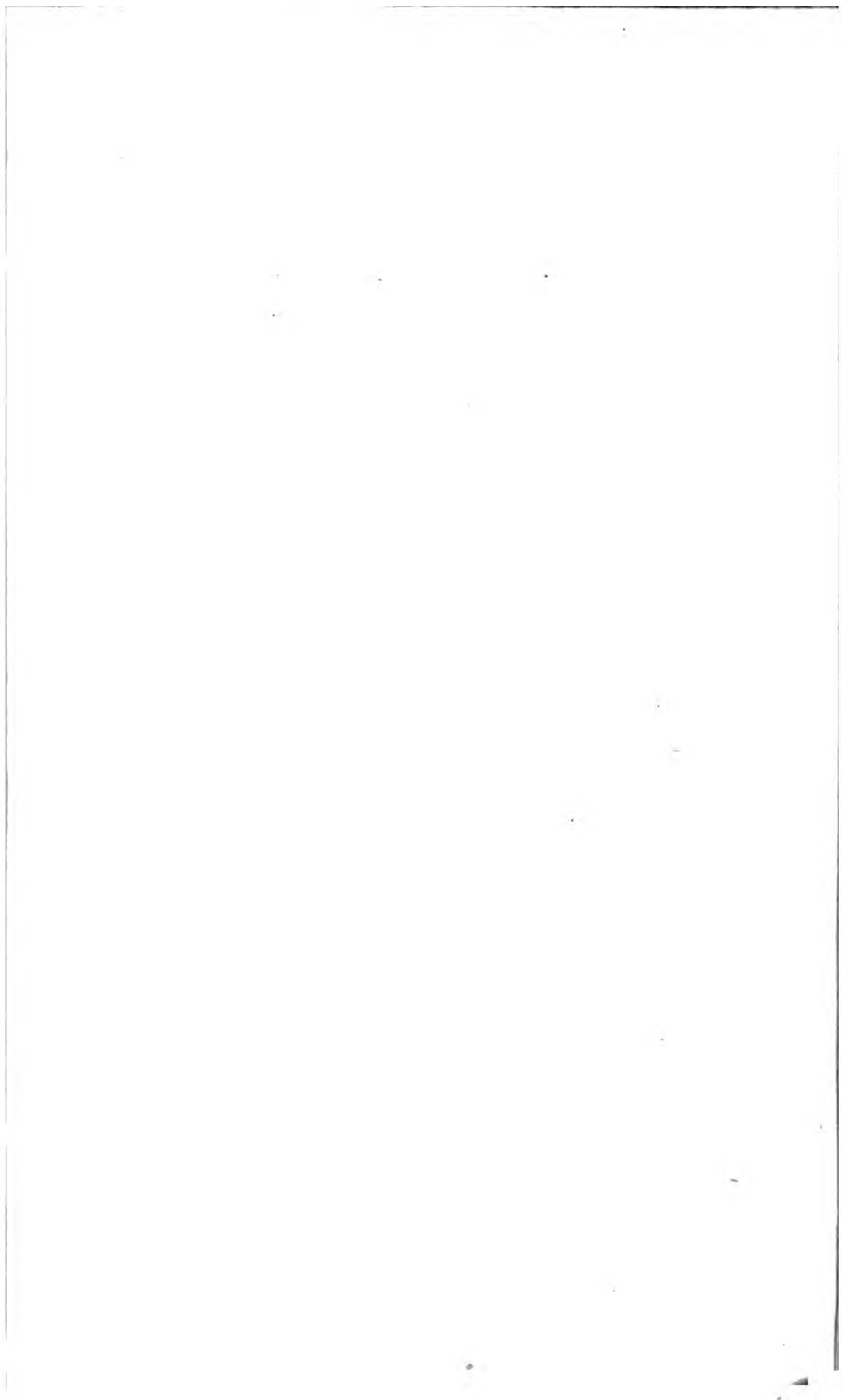
No. 41 of the *Idler* alludes to the death of his mother, which took place in 1759: he had ever loved her with anxious affection, and had contributed to her support, often when he knew not where to recruit his finances. On this event, he wrote his *Rasselas*, with a view to raise a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of her funeral, and pay some little debts she had left. His mind appears to have been powerfully excited and enriched both with the subject and the

⁴ See his very tender letters on this subject, in Boswell's *Life*, vol. i. p. 315, et seq. which are thus particularly referred to, as they are to be found only in the edition of 1807. C.

motive ; for he wrote the whole of this elegant and philosophical fiction during the evenings of one week, and sent it to press in portions as it was written. He received one hundred pounds from Messrs. Strahan, Johnston, and Dodsley, for the copy, and twenty-five more when it came, as it soon did, to a second edition. Few works of the kind have been more generally or more extensively diffused by means of translation. Yet the author, perhaps from the pain he felt in recollecting the melancholy occasion which called forth his pen, appears to have dismissed it with some degree of indifference, as soon as published ; for from that time to the year 1781, when he found it accidentally in a chaise, while travelling with Mr. Boswell, he declared he had never looked into it. His translation of Lobo probably suggested his placing the scene in Abyssinia ; but there is a little scarce volume, unnoticed by his biographers, from which I suspect he took some hints. It is entitled *The late Travels of S. Giacomo Baratti, an Italian Gentleman, into the remotest Countries of the Abyssins, or of Ethiopia Interior.* 12mo. Lond. 1670.

Among his occasional productions about this time, were his translation of a Dissertation on the Greek Comedy, for Mrs. Lennox's English version of *Brumoy*, the general Conclusion of the book ; and an Introduction to the *World Displayed*, a collection of voyages and travels, projected by his friend Newbery.—When a new bridge was about to be built over the Thames at Blackfriars, he wrote some papers against the plan of the architect, Mr. Mylne. His principal motive appears to have been his friendship for Mr. Gwyn, who had given in a plan, and probably he only clothed Gwyn's arguments in his own stately language. Such a contest was certainly not within his province, and he could derive little other advantage than the pleasure of serving his friend. He appeared more in character when he assisted his contemporaries with prefaces and dedications, which were very frequently solicited from him. Poor as he was at this time, he taught how dedications might be written without servile submission or flattery, and yet with all the courtesy, compliment and elegance, which a liberal mind could expect.

But an end was now approaching to his pecuniary embarrassments. In 1762, while he was proceeding with his edition of *Shakspeare*, he was surprised by the information that his present majesty had been pleased to grant him a pension of three hundred pounds a year, not, as has been invidiously asserted, in order to induce him to write for administration, but as the reward of his literary merit. Had it been otherwise, he had surely the strongest inducement to have exerted his talents in favour of lord Bute, by whose recommendation the pension was granted, and who at this time wanted much abler support than the hired writers of government could supply. But it is well known that he wrote no political tract for nearly eight years afterwards. He now took a house in Johnson's court, Fleet-street, and allotted an apartment for Mrs. Williams. In 1765, he was introduced to the late Mr. Thrale and family, a circumstance which contributed much to alleviate the solitudes of life, and furnished him with the enjoyment of an elegant table, and elegant society. Here an apartment was fitted up for him, which he occupied when he pleased, and he accompanied the family in their various summer excursions, which tended to exhilarate his mind, and render the return of his constitutional melancholy less frequent.



In the same year, he received a diploma from Trinity College Dublin, complimenting him with the title of doctor of laws, and after many delays, his edition of Shakspeare was published in eight volumes octavo. The preface is universally acknowledged to be one of the most elegant and acute of all his compositions. But as an illustrator of the obscurities of Shakspeare, it must be allowed he has not done much, nor was this a study for which he was eminently qualified. He was never happy when obliged to borrow from others, and he had none of that useful industry which indulges in research. Yet his criticisms have rarely been surpassed, and it is no small praise that he was the precursor of Steevens and Malone.

The success of the Shakspeare was not great, although upon the whole it increased the respect in which the literary world viewed his talents. Kenrick made the principal attack on this work, which was answered by an Oxford student, named Barclay. But neither the attack nor the answer attracted much notice.

In 1766, he furnished the preface and some of the pieces which compose a volume of poetical miscellanies by Mrs. Anna Williams. This lady was still an inmate in his house, and was indeed absolute mistress. Although her temper was far from pleasant, and she had now gained an ascendancy over him which she often maintained in a fretful and peevish manner, he forgot every thing in her distresses, and was indeed, in all his charities, which were numerous, the most remote that can be conceived from the hope of gratitude or reward. His house was filled by dependents, whose perverse tempers frequently drove him out of it, yet nothing of this kind could induce him to relieve himself at their expense. His noble expression was, "If I dismiss them, who will receive them?" Abroad, his society was now very extensive, and included almost every man of the age, distinguished for learning, and many persons of considerable rank, who delighted in his company and conversation.

In 1767, he had the honour to be admitted to a personal interview with his majesty in the library of the queen's palace. Of the conversation which passed, Mr. Boswell has given a very interesting and authentic account, which, it may here be mentioned, he prized at so high a rate, as to print it separately in a quarto sheet, and enter it in that form at Stationers' Hall, a few days before the publication of his *Life of Johnson*. He attempted in the same manner to secure Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield.—In 1767, on the institution of the Royal Academy of Arts, Johnson was appointed professor in ancient literature, and there probably was at that time some design of giving a course of lectures. But this, and the professorship of ancient history, are as yet mere sinecures.

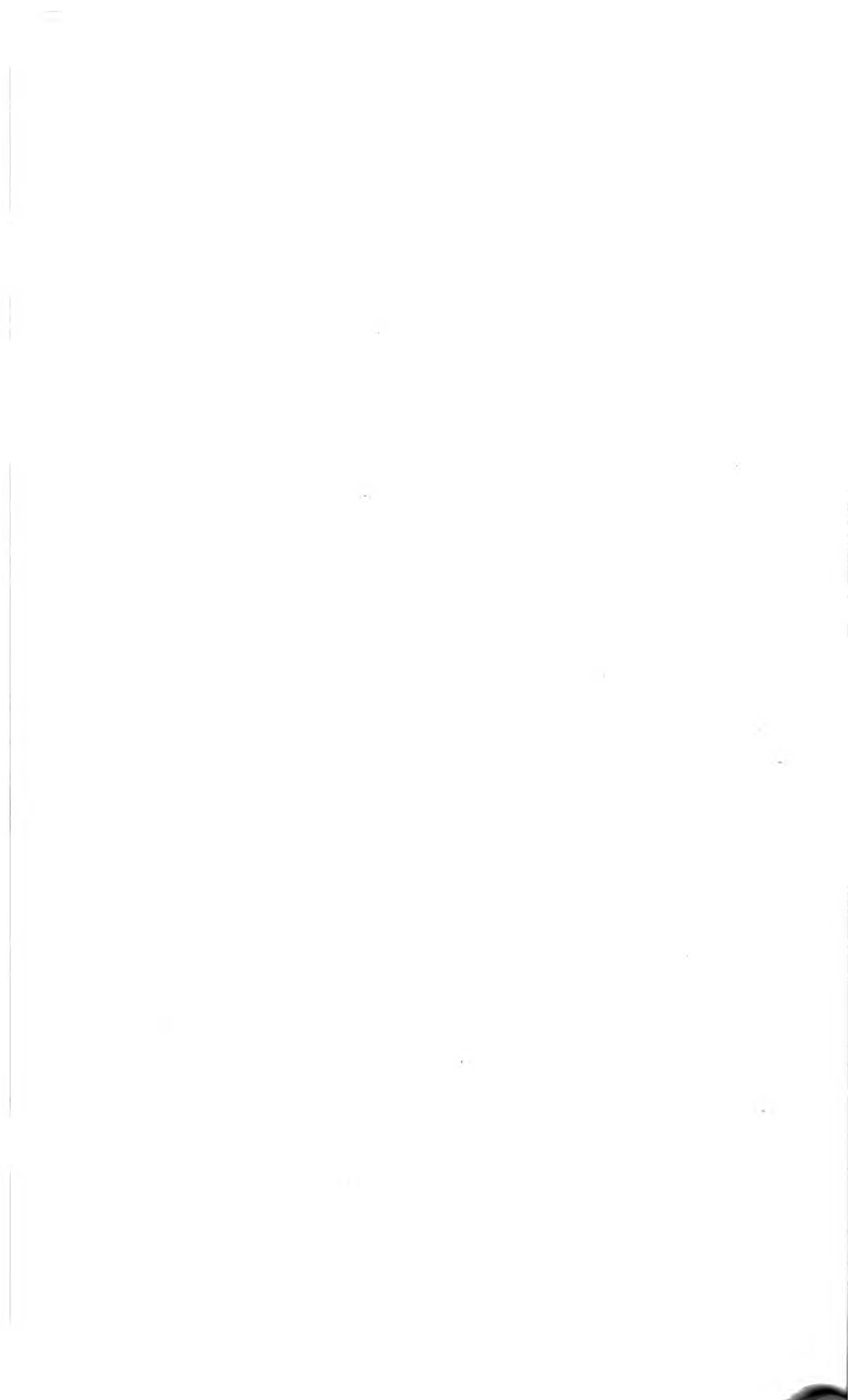
In 1770, his first political pamphlet made its appearance, in order to justify the conduct of the ministry and the house of commons in expelling Mr. Wilkes, and afterwards declaring col. Luttrell to be duly elected representative for the county of Middlesex, notwithstanding Mr. Wilkes had the majority of votes. The vivacity and pointed sarcasm of this pamphlet formed its chief recommendation, and it continues to be read as an elegant political declamation; but it failed in its main object. It made no converts to the right of incapacitating Mr. Wilkes by the act of expulsion, and the ministry had not the courage to try the question of absolute incapacitation. Wilkes lived to see the offensive resolutions expunged from the journals of the house of commons, and what seemed yet more improbable, to be reconciled

to Johnson, who, with unabated dislike of his moral character, could not help admiring his classical learning, and social talents. His pamphlet, which was entitled the *False Alarm*, was answered by two or three anonymous writers of no great note.

In 1771, he appeared to more advantage as the author of *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland Islands*, from materials partly furnished by the ministry, but highly enriched by his vigorous style, and peculiar train of thought. The object of this pamphlet was to represent the dispute respecting a barren island as an insufficient cause of war; and in the course of his reasoning, he has taken an opportunity to depict the miseries as well as the absurdity of unnecessary war, in a burst of animated and appropriate language which will probably never be exceeded. His character of Junius, in this pamphlet, is scarcely inferior.—The sale of the first edition was stopt for awhile by lord North, and a few alterations made before it appeared in a second. Johnson's opinion of these two pamphlets was, that "there is a subtlety of disquisition in the *False Alarm*, which is worth all the fire of the other."

About this time, an ineffectual attempt was made by his steady friend Mr. Strahan, his majesty's printer, to procure him a seat in parliament. His biographers have amused their readers by conjectures on the probable figure he would make in that assembly, and he owned frequently that he should not have been sorry to try. Why the interference of his friends was ineffectual, the minister only could tell, but he was certainly not ill advised. It is not improbable that Johnson would have proved an able assistant on some occasions, where a nervous and manly speech was wanted to silence the inferiors in opposition, but it may be doubted whether he would have given that uniform and open consent which is expected from a party man. Whatever aid he might be induced to give by his pen on certain subjects which accorded with his own sentiments, and of which he thought himself master, he by no means approved of many parts of the conduct of those ministers who carried on the American war; and he was ever decidedly against the principle (if it may be so called) that a man should go along with his party right or wrong. "This," he once said, "is so remote from native virtue, from scholastic virtue, that a good man must have undergone a great change before he can reconcile himself to such a doctrine. It is maintaining that you may lie to the public, for you do lie when you call that right which you think wrong, or the reverse."

In the year 1773, he carried into execution a design which he had long meditated of visiting the western isles of Scotland. He arrived at Edinburgh on the 18th of August, and finished his journey on the 22d of November. During this time he passed some days at Edinburgh, and then went by St. Andrew's, Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort Augustus, to the Hebrides, visiting the isles of Sky, Rasay, Col, Mull, Inchkenneth and Icolmkill. He then travelled through Argyleshire by Inverary, and thence by Lochlomond and Dumbarton to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The popularity of his own account, which has perhaps been more generally read than any book of travels in modern times, and the *Journal* of his pleasant companion Mr. Boswell, render any farther notice of this journey unnecessary. The censure he met with is now remembered with indifference, and his *Tour* continues to be read without any of the unpleasant emotions which



it first excited, in those who contended that he had not stated the truth, or were unwilling that the truth should be stated.

During his absence, his humble friend and admirer, Thomas Davies, bookseller, ventured to publish two volumes entitled *Miscellanies and fugitive Pieces*, which he advertised in the newspapers, as the production of the "author of the *Rambler*." Johnson was inclined to resent this liberty, until he recollected Davies's narrow circumstances, when he cordially forgave him, and continued his kindness to him as usual. A third volume appeared soon after, but all its contents are not from Dr. Johnson's pen.

On the dissolution of parliament in 1774, he published a short political pamphlet entitled *The Patriot*, the principal object of which appears to have been to repress the spirit of faction which at that time was too prevalent, especially in the metropolis. It was a hasty composition, called for, as he informed Mr. Boswell, on one day, and written the next. The success, since his time, of those mock-patriots whom he has so ably delineated, is too decisive a proof that the reign of political delusion is not to be shortened by eloquence or argument.

During his Tour in Scotland, he made frequent inquiries respecting the authenticity of Ossian's Poems, and received answers so unsatisfactory that, both in his book of travels and in conversation, he did not hesitate to treat the whole as an imposture. This excited the resentment of Macpherson, the editor, to such a degree that he wrote a threatening letter to Johnson, who answered it in a composition which, in the expression of firm and unalterable contempt, is perhaps superior to that he wrote to Lord Chesterfield. In that he mixed somewhat of courtesy, but Macpherson he despised both as a man and a writer, and treated him as a ruffian.

The rupture between Great Britain and America once more roused our author's political energies, and produced his *Taxation no Tyranny*, in which he endeavoured to prove that distant colonies, which had in their assemblies a legislature of their own, were, notwithstanding, liable to be taxed in a British parliament, where they had no representatives, and he thought that this country was strong enough to enforce obedience. This pamphlet, which appeared in 1775, produced a controversy which was carried on for some time with considerable spirit, although Johnson took no share in it: but the right of taxation was no longer a question for discussion: the Americans were in arms, blood had been spilt, and "successful rebellion became revolution." No censure was more generally advanced, at this time, against our author, than that his opinions were regulated by his pension, and none could be more void of foundation. His opinion, whether just or not, of the Americans was uniform throughout his life, and he continued to maintain them when, in strict prudence, they might as well have been softened to the measure of changed times.

It is not improbable, however, that he felt the force of some of the replies made to his pamphlet, seconded as they were by the popular voice and by the discomfiture of the measures of administration. It is reported that he complained, and perhaps about this time, of being called upon to write political pamphlets, and threatened to give up his pension. Whether this complaint was carried to the proper quarter, Mr. Boswell has not informed us, but it is certain he wrote no more in defence

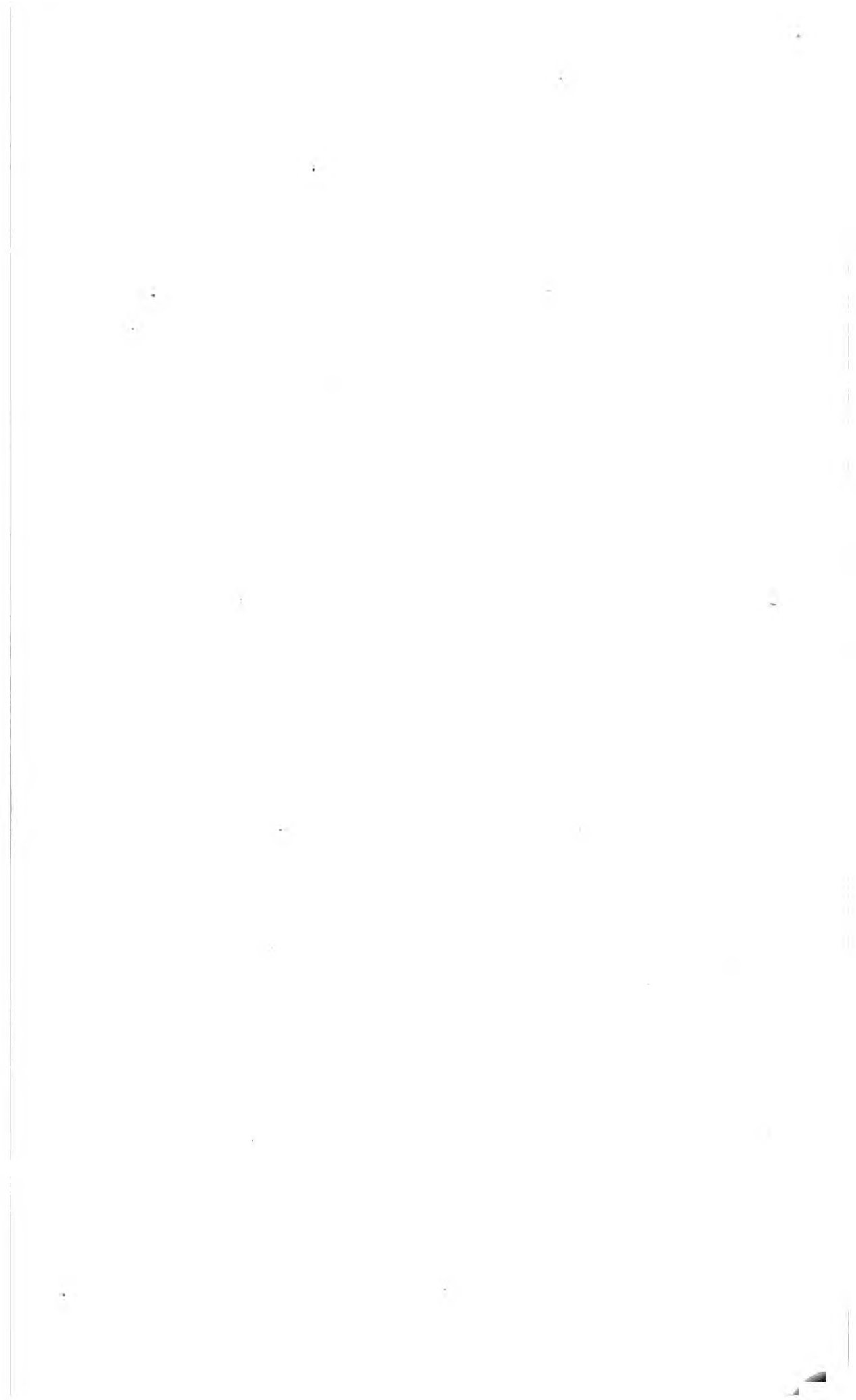
of the ministry, and he received no kind of reward for what he had done. His pension neither he or his friends ever considered in that light, although it might make him acquiesce more readily in what the minister required. He was willing to do something for gratitude, but nothing for hire.

A few months after the publication of his last pamphlet, he received his diploma as doctor of laws from the university of Oxford, in consequence of a recommendation from the chancellor, lord North. It is remarkable, however, that he never assumed this title in writing notes or cards.— In the autumn of this year, he went on a tour to France with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. Of this tour Mr. Boswell has printed a few memorandums, which were probably intended as the foundation of a more regular narrative, but this he does not appear to have ever begun. As the tour lasted only about two months, it would probably have produced more sentiment than description.

In 1777, he was engaged by the London booksellers to write short lives or prefaces to an edition of the English poets, and this being one of the most important of his literary undertakings, some account of its origin is necessary, especially as the precise share which belongs to him has been frequently misrepresented. It is perhaps too late now to inquire into the propriety of the decision of the house of lords respecting literary property. It had not, however, taken place many months before some of the predicted consequences appeared. Among other instances, an edition of the English poets was published at Edinburgh, in direct violation of that honourable compact by which the booksellers of London had agreed to respect each other's property, notwithstanding their being deprived of the more effectual support of the law. This, therefore, induced the latter to undertake an edition of the poets in a more commodious form, and with suitable accuracy of text. A meeting was called of about forty of the most respectable booksellers of London, the proprietors, or the successors and descendants of the proprietors of copyrights in these works, and it was agreed that an elegant and uniform edition of The English Poets should be printed, with a concise account of the life of each author by Dr. Samuel Johnson, and that Messrs. Strahan, Cadell and T. Davies, should wait upon him with their proposals.

Johnson was delighted with the task, the utility of which had probably occurred to his mind long before, and he had certainly more acquaintance than any man then living with the poetical biography of his country, and appeared to be best qualified to illustrate it by judicious criticism. Whether we consider what he undertook, or what he performed, the sum of two hundred guineas which he demanded, will appear a very trivial recompense. His original intention, and all indeed that was expected from him, was a very concise biographical and critical account of each poet, but he had not proceeded far before he began to enlarge the lives to the present extent, and at last presented the world with such a body of criticism as was scarcely to be expected from one man, and still less from one now verging on his seventieth year.

Of this edition it is yet necessary to say, that Dr. Johnson was not in all respects to be considered as the editor. He had not the choice of the poets to be admitted, although in addition to the list prepared by his employers, he recommended Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden. The selection was made by the booksel-





lers, who appear to have been guided, partly by the acknowledged merit of the poet, and partly by his popularity, a quality which is sometimes independent of the former. Our author, however, felt himself under no restraint in accepting the list offered, nor did he in any instance consider himself bound to lean with partiality to any author merely that the admission of his works might be justified. This absurd species of prejudice which has contaminated so many single lives and critical prefaces, was repugnant to his, as it must ever be to the opinion of every man who considers truth as essential to biography, and that the possession of talents, however brilliant, ought to be no excuse for the abuse of them.—Every preliminary having been settled in the month of April, 1777, the new edition of the poets was sent to press, and Johnson was informed that his lives might be written in the meantime, so as to be ready to accompany the publication.

Not long after he undertook this work, he was invited to contribute the aid of his eloquent pen in saving the forfeited life of Dr. William Dodd, a clergyman, who was convicted of forgery. This unhappy man had long been a popular preacher in the metropolis: and the public sentiment was almost universal in deprecating so shameful a sight as that of a clergyman of the church of England suffering by a public execution. Whether there was much in Dodd's character to justify this sentiment, or to demand the interference of the corporation of London, backed by the petitions of thousands of the most distinguished and wealthy citizens, may perhaps be doubted. Johnson, however, could not resist what put every other consideration out of the question, "a call for mercy," and accordingly contributed every thing that the friends of Dodd could suggest as useful. He wrote his Speech to the Recorder of London, delivered at the Old Bailey when sentence of death was about to be passed on him: The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren, a sermon delivered by Dodd in the chapel of Newgate: two letters, one to the lord chancellor Bathurst, and one to lord chief justice Mansfield: a petition from Dr. Dodd to the king: another from Mrs. Dodd to the queen: observations inserted in the newspapers, on occasion of earl Percy's having presented to his majesty a petition for mercy to Dodd, signed by twenty thousand persons: a petition from the city of London; and Dr. Dodd's last solemn declaration, which he left with the sheriff at the place of execution. All these have been printed in Dr. Johnson's works, with some additional correspondence which Mr. Boswell inserted in his life. Every thing is written in a style of pathetic eloquence, but as the author could not be concealed, it was impossible to impress a stronger sense of the value of Dodd's talents than had already been entertained. The papers, however, contributed to heighten the clamour which was at that time raised against the execution of the sentence, and which was confounded with what was then thought more censurable, the conduct of those by whom the unhappy man might have been saved before the process of law had been begun.

In 1779, the first four volumes of his Lives of the Poets were published, and the remainder in the year 1781, which he wrote, by his own confession, "dilatatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste." He had, however, performed so much more than was expected, that his employers presented him with an hundred pounds in addition to the stipulated sum. As he never was insensible to the pleasure or value of fame, it is not improbable that he was

yet more substantially gratified by the eagerness with which his lives of the poets were read and praised. He enjoyed likewise another satisfaction which it appears he thought not unnecessary to the reputation of a great writer. He was attacked on all sides for his contempt of Milton's politics, and the sparing praise, or direct censure he had bestowed on the poetry of Prior, Hammond, Collins, Gray and a few others. The errors, indeed, which on any other subject might have passed for errors of judgment, were by the irascible tempers of his adversaries magnified into high treason against the majesty of poetic genius. During his life, these attacks were not few, nor very respectful to a veteran whom common consent had placed at the head of the literature of his country; but the courage of his adversaries was observed to rise very considerably after his death, and the name which public opinion had consecrated, was reviled with the utmost malignity. Even some who during his life were glad to conceal their hostility, now took an opportunity to retract the admiration in which they had joined with apparent cordiality: and to discover faults in a body of criticism which, after all reasonable exceptions are admitted, was never equalled, and perhaps never will be equalled for justice, acuteness and elegance. Where can we hope to find discussions that can be compared with those introduced in the lives of Cowley, Milton, Dryden and Pope? His abhorrence indeed of Milton's political conduct led him to details and observations which can never be acceptable to a certain class of politicians, but when he comes to analyze his poetry, and to fix his reputation on its proper basis, it must surely be confessed that no man, since the first appearance of *Paradise Lost*, has ever bestowed praise with a more munificent hand. He appears to have collected his whole energy to immortalize the genius of Milton, nor has any advocate for Milton's democracy appeared who has not been glad to surrender the guardianship of his poetical fame to Johnson.

In 1782, the public demand rendered it necessary to print an edition of the *Lives* in four octavo volumes; and in 1783, another edition of the same number, but considerably enlarged, altered and corrected by the author. I cannot here suppress a circumstance communicated by my worthy friend, Mr. Nichols, which may check the murmurs of the public respecting improved editions. Although the corrections and alterations of the edition of 1783 were printed separately and offered *gratis* to the purchasers of the former, not ten copies were called for!

With this work the public labours of Johnson ended, and when we consider his advanced time of life, and the almost unabated vigour of his mind, it may be surely added, that his sun set with unrivalled splendour. But the infirmities of age were now undermining a constitution that had kept perpetual war with hereditary disease, and his most valued friends were dropping into the grave before him. He lost Mr. Thrale and Mrs. Williams: his home became cheerless, and much visiting was no longer convenient. His health began to decline more visibly from the month of June 1783, when he had a paralytic stroke, and although he recovered so far as to be able to take another journey to Litchfield and Oxford towards the close of the year, symptoms of a dropsy indicated the probability of his dissolution at no distant period. Some relief, however, having been administered, he rejoined the society of his friends, and with a mind still curious, intelligent, and active, renewed his attention to the concerns of literature, dic-

tating information wherever it was wanted, and trying his faculties by Latin translations from the Greek poets. Nothing was so much the subject of alarm with him, as the decay of memory and judgment, of which, however, to the last he never betrayed the least symptom.

In Midsummer 1784, he acquired sufficient strength to go for the last time into Derbyshire. During his absence, his friends, who were anxious for the preservation of so valuable a life, endeavoured to procure some addition to his pension, that he might be enabled to try the efficacy of a tour to the southern part of the continent. Application was accordingly made to the lord chancellor Thurlow, who seconded it in the proper quarter, but without success. He evinced, however, his high respect for Johnson, by offering to advance the sum of five hundred pounds; and Johnson, when the circumstance was communicated, thanked his lordship in a letter, elevated beyond the common expressions of gratitude, by a dignity of sentiment congenial to the feelings of his noble and liberal correspondent. Dr. Brocklesby also made a similar offer, although of a lesser sum; and such indeed was the estimation in which Johnson was held, that nothing would have been wanting which money or affection could procure, either to protract his days, or to make them comfortable.

But these offers were not accepted. The scheme of a continental tour, which he once thought necessary, was never much encouraged by his physicians, and had it promised greater effects, was now beyond his strength. The dropsy and asthma were making hasty approaches, and although he longed for life, and was anxiously desirous that every means might be used to gain another day, he soon became convinced that no hopes were left. During this period, he was alternately resigned to die, and tenacious of life, tranquil in the views of eternity, and disturbed by gloomy apprehensions, but at last his mind was soothed with the consolatory hopes of religion, and although the love of life occasionally recurred, he adjusted his worldly concerns with composure and exactness, as one who was conscious that he was soon to give an account. On Monday the 13th of December, he tried to obtain a temporary relief by puncturing his legs, as had been before performed by the surgeon, but no discharge followed the operation, and about seven o'clock in the evening he breathed his last, so gently, that some time elapsed before his death was perceived.

On the 20th, his body was interred with great solemnity in Westminster Abbey, close to the grave of his friend Garrick. Of the other honours paid to his memory, it may suffice to say that they were more in number and quality than were ever paid to any man of literature. It was his singular fate that the age, which he contributed to improve, repaid him by a veneration of which we have no example in the annals of literature; and that when his failings as well as his virtues were exhibited without disguise and without partiality, he continued to be revered by the majority of the nation, and is now, after scrutiny and censure have done their worst, enrolled among the greatest names in the history of English genius.

But to delineate the character of Johnson is a task which the present writer wishes to decline. Five large editions of Mr. Boswell's *Life* have familiarized Johnson to the knowledge of the public so intimately, that it would be impossible to advance any thing with which every reader is not already acquainted. The

suffrages of the nation have been taken, and the question is finally decided. On mature consideration, there appears no reason to depart from the generally received opinions as to the rank Johnson holds among men of genius and virtue, a rank which those who yet capriciously dwell on his failings, will find it difficult to disturb. His errors have been brought forward with no sparing hand both by his friends and his enemies, yet when every fair deduction is made from the reputed excellence of his character as a man and a writer, enough, in my opinion, will remain to gratify the partiality of his admirers, and to perpetuate the public esteem.

It is unpleasant, however, to quit a subject which the more it is revolved, serves to gladden the mind with pleasing recollections. There are surely circumstances in the history of Johnson which compel admiration in defiance of prejudice or envy. That a man of obscure birth, of manners by no means prepossessing, whose person was forbidding, whose voice was rough, inharmonious and terrifying, whose temper was frequently harsh and overbearing; that such a man should have forced his way into the society of a greater number of eminent characters than perhaps ever gathered round an individual; that he should not only have gained but increased their respect to a degree of enthusiasm, and preserved it unabated for so long a series of years; that men of all ranks in life, and of the highest degrees of mental excellence, should have thought it a duty, and found it a pleasure, not only to tolerate his occasional roughness, but to study his humour, and submit to his controul, to listen to him with the submission of a scholar, and consult him with the hopes of a client; all this surely affords the strongest presumption that such a man was remarkable beyond the usual standard of human excellence. Nor is this inference inconsistent with the truth, for it appears that whatever merit may be attributed to his works, he was perhaps yet more to be envied in conversation, where he exhibited an inexhaustible fertility of imagination, an elegance and acuteness of argument, and a ready wit, such as never appear to have been combined in one man. And it is not too much to say, that whatever opinion was entertained by those who knew him only in his writings, it never could have risen to that pitch of admiration which has been excited by the labours of his industrious biographer.

His death formed a very remarkable era in the literary world. For a considerable time, the periodical journals, as well as general conversation, were eagerly occupied on an event which was the subject of universal regret; and every man hastened with such contributions as memory supplied, to illustrate a character in which all took a lively interest. Numerous anecdotes were published, some authentic and some imaginary, and the general wish to know more of Johnson was for some years insatiable.

At length the proprietors of his printed works met to consider of a complete and uniform edition; but as it was feared that the curiosity which follows departed genius might soon abate, some doubt was entertained of the policy of a *collection* of pieces, the best of which were already in the hands of the public in various forms; but this was fortunately over-ruled, and in the course of the last year (1806) these collected works were printed for the fourth time, and will probably be long considered as a standard book in every library. Less fortunately, however, six

John Hawkins, who was one of Johnson's executors, and professed to be in possession of materials for his life, was engaged to write that life, as well as to collect his works. They accordingly appeared in 1787, in eleven volumes 8vo. Of the *Life* it is unnecessary to add any thing to the censure so generally passed. Sir **John** spoke his mind, perhaps honestly, but his judgment must have been as defective as his memory, when he decided with so much prejudice and so little taste or candour, on the merits of his author, and of other eminent persons, whom, as a critic humorously said "he brought to be tried at the Middlesex quarter sessions." In collecting the works, he inserted some which no man could suspect to be Johnson's, while he omitted other pieces that had been acknowledged. A more correct arrangement, however, has been since adopted.

Two years before this edition appeared, Mr. **Boswell** published his *Tour to the Hebrides*, and exhibited such a sample of Dr. Johnson's conversation-talents as raised very high expectations from the *Life* which he then announced to be in a state of preparation. Mr. **Boswell's** acquaintance with Dr. Johnson commenced in the year 1763, and from that time he appears to have meditated what he at length executed, the most complete and striking portrait ever exhibited of any human being. His *Tour* having shown the manner in which he was to proceed, Johnson's friends willingly contributed every document they could collect from memory or writing, and Mr. **Boswell**, who meditated one volume only, was soon obliged to extend his work to two bulky quartos. These were published in 1791, and bought up with an avidity, which their wonderful variety of entertainment, vivacity, anecdote and sentiment, amply justified. Four very large editions have since appeared, and it seems to be one of those very fortunate and fascinating books of which the public is not likely to tire.

Mr. **Boswell**, indeed, has proved, contrary to the common opinion, and by means which will not soon be repeated, that the life of a mere scholar may be rendered more instructive, more entertaining, and more interesting, than that of any other human being. And although the "confidence of private conversation" has been thought to be sometimes violated in this work, for which no apology is here intended, yet the world seems agreed to forgive this failing in consideration of the pleasure it has afforded; that wonderful variety of subjects, of wit, sentiment, and anecdote, with which it abounds; and above all the valuable instruction it presents on many of the most important duties of life. It must be allowed that it created some enemies to Dr. Johnson among those who were not enemies before this disclosure of his sentiments. Vanity has been sometimes hurt, and vanity has taken its usual revenge. It is generally agreed, however, that Mr. **Boswell's** account of his illustrious friend is impartial: he conceals no failing that revenge or animosity has since been able to discover; all his foibles of manner and conversation are faithfully recorded, and recorded so frequently that it is easier to form a just estimate of doctor Johnson than of any eminent character in the whole range of biography.

One singular effect was produced by this extraordinary book. When it was determined to discard sir **John Hawkins's** *Life of Johnson*, application was made to Mr. **Murphy** to furnish another to be prefixed to the second edition of the works

⁵ British Essayists, Preface to the *Rambler*, vol. xix. C.

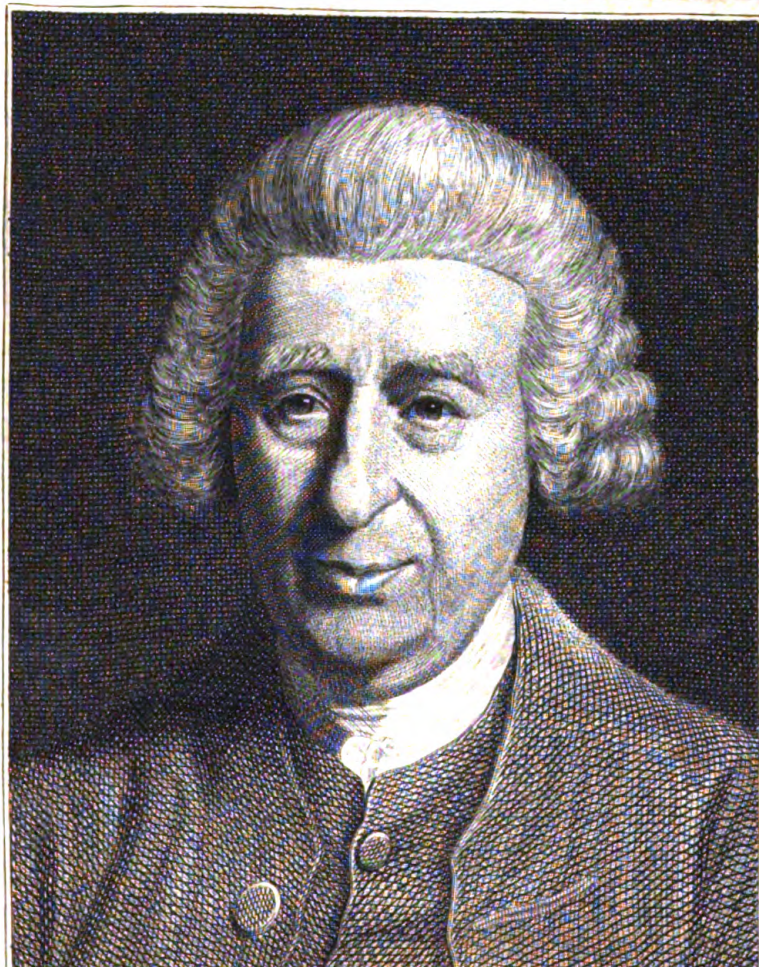
published in 1793. This Mr. Murphy executed under the title (which he had used in the case of Fielding) of *An Essay on the Life and Genius of Dr. Johnson*; but he had conceived a prejudice of jealousy of Mr. Boswell's fame, and notwithstanding the latter had strengthened his narrative by every possible proof, Murphy persisted in taking his facts from the very inaccurate narrative of sir John Hawkins, and the more flippant anecdotes published by Mrs. Piozzi. In his *Essay*, therefore, it is not wonderful that many circumstances are grossly, and considering that proofs were within his reach, we may add, wilfully misrepresented⁶.

As Dr. Johnson has been introduced in the present collection as an English poet, it may be necessary to take some notice of the poems now presented to the reader. They are what have been published in his works, and no doubts, as far as the present writer knows, have ever been entertained of their authenticity. What he might have produced, if he had devoted himself to the Muses, it is not easy to determine. That he had not the essentials of a poet of the higher order must, I think, be allowed; but as a moral poet, his acknowledged pieces stand in a very high rank. Like Pope, he preferred reason to fancy, and his two imitations of Juvenal are not only equal to any thing that writer has produced, in the happy delineation of living manners, and in elegance of versification, but are perhaps superior to any compositions of the kind in our language. His *Irene* is remarkable for splendour of language, richness of sentiment, and harmony of numbers, but as a tragedy it is radically defective: it excites neither interest or passion. Of his lesser pieces, the Prologue on Opening the Theatre in 1747, and that for the benefit of Milton's grand-daughter, are perfect models of elegant and manly address. His odes are defective in imagination and description; he always undervalued this species of poetry, and certainly has not improved it. A few of his translations are more happily executed, particularly the *Dove of Anacreon*. The poem on the death of his humble friend Levet is one of those pathetic appeals to the heart which are irresistible.

⁶ The principal of these are corrected in notes appended to the last edition of Johnson's works. Murphy's narrative was in truth little more than what was compiled in 1787, from sir John Hawkins, by the Monthly Reviewers, whose style and reflections he has in general copied verbatim, without a word of acknowledgment. C.



*Engraved by J. Hollenay 1786 from an Original
Painted by M. Stone 1756.*





THE
LIFE OF GLOVER,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THE *facts*, in the following narrative, are principally taken from an account of our poet drawn up by Mr. Reed, a gentleman of well-known accuracy and information, and inserted in the *European Magazine* for January, 1786.

Richard Glover, the son of Richard Glover, a Hamburgh merchant in London, was born in St. Martin's Lane, Cannon Street, in the year 1712. Being probably intended for trade, he received no other education than what the school of Cheam, in Surry, afforded, which he was afterwards induced to improve by an ardent love of learning, and a desire to cultivate his poetical talents according to the purest models. His poetical efforts were very early, for in his sixteenth year he wrote a poem to the memory of sir Isaac Newton, which was supposed to have merit enough to deserve a place in the *View* of that celebrated author's philosophy, published in 1728, by Dr. Henry Pemberton.

Dr. Pemberton, a man of much science, and of some taste, appears to have been warmly attached to the interests of our young poet, and at a time when there were few regular vehicles of praise or criticism, took every opportunity of encouraging his efforts, and apprising the nation of this new addition to its literary honours. Of the poem in question, he thus speaks, in his preface: "I have presented my readers with a copy of verses on sir Isaac Newton, which I have just received from a young gentleman, whom I am proud to reckon among the number of my dearest friends. If I had any apprehension that this piece of poetry stood in need of an apology, I should be desirous the reader might know that the author is but sixteen years old, and was obliged to finish the composition in a very short space of time, but I shall only take the liberty to observe, that the boldness of the digressions will be best judged of by those who are acquainted with Pindar." The poem is now before the reader, who if he thinks this praise too high, will yet reflect with pleasure that it probably cheered the youthful ambition of the author of Leonidas.

At the usual period, Glover became engaged in the Hamburgh trade, but continued his attachment to literature and the Muses, and was, says Dr. Warton, one of the best and most accurate Greek scholars of his time. It has been mentioned in the life of Green, that he published *The Spleen* of that poet, in which he is complimented on

account of his study of the ancient Greek poets, and his wish to emulate their fame. Green had probably seen some part of *Leonidas*, which was begun when the author was young, and had been submitted in specimens to many of his friends¹.

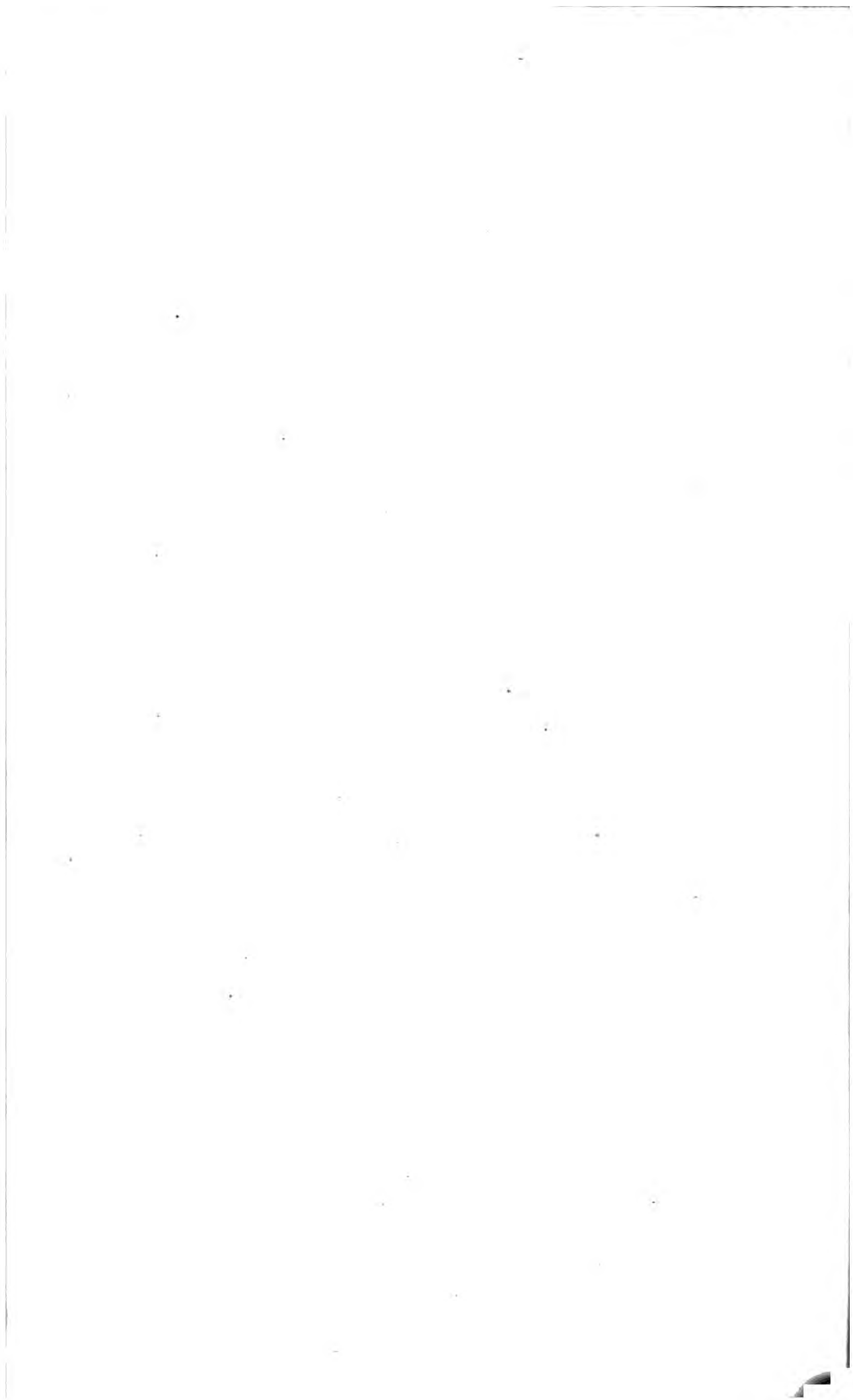
Leonidas was first published in 1737, in a quarto volume, consisting of nine books. Its reception was highly flattering, for in this and the following year it passed through three editions. It was dedicated to lord Cobham, one of his early patrons, and whom, it is supposed, he furnished with many of the inscriptions at Stowe. It was also strongly recommended by such of that nobleman's political friends as were esteemed the arbiters of taste. Lord Lyttelton, in the periodical paper called *Common Sense*, praised it in the warmest terms, not only for its poetical beauties, but its political tendency, "the whole plan and purpose of it being to show the superiority of freedom over slavery; and how much virtue, public spirit, and the love of liberty are preferable both in their nature and effects, to riches, luxury, and the insolence of power."

This is perhaps too much like the criticism of Bossu on the *Iliad*: but the following passage is more appropriate, and as the papers in which it appeared are now scarce, may be introduced here without impropriety.

"The artful conduct of the principal design; the skill in connecting and adapting every episode to the carrying on, and serving that design; the variety of characters, the great care to keep them, and distinguish each from the other by a propriety of sentiment and thought, all these are excellencies which the best judges of poetry will be particularly pleased with in *Leonidas*. I must observe too, that even those who are not naturally fond of poetry, or any work of fancy, will find in this so much solidity of reason, such good sense, weight of thought, and depth of learning; will see every virtue, public or private, so agreeably and forcibly inculcated, that they may read it with delight and with instruction, though they have no relish for the graces of the verse, the harmony of the numbers, or the charms of the invention.

"Upon the whole, I look upon this poem as *one of those few* of distinguished worth and excellence, which will be handed down with respect to all posterity, and which in the long revolution of past centuries, but *two or three countries* have been able to produce. And I cannot help congratulating my own, that after having in the last age brought forth a *Milton*, she has in this produced *two more* such poets, as we have the happiness to see flourish now together, I mean Mr. *Pope* and Mr. *Glover*. The first of these has no superior, if an equal, in all the various parts of poetry, to which his elegant and extensive genius has applied itself, no, *not among the greatest of the ancients*. But an epic poem he has not yet given, of his own I mean, distinct from his translations. And certainly, in that species of writing, it is enough to have given *Homer to us*, with a force of style not inferior to his own: the bounds of human life are too contracted for a second work so difficult as this: I might add, perhaps, the bounds of human glory. There was therefore a path left clear for Mr. Glover; and to what a height it has carried him, will appear to all who have eyes good enough to reach so far; for your judges of epigrams and songs can see no further than the bottom of the hill, and both he and Mr. *Pope* are out of their sight. But it must be owned that the latter had made the way much less difficult for Mr. Glover to ascend, by smoothing the roughness, and rooting up the thorns and briars which the English Parnassus was encumbered with before: so that if

¹ When Thomson was told that Glover was writing an epic poem, he exclaimed—"He write an epic poem! a Londoner, who has never seen a mountain!" Warton,



the diction of Leonidas be softer, and the general flow of the numbers more harmonious than that of Milton himself; it may, in part, be ascribed to Mr. Pope, as the great polisher and improver of our verse."

Besides this warm and rather extravagant encomium, Lyttelton addressed verses to our author², in which he inveighs with much asperity against the degeneracy of the times, but, not very consistently, compares England to Greece and France to Persia. Other writers, particularly Fielding, in the paper called *The Champion*, took up the pen in favour of Leonidas, and lord Lyttelton's paper in *Common Sense* was answered in another political paper, but neither with strength of argument, or decency.

Leonidas was published just after the prince of Wales had been driven from St. James's, began to keep a separate court, and had appointed lord Lyttelton his secretary, Mallet his under-secretary, and had granted a pension to Thomson. By the whole of this new court, and by the adherents in general of opposition, Leonidas was praised, quoted, and recommended; not beyond its merit, but too evidently from a motive which could not always prevail, and which ceased to animate their zeal in its favour, when Walpole, the supposed author of all our national grievances, was compelled to resign³.

Amidst this high encouragement, the services of Dr. Pemberton must not be forgotten. Soon after the appearance of Leonidas this steady friend endeavoured to fix the public attention on it, by a long pamphlet, entitled *Observations on Poetry, especially epic*, occasioned by the late Poem upon Leonidas, 12mo. 1738. In this, with many just remarks of a general kind, the author carries his opinion of Glover's production beyond all reasonable bounds. It came, however, from a friend whom Glover had early been taught to revere, but added to so much unqualified praise from other quarters, I am afraid, prevented his attending to those defects which impartial criticism could not have concealed.

In the following year, he published *London, or the Progress of Commerce*⁴, and the more celebrated ballad of *Hosier's Ghost*, both written with a view to rouse the nation to resent the conduct of the Spaniards, and to promote what had seldom been known, a war called for by the people, and opposed by the ministry. During the same political dissensions, which, as usual, were warmest in the city of London, Glover presided at several meetings called to set aside, or censure the conduct of those city magistrates or members of parliament who voted for the court. His speeches at those meetings, if we may trust to the report of them in the periodical journals of 1739 and 1740, were elegant, spirited, and calculated to give him considerable weight in the deliberative assemblies of his fellow-citizens. The latter were, indeed, so fully convinced of his talents and zeal, as to appoint him to conduct their application to parliament, on the subject of the neglect shown to their trade by the ruling administration. His services in this last

These verses, in the first edition of lord Lyttelton's works, are dated 1734, two years before the appearance of Leonidas. C.

² "Soon after Mr. Glover had published his Leonidas, a poem that was eagerly read and universally admired, he passed some days with Mr. Pope at Twickenham." Warton's Essay: where an anecdote follows this notice, that shows the intimacy of our poet with the bard of Twickenham. He was also on very intimate terms with Bubb Doddington, afterwards lord Melcombe, and is frequently mentioned in his lordship's diary. C.

⁴ "Glover has put out a new poem, called *London, or the Progress of Commerce*, wherein he very much extols a certain Dutch poet, called Janus Douza, and compares him to Sophocles; I suppose he does it to make interest upon 'Change." West's Letters to lord Orford.

affair may be seen in a pamphlet published in 1743, under the title of *A short Account of the late Application to Parliament made by the Merchants of London upon the neglect of their Trade : with the Substance of the Evidence thereupon, as summed up by Mr. Glover.*

In 1744, he was offered employment of a very different kind, being nominated in the will of the dutchess of Marlborough, to write the duke's life, in conjunction with Mallet. Her grace bequeathed 500*l.* to each on this condition ; but Glover immediately renounced his share, while Mallet, who has no scruples of any kind, where his interest was concerned, accepted the legacy, and continued to receive money from the late duke of Marlborough on the same account, although after twenty years of talk and boast, he left nothing behind him that could show he had ever seriously begun the work.

Glover's rejection of this legacy is the more honourable, as at this time his affairs became embarrassed ; from what cause, we are not told. It may be conjectured, however, that he had shared the usual fate of those who are diverted from their regular pursuits by the dreams of political patronage. From the prince he is said to have received at one time a complete set of the classics, elegantly bound, and at another time, during his distresses, a present of 500*l.* But it does not appear that when the friends of Leonidas came into power, they made any permanent provision for the author.

During the period of his embarrassment, he retired from public notice, until the respect and gratitude of his humbler friends in the city induced them to request that he would stand candidate for the office of chamberlain of London, which was vacant in 1751, but his application was unfortunately made when the majority of the voters had already been engaged to sir Thomas Harrison. His feelings on this disappointment do him so much honour, and are so elegantly expressed in the speech he addressed to the livery, that no apology seems necessary for introducing it in this place :

“ Gentlemen,

“ AFTER the trouble which I have had so large a share in giving you, by my application for your favour to succeed sir John Bosworth in the office of chamberlain, this day so worthily supplied, I should deem myself inexcusable in quitting this place, before I rendered my thanks to those in particular who have so generously espoused my interest ; to your new-elected chamberlain himself, and numbers of his friends, whose expressions and actions have done me peculiar honour, amidst the warmth of their attachment to him ; to the two deserving magistrates, who have presided among us with impartiality, humanity, and justice ; and lastly, to all in general, for their candour, decency, and indulgence.

“ Gentlemen,

“ Heretofore I have frequently had occasion of addressing the livery of London in public ; but at this time I find myself at an unusual loss, being under all the difficulties which a want of matter, deserving your notice, can create. Had I now your rights and privileges to vindicate ; had I the cause of your suffering trade to defend ; or were I now called forth to recommend and enforce the parliamentary service of the most virtuous and illustrious citizen, my tongue would be free from constraint, and expatiating at large, would endeavour to merit your attention, which now must be solely confined to so narrow a subject as myself. On those occasions, the importance of the matter, and my known zeal to serve you, however ineffectual my attempts might prove, were always sufficient to secure me the honour of a kind reception and unmerited regard. Your

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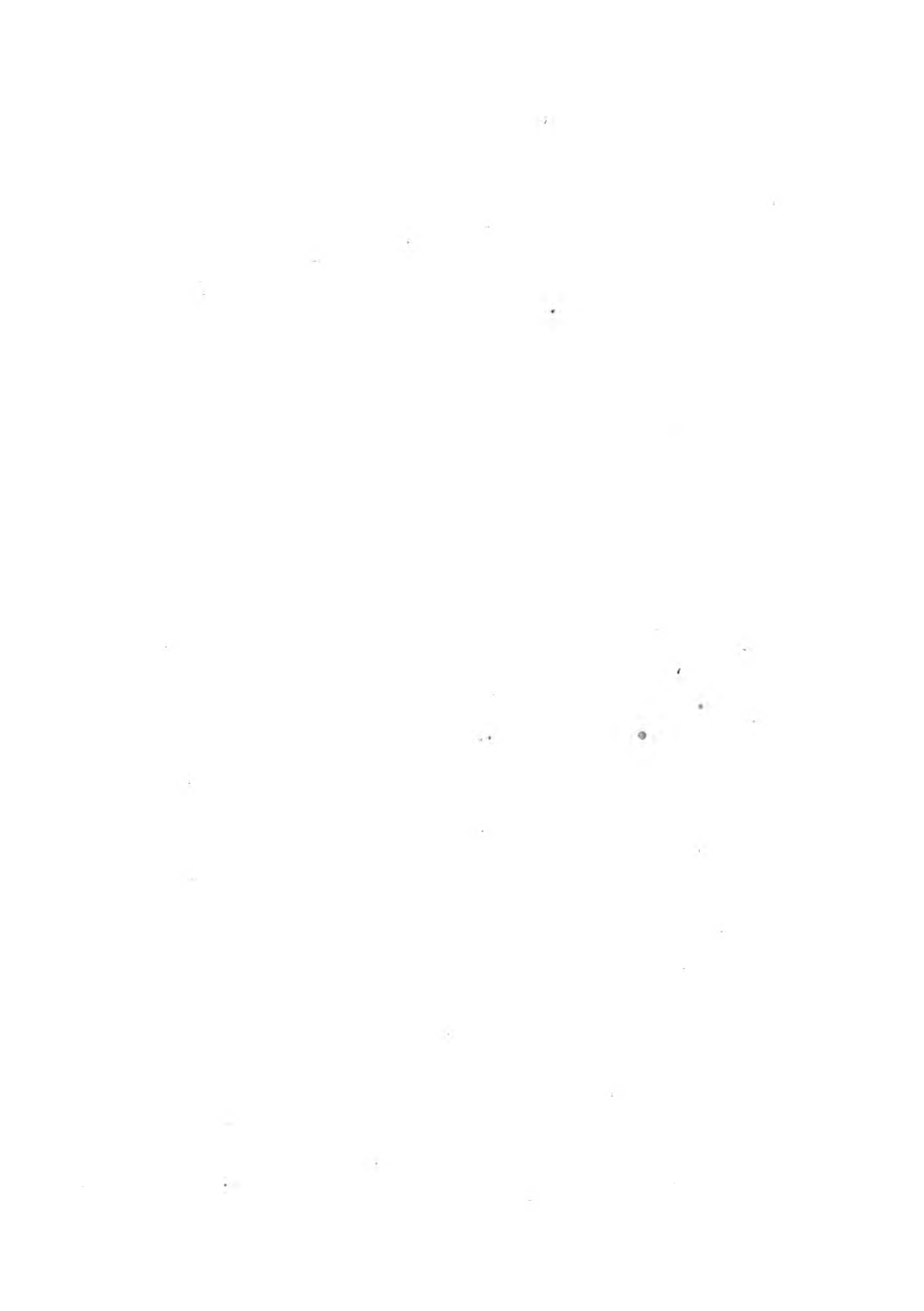
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countenance, gentlemen, first drew me from the retirement of a studious life; your repeated marks of distinction first pointed me out to that great body the merchants of London, who, pursuing your example, condescended to intrust me, unequal and unworthy as I was, with the most important cause, a cause where your interest was as nearly concerned as theirs. In consequence of that deference which has been paid to the sentiments and choice of the citizens and traders of London, it was impossible but some faint lustre must have glanced on one, whom, weak as he was, they were pleased to appoint the instrument on their behalf: and if from these transactions I accidentally acquired the smallest share of reputation, it was to you, gentlemen of the livery, that my gratitude ascribes it; and I joyfully embrace this public opportunity of declaring, that whatever part of a public character I may presume to claim, I owe primarily to you. To this I might add the favour, the twenty years countenance and patronage of one, whom a supreme degree of respect shall prevent me from naming; and though under the temptation of using that name, as a certain means of obviating some misconstructions, I shall, however, avoid to dwell on the memory of a loss so recent, so justly and so universally lamented.

“ Permit me now to remind you, that when placed by these means in a light not altogether unfavourable, no lucrative reward was then the object of my pursuit; nor ever did the promises or offers of private emolument induce me to quit my independence, or vary from the least of my former professions, which always were, and remain still founded on the principles of universal liberty; principles which I assume the glory to have established on your records. Your sense, liverymen of London, the sense of your great corporation, so repeatedly recommended to your representatives in parliament, were my sense, and the principal boast of all my compositions, containing matter imbibed in my earliest education, to which I have always adhered, by which I still abide, and which I will endeavour to bear down with me to the grave, and even at that gloomy period, when deserted by my good fortune, and under the severest trials, even then, by the same consistency of opinions and uniformity of conduct, I still preserved that part of reputation which originally derived from your favour, whatever I might pretend to call a public character, unshaken and unblemished; nor once, in the hour of affliction, did I banish from my thoughts the most sincere and conscientious intention of acquitting every private obligation, as soon as my good fortune should please to return; a distant appearance of which seemed to invite me, and awakened some flattering expectations on the rumoured vacancy of the chamberlain's office; but always apprehending the imputation of presumption, and that a higher degree of delicacy and caution would be requisite in me than in any other candidate, I forbore, till late, to present myself once more to your notice, and then, for the first time, abstracted from a public consideration, solicited your favour for my own private advantage. My want of success shall not prevent my cheerfully congratulating this gentleman on his election, and you on your choice of so worthy a magistrate, and if I may indulge a hope of departing this place with a share of your approbation and esteem, I solemnly from my heart declare, that I shall not bear away with me the least trace of disappointment.”

The allusion in this speech to the favour of the prince of Wales was probably better understood then than it can be at this distant period. In that illustrious personage, he no doubt lost a powerful patron.

In 1753, he began to try his talents in dramatic composition, and produced the tragedy of *Boadicea*, which was performed for nine nights at Drury Lane theatre. Dr.

Pemberton, with his accustomed zeal wrote a pamphlet to recommend it, and among the inferior critics, it occasioned a temporary controversy. "The tragedy of Boadicea," says Davies in his Life of Garrick, "was brought forward in November 1754: great expectations were formed of its success from the reputation of the author, who had acquired very great and deserved praise from his heroic poem of Leonidas. But his poetical talents, though great, were inferior to his character as a patriot and true lover of his country.

"The amiable author read his Boadicea to the actors. But surely his manner of conveying the meaning of his poem was very unhappy; his voice was harsh, and his elocution disagreeable. Mr. Garrick was vexed to see him mangle his own work, and politely offered to relieve him by reading an act or two: but the author imagining that he was the only person fit to unfold his intention to the players, persisted to read the play to the end, to the great mortification of the actors."

In 1761, he published his Medea, a tragedy written on the Greek model, and therefore unfit for the modern stage. The author, indeed, did not intend it for representation, but Mrs. Yates considered the experiment as likely to procure a full house at her benefit, and brought it forward upon that occasion; it was afterwards acted a few nights, but without exciting the tragic passions⁵.

From this period, Glover's affairs took a more promising turn, although in what way we are not told. At the accession of his present majesty, he was chosen member of parliament for Weymouth, and made a considerable figure in the many debates to which the confused state of affairs in India gave rise. In 1772, we find him an intelligent and active agent in adjusting the affairs of the bank of Douglas, Heron, and company, of Scotland, which failed about that time; and on other occasions, where the mercantile interests of London were concerned, he distinguished himself, not only by his eloquence, but by that general knowledge of commerce which inclines to enlarged and liberal, as well as advantageous measures.

In 1775, the West India merchants testified the sense they entertained of his services in their affairs, by voting him a piece of plate of the value of 300*l*. The speech which he delivered in the house of commons, on the application of these merchants, was afterwards printed, and appears to have been the last of his public services.

In 1770, he republished his Leonidas in two volumes 12mo. extended from nine books to twelve, and the attention now bestowed on it, recalling his youthful ideas, strengthened by time and observation, probably suggested The Athenaid, which, however, he did not live to publish. Soon after 1775, he retired from public business, but kept up an intimacy with many of the most eminent scholars of the day, by whom he was highly respected. After experiencing, for some time, the infirmities of age, he departed this life, at his house in Albermarle Street, November 25, 1785.

Glover was twice married. † His second wife is now living, and a daughter, married to ^{Henry}Halsey, esq., He was supposed, by Dr. Warton, to have left some curious memoirs of his life, but as so many years have elapsed without their appearance, this was either a mistake, or they have been deemed unfit for publication.

His character was drawn up by the late Dr. Brocklesby for the Gentleman's Magazine, and as far as respects his amiable disposition, was confirmed to me by Dr. Warton, who knew him well.

⁵ He is said to have written a sequel to Medea, which has never appeared C.

+ May 1737 W Glover, & Author of Leonidas was married to Miss Hemm, a lady of great merit & beauty, with a fortune of £12,000. Hist. Reg.

“ Through the whole of his life, Mr. G. was by all good men revered, by the wise esteemed, by the great sometimes caressed and even flattered, and now his death is sincerely lamented by all who had the happiness to contemplate the integrity of his character. Mr. G. for upwards of fifty years past, through every vicissitude of fortune, exhibited the most exemplary simplicity of manners; having early attained that perfect equanimity, which philosophy often recommends in the closet, but which in experience is too seldom exercised by other men in the test of trial. In Mr. G. were united a wide compass of accurate information in all mercantile concerns, with high intellectual powers of mind, joined to a copious flow of eloquence as an orator in the house of commons. Since Milton he was second to none of our English poets, in his discriminating judicious acquaintance with all ancient as well as modern literature; witness his *Leonidas*, *Medea*, *Boadicea*, and *London*: for, having formed his own character upon the best models of the Greek writers, he lived as if he had been bred a disciple of Socrates, or companion of Aristides. Hence his political turn of mind, hence his unwarped affection and active zeal for the rights and liberties of his country.—Hence his heartfelt exultation whenever he had to paint the impious designs of tyrants in ancient times frustrated, or in modern, defeated in their nefarious purposes to extirpate liberty, or to trample on the unalienable rights of man, however remote in time or space from his immediate presence. In a few words, for the extent of his various erudition, for his unalloyed patriotism, and for his daily exercise and constant practice of Xenophon’s philosophy, in his private as well as in public life, Mr. Glover has left none his equal in the city, and some time it is feared may elapse before such another citizen shall arise, with eloquence, with character, and with poetry, like his, to assert their rights, or to vindicate with equal powers the just claims of free-born men. Suffice this testimony at present, as the well-earned meed of this truly virtuous man, whose conduct was carefully marked, and narrowly watched by the writer of the foregoing hasty sketch, for his extraordinary qualities during the long period in human life of upwards of forty years: and now it is spontaneously offered as a voluntary tribute, unsolicited and unpurchased; but as it appears justly due to the memory of so excellent a poet, statesman, and true philosopher, in life and death the same.”

Glover’s *Leonidas* amply entitles him to a distinguished place among the poets of his country, but the public has not held it in uniform estimation. From the time of its first appearance in 1737, it went through six, if not seven editions, but for nearly forty years there has not been a demand for another, although that published in 1770 was highly improved and enlarged. Its history may probably account in part for this singular fate, and public taste must explain the rest.

We have already mentioned, that on its first publication it was read and praised with the utmost avidity. Besides the encomiums it drew from Lyttelton and Pemberton, its fame reached Ireland, where it was reprinted, and became as much in fashion as it had been in England. “ Pray who is that Mr. Glover,” says Swift to Pope, in one of his letters, “ who writ the epic poem called *Leonidas*, which is reprinting here, and hath great vogue⁶ ?

Unfortunately, however, the whole of this tribute of praise was not paid to the

⁶ “ Pope’s answer” says Dr. Warton, “ does not appear: it would have been curious to have known his opinion concerning a poem that is written in a taste and manner so different from his own, in a style formed in the Grecian school, and with the simplicity of an ancient.” I am happy to add this testimony to the merit of a poem, of which I have ventured to think more highly than some late critics. C.

intrinsic merit of the poem. It became the adopted favourite of the party in opposition (to sir Robert Walpole) who had long endeavoured to persuade the nation that public liberty was endangered by the measures of that minister, and that they formed the chosen band who occupied the straits of Thermopylæ in defiance of the modern Xerxes. Leonidas therefore was recommended, to rouse an oppressed and enslaved people to the vindication of their rights. That this should be attempted is less wonderful than that it should succeed. We find very few passages in this poem which will apply to the state of public affairs in England at that time, if we except the common-place censure of courts and courtiers, and even that is appropriated with so strict historical fidelity to the court of Xerxes, that it does not seem easy to borrow it for any other purpose. "Nothing else," however, Dr. Warton informs us, "was read or talked of at Leicester House," the illustrious owner of which extended his patronage to all poets who fanned the sacred flame of patriotism.

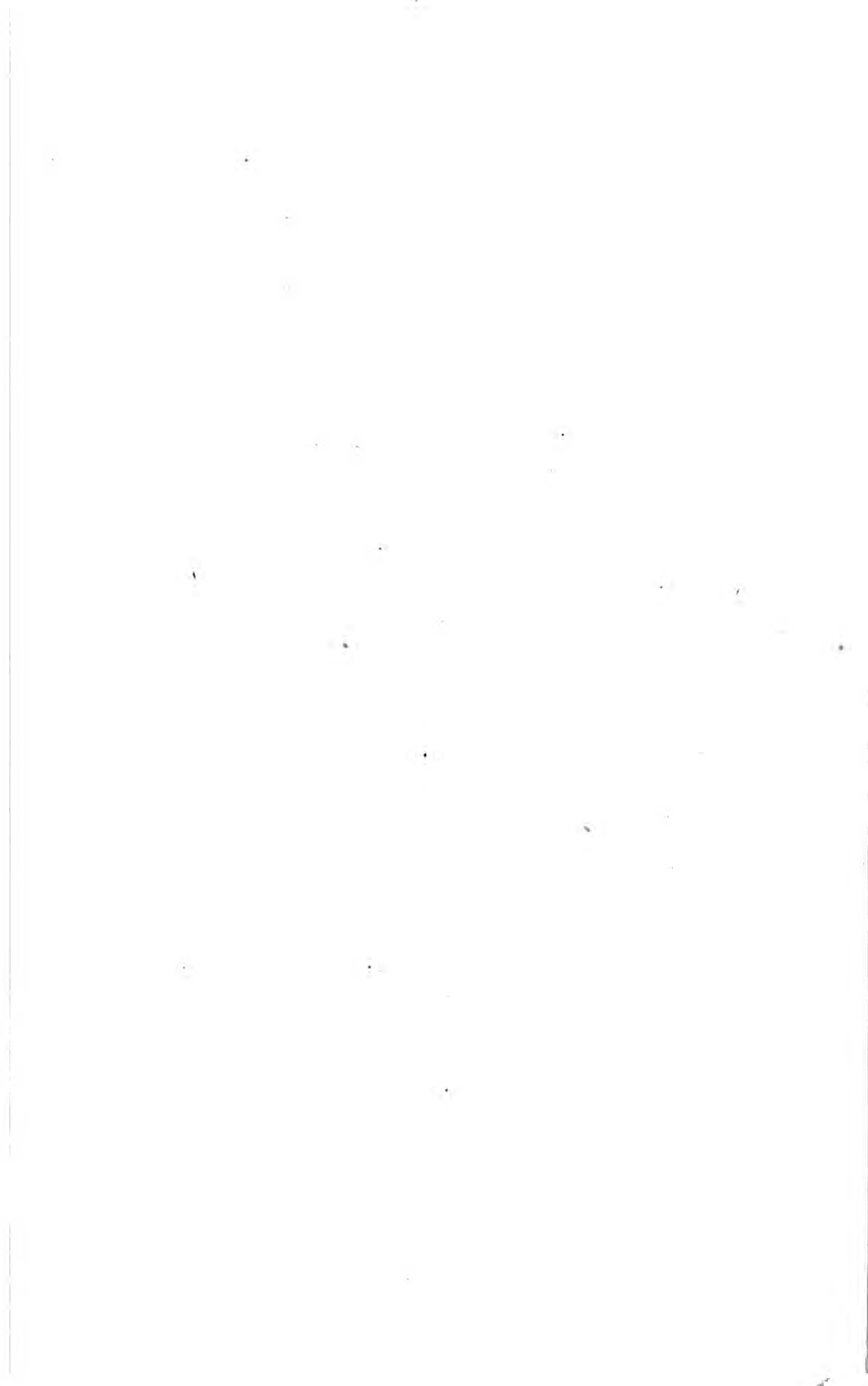
The consequence of all this was, that Leonidas, which might have laid claim to a considerable rank among English poems of the higher order, was pushed beyond it, and when the purposes for which it had been extolled were either answered, or no longer desirable, it fell lower than it deserved. This is the more justly to be regretted, as we have no reason to think the author solicited the injudicious praise of his friends and patrons, or had any hand in building the airy edifice of popular fame. He was, indeed, a lover of liberty, which has ever been the favourite theme of poets, but he did not write for a temporary purpose. Leonidas had been the fruit of very early ambition: he says of himself,

..... My youthful hours
 Were exercis'd in knowledge. Homer's Muse
 To daily meditation won my soul,
 With n.y young spirit mix'd undying sparks
 Of her own rapture. Book vi. 282-267.

He was desirous to be known to posterity, and when he had outlived the party who pressed his poem into their service, he corrected and improved it for a generation that knew nothing of the partialities which first extended its fame.

If his object, however, in this epos, had been solely to inculcate a love of liberty, a love of our country, and a resolute determination to perish with its freedom, he could not have chosen a subject, at least from ancient times, so happily adapted to elevate the mind. The example was unparalleled in history, and therefore the more capable of admitting the embellishments and attractions that belong to the epic province. Nor does it appear that he undertook a task to which his powers were inadequate, when he endeavoured to interest his readers in the fate of his gallant hero and faithful associates. He is not deficient either in the sublime or the pathetic, although in these essentials he may not bear an uniform comparison with the great masters of the passions. The characters are varied with much knowledge of the human heart; each has his distinctive properties, and no one is raised beyond the proportion of virtue or talent which may be supposed to correspond with the age he lived in, or the station he occupied.

His comparisons, as lord Lyttelton remarks, are original and striking, although sometimes not sufficiently dignified. His descriptions are minutely faithful, and his episodes are in general so interesting, that no critical exceptions would probably induce the reader to part with them, or to suppose that they are not indispensable to the main



action. He has likewise this peculiar excellence, that neither his speeches or descriptions are extended to such lengths as, in some attempts of the epic kind, become tiresome, and are the strongest indication of want of judgment. He paints the rapid energies of a band of freemen, in a barbarous age, struggling for their country, strangers to the refined deliberation of later ages, and acquainted with that eloquence only which leads to prompt decision.

The character thus attempted to be given has been drawn principally from a consideration of the following passages in this poem, which in the opinion of the writer, constitute beauties of a superior kind. The parting of Leonidas with his wife and family—the hymn of the Magi—the episode of Teribazus and Ariana, to which, I believe, all critics have done justice—the description of the army of Xerxes—the speech of Demaratus to Xerxes—the combat between Diomedon and Tigranes—the destruction of the barbarians at the close of the eighth book—the sublime dream of Leonidas—his armour—the burning of the camp of Xerxes—and the death of Leonidas. To these may be added, the masterly-drawn characters of Diomedon, Dithyrambus, Menelippus, Xerxes, Demaratus, Hyperanthus, Polydorus, and Artemisia. The character of Artemisia, I may here mention, was added to the edition of 1770, with the very interesting one of Oileus, and those of Melibæus, Melissa, Artuches, and Æschylus.

Like Lucan, our author has rejected the aid of mythological machinery and prodigies, and the propriety of constructing an epic poem without such supernatural auxiliaries, became, after the publication of Leonidas, a question with certain critics. The examples of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, which were cited, are certainly powerful; but the voice of Nature is yet more powerful, and no argument or authority can prove the absolute necessity of what cannot for a moment be reconciled to truth or probability. Mythology, it may be said, has been a fertile source of the sublime, but it is only one source, and where it has been resorted to by modern poets, they have generally dwindled into servile imitators, or have become the borrowers of imagery and sentiment, which they can make appear to be their own only by spoiling.

It may with more justice be objected to Leonidas, that the author places too constant a reliance on history, and follows Herodotus and other writers so closely, as to leave less scope for the powers of invention than he might have justly claimed, considering the great distance of time, and the character of the Greeks in that age.

With respect to the language and versification of Leonidas, although they may be praised for simplicity, perspicuity, and harmony, there are many tame and prosaic lines; but the greatest fault is a want of strength, majesty, and variety. "He has not availed himself," Dr. Warton observes, "of the great privilege of blank verse, to run his verses into one another with different pauses." He thought that iambic feet only should be used in heroic verse, without admitting any trochaic, a notion which is much to be regretted in a writer whose judgment, as a critic, was acknowledged by the best scholars of his time.

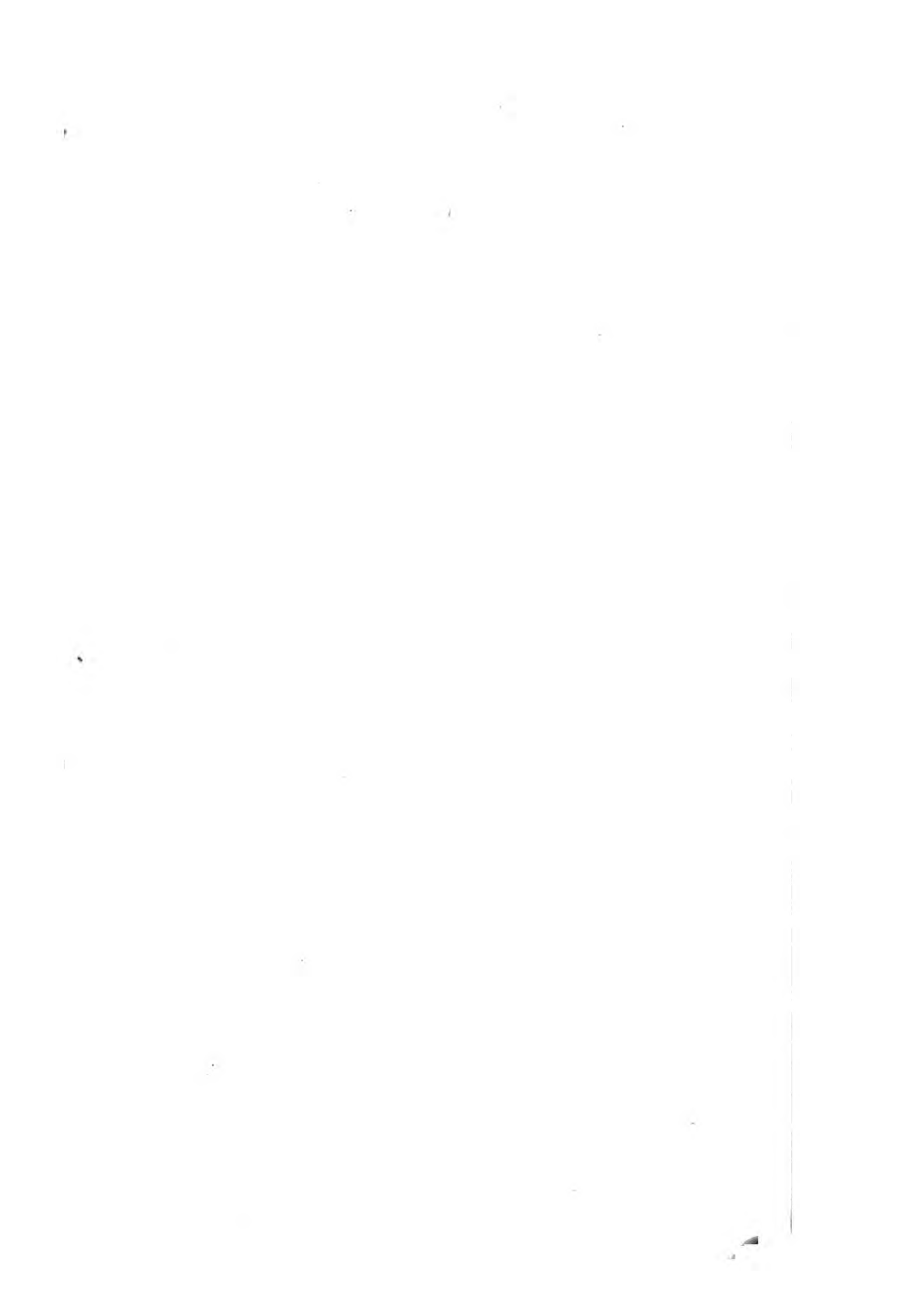
The Athenaid was published in 1787, exactly as it was found among his papers. It consists of the unusual number of thirty books, but evidently was left without the corrections which he would probably have bestowed, had he revised it for the press. It is intended as a continuation, or second part to Leonidas, in which the Greeks are conducted through the vicissitudes of the war with Xerxes, to the final emancipation of their country from his invasions. As an epic it seems defective in many respects. Here is no hero on whose fate the mind is exclusively engaged, but a race of heroes who

demand our admiration by turns; the events of history, too, are so closely followed, as to give the whole the air of a poetical chronicle.

If the plan be defective, the execution is no less so. It abounds in prosaic lines and mean comparisons; there are many words, likewise, introduced, which are too familiar for heroic poetry, as *forestall, uncomfortable, acquiescence, obtuse, exemplified, meritorious, absurdity, superfluous, timber, assiduity, elegantly, authoritative, supercede, convalescence, circumscription, &c. &c.* It may be added, that there are various repetitions, which mark the unfinished state in which the author has left this composition.

With all these faults, however, the Athenaid must be allowed to contain many splendid passages, such as, the vision of Leonidas which appeared to Æschylus—the dream of Timon—the march of the Persian army—Mardonius' vision of the temple of Fame—the desolation of Athens—the appearance of Xerxes and his troops on the declivity of Mount Ægaleos—the passage of Sandauce to Phaleron—the dirge of Ariana—the relief given to the famished Eretrians—the episode of Hyacinthus and Cleora—the cave of the furies, and the cave of Trophonius. As to the characters, that of Aristides is evidently the author's favourite, nor will the reader, perhaps, be less interested in the fate of Themistocles, Mardonius, Sandauce, Argestes, Timothea, Nichomachus, and Masistius. Throughout the whole of the poem, the pathetic is predominant, and the author depicts with admirable feeling those scenes of domestic woe, which are created by civil dissention co-operating with foreign invasion. Such a style is not ill adapted to modern taste, but in proportion as poems of this species abound in the pathetic, they depart from the general character of the epic.

It is not necessary to detain the reader by observations on his smaller poems. That on sir Isaac Newton is certainly an extraordinary production from a youth of sixteen, but the theme, I suspect, must have been given to him. Such an acquaintance with the state of philosophy and the improvements of our immortal philosopher, could not have been acquired at his age. Hosier's Ghost was long one of the most popular English ballads; but his London, if intended for popular influence, was probably read and understood by few. In poetical merit, however, it is not unworthy of the author of Leonidas. Fielding wrote a very long encomium on it in his Champion, and predicted, rather too rashly, that it would ever continue to be the delight of all that can feel the exquisite touch of poetry, or be roused with the divine enthusiasm of public spirit.



THE
LIFE OF WHITEHEAD,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

WILLIAM WHITEHEAD was born at Cambridge in the beginning of the year 1715. His father was a baker in St. Botolph's parish, and at one time must have been a man of some property or some interest, as he bestowed a liberal education on his eldest son, John, who after entering into the church, held the living of Pershore, in the diocese of Worcester. He would probably have been enabled to extend the same care to William, his second son, had he not died when the boy was at school, and left his widow involved in debts contracted by extravagance or folly. A few acres of land, near Grandchester, on which he expended considerable sums of money, without, it would appear, expecting much return, is yet known by the name of *Whitehead's Folly*.

William received the first rudiments of education at some common school in Cambridge, and at the age of fourteen was removed to Winchester, having obtained a nomination into that college by the interest of Mr. Bromley, afterward lord Montfort. Of his behaviour while at school his biographer, Mr. Mason, received the following account from Dr. Balguy.

“ He was always of a delicate turn, and though obliged to go to the hills with the other boys, spent his time there in reading either plays or poetry ; and was also particularly fond of the *Atalantis*, and all other books of private history or character. He very early exhibited his taste for poetry ; for while other boys were contented with showing up twelve or fourteen lines, he would fill half a sheet, but always with English verse. This Dr. Burton, the master, at first discouraged ; but, after some time, he was so much charmed, that he spoke of them with rapture. When he was sixteen he wrote a whole comedy.

“ In the winter of the year 1732, he is said to have acted a female part in the *Andria*, under Dr. Burton's direction. Of this there is some doubt : but it is certain that he acted *Marcia*, in the tragedy of *Cato*, with much applause.

“ In the year 1733, the earl of Peterborough, having Mr. Pope at his house near Southampton, carried him to Winchester to show him the college, school, &c. The earl gave ten guineas to be disposed of in prizes amongst the boys, and Mr. Pope set them a subject to write upon, viz. PETERBOROUGH. Prizes of a guinea each were given

to six of the boys, of whom Whitehead was one. The remaining sum was laid out for other boys in subscriptions to Pine's Horace, then about to be published.

“ He never excelled in writing epigrams, nor did he make any considerable figure in Latin verse, though he understood the classics very well, and had a good memory. He was, however, employed to translate into Latin the first epistle of the Essay on Man : and the translation is still extant in his own hand. Dobson's success in translating Prior's Solomon had put this project into Mr. Pope's head, and he set various persons to work upon it.

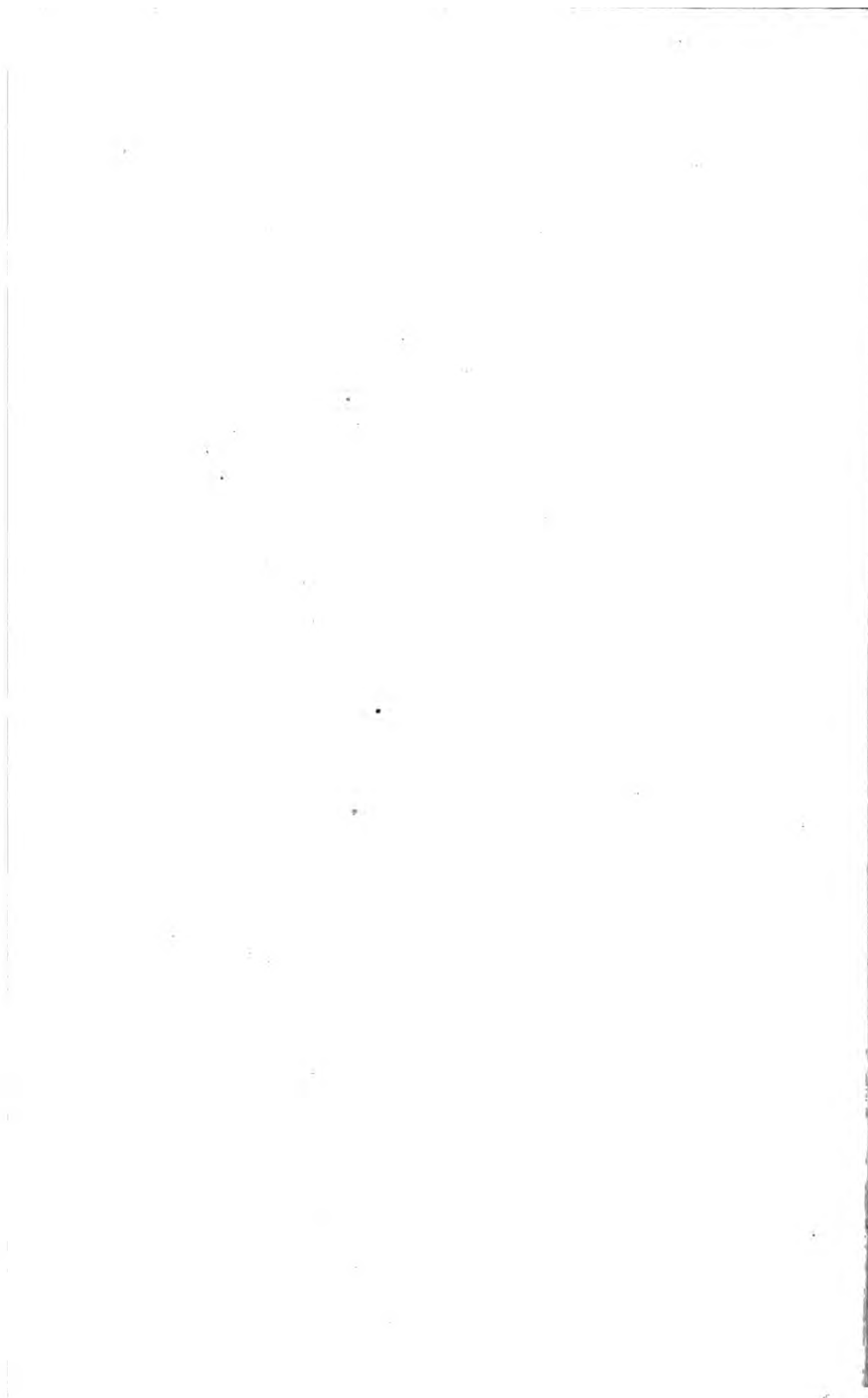
“ His school friendships were usually contracted either with noblemen, or gentlemen of large fortune, such as lord Drumlanrig, sir Charles Douglas, sir Robert Burdett, Mr. Tryon, and Mr. Munday of Leicestershire. The choice of these persons was imputed by some of his schoolfellows to vanity, by others to prudence ; but might it not be owing to his delicacy, as this would make him easily disgusted with the coarser manners of ordinary boys ? He was school-tutor to Mr. Wallop, afterwards lord Lymington, son to the late earl of Portsmouth, and father to the present earl. He enjoyed, for some little time, a lucrative place in the college, that of preposter of the hall.

“ At the election in September, 1735, he was treated with singular injustice ; for, through the force of superior interest, he was placed so low on the roll, that it was scarce possible for him to succeed to New College. Being now superannuate, he left Winchester of course, deriving no other advantage from the college than a good education : this, however, he had ingenuity enough to acknowledge, with gratitude, in a poem prefixed to the second edition of Dr. Lowth's Life of William of Wickham.”

In all this there is nothing extraordinary ; nor can the partiality of his biographer conceal that, among the early efforts of his Muse, there is not one which seems to indicate the future poet, although he is anxious to attribute this to his having followed the example of Pope, rather than of Spenser, Fairfax, and Milton. The Vision of Solomon, however, which he copied from Whitehead's juvenile manuscripts, and is reprinted in the present edition, is entitled to considerable praise. Even when a school-boy he had attentively studied the various manners of the best authors, and in the course of his poetical life, attained no small felicity in exhibiting specimens of almost every kind of stanza.

Although he lost his father before he had resided at Winchester above two years, yet by his own frugality, and such assistance as his mother, a very amiable, prudent, and exemplary woman, could give him, he was enabled to remain at school until the election for New College, in which we have seen he was disappointed. Two months after, he returned to Cambridge, where he was indebted to his extraction, *low* as Mr. Mason thinks it, for what laid the foundation of his future success in life. The circumstance of his being the orphan son of a baker gave him an unexceptionable claim to one of the scholarships founded at Clarehall by Mr. Thomas Pyke, who had followed that trade in Cambridge. His mother accordingly admitted him a sizer in this college, under the tuition of Messrs. Curling, Goddard, and Hopkinson, Nov. 26, 1735. After every allowance is made for the superior value of money in his time, it will remain a remarkable proof of his poverty and economy, that this scholarship, which amounted only to four shillings a week, was in his circumstances a desirable object.

He brought some little reputation with him to college, and his poetical attempts when at school, with the notice Mr. Pope had taken of him, would probably secure him from the neglect attached to inferiority of rank. But it is more to his honour, that by his amiable manners, and intelligent conversation, he recommended himself to the special





notice of some very distinguished contemporaries, of Dr. Powell, Balguy, Ogden, Stebbing, and Hurd, who not only admitted him to an occasional intercourse, but to an intimacy and respect which continued through the various scenes of their lives. In such society his morals and industry had every encouragement which the best example could give, and he soon surmounted the prejudices which vulgar minds might have indulged on the recollection of his birth and poverty.

When the marriage of the prince of Wales in 1736, and the birth of his son, the present king, called for the gratulatory praises of the universities, Whitehead wrote some verses on these subjects, which he inserted in the first collection of his poems, published in 1754, but omitted from the second in 1774. They are restored, however, to the present edition, as they have been reprinted in some subsequent collections; nor can there be much danger to the reputation of a poet in telling the world that his earliest efforts were not his best.

The production with which, in Mr. Mason's opinion, he commenced a poet, was his epistle *On the Danger of Writing in Verse*. This, we are told, obtained general admiration, and was highly approved by Pope. But that it is "one of the most happy imitations extant of Pope's preceptive manner," is a praise which seems to come from Mr. Mason's friendship, rather than his judgment. The subject is but slightly touched, and the sentiments are often obscure. It is not very easy to arrange the following words in any order that can make sense.

Will it avail, that, unmatu'r'd by years,
My easy numbers pleas'd your partial ears,
If now condemn'd, ev'n where he's valu'd most,
The man must suffer if the poet's lost.

Nor are the following much more intelligible :

Thus grateful France does Richlieu's worth proclaim,
Thus grateful Britain doats on Somers' name,
And spite of party rage, and human flaws,
And British liberty, and British laws,
Times yet to come shall sing of Anna's reign,
And bards, who blame the measures, love the man.

Why "times to come" should celebrate Anna's reign, "in spite of British liberty and laws" is not easily discovered, although they may be allowed to forget "party rage," and what is tamely called "human flaws." The finest passage and happiest imitation of Pope, is that in which he condemns the licentiousness of certain poets.

The tale of *Atys and Adrastus*, his next publication, is altogether superior to the former. It is elegant, pathetic, and enriched with some beautiful imagery.

The Epistle of Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII. which followed, will not be thought to rank very high among productions of this kind. "The truth is," says Mr. Mason, "Mr. Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* is such a *chef d'œuvre*, that nothing of the kind can be relished after it." Our critic has, however, done no credit to Whitehead, by this insinuation of rivalry, and yet less to himself by following it with a petulant attack on Dr. Johnson. In his eagerness to injure the reputation of a man so much his superior, and with whom, it is said, he never exchanged an angry word, he would exclude *sympathy* from the charms which attract in the *Eloisa*, and at the expence of taste and feeling, passes a clumsy sarcasm on papistical machinery.

The *Essay on Ridicule* was published in 1743. It is by far the best of his didactic pieces, and one upon which, his biographer thinks, he bestowed great pains. "His own natural candour led him to admit the use of this excellent (though frequently mis-directed) weapon of the mind with more restrictions than, perhaps, any person will submit to, who has the power of employing it successfully." The justice of this observation is proved by almost universal experience. Pope and Swift at this time were striking instances of the abuse of a talent which, moderated by candour, and by respect for what ought to be above all ridicule and all levity, might contribute more powerfully to sink vice into contempt than any other means that can be employed.

This poem is not now printed as it came from the pen of the author on its first publication. Some lines at the conclusion are omitted, in which he was afraid he had authorized too free a use of ridicule; and the names of Lucian and Cervantes, whom he held as legitimate models, are omitted, that honour being reserved for Addison only.

His next essay was the short epistle to the Earl of Ashburnham on Nobility. His biographer is silent concerning it, because it was not inserted in either of the editions of his works, nor can he assign the reason, although it does not appear to be very obscure. With much excellent advice, there is a mixture of democratic reflection on hereditary titles, and insinuations respecting

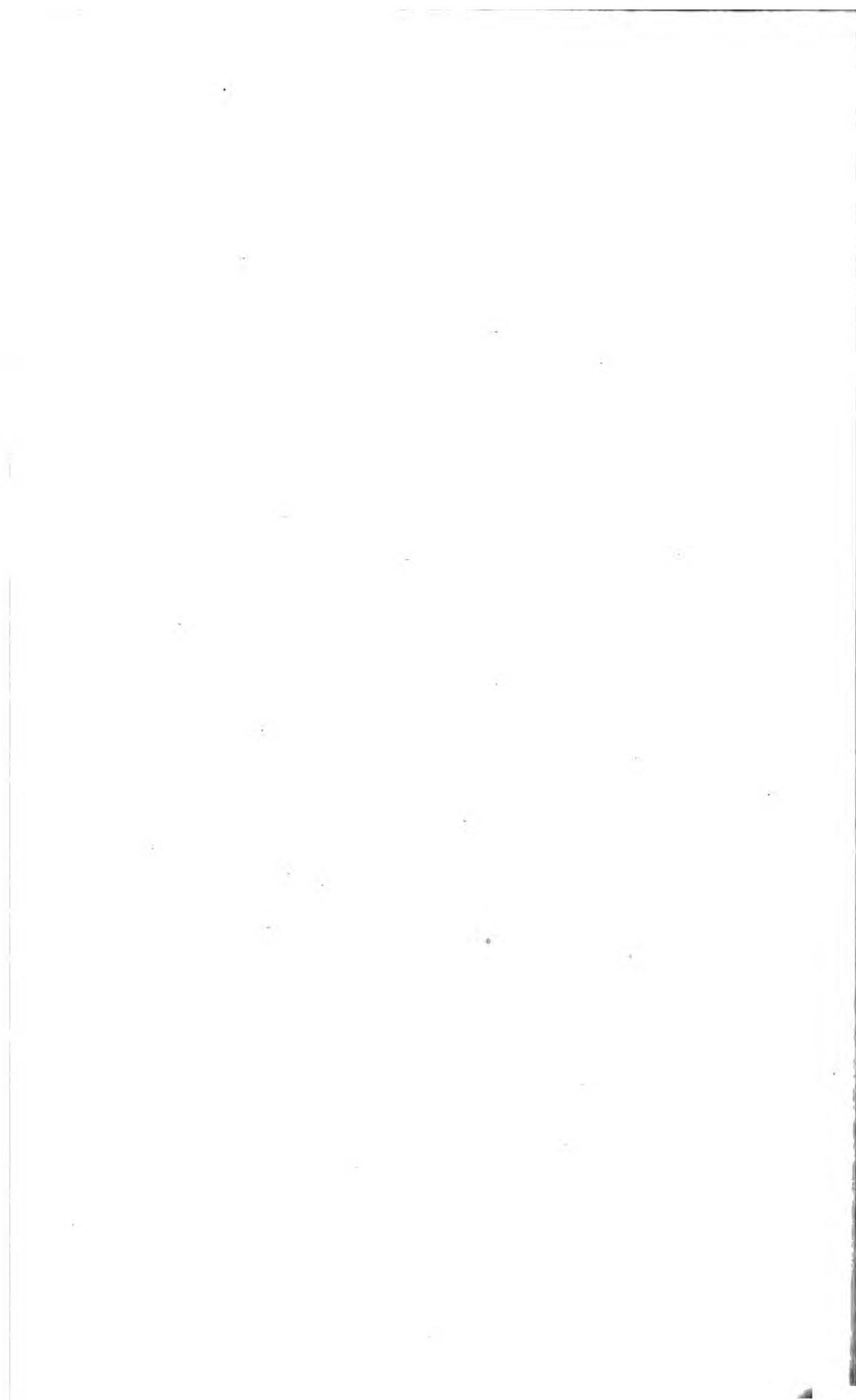
..... such seeming inconsistent things
As strength with ease, and liberty with kings,

which he might think somewhat uncourtly in the collected works of one who had become the companion of lords, and the poet laureat.

In the publication of the poems now enumerated, while at college, Mr. Mason informs us, that he was less eager for poetical fame than desirous of obtaining a maintenance by the labours of his pen, that he might be less burthensome to his mother. With this laudable view, he practised the strictest economy, and pursued his studies with exemplary diligence. Whether his inclination led him to any particular branch of science, we are not told. In 1739 he took his degree of bachelor of arts, and in 1742 was elected a fellow of his college. In 1743, he was admitted master of arts, and appears about this time to have had an intention to take orders. Some lines which he wrote to a friend, and which are reprinted among the additional fragments to his works in this edition, treat this intention with a levity unbecoming that, which, if not serious, is the worst of all hypocrisy. He was prevented, however, from indulging any thoughts of the church by an incident which determined the tenour of his future life.

William, third earl of Jersey, was at this time making inquiries after a proper person to be private tutor to his second son, the late earl, and Whitehead was recommended by Mr. commissioner Graves, as a person qualified for this important charge. Mr. Whitehead accepted the offer, as his fellowship would not necessarily be vacated by it, and in the summer of 1745 removed to the earl's house in town, where he was received upon the most liberal footing. A young friend of the family, afterwards general Stephens, was also put under his care, as a companion to the young nobleman in his studies, and a spur to his emulation.

Placed thus in a situation, where he could spare some hours from the instruction of his pupils, he became a frequenter of the theatre, which had been his favourite amusement long before he had an opportunity of witnessing the superiority of the London performers. Immediately on his coming to town, he had written a little ballad farce, entitled *The*



Edinburgh Ball, in which the young Pretender is held up to ridicule. This, however, was never performed, or printed. He then began a regular tragedy, *The Roman Father*, which was produced on the stage in 1750. He appears to have viewed the difficulties of a first attempt with a wary eye, and had the precaution to make himself known to the public by the Lines addressed to Dr. Hoadley. Those to Mr. Garrick, on his becoming joint patentee of Drury Lane theatre, would probably improve his interest with one whose excessive tenderness of reputation was among the few blemishes in his character.

It is not necessary to expatiate on the merits of *The Roman Father*, as dramatic pieces are excluded from this collection. It still retains its place on the stage, and has been the choice of many new performers who wished to impress the audience with a favourable opinion of their powers, and of some old ones who are less afraid of modern than of ancient tragedy, of declamation than of passion. Mr. Mason has bestowed a critical discussion upon it, but evidently with a view to throw out reflections on *Irene*, which Johnson never highly valued; and on Garrick, whom he accused of a tyrannical use of the pruning knife. To this, however, he confesses that Whitehead submitted with the humblest deference, nor was it a deference which dishonoured either his pride or his taste. He avowedly wrote for stage-effect, and who could so properly judge of that as Garrick?

The next production of our author was *The Hymn to the Nymph of the Bristol Spring*, in 1751, "written in the manner of those classical addresses to heathen divinities of which the hymns of Homer and Callimachus are the archetypes." This must be allowed to be a very favourable specimen of his powers in blank verse, and has much of poetical fancy and ornament. *The Sweepers*, a ludicrous attempt in blank verse, would, in Mr. Mason's opinion, have received more applause than it has hitherto done, had the taste of the generality of readers been founded more on their own feelings than on mere prescription and authority. It appears to me, however, to be defective in plan: there is an effort at humour in the commencement, of which the effect is painfully interrupted by the miseries of a female sweeper taken into keeping, and passing to ruin through the various stages of prostitution.

About this time, if I mistake not, for Mr. Mason has not given the precise date, he wrote the beautiful stanzas on Friendship, which that gentleman thinks one of his best and most finished compositions. What gives it a peculiar charm is, that it comes from the heart, and appeals with success to the experience of every man who has imagined what friendship should be, or known what it is. The celebrated Gray, according to Mr. Mason's account, "disapproved the general sentiment which it conveyed, for he said it would furnish the unfeeling and capricious with apologies for their defects, and that it ought to be entitled *A Satire on Friendship*." Mr. Mason repeated this opinion to the author who, in consequence, made a considerable addition to the concluding part of the piece. "Still, however, as the exceptionable stanzas remained, which contained an apology for what Mr. Gray thought no apology ought to be made, he continued unsatisfied, and persisted in saying, that it had a bad tendency, and the more so, because the sentiments which he thought objectionable were so poetically and finely expressed."

This is a singular anecdote; how far Gray was right in his opinion may be left to the consideration of the reader, who is to remember that the subject of these verses is school-boy friendship. Some instances of its instability Whitehead may have experi-

enced, and the name of Charles Townsend is mentioned as one who forgot him when he became a statesman. But it is certain that he had less to complain of, in this respect, than most young men of higher pretensions, for he retained the greater part of his youthful friendships to the last, and was, indeed, a debtor to friendship for almost all he had. What Gray seems to be afraid of, is Whitehead's admission that the decay of friendship may be mutual, and from causes for which neither party is seriously to blame.

The subject of this poem is not indirectly connected with the verses which he wrote about this time (1751) to the Rev. Mr. Wright, who had blamed him for leading what his friends thought a dependent life, and for not taking orders, or entering upon some regular profession. For this there was certainly some plea. He had resigned his fellowship in 1746, about a year after he became one of lord Jersey's family, and with that, every prospect of advantage from his college. He had now remained five years in this family, and had attained the age of thirty-six, without any support, but what depended on the liberality of his employer, or the sale of his poems. It was not therefore very unreasonable in his friend to suggest, that he had attained the age at which men in general have determined their course of life, and that his present situation must be one of two things, either dependent or precarious.

In the verses just mentioned, Whitehead endeavours to vindicate his conduct, and will, I apprehend, be found to vindicate it like one too much enamoured of present ease to look forward to probable disappointment. He is content with dependence, because he has made it easy to himself; his present condition is quiet and contentment, and what can his future be more? thus ingeniously shifting the subject from a question of dependence or independence, to that of ambition and bustle. But although this will not apply generally, such was his temper or his treatment that it proved a sufficient apology in his own case. Throughout a long life, he never had cause to repent of the confidence he placed in his noble friends, who continued to heap favours upon him in the most delicate manner, and without receiving, as far as we know, any of those humiliating or disgraceful returns which degrade genius and endanger virtue.

The poems now enumerated, and a few others of the lighter kind, he published in 1754 in one volume, and about the same time produced his second tragedy, *Creusa*, which had not the success of *The Roman Father*, although Mr. Mason seems inclined to give it the preference. But it ought not to be forgot that, with the profits arising from these theatrical productions, our author honourably discharged his father's debts.

About this time, lord Jersey determined that his son should complete his education abroad, and the late lord Harcourt having the same intentions concerning his eldest son lord viscount Nuneham, a young nobleman of nearly the same age, Mr. Whitehead was appointed governor to both, and gladly embraced so favourable an opportunity of enlarging his views by foreign travel. Leipzig was the place where they were destined to pass the winter of 1754, in order to attend the lectures of professor Mascow on the *Droit publique*. They set off in June, and resided the rest of the summer at Rheims, that they might habituate themselves to the French language, and then passed seven months at Leipzig, with little satisfaction or advantage, for they found the once celebrated Mascow in a state of dotage, without being quite incapacitated from reading his former lectures.

In the following spring, they visited the German courts, proceeded to Vienna, and thence to Italy. On their return homeward, they crossed the Alps, and passed through Switzerland, Germany, and Holland, being prevented from visiting France by the decla-



ration of war, and landed at Harwich in September 1756. During this tour, Whitehead wrote those Elegies and Odes which relate to subjects inspired on classic ground, and in which he attempts picturesque imagery with more felicity than in any of his former pieces. He had, indeed, in this tour, every thing before his eyes which demanded grandeur of conception and elevation of language. He beheld the objects which had animated poets in all ages, and his mind appears to have felt all that local emotion can produce.

Mr. Mason complains that these Elegies were not popular, and states various objections made to them; he does not add by whom: but takes care to inform us that the poet bore his fate contentedly, because he was no longer under the necessity of adapting himself to the public taste in order to become a popular writer. He had received while yet in Italy two genteel patent places, usually united, the badges of secretary and registrar of the order of the Bath, and two years after, on the death of old Cibber, he was appointed poet laureat.

This last place was offered to Gray, by Mr. Mason's mediation, and an apology was made for passing over Mr. Mason himself, "that being in orders, he was thought, merely on that account, less eligible for the office than a layman¹." Mr. Mason says, he was glad to hear this reason assigned, and did not think it a weak one. It appears, however, that a higher respect was paid to Gray than to Whitehead, in the offer of the appointment. Gray was to hold it as a sinecure, but Whitehead was expected to do the duties of the laureat. In this dilemma, if it may be so called, Mr. Mason endeavoured to relieve his friend by an expedient not very promising. He advised him to employ a deputy to write his annual odes, and reserve his own pen for certain great occasions, as a peace, or a royal marriage; and he pointed out to him two or three needy poets who, for a reward of five or ten guineas, would be humble enough to write under the eye of the musical composer.

Whitehead had more confidence in his powers, or more respect for his royal patron, than to take this advice, and set himself to compose his annual Odes with the zeal that he employed on his voluntary effusions. But although he had little to fear from the fame of his predecessor, he was not allowed to enjoy all the benefits of comparison. His Odes were confessedly superior to those of Cibber, but the office itself, under Cibber's possession, had become so ridiculous, that it was no easy task to restore it to some degree of public respect. Whitehead, however, was perhaps the man of all others, his contemporaries, who could perform this with most ease to himself. Attacked as he was, in every way, by "the little fry" of the poetical profession, he was never provoked into retaliation, and bore even the more dangerous abuse of Churchill, with a real or apparent indifference, which to that turbulent libeller must have been truly mortifying. He was not, however, insensible of the inconvenience, to say the least, of a situation which obliges a man to write two poems yearly upon the same subjects, and with this feeling wrote *The Pathetic Apology for all Laureats*; which, from the motto, he appears to have intended to reach that quarter where only redress could be obtained, but it was not published until after his death.

For some years after his return to England, he lived almost entirely in the house of the earl of Jersey, no longer as a tutor to his son, but as a companion of amiable manners and accomplishments, whom the good sense of that nobleman and his lady preferred to be the partner of their familiar and undisguised intimacy, and placed at their table

¹ This office was held from 1716 to 1730 by Eusden, a clergyman. C.

as one not unworthy to sit with guests of whatever rank. The earl and countess were now advanced in years, and his biographer informs us, that Whitehead "willingly devoted the principal part of his time to the amusement of his patron and patroness, which it will not be doubted by those, who know with what unassuming ease, and pleasing sallies of wit, he enlivened his conversation, must have made their hours of sickness or pain pass away with much more serenity." The father of lord Nuneham also gave him a general invitation to his table in town, and to his delightful seat in the country, and the two young lords, during the whole of his life, bestowed upon him every mark of affection and respect.

During this placid enjoyment of high life, he produced *The School for Lovers*, a comedy, which was performed at Drury Lane in the year 1762. In the advertisement prefixed to it, he acknowledges his obligations to a small dramatic piece written by M. de Fontenelle. This comedy was not unsuccessful, but was written on a plan so very different from all that is called comedy, that the critics were at a loss where to place it. Mr. Mason, who will not allow it to be classed among the *sentimental*, assigns it a very high station among the small list of our *genteel* comedies.

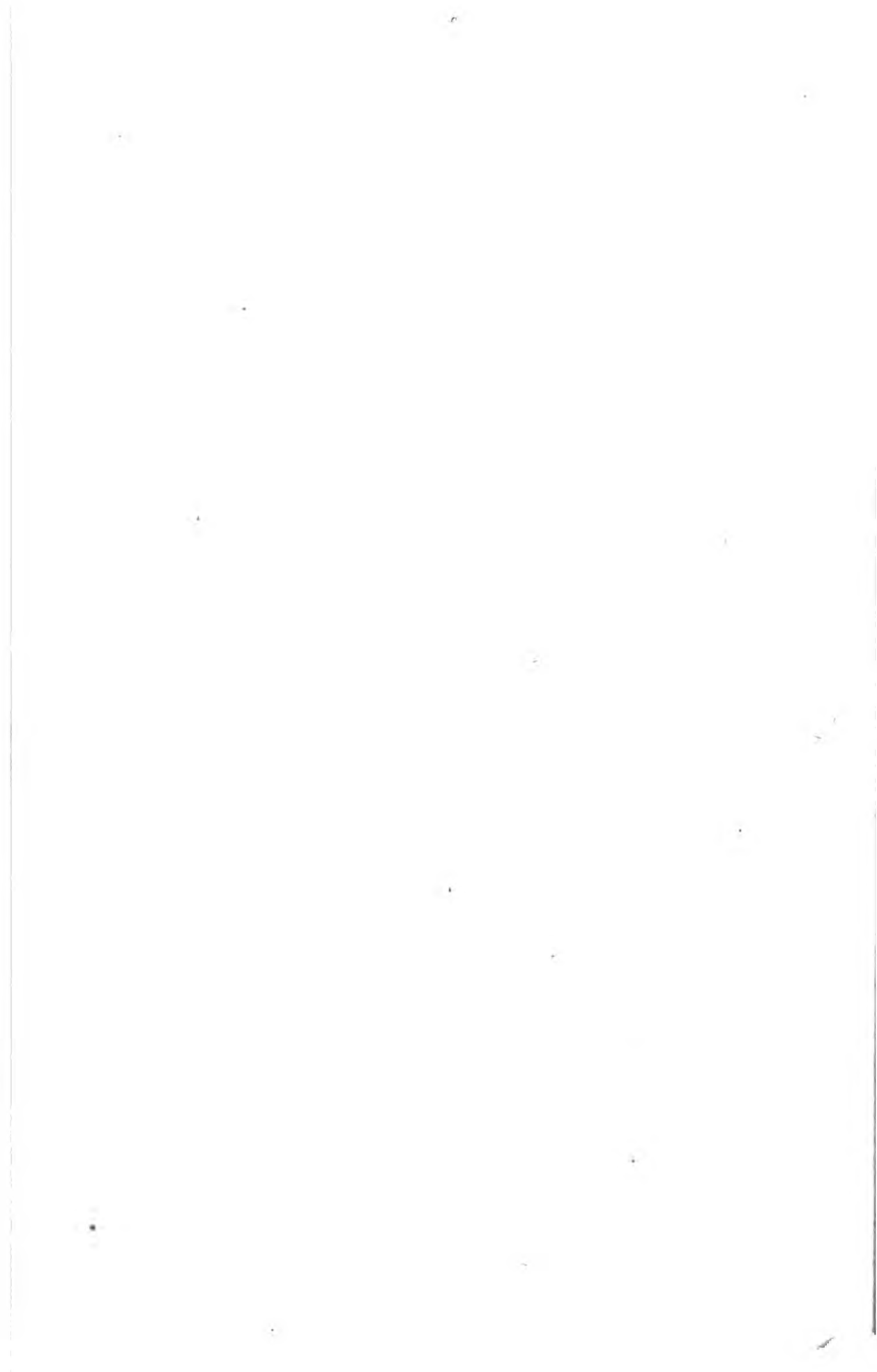
In the same year, he published his *Charge to the Poets*, in which, as laureat, he humorously assumes the dignified mode of a bishop giving his visitatorial instructions to his clergy. He is said to have designed this as a continuation of *The Dangers of writing Verse*. There seems, however, no very close connection, while as a poem it is far superior, not only in elegance and harmony of verse, but in the alternation of serious advice and genuine humour, the whole chastened by candour for his brethren, and a kindly wish to protect them from the fastidiousness of criticism, as well as to heal the mutual animosities of the *genus irritabile*.

In this laudable attempt, he had not even the happiness to conciliate those whose cause he pleaded. Churchill, from this time, attacked him whenever he attacked any, but Whitehead disdained to reply, and only adverted to the animosity of that poet in a few lines which he wrote towards the close of his life, and which appear to be part of some longer poem. They have already been noticed in the *Life of Churchill*, and are now added among the fragments copied from Mr. Mason's *Memoirs*.

One consequence of Churchill's animosity, neither silence nor resentment could avert. Churchill, at this time, had possession of *the town*, and made some characters unpopular merely by joining them with others who were really so. Garrick was so frightened at the abuse he threw out against Whitehead, that he would not venture to bring out a tragedy which the latter offered to him. Such is Mr. Mason's account, but if it was likely to succeed, why was it not produced when Churchill and his animosities were forgotten? Why amidst all the revolutions of the stage, some of which have not been unfavourable to much worse pieces than Whitehead would have written, does it yet remain in manuscript?

The story, however, may be true; for when, in 1770, he offered his *Trip to Scotland*, a farce, to Mr. Garrick, he conditioned that it should be produced without the name of the author. The secret was accordingly preserved both in acting and publishing, and the farce was performed and read for a considerable time, without a suspicion that the grave author of *The School for Lovers* had relaxed into the broad mirth and ludicrous improbabilities of farce.

In 1774, he collected his poems and dramatic pieces together, with the few exceptions already noticed, and published them in two volumes under the title of *Plays and Poems*, concluding with the *Charge to the Poets*, as a farewell to the Muses. He had, however, so





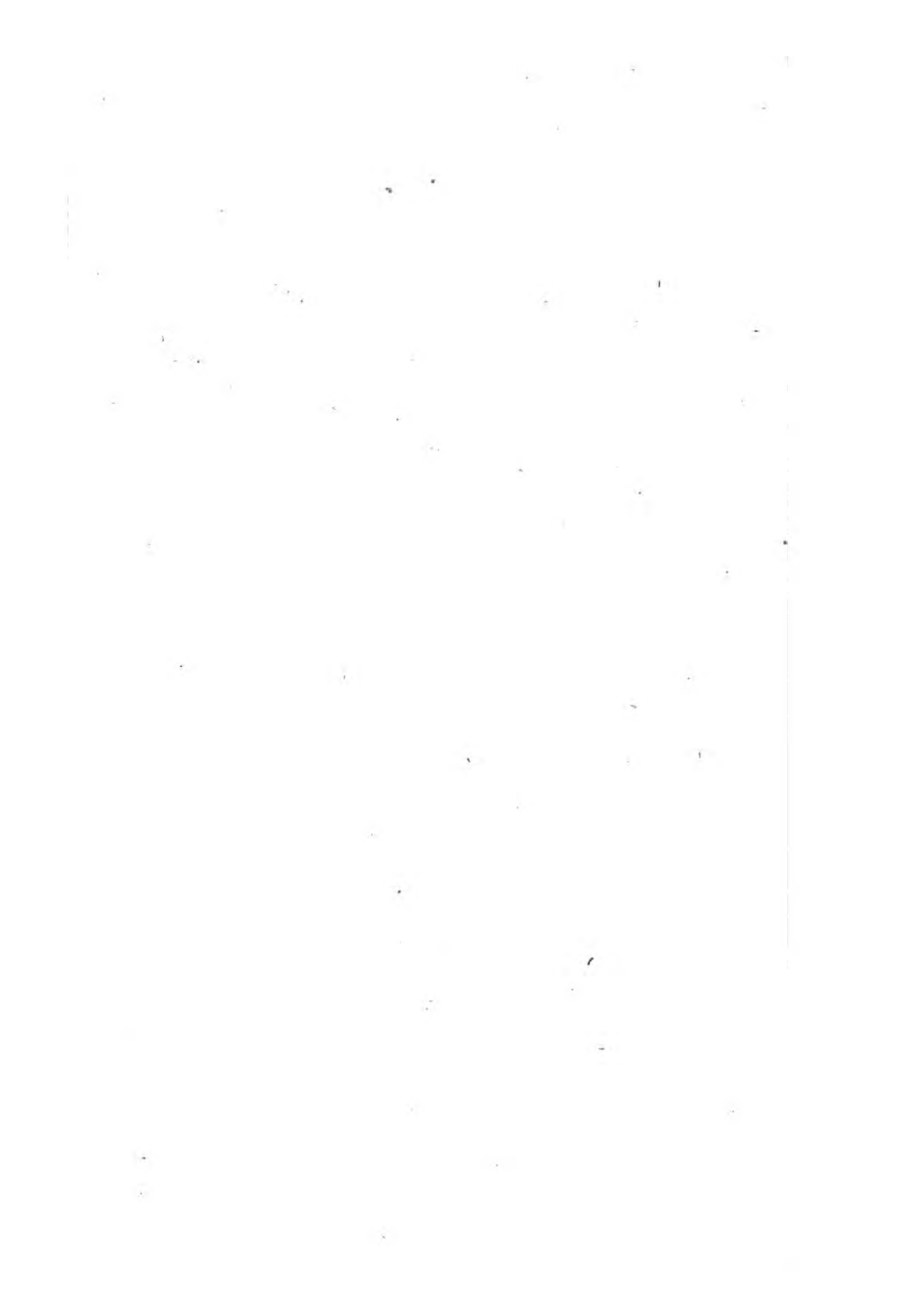
much leisure, and so many of those incitements which a poet and a moralist cannot easily resist, that he still continued to employ his pen, and proved that it was by no means worn out. In 1776 he published *Variety*, a Tale for married People, a light, pleasing poem, in the manner of Gay, which speedily ran through five editions. His *Goat's Beard* (in 1777) was less familiar and less popular, but is not inferior in moral tendency and just satire on degenerated manners. It produced an attack, entitled *Ass's Ears*, a Fable, addressed to the Author of the *Goat's Beard*, in which the office of laureat is denied to men of genius, and judged worthy to be held only by such poets as Shadwell and Cibber.

The *Goat's Beard* was the last of Whitehead's publications. He left in manuscript the tragedy already mentioned, which Garrick was afraid to perform; the name Mr. Mason conceals, but informs us that the characters are noble, and the story domestic. He left also the first act of an *Cædipus*; the beginning, and an imperfect plan of a tragedy founded on king Edward the Second's resignation of his crown to his son, and of another composed of Spanish and Moorish characters; and a few small poetical pieces, some of which Mr. Mason printed in the volume to which he prefixed his *Memoirs*, in 1788. They are now before the reader in one series, with a poem which Whitehead published in 1758, but omitted in his edition of 1770. It has the humble title of *Verses to the People of England*, whom he endeavours to excite to revenge their country's wrongs by a more spirited support of the war. The stanza is perhaps too short for the dignity of the subject, but it gives a rapidity to some glowing and vigorous sentiments. Mr. Mason has not noticed this piece, of which he could not be ignorant, as it was published with the author's name. Perhaps it appeared to disadvantage by a comparison with Akenside's *Ode to the Country Gentlemen of England*, published at the same time.

After he had taken leave of the public as an author, except in his official productions, he continued to enjoy the society of his friends for some years, highly respected for the intelligence of his conversation and the suavity of his manners. His death, which took place on April 14, 1785, was sudden. In the spring of that year he was confined at home for some weeks by a cold and cough which affected his breast, but occasioned so little interruption to his wonted amusements of reading and writing, that when lord Harcourt visited him the morning before he died, he found him revising for the press a paper which his lordship conjectured to be the birth-day ode. At noon finding himself disinclined to taste the dinner his servant brought up, he desired to lean upon his arm from the table to his bed, and in that moment he expired, in the seventieth year of his age. He was interred in South Audley Street chapel.

Unless, with Mr. Mason, we conclude that where Whitehead was unsuccessful, the public was to blame, it will not be easy to prove his right to a very high station among English poets. Yet perhaps he did not so often fall short from a defect of genius, as from a timidity which inclined him to listen too frequently to the corrections of his friends, and to believe that what was first written could never be the best. Although destitute neither of invention nor ease, he repressed both by adhering, like his biographer, to certain standards of taste which the age would not accept, and like him too, consoled himself in the hope of some distant era when his superior worth should be acknowledged.

As a prose writer he has given proofs of classical taste and reading in his *Observations on the Shield of Æneas*, originally published in Dodsley's *Museum*, and afterwards annexed to Warton's *Virgil*; and of genuine and delicate humour in three papers of *The World*, No. 12, 19, and 58. These he reprinted in the edition of his works, published in 1774.





MR. URBAN, *Shrewsbury, Oct. 17.*

THE following inscription was written by the Rev. R. Jago, for a *shed* at Snitterfield, co. Warwick. As it does not appear in his Works, you will probably think it worth preserving among your literary curiosities. Mr. Jago was the author of "Edge Hill, a poem," and other ingenious productions. He died at Snitterfield, of which place he was Vicar, May 8, 1781, aged 65 years. P.

Ædes Gulliverianæ.

Illustrissimo quadrupedum generi,
hinnitu præcellenti,
impavido, strenuo, fideli,
hominum usui inservire non dedignanti,
solamini infirmis, validis oblectamento,
domi, forisque,
peregrinanti, rusticanti,
gratitudinis ergo posuit,
humillimus, et in omni beneficio devinctus,
Lemuel Gulliver, Bipes.

THE
LIFE OF JAGO,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

RICHARD JAGO, descended of a Cornish family, was the third son of the rev. Richard Jago, rector of Beaudesert¹, in Warwickshire, by Margaret, the daughter of William Parker, gent. of Henly in Arden; and was born October 1, 1715. He received his classical education under the rev. Mr. Crumpton, an excellent schoolmaster, at Solihull, in the same county, but one whose severity our poet has thought proper to record in his *Edge-Hill*.

Hail, Solihull! respectful I salute
Thy walls: more awful once, when, from the sweets
Of festive freedom, and domestic ease,
With throbbing heart, to the stern discipline
Of pedagogue morose I sad return'd.

At this school he formed an intimacy, which death only dissolved, with the poet Shenstone, whose letters to him have since been published. In their early days they probably exchanged their juvenile verses, and afterwards communicated to each other their more serious studies and pursuits. Somerville also appears to have encouraged our author's first attempts, which were made at a yet earlier period, when under his father's humble roof.

O Beaudesert!.....
Haunt of my youthful steps! where I was wont
To range, chanting my rude notes to the wind,
While Somerville disdain'd not to regard
With candid ear, and regulate the strain.

From school he was entered as a servitor of University College, Oxford, where Shenstone, then a commoner of Pembroke, the late rev. Richard Greaves, Mr. Whistler, and others who appear among Shenstone's correspondents, showed him every respect, notwithstanding the inferiority of his rank. A young man of whatever merit, who was servitor, was usually visited, if visited at all, with secrecy; but this prejudice is now so

¹ Or Beldesert, a living conferred upon him by Lloyd, bishop of Worcester, in 1709. C.

much abolished, that the same circumspection is not thought necessary. He took his master's degree July 9, 1738, having entered into the church the year before, and served the curacy of Snitterfield, near Stratford upon Avon. His father died in 1740. In 1744, or, according to Shenstone's Letters, in 1743, he married Dorothea Susanna Fancourt, daughter of the rev. — Fancourt of Kilmcote in Leicestershire, a young lady whom he had known from her childhood².

For several years after his marriage, he resided at Harbury, to which living he was presented in 1746. Lord Willoughby de Broke gave him also the living of Chesterton, at a small distance from Harbury. These two benefices together did not produce more than one hundred pounds a year. In 1751 he had the misfortune to lose his wife, who appears to have been an amiable and accomplished woman, and was left with the care of seven very young children.

In 1754 lord Clare, the late earl Nugent, procured for him from Dr. Madox, bishop of Worcester, the vicarage of Snitterfield, worth about 140*l*. In 1759, he married a second wife, Margaret, daughter of James Underwood, esq. of Rudgeley, in Staffordshire, who survived him, but by whom he had no children.

Some of his smaller pieces of poetry had before this time been inserted in Dodsley's Collection, but he put in for higher claims, by publishing the poem of Edge-Hill, in the year 1767; and in 1768 his more popular fable of Labour and Genius. In 1771, he was presented by his kind patron, lord Willoughby de Broke, to the living of Kilmcote, formerly held by his first wife's father, which being worth near 300*l*. a year, enabled him to maintain his family with ease and comfort, especially as he retained Snitterfield, and resigned only the trifling living of Harbury. During the latter part of his life, when the infirmities of age made their approach, he resided almost entirely at Snitterfield, where he amused himself with improving the vicarage house, and ornamenting his grounds, a taste he probably caught from Shenstone, but which he contrived to indulge at a much less expense.

He died after a short illness, May 8, 1781, aged sixty-five years, and was buried, according to his desire, in a vault which he had made for his family in the church at Snitterfield. Three of his daughters, by the first wife, survived him.

His personal character is thus given by his biographer—"Mr. Jago, in his person, was about the middle stature. In his manner, like most people of sensibility, he appeared reserved among strangers: amongst his friends he was free and easy: and his conversation sprightly and entertaining. In domestic life, he was the affectionate husband, the tender parent, the kind master, the hospitable neighbour, and sincere friend; and both by his doctrine and example, a faithful and worthy minister of the parish over which he presided."

In 1784, his poems, as corrected, improved, and enlarged by the author a short time before his death, with some additional pieces, were published by his friend, the late John Scott Hylton, esq. of Lapall-House near Hales Owen, who was likewise the correspondent of Shenstone. To this publication Mr. Hylton prefixed some account of Jago's life, which, however meagre and unsatisfactory, is all that can now be procured. A very few particulars, indeed, but perhaps of no great importance, have been gleaned from Shenstone's Letters, &c. His life, it may be presumed, was that of a man not dependent on fame, and whose productions formed the amusement of his leisure hours. It would

² Shenstone's Letters. Letter xlix. C.

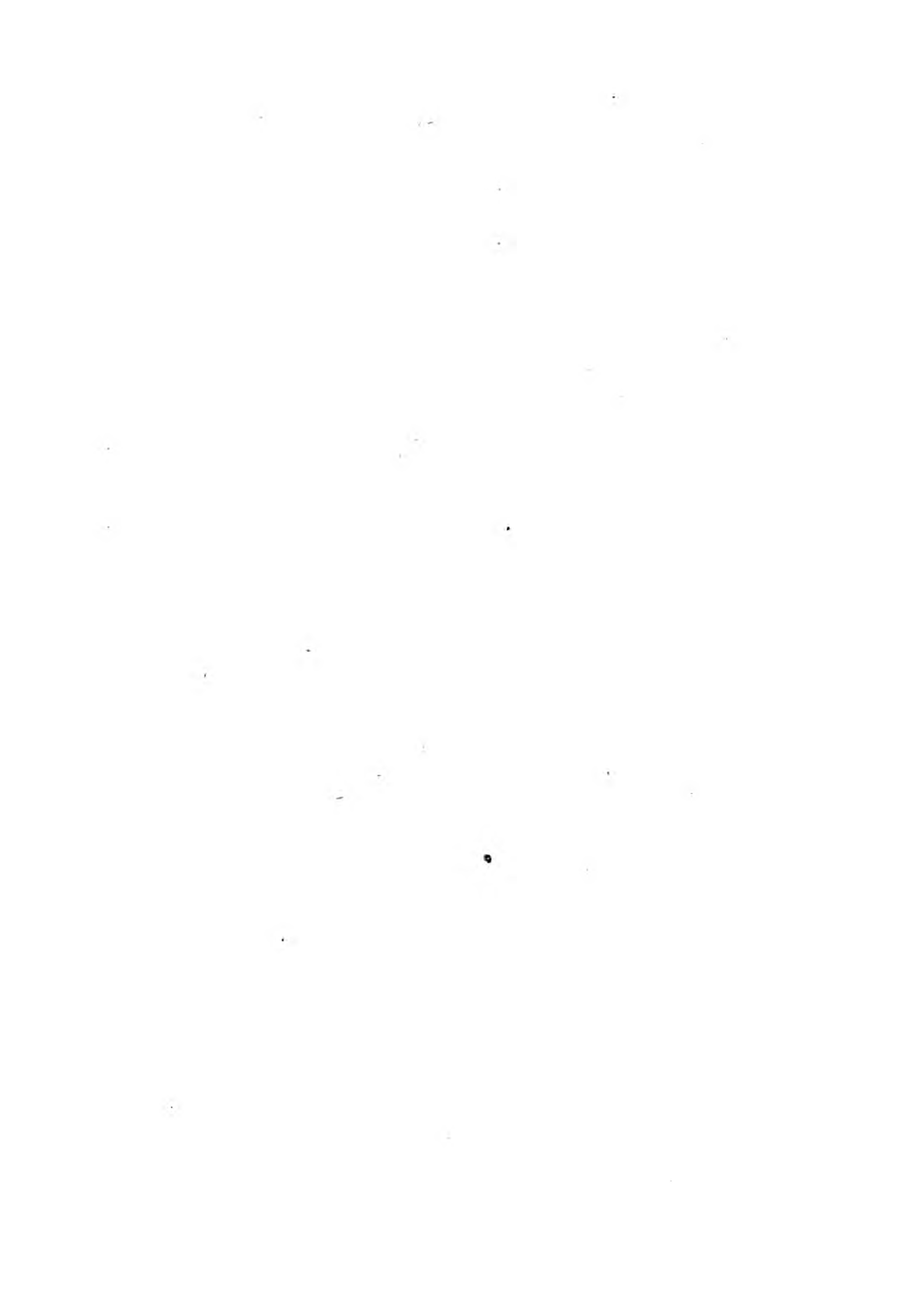
appear by one of Shenstone's letters that he occasionally used his pencil as well as his pen.

His rank as a poet cannot be thought very high. Yet we have few more beautiful specimens of tenderness and sensibility than in his Elegies on the Blackbirds and Goldfinches. The fable of Labour and Genius has a pleasing mixture of elegance and humour.

The Elegy on the Blackbirds appeared first in *The Adventurer*, to the editor of which it was sent by Gilbert West, and published as his. The author claimed it, however, when added to Dodsley's collection, a circumstance which Dr. Johnson has noted, but not with sufficient precision, in his life of West. Even when Mr. Jago put his name to it, a manager of the Bath theatre endeavoured to make it pass for his own, and with great effrontery asserted that *Jago* was a fictitious name adopted from the play of *Othello*.

His longest poem, *Edge-Hill*, has some passages not destitute of animation, but it is so topographically exact, that to enjoy it the reader must have a map constantly before him; and perhaps with that aid, if he is not conversant with the various scenery, the effect will be languor and indifference. Even his friend Shenstone seems to speak coldly of it. "You must by no means lay aside the thoughts of perfecting *Edge-hill*, at your leisure. It is possible, that in order to keep clear of flattery, I have said less in its favour than I really ought—but I never considered it otherwise than as a poem which it was very adviseable for you to complete and finish." Shenstone did not live to see it published in its finished state, and whatever his objections, probably bestowed the warmest praise on the tender and simple episode of *Lydia and the Blind Lover*, taken from a story in *The Tatler*.

His other pieces requires no distinct notice.—Shenstone, in a letter dated 1759, mentions an *Essay on Electricity* written by Jago, but whether published, I have not been able to discover. In 1755, he printed a very sensible and seasonable discourse, entitled *The Causes of Impenitence considered*, preached at Harbury, May 4, 1755, on occasion of a conversation said to have passed between one of the inhabitants and an apparition, in the churchyard belonging to that place. From this incident, which he does not consider it as his business either to confirm or disprove, he takes an opportunity to enforce the necessity of repentance. Another sermon, 1763, is attributed to him in *Cooke's Historical Register*, of which I can find no mention any where else.



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HENRY BROOKING Esq.

THE
LIFE OF HENRY BROOKE, ESQ.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THIS amiable and ingenious writer was a native of Ireland, where he was born in the year 1706. His father, the rev. W. Brooke of Rantavan, rector of the parishes of Kilkare, Mullough, Mybullough, and Licowie, is said to have been a man of great talents and worth : his mother's name was Digby. Our poet's education appears to have been precipitated in a manner not very usual ; after being for some time the pupil of Dr. Sheridan, he was sent to Trinity College, Dublin, and from thence removed, when only seventeen years old, to study law in the Temple. Dr. Sheridan was probably the means of his being introduced in London to Swift and Pope, who regarded him as a young man of very promising talents. How long he remained in London we are not told ; but on his return to Ireland he practised for some time as a chamber counsel, when an incident occurred which interrupted his more regular pursuits, and prematurely involved him in the cares of a family.

An aunt, who died at Westmeath about the time of his arrival in Ireland, committed to him the guardianship of her daughter, a lively and beautiful girl between eleven and twelve years old. Brooke, pleased with the trust, conducted her to Dublin, and placed her at a boarding-school, where during his frequent visits he gradually changed the guardian for the lover, and at length prevailed on her to consent to a private marriage. In the life prefixed to his works, this is said to have taken place before she had reached her fourteenth year ; another account, which it is neither easy nor pleasant to believe, informs us that she was a mother before she had completed that year. When the marriage was discovered, the ceremony was again performed in the presence of his family.

For some time this happy pair had no cares but to please each other, and it was not until after the birth of their third child, that Brooke could be induced to think seriously how such a family was to be provided for. The law had long been given up, and he had little inclination to resume a profession which excluded so many of the pleasures of imagination, and appeared inconsistent with the feelings of a mind tender, benevolent, and somewhat romantic. Another journey to London, however, promised the advantages of literary society, and the execution of literary schemes by which he might indulge his genius, and be rewarded by fame and wealth. Accordingly, soon after his

arrival, he renewed his acquaintance with his former friends, and published his philosophical poem, entitled *Universal Beauty*. This had been submitted to Pope, who probably contributed his assistance, and whose manner at least is certainly followed. At what time this occurred is uncertain. The second part was published in 1735, and the remainder about a year after. What fame or advantage he derived from it we know not, as no mention is made of him in the extensive correspondence of Pope or Swift. He was, however, obliged to return to Ireland, where for a short time he resumed his legal profession.

In 1737, he went a third time to London, where he was introduced to Lyttelton and others, the political and literary adherents of the prince of Wales, "who," it is said, "caressed him with uncommon familiarity, and presented him with many elegant and valuable tokens of his friendship." Amidst such society, he had every thing to point his ambition to fame and independence, and readily caught that fervour of patriotic enthusiasm which was the bond of union and the ground of hope in the prince's court.

In 1738, he published a Translation of the First Three Books of Tasso, of which it is sufficient praise that Hoole says, "It is at once so harmonious and so spirited, that I think an entire translation of Tasso by him would not only have rendered my task unnecessary, but have discouraged those from the attempt whose poetical abilities are much superior to mine."

He was, however, diverted from completing his translation by his political friends, who, among other plans of hostility against the minister of the day, endeavoured to turn all the weapons of literature against him. Their prose writers were numerous, but principally essayists and pamphleteers; from their poets they had greater expectations; Paul Whitehead wrote satires; Fielding comedies and farces; Glover, an epic poem; and now Brooke was encouraged to introduce Walpole in a tragedy. This was entitled *Gustavus Vasa, the Deliverer of his Country*, and was accepted by Drury Lane theatre and almost quite ready for performance, when an order came from the lord chamberlain to prohibit it. That it contains a considerable portion of party-spirit cannot be denied, and the character of Trollio, the Swedish minister, however unjustly, was certainly intended for sir Robert Walpole; but it may be doubted whether this minister gained much by prohibiting the acting of a play which he had not the courage to suppress when published, and when the sentiments, considered deliberately in the closet, might be nearly as injurious as when delivered by a mouthing actor. The press, however, remained open, and the prohibition having excited an uncommon degree of curiosity, the author was more richly rewarded than he could have been by the profits of the stage. Above a thousand copies were subscribed for at five shillings each, and by the sale of the subsequent editions the author is said to have cleared nearly a thousand pounds. The editor of the *Biographia Dramatica* says that it was acted, in 1742, with some alterations, on the Irish stage, by the title of *The Patriot*. Dr. Johnson, who at this time ranked among the discontented, wrote a very ingenious satirical pamphlet, in favour of the author, entitled *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage from the malicious and scandalous Aspersion of Mr. Brooke, Author of Gustavus Vasa*; 4to. 1739.

The fame Brooke acquired by this play, which has certainly many beauties, seemed the earnest of a prosperous career, and as he thought he could now afford to wait the slow progress of events, he hired a house at Twickenham, near to Pope's, furnished it genteelly, and sent for Mrs. Brooke and his family. But these flattering prospects were soon clouded. He was seized with an ague so violent and obstinate that his physicians,

after having almost despaired of his life, advised him, as a last resource, to try his native air; with this he complied, and obtained a complete recovery. It was then expected that he should return to London; and such was certainly his intention; but to the surprise of his friends he determined to remain in Ireland. For a conduct so apparently inconsistent, not only with his interest but his inclination, he was long unwilling to account. It appeared afterwards, that Mrs. Brooke was alarmed at the zeal with which he espoused the cause of the opposition, and dreaded the consequences with which his next intemperate publication might be followed. She persuaded him therefore to remain in Ireland; and for so singular a measure, at this favourable crisis in his history, he could assign no adequate reason, without exposing her to the imputation of caprice, and himself to that of a too yielding temper.

During his residence in Ireland, he kept up a literary correspondence with his London friends; but all their letters were consumed by an accidental fire. Two from Pope, we are told, are particularly to be lamented, as, in one of these, he professed himself in heart a protestant, but apologized for not publicly conforming, by alleging that it would render the eve of his mother's life unhappy. Pope's filial affection is the most amiable feature in his character; but this story of his declining to conform because it would give uneasiness to his mother, falls to the ground when the reader is told that his mother had been dead six or seven years before Brooke went to Ireland. In another letter he is said, with more appearance of truth, to have advised Brooke to take orders, "as being a profession better suited to his principles, his disposition, and his genius, than that of the law, and also less injurious to his health." Why he did not comply with this advice cannot now be known; but before this time he appears to have been of a religious turn, although it is not easy to reconcile his principles, which were those of the strictest kind, with his continual ambition to shine as a dramatic writer.

For some years after his arrival in Ireland little is known of his life, except that lord Chesterfield, when viceroy, conferred upon him the office of barrack-master. His pen, however, was not idle. In 1741, he contributed to Ogle's version of Chaucer, *Constantia, or the Man of Law's Tale*; and in 1745, according to one account, his tragedy of *The Earl of Westmoreland* was performed, on the Dublin stage; but the editor of the *Biographia Dramatica* informs us that it was first acted at Dublin in 1741, under the title of *The Betrayer of his Country*; and again in 1754, under that of *Injured Honour*. Its fame, however, was confined to Ireland; nor was it known in England until the publication of his poetical works in 1778. A more important publication was his *Farmer's Letters*, written in 1745, on the plan of Swift's *Drapier's Letters*, and with a view to rouse the spirit of freedom among the Irish, threatened as they were, in common with their fellow-subjects, by rebellion and invasion. On this occasion Garrick addressed the following lines to him:

Oh, thou, whose artless free-born genius charms;
Whose rustic zeal each patriot bosom warms;
Pursue the glorious task, the pleasing toil,
Forsake the fields, and till a nobler soil;
Extend the farmer's care to human kind,
Manure the heart and cultivate the mind;
There plant religion, reason, freedom, truth,
And sow the seeds of virtue in our youth.

Let not *rank weeds* corrupt, or *brambles* choke,
 And shake the *vermin* from the British oak ;
 From *northern blasts* protect the vernal bloom,
 And guard our pastures from the *wolves of Rome* ;
 On Britain's liberty *engraft* thy name,
 And *reap the harvest* of immortal fame !

In 1746, he wrote an Epilogue on the birth-day of the duke of Cumberland, spoken by Mr. Garrick in Dublin, and a Prologue to *Othello*, which are now added to his works. In 1747, he contributed to Moore's volume of Fables four of great poetical merit, viz. *The Temple of Hymen*, *The Sparrow and Dove*, *The Female Seducer*, and *Love and Vanity*. In 1748, he wrote a Prologue to *The Foundling*, which is now added to this edition, and a dramatic opera, entitled *Little John and the Giants*. This was acted only one night in Dublin, being then prohibited on account of certain political allusions. On this occasion, he wrote *The Last Speech of John Good*, alias, *Jack the Giant Queller*, a satirical effusion, not very pointed, and mixed with political allegory, and a profusion of quotations from scripture against tyrants and tyranny. In 1749, his *Earl of Essex*, a tragedy, was performed at Dublin, and afterwards, in 1760, at Drury Lane theatre, with so much success as to be preferred to the rival plays on the same subject, by Banks and Jones. At what time his other dramatic pieces were written, or acted, if acted at all, is uncertain¹.

His biographer informs us, that "wearied, at length, with fruitless efforts to rouse the slumbering genius of his country—disgusted with her ingratitude—and sick of her venality, he withdrew to his paternal seat, and there, in the society of the Muses, and the peaceful bosom of domestic love, consoled himself for lost advantages and disappointed hopes. An only brother, whom he tenderly loved, accompanied his retirement, with a family almost as numerous as his own ; and there, for many years, they lived together with uninterrupted harmony and affection : the nephew was as dear as the son—the uncle as revered as the father—and the sister-in-law almost as beloved as the wife."

In 1762, he published a pamphlet entitled *The Trial of the Roman Catholics* ; the object of which was to remove the political restraints on that class, and to prove that this may be done with safety. In this attempt, however, his zeal led him so far as to question incontrovertible facts, and even to assert that the history of the Irish massacre in 1641 is nothing but an old wife's fable ; and upon the whole, he leans more to the principles of the Roman Catholic religion than an argument professedly political, or a mere question of extended toleration, seemed to require.

His next work excited more attention in England. In 1766, appeared the first volume of *The Fool of Quality*, or the *History of the Earl of Moreland*, a novel replete with knowledge of human life and manners, and in which there are many admirable traits of moral feeling and propriety, but mixed, as the author advances towards the close, with so much of religious discussion, and mysterious stories and opinions, as to leave it doubt-

¹ These were, *The Contending Brothers*, *The Female Officer*, and *The Marriage Contract*, comedies ; *The Impostor*, a tragedy, and *Cymbeline*, an injudicious alteration from Shakspeare. *Montezuma*, a tragedy, is printed among his works, but is said to have been the production of another hand. Of these, *The Female Officer* only is said to have been once acted, when Mrs. Woffington personated the officer ; probably at her benefit. C.



ful whether he inclined most to Behmenism or Popery. It became, however, when completed in five volumes, 1770, a very popular novel, and has often been reprinted since.

In 1772, he published *Redemption*, a poem, in which that great mystery of our religion is explained and amplified by bolder figures than are usually hazarded. His taste was, indeed, evidently on the decline; and in this, as well as all his later performances, he seems to have yielded to the enthusiasm of the moment, without any reserve in favour of his better judgment. In this poem too he appears to have left his pronunciation of the English so far as to introduce rhymes which must be read according to the vulgar Irish. His last work was *Juliet Grenville*, a novel in three volumes, which appeared in 1774. This is very justly entitled *The History of the Human Heart*, the secret movements of which few novelists have better understood; but there is such a mixture of the most sacred doctrines of religion with the common incidents and chit-chat of the modern romance, that his best friends could with difficulty discover among these ruins some fragments which indicated what his genius had once been.

In this year (1774) we are told that Garrick pressed him earnestly to write for the stage, and offered to enter into articles with him, at the rate of a shilling *per* line for all he should write during life, provided that he wrote for him alone. "This Garrick," says his biographer, "looked upon as an extraordinary compliment to Mr. Brooke's abilities; but he could not, however, bring him over to his opinion, nor prevail with him to accept of his offer; on the contrary, he rejected it with some degree of haughtiness—for which Garrick never forgave him. He was then in the full and flattering career to fortune and to fame, and would have thought it a disgrace to hire out his talents, and tie himself down to necessity."

In this story there is enough to induce us to reject it. Brooke was so far from being, at this time, in the full and flattering career to fortune and to fame, that he had outlived both. And, supposing that there may be some mistake in the date of Garrick's proposal, and that for 1774 we should read 1764, or even 1754, the proposal itself is too ridiculous to bear examination.

Our author's tenderness of heart, and unsuspecting temper, involved him in pecuniary difficulties. He was ever prone to give relief to the distressed, although the immediate consequence of his liberality was that he wanted relief himself; and at length was compelled to dispose of his property, and remove to Kildare. After living some time here, he took a farm near his former residence. Where this residence was, his biographers have not mentioned; but soon after his return, they inform us that he lost his wife, to whom he had been happily united for nearly fifty years. The shock which this calamity gave to a mind never, I suspect, very firm, and the wreck of a family of seventeen children now reduced to two, was followed by a state of mental imbecility from which he never recovered. The confusion of his ideas, indeed, had been visible in most of his latter writings; and the infirmities of age completed what his family losses and personal disappointments had begun. His last days, however, were cheered by the hopes of religion, which became brighter as he approached the hour in which they were to be fulfilled. He died, October 10, 1783², leaving a son, since dead, and a daughter, the child of his old age.

² He was in possession of the place of barrack-master of Mullingar at his death C.

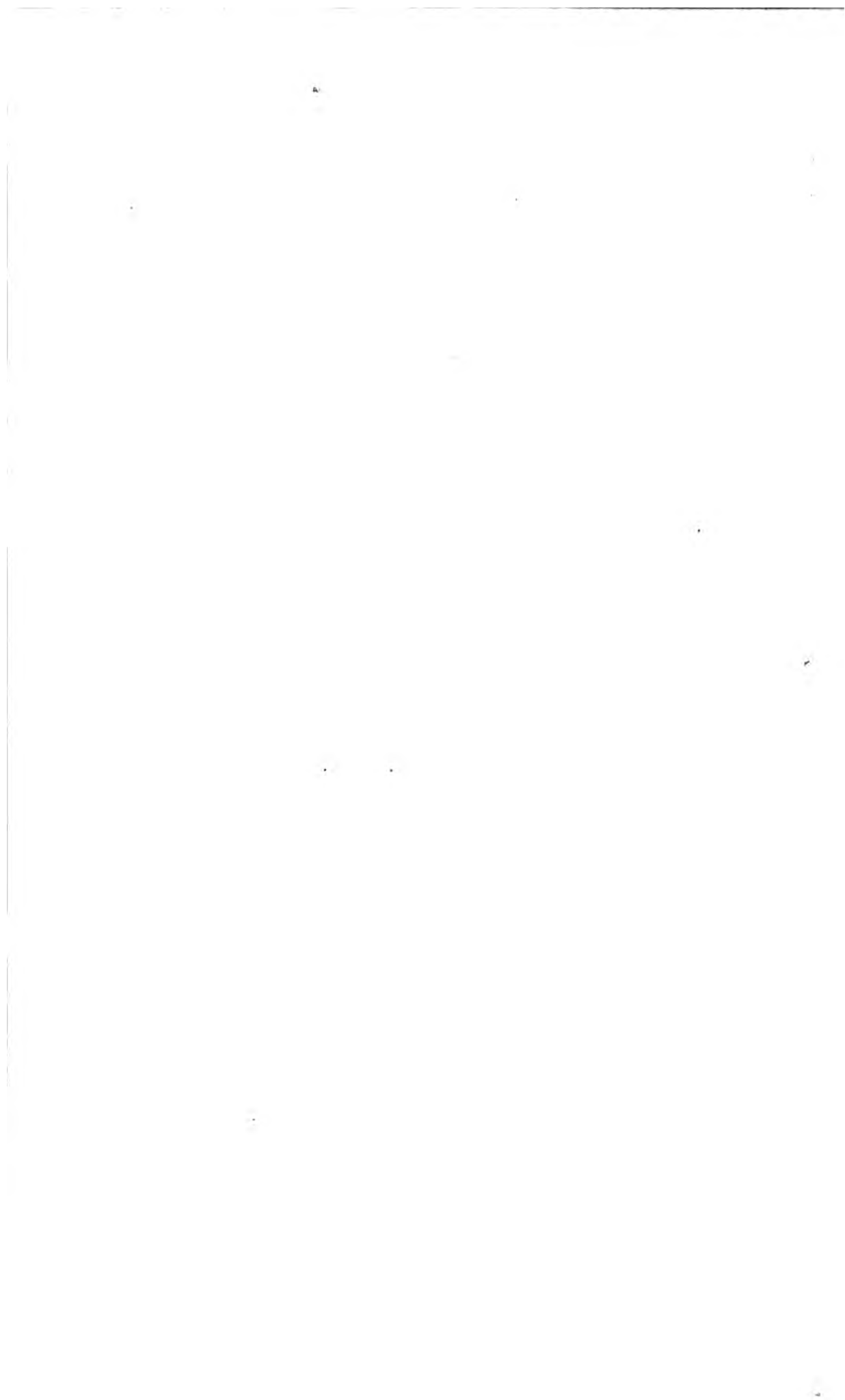
His poetical works were collected in 1778, in four volumes octavo, printed very incorrectly, and with the addition of some pieces which were not his. In 1792 another edition was published at Dublin, by his daughter, who procured some memoirs of her father prefixed to the first volume. In this she informs us she found many difficulties. He had lived to so advanced an age that most of his contemporaries departed before him, and this young lady remembered nothing of him previous to his retirement from the world. Such an apology cannot be refused, while we must yet regret that Miss Brooke was not able to collect information more to be depended on, and arranged with more attention to dates. The narrative, as we find it, is confused and contradictory.

From all, however, that can now be learned, Brooke was a man of a most amiable character and ingenuous temper, and perhaps few men have produced writings of the same variety, the tendency of all which is so uniformly in favour of religious and moral principle. Yet even in this there are inconsistencies which we know not how to explain, unless we attribute them to an extraordinary defect in judgment. During a great part of his life, his religious opinions approached to what are now termed methodistical, and one difficulty, in contemplating his character, is to reconcile this with his support of the stage, and his writing those trifling farces we find among his works. Perhaps it may be said that the necessities of his family made him listen to the importunity of those friends who considered the stage as a profitable resource, but by taking such advice he was certainly no great gainer. Except in the case of his *Gustavus* and *Earl of Essex*, there is no reason to think that he was successful, and the greater part of his dramas were never performed at all, or printed, until 1778, when he could derive very little advantage from them. Nor can we impute it to any cause, except a total want of judgment and an ignorance of the public taste, that he intermixed the most awful doctrines of religion and the lighter incidents and humorous sketches of vulgar or fashionable life, in his novels.

He lived, however, we are told, more consistently than he wrote. No day passed in which he did not collect his family to prayer, and read and expounded the scriptures to them³. Among his tenants and humble friends he was the benevolent and generous character which he had been accustomed to depict in his works, and while he had the means, he literally went about doing good.

As a poet, he delights his readers principally by occasional flights of a vivid imagination, but has in no instance given us a poem to which criticism may not suggest many reasonable objections. The greater part of his life, he lived remote from the friends of whose judgment he might have availed himself, and by whose taste his own might have

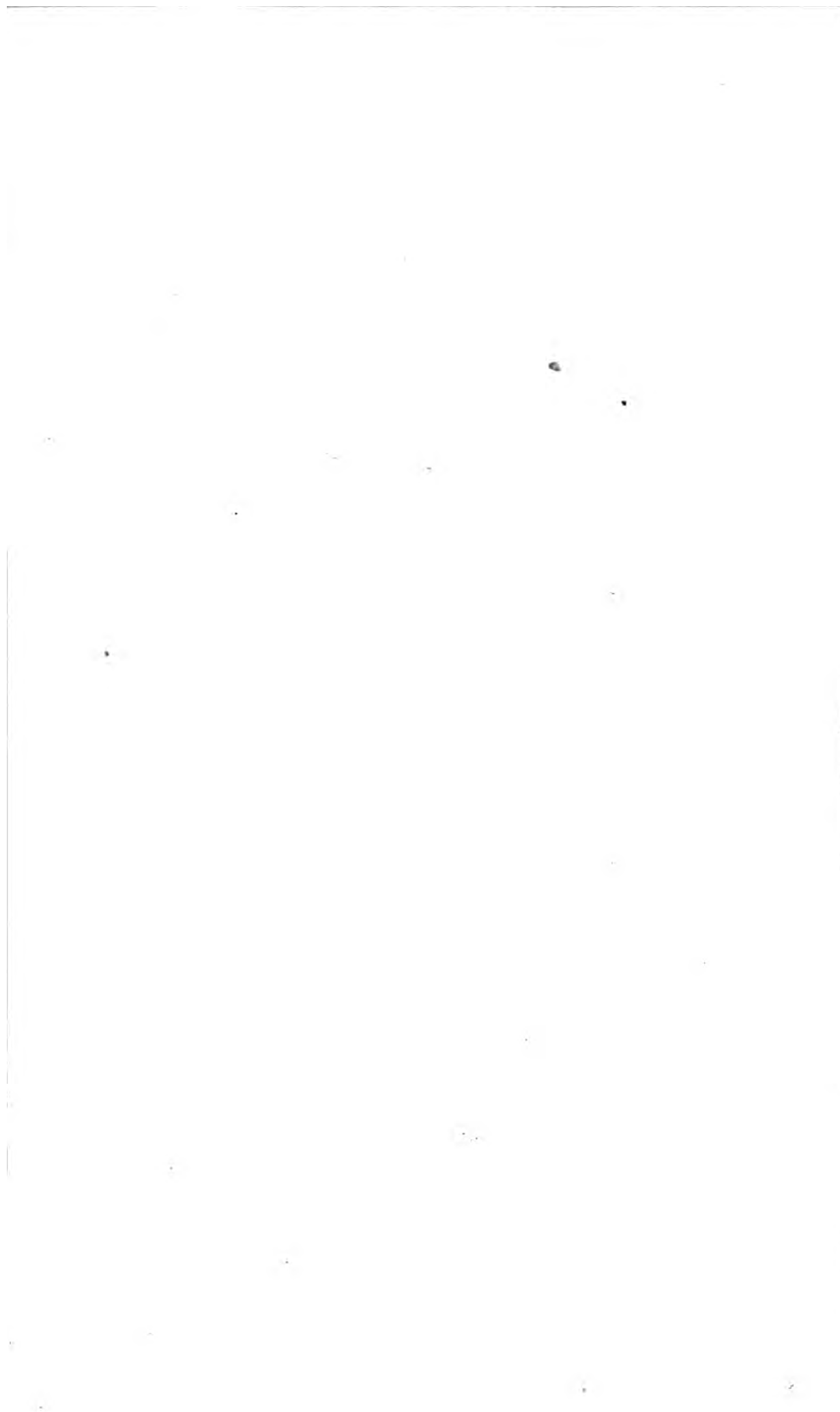
³ The following anecdote is given by his biographer, with some regret that he had not been educated for the church. "One Sunday, while the congregation were assembled in the rural church of the parish in which he lived, they waited a long time the arrival of their clergyman. At last, finding he was not likely to come that day, they judged that some accident had detained him; and being loth to depart entirely without their errand, they with one accord requested that Mr. Brooke would perform the service for them, and expound a part of the scriptures.—He consented, and the previous prayers being over, he opened the Bible, and preached extempore on the first text that struck his eye. In the middle of his discourse, the clergyman entered, and found the whole congregation in tears. He entreated Mr. Brooke to proceed; but this he modestly refused; and the other as modestly declared, that after the testimony of superior abilities, which he perceived in the moist eyes of all present, he would think it presumption and folly to hazard any thing of his own. Accordingly, the concluding prayers alone were said, and the congregation dismissed for the day." C.



been regulated. His first production, *Universal Beauty*, has a noble display of fancy in many parts. It is not improbable that Pope, to whom he submitted it, gave him some assistance, and he certainly repaid his instructor by adopting his manner, yet he has avoided Pope's monotony, and would have done this with more effect, if we did not perceive a mechanical lengthening of certain lines, rather than a natural variety of movement. On the other hand, the sublimity of the subject, by which he was inspired, and which he hoped to communicate, sometimes betrays him into a species of turgid declamation. Harmony appears to be consulted, and epithets multiplied, to please the ear at the expense of meaning.

The three books of Tasso have already been noticed, and the reader of the present collection may have an opportunity of comparing them with Hoole's translation. The *Man of Law's Tale*, from Chaucer, will incline every reader to wish that he had contributed more to Ogle's translation. Of all his original poems, the most correct are the four fables, first published in Moore's collection. They are perhaps too long for fables, but as moral *tales* we have few that exceed them in poetical spirit, and sprightly turns of thought. The *Fox Chase* and his lesser pieces, if we except some of the songs composed for his dramas, will add but inconsiderably to his fame.







THE
LIFE OF JOHN SCOTT,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THIS very amiable man, the youngest son of Samuel and Martha Scott, was born on the ninth day of January 1730, in the Grange Walk, in the parish of St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey. His father was a draper and citizen of London, a man of plain and irreproachable manners, and one of the society of the people called Quakers, in which persuasion our poet was educated, and continued during the whole of his life, although not with the strictest attention to all the peculiarities of that sect¹.

His father does not appear to have intended him for a classical education. In his seventh year he was put under the tuition of one John Clarke, a native of Scotland, who kept a school in Bermondsey Street, but attended young Scott at his father's house, where he instructed him in the rudiments of the Latin tongue. Little is known of his proficiency under this tutor, whom, however, in his latter days, he remembered with pleasure, although he was a man of severe manners. In his tenth year, his father retired with his family, consisting of Mrs. Scott and two sons, to the village of Amwell in Hertfordshire, where, for some time, he carried on the malting trade.

Here our poet was sent to a private day-school, in which he is said to have had few opportunities of polite literature, and those few were declined by his father from a dread of the small-pox, which neither he nor his son had yet caught. This terrour, perpetually recurring as the disorder made its appearance in one quarter or another, occasioned such frequent removals as prevented his son from the advantages of regular education. The youth, however, did not neglect to cultivate his mind by such means as were in his power. About the age of seventeen, he discovered an inclination to the study of poetry, with which he combined a delight in viewing the appearances of rural nature. At this time he derived much assistance from the conversation and opinions of one Charles Frogley, a person in the humble station of a bricklayer, but who had improved a natural taste for poetry, and arrived at a considerable degree of critical dis-

¹ He used *thee* and *thou* in conversation and correspondence, and conformed to the Quaker-garb, but on the title-page of the edition of his poems published by himself the year before his death, he is called John Scott, *esq.* C.

cernment. This Mr. Scott thankfully acknowledged when he had himself attained a rank among the writers of his age, and could return with interest the praise by which Frogley had cheered his youthful attempts. The only other adviser of his studies, in this sequestered spot, was a Mr. John Turner, afterwards a dissenting preacher. To him he was introduced in 1753 or 1754, and on the removal of Mr. Turner to London and afterwards to Colliton in Devonshire, they carried on a friendly correspondence on matters of general taste.

Mr. Scott's first poetical essays were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, "the great receptacle for the ebullitions of youthful genius." Mr. Hoole, his biographer, has not been able to discover all the pieces inserted by him in that work, but has reprinted three of them, which are now added to the collection originally formed by himself. Other pieces which he occasionally communicated to his friend Turner, were either mislaid, or on more mature deliberation kept back from the press. He appears to have looked up to Turner's opinions with much deference, and it was probably at his solicitation that he first ventured to come before the public as a candidate for poetical fame.

With the taste of the public during his retirement at Amwell, he could have little acquaintance. He had lived here about twenty years, at a distance from any literary society or information. His reading was chiefly confined to books of taste and criticism, but the latter at that time were not many, nor very valuable. In the ancient or modern languages it does not appear that he made any progress. Mr. Hoole thinks he knew very little of Latin, and had no knowledge of either French or Italian. Those who know of what importance it is to improve genius by study, will regret that such a man was left, in the pliable days of youth, without any acquaintance with the noble models on which English poets have been formed. They will yet more regret that the cause of this distance from literary society, the source of all generous and useful emulation, was a superstitious dread of the small-pox, already mentioned as obstructing his early studies, and which continued to prevail with his parents to such a degree, that although at the distance of only twenty miles, their son had been permitted to visit London but once in twenty years. His chief occupation, when not in a humour to study, was in cultivating a garden, for which he had a particular fondness, and at length rendered one of the most attractive objects to the visitors of Amwell.

About the year 1760, he began to make occasional, though cautious and short visits to London, and in the spring of this year published his *Four Elegies*, descriptive and moral, epithets which may be applied to almost all his poetry. These were very favourably received, and not only praised by the public critics, but received the valuable commendations of Dr. Young, Mrs. Talbot, and Mrs. Carter, who loved poetry, and loved it most when in conjunction with piety.

Although Mr. Scott had not given his name to this publication, he was not long undiscovered, and began to be honoured with the notice of several of the literati of the day, which, however, did not flatter him into vanity or carelessness. For many years he abstained from further publication, determined to put in no claims that were not strengthened by the utmost industry, and frequent and careful revisal. This, I am apt to think, in some cases checked his enthusiasm, and gave to his longer poems an appearance of labour.

In 1761, during the prevalence of the small-pox at Ware, he removed to St. Margaret's, a small hamlet about two miles distant from Amwell, where Mr. Hoole informs us he became first acquainted with him, and saw the first sketch of his poem of Amwell,



to which he then gave the title of *A Prospect of Ware and the Country adjacent*. In 1766, he became sensible of the many disadvantages he laboured under by living in continual dread of the small-pox, and had the courage to submit to the operation of inoculation, which was successfully performed by the late baron Dimsdale. He now visited London more frequently, and Mr. Hoole had the satisfaction to introduce him, among others, to Dr. Johnson. "Notwithstanding the great difference of their political principles, Scott had too much love for goodness and genius, not to be highly gratified in the opportunity of cultivating a friendship with that great exemplar of human virtues, and that great veteran of human learning; while the doctor, with a mind superior to the distinction of party, delighted with equal complacency in the amiable qualities of Scott, of whom he always spoke with feeling regard²."

In 1767, he married Sarah Frogley, the daughter of his early friend and adviser Charles Frogley. The bride was, previous to her nuptials, admitted a member of the society of Quakers. For her father he ever preserved the highest respect, and seems to have written his eleventh Ode, with a view to relieve the mind of that worthy man from the apprehension of being neglected by him. The connection he had formed in his family, however, was not of long duration. His wife died in child-bed in 1768, and the same year he lost his father, and his infant child. For some time he was inconsolable, and removed from Amwell, where so many objects excited the bitter remembrance of all he held dear, to the house of a friend at Upton. Here, when time and reflection had mellowed his grief, he honoured the memory of his wife by an elegy, in which tenderness and love are expressed in the genuine language of nature. As he did not wish to make a parade of his private feelings, a few copies only of this elegy were given to his friends, nor would he ever suffer it to be published for sale. It procured him the praise of Dr. Hawkesworth, and the friendship of Dr. Langhorne, who about this time had been visited by a similar calamity.—His mother, it ought to have been mentioned, died in 1766; and in 1769, he lost his friend and correspondent Mr. Turner.

In November 1770, he married his second wife, Mary de Horne, daughter of the late Abraham de Horne, "a lady whose amiable qualities promised him many years of uninterrupted happiness." During his visits in London, he increased his literary circle of friends by an introduction to Mrs. Montague's parties. Among those who principally noticed him with respect, were lord Lyttelton, sir William Jones, Mr. Potter, Mr. Mickle, and Dr. Beattie, who paid him a cordial visit at Amwell in 1773, and again in 1781, and became one of his correspondents.

Although we have hitherto contemplated our author as a student and occasional poet, he rendered himself more conspicuous as one of those reflectors on public affairs who employ much of their time in endeavouring to be useful. He appears to have acquired the spirit and patriotism of the *country gentleman* whose abilities enable him to do good, and whose fortune adds the influence which is often necessary to render that good effectual and permanent. Among other subjects, his attention had often been called to that glaring defect in human polity, the state of the poor, and having revolved it in his mind, with the assistance of many personal inquiries, he published, in 1773, *Observations on the present State of the parochial and vagrant Poor*. It is needless to add that his advice in this matter was rather approved than followed. Some of his propositions,

² Hoole's Life of Scott, p. 35—36. C.

indeed, were incorporated in Mr. Gilbert's Bill, in the year 1782, but the whole was lost for want of parliamentary support.

In 1776 he published his *Amwell*, a descriptive poem, which he had long been preparing, and in which he fondly hoped to immortalize his favourite village. His biographer, however, has amply demonstrated the impossibility of communicating local enthusiasm by any attempt of this kind. The reflections occasionally introduced, and the historical or encomiastic digressions, are generally selected as the most pleasing passages in descriptive poetry, but all that is really descriptive, all that would remove us from the closet to the scene is a hopeless attempt to do that by the pen which can only be done by the pencil. Of all writers, whether in prose or verse, who have attempted picturesque description, Gilpin alone has succeeded, not indeed completely, for language will not admit of it, but in bringing objects the nearest to the eye.

At such intervals as our author could spare, he wrote various anonymous pamphlets and essays, on miscellaneous subjects, and is said to have appeared among those enemies of the measures of government who answered Dr. Johnson's *Patriot*, *False Alarm*, and *Taxation no Tyranny*. On the commencement of the Rowleian controversy, he took the part of Chatterton, and was among the first who questioned the authenticity of the poems ascribed to Rowley. This he discussed in some letters inserted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Of course he was led to admire the wonderful powers of the young impostor, and in his twenty-first Ode pays a poetical tribute to his memory, in which, with others of his brethren at that time, he censures the unfeeling rich for depriving their country of a new Shakspeare or Milton.

These, however, were his amusements; the more valuable part of his time was devoted to such public business as is ever best conducted by men of his pure and independent character. He gave regular attendance at turnpike meetings, navigation trusts, and commissions of land tax³, and proposed and carried various schemes of local improvement, particularly the fine road between Ware and Hertford, and some useful alterations in the streets of Ware. Among his neighbours he frequently, by a judicious interference or arbitration, checked that spirit of litigation which destroys the felicity of a country life. During the meritorious employments of his public and political life, it can only be imputed to him that in his zeal for the principles he espoused, he sometimes betrayed too great warmth; and in answering Dr. Johnson's pamphlets, it has been allowed that he made use of expressions which would better become those who did not know the worth of that excellent character.

In 1778, he published a work of great labour and utility, entitled, *A Digest of the Highway and General Turnpike laws*. In this compilation, Mr. Hoole informs us, all the acts of parliament in force are collected together, and placed in one point of view; their contents are arranged under distinct heads, with the addition of many notes, and an appendix on the construction and preservation of public roads, probably the only scientific treatise on the subject. A part of this work appeared in 1773, under the title of *a Digest of the Highway Laws*.

³ When once asked whether he was in the commission of the peace, he answered without hesitation, that his principal objection to taking the oath, was the offence which it would give to *the society*. His own opinion was, that an oath and an affirmative are substantially the same, and that the mode of appeal to the searcher of hearts is of little consequence, though he certainly preferred the latter. *Monthly Review*, vol. vii. number v. p. 237. C.



In the spring of 1782, he published what he had long projected, a volume of poetry, including his Elegies, Amwell, and a great variety of hitherto unpublished pieces. On this volume it is evident he had bestowed great pains, and added the decorations of some beautiful engravings. A very favourable account was given of the whole of its contents in the *Monthly Review*; but the *Critical* having taken some personal liberties with the author, hinting that the ornaments were not quite suitable to the plainness and simplicity of a quaker, Mr. Scott thought proper to publish a letter addressed to the authors of that journal, in which he expostulated with them on their conduct, and defended his poetry. Every friend, however, must wish he had passed over their strictures in silence. His defence of his poetry betrays him into the error of which he complained, and we see far more of the conceited egotist than could have been supposed to belong to his simple and humble character.

After this contest, he began to prepare a work of the critical kind. He had been dissatisfied with some of Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, and had amassed in the course of his own reading and reflection a number of observations on Denham, Milton, Pope, Dyer, Goldsmith, and Thomson, which he sent to the press under the title of *Critical Essays*, but did not live to publish. On the 25th of October 1783, he accompanied Mrs. Scott to London for the benefit of medical advice for a complaint under which she laboured at that time; but on the first of December, while at his house at Ratcliff, he was attacked by a putrid fever, which proved fatal on the 12th of that month, and he was interred on the 18th in the quaker's burying ground at Ratcliff. He had arrived at his fifty fourth year, and left behind him a widow and a daughter, their only child, then about six years old. His death was the more lamented as he was in the vigour of life, and had the prospect of many years of usefulness. "In his person he was tall and slender, but his limbs were remarkably strong and muscular: he was very active, and delighted much in the exercise of walking: his countenance was cheerful and animated." The portrait prefixed to his works is not a very correct likeness, nor was he himself satisfied with it.

His public and private character appears to have been in every respect worthy of imitation, but what his religious opinions were, except that he cherished a general reverence for piety, is somewhat doubtful. Professedly, he was one of the society called Quakers, but the paper which that society, or some of his relations, thought it necessary to publish after his death, seems to intimate, that in their opinion, and finally in his own, his practice had not in all respects been consistent. Mr. Hoole has suppressed this document, while he has thrown out a hint which is altogether unintelligible without a reference to it. He says, that "he had been told that the *state of his mind did not a little contribute to strengthen his malady.*" Whether this was the case, the reader may judge from a perusal of the following statement, originally drawn up for the use of *The Friends*, and which is now reprinted, without any suspicion that it will injure the memory of Mr. Scott, and certainly without any intention to produce such an effect. Those who have admired him as the active and benevolent citizen, and the favoured poet, will not, it is hoped, whatever their religious opinion may be, view him with less complacency on his death-bed as the humble Christian.

"John Scott was favoured with strength of body, and an active and vigorous mind: he was esteemed regular and moral in his conduct, and extensive in his knowledge, being remarkably diligent and attentive in promoting works of public utility: in assisting individuals in cases of difficulty, and in the conciliation of differences. His removal hence is generally lamented by his neighbours, both in superior and inferior stations. Notwith-

standing these qualifications, there is reason to believe he frequently experienced the conviction of the spirit of truth, for not faithfully following the Lord, and adhering to the cross of Christ, by which true believers are crucified to the world and the world to them.

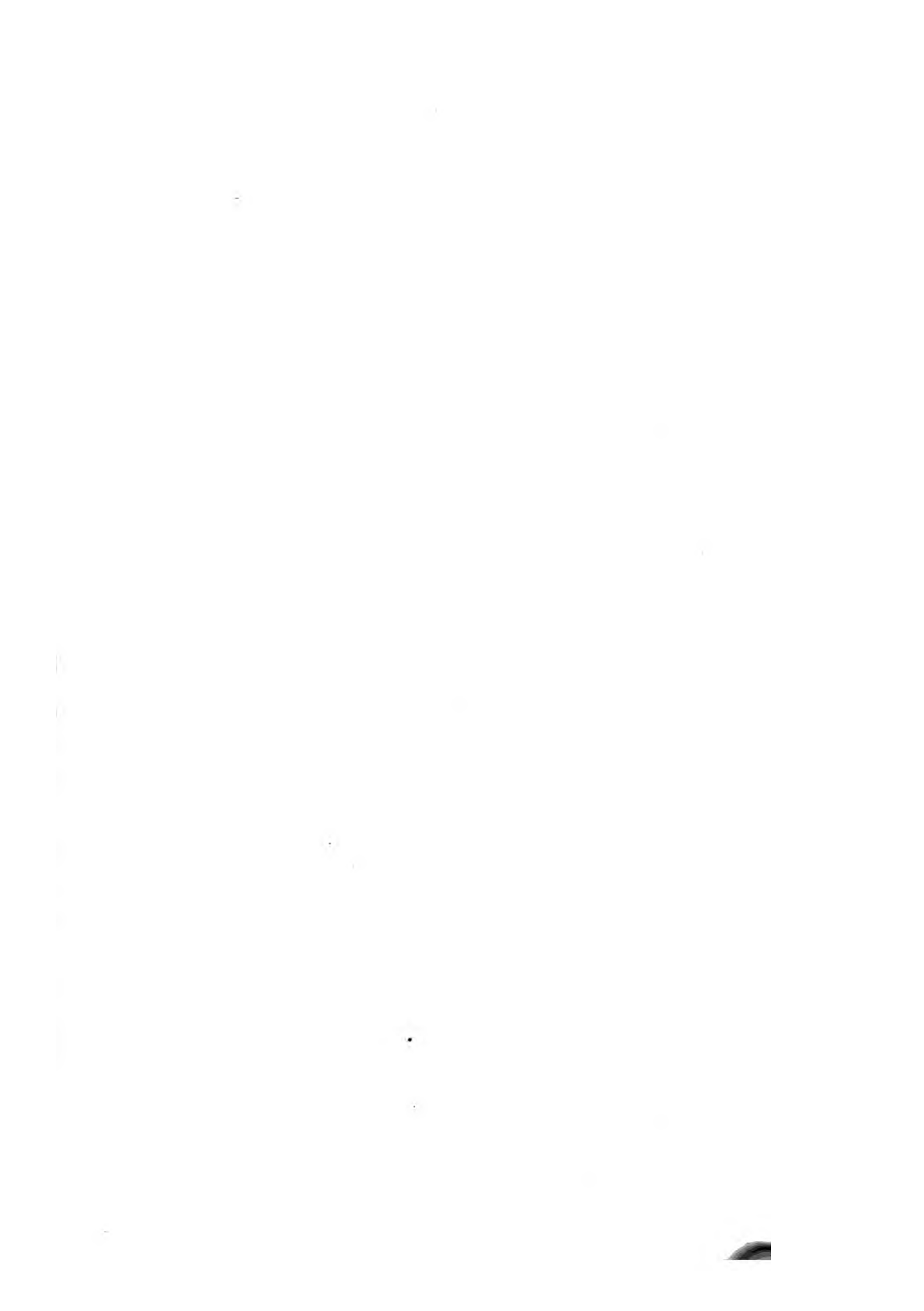
“ During the yearly meeting in London, in the year 1783, he attended many of the meetings for worship, and appeared to be more religiously concerned than for some years preceding.

“ On the 1st of the 12th month he was seized with a fever; and, expecting it would prove fatal, he was greatly humbled in spirit, saying to his wife, that his father was a good man, and he believed was gone to Heaven, expressing a sense of the happiness of the righteous in futurity; but being convinced of his own low and unprepared state, he said, he himself was unworthy of the lowest place in the heavenly mansions, but hoped he should not be a companion of accursed and wrathful spirits.

“ In the early part of his illness, he discoursed with his wife concerning some outward affairs, particularly desiring that his only and beloved daughter might be brought up among friends.

“ Notwithstanding the severity of the distemper, he was favoured with a clear and unimpaired understanding, and the exercise of his spirit seemed to be almost continual for peace and reconciliation with his Maker; having a hope, that if it should please the Lord to spare him, he should become a new man; but, in much diffidence, he expressed a fear lest the old things should again prevail; he also said to the person who attended him, that ‘ he had been too proud.’ But it is well known, that his behaviour to his inferiors was the reverse, for to them he was remarkably easy of access.

“ Speaking frequently of his brother, and expressing a desire to see him, on the 9th of the 12th month a special messenger was sent to Hertford, from Ratcliff, requesting his attendance there. His brother, on being informed next morning, by letter, of his continual solicitude to see him, and him only, reached his house at Ratcliff about four that afternoon. Being introduced to his bed-side, on asking him how he did, he answered, ‘ Very bad: I wanted to see thee, and if thee had come sooner, I had a great deal to say to thee, but I fear now I cannot.’ What afterwards passed between them was as follows. After a short space of silence, John Scott began to speak, with a voice full of power:—‘ I wanted to see thee, to tell thee that I have nothing to trust to but the blessed Jesus; and that, if I die, I do not die an unbeliever. If I die, I die a believer, and have nothing to trust to but mere unmerited mercy.’ Finding him brought down, as from the clefts of the rocks, and the heights of the hills, into the valley of deep humiliation, his brother rejoiced in spirit, and spake comfortably to him, expressing the deeply humiliating views he had of his own state. J. Scott replied—‘ O! if it is so with thee, how must it have been with me who have been the chief of sinners?’ The insufficiency of self-righteousness being mentioned, ‘ Oh,’ said he, with great earnestness, ‘ righteousness! I have no righteousness, nor any thing to trust to, but the blessed Jesus and his merits.’ Pausing awhile, he proceeded—‘ There is something within me which keeps me from despairing. I dare not despair, although I have as much reason to despair as any one, were it not for him who showed mercy to the thief upon the cross. The thief upon the cross, and Peter, who denied his master, are much before me.’ Being advised to trust in the Lord, he replied, ‘ I have none else to trust in. Oh!’ said he, ‘ the Saviour! he is the way, and there is no other; I now see there is no other. Oh, the Saviour! I have done too much against him; and if I live, I hope I shall be able to let the world know it, and that, in many



respects, my mind is altered. But I dare not make resolutions.' His brother mentioning former times, and the days of his youth, in which they frequently conversed about, and were both clearly convinced of, the necessity of inward and experimental piety, he answered—' I was then very deficient, but I have since been much more shaken.' Visiting the sick in a formal customary manner, being represented as unprofitable, he replied, ' Oh ! it is not a time to be solicitous about forms ! Here is a scene, indeed, enough to bring down the grandeur of many, if they could see it. I buoyed myself up with the hope of many days.' Recommending him to the great object, Christ within, the hope of glory, to which his mind was measurably turned, his brother seemed to withdraw, on which he clasped his hand, and took a solemn farewell.

" He continued in mutability about two days longer, altogether in a calm and rational state. About twelve hours before his decease, his speech much faltered : but, by some broken expressions, it appeared that the religious concern of his mind was continued.

" On the 12th day of the 12th month, 1783, he departed this life in remarkable quietness, without sigh or groan, and was buried in friends' burying ground on the 18th, being nearly 54 years of age.

" The publication of these Memoirs proceeds not from partiality to our deceased friend : they are preserved as a word of reproof to the careless, and of comfort to the mourners in Zion.

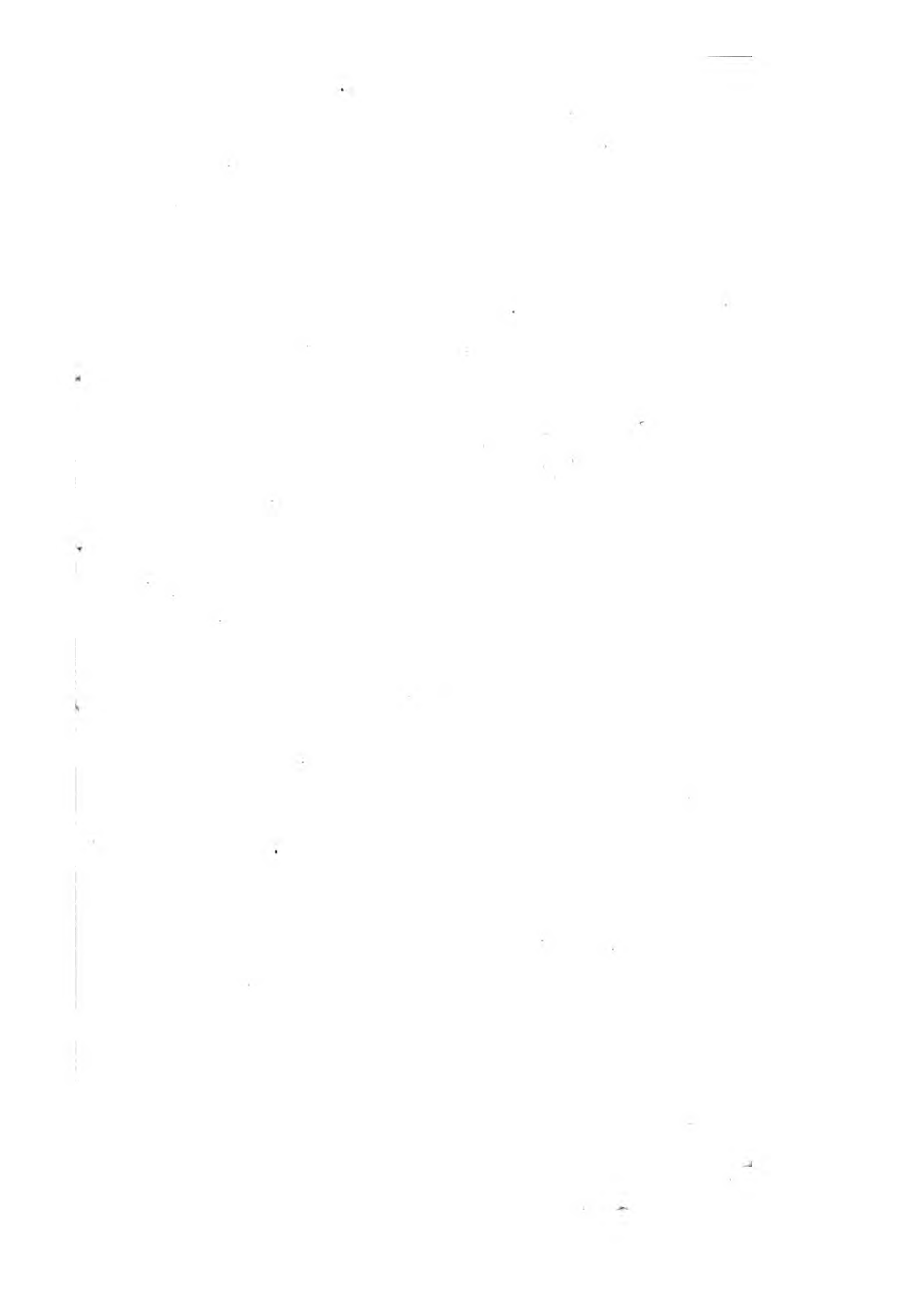
" May none, in a day of health and prosperity, reject the visitation of his divine grace and favour, who hath declared, that ' his spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.' Nor, on the other, may the penitent, and truly awakened, at no time despair of that mercy and forgiveness which the Lord hath promised to them who sincerely repent."

His Critical Essays were published in 1785, by Mr. Hoole, who prefixed a life, written with much affection, yet with impartiality. He loved the man, and he freely criticises the poet. Of his peculiar habits we have only one anecdote :—" He preferred the time for poetical composition, when the rest of the family were in bed ; and it was frequently his custom to sit in a dark room, and when he had composed a number of lines, he would go into another room where a candle was burning, in order to commit them to paper. Though in general very regular in his hour of retiring to rest, he would sometimes be up great part of the night, when he was engaged in any literary work."

As a poet, he may be allowed to rank among those who possess genius in a moderate degree ; who please by short efforts and limited inspirations ; but whose talents are better displayed in moral reflection and pathetic sentiment than in flights of fancy. His Elegies, as they were the first, are among the best of his performances. Simplicity appears to have been his general aim, and he was of opinion that it was too little studied by modern writers. In the Mexican Prophecy, however, and in Serim, there is a fire and spirit worthy of the highest school. His Amwell will ever deserve a distinguished place among descriptive poems ; although it is liable to all the objections attached to descriptive poetry. But he cannot be denied the merit of being original in many individual passages ; and he appears to have viewed Nature with the eye of a genuine poet. He has himself pointed out some coincidences with former poets, which were accidental ; and perhaps others may be discovered, without detracting from the independence of his Muse. His feeblest effort is the Essay on Painting, a hasty sketch, in which he professed himself,

and that not in very humble terms, to be the rival of Hayley⁴, on the same subject. The public, I am afraid, has decided against him. Upon the whole, however, the vein of pious and moral reflection, and the benevolence and philanthropy, which pervade all his poems, will continue to make them acceptable to those who read to be improved, and are of opinion that pleasure is not the sole end of poetry.

⁴ See his two letters in Forbes's *Life of Dr. Beattie*, vol. ii. but especially his letter to the *Critical Reviewers*. C.



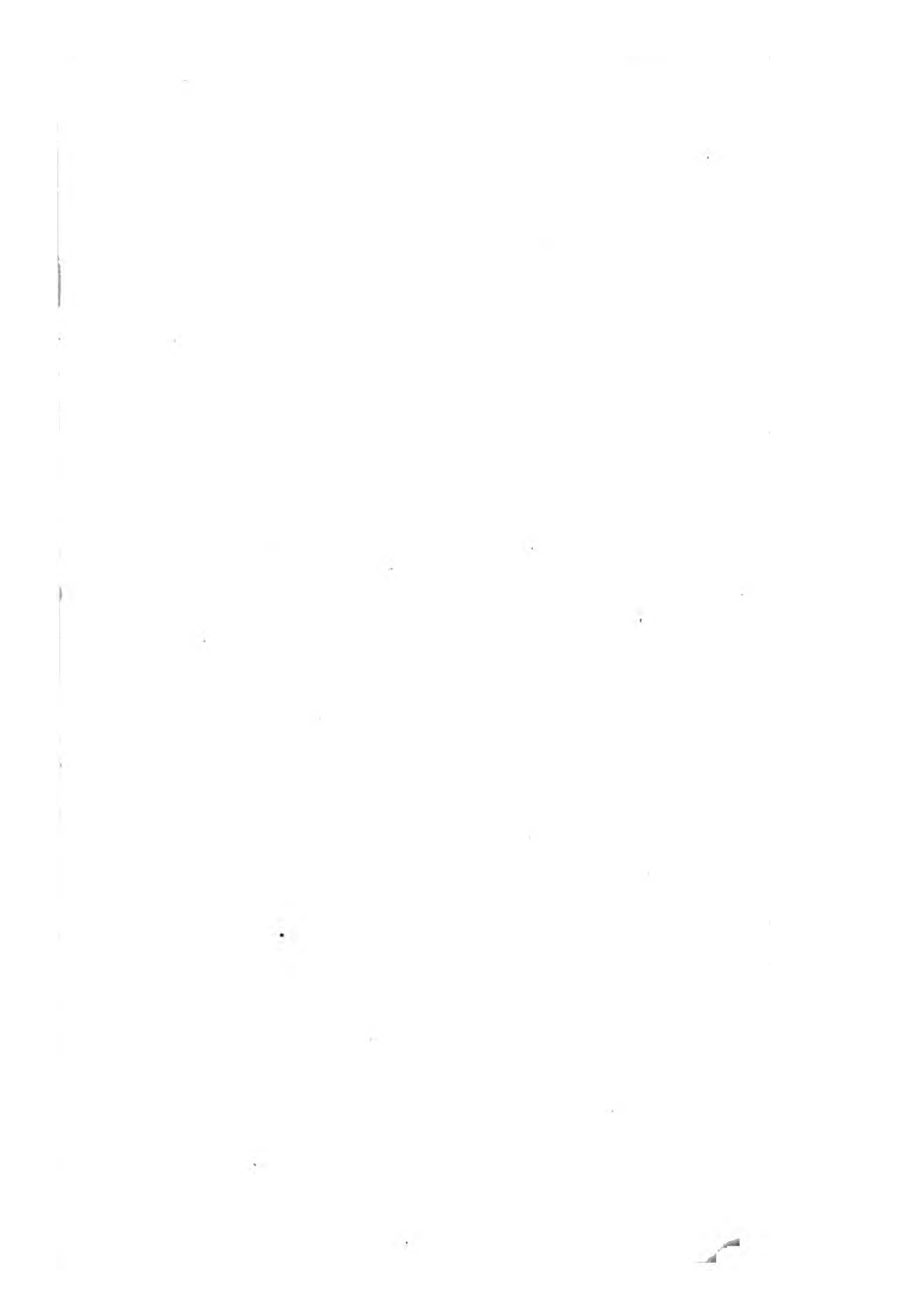
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Engraved by C. Beadland, from a slight Sketch by M.^r Humphry.

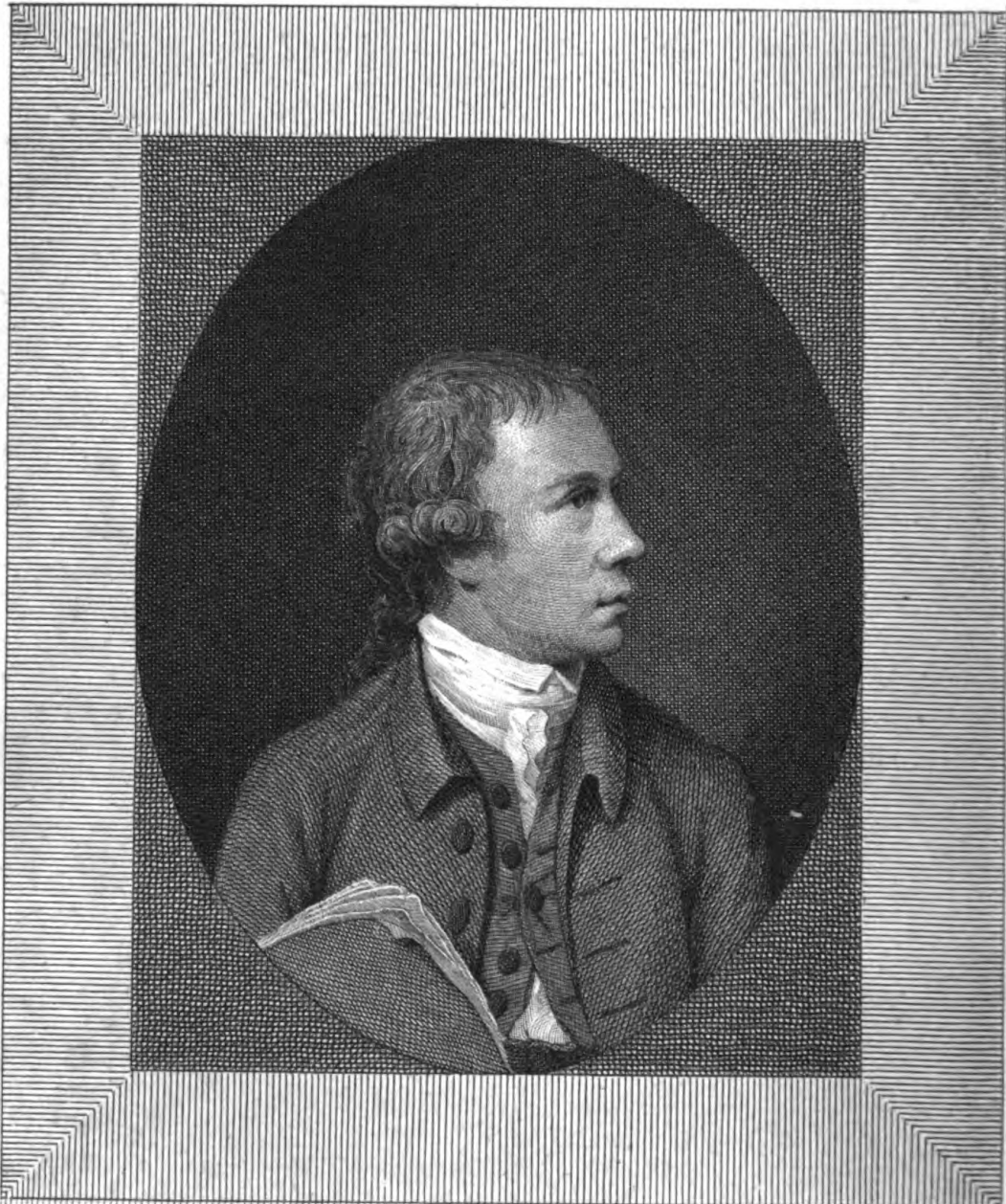
WILLIAM JULIUS MICKLE ESQ.^R

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W^m JULIUS MICKLE ESQ^r

THE
LIFE OF WILLIAM JULIUS MICKLE,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THE father of this ingenious poet was the rev. Alexander Mickle¹, who, exchanging the profession of physic for that of divinity, was admitted, at an age more advanced than usual, into the ministry of the church of Scotland. From that country he removed to London, where he preached for some time in various dissenting meetings, particularly that of the celebrated Dr. Watts. He was also employed by the booksellers in correcting the translation of Bayle's Dictionary, to which he is said to have contributed the greater part of the notes. In 1716 he returned to Scotland, on being presented to the living of Langholm, in the county of Dumfries; and in 1727 he married Julia, daughter of Mr. Thomas Henderson, of Ploughlands, near Edinburgh, and first cousin to the late sir William Johnstone, baronet, of Westerhall. By this lady, who appears to have died before him, he had ten children.

Our poet, his fourth² son, was born Sunday, Sept. 29, 1734, and educated at the grammar-school of Langholm, where he acquired that early taste for works of genius which frequently ends, in spite of all obstacles, in a life devoted to literary pursuits. He even attempted, when at school, a few devotional pieces in rhyme, which, however, were not superior to the common run of juvenile compositions. About his thirteenth year, he accidentally met with Spenser's Faerie Queene, which he studied with so much perseverance as fixed a lasting impression on his mind, and made him desirous of being enrolled among the imitators of that poet. To this he joined the reading of Homer and Virgil during his education at the high school of Edinburgh, in which city his father obtained permission to reside, in consideration of his advanced age and infirmities, and to enable him to give a proper education to his children. His parochial duty was performed, during his absence, by a substitute: an indulgence which, the biographers of our poet remark, is very unusual in that part of the united kingdom.

About two years after the rev. Mr. Mickle came to reside in Edinburgh, upon the death of a brother-in-law, a brewer in the neighbourhood of that city, he embarked a

¹ *Meikle* was the original orthography. C.

² His third son, according to the life prefixed to the quarto edition of his poems. C.

great part of his fortune in the purchase of the brewery, and continued the business in the name of his eldest son. Our poet was then taken from school, employed as a clerk under his father, and, upon coming of age, in 1755, took upon him the whole charge and property of the business, on condition of granting his father a share of the profits during his life, and paying a certain sum to his brothers and sisters at stated periods, after his father's decease, which happened in 1758.

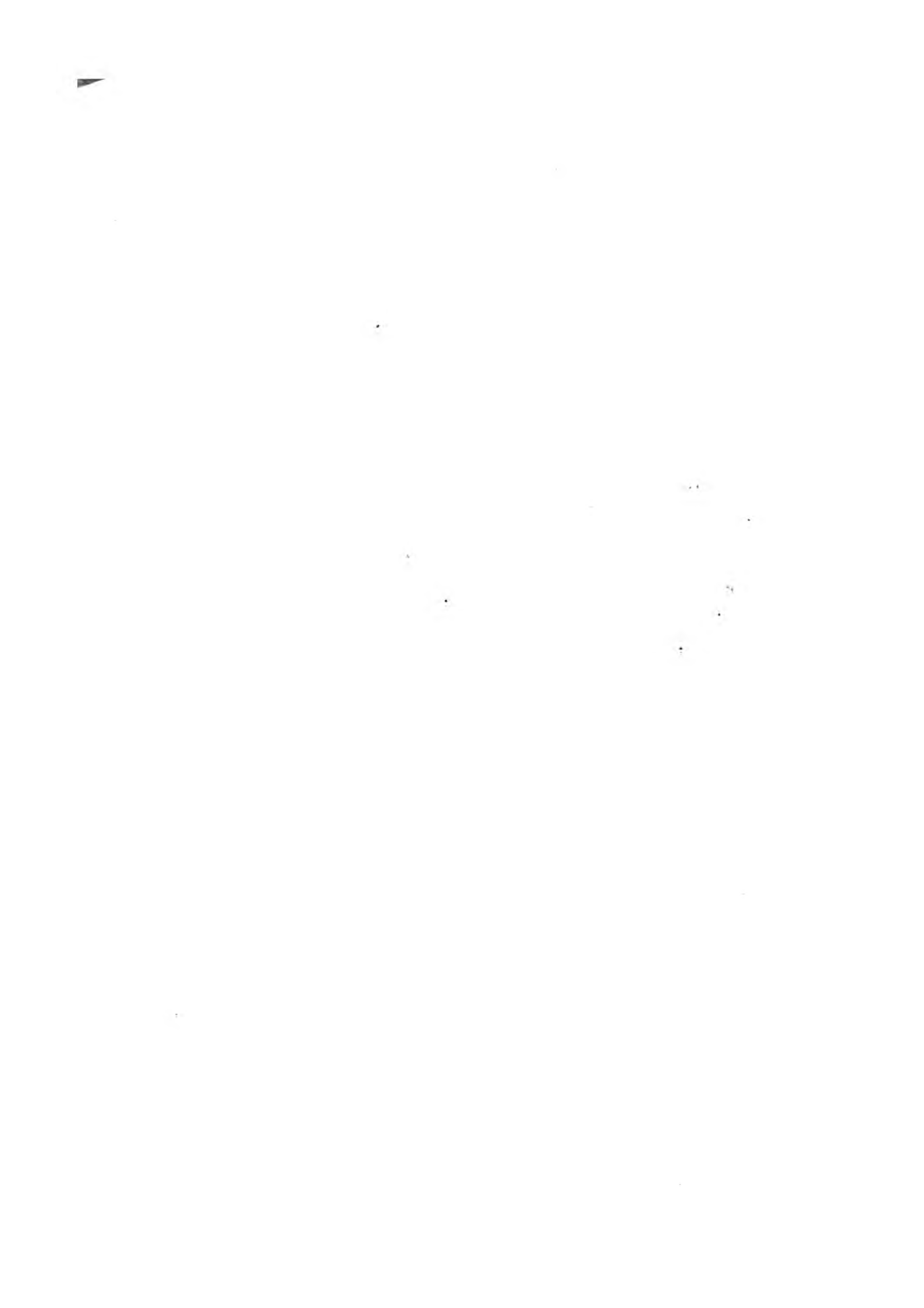
Young Mickle is said to have entered into these engagements more from a sense of filial duty, and the peculiar situation of his family, than from any inclination to business. He had already contracted the habits of literary life; he had begun to feel the enthusiasm of a son of the Muses; and while he was storing his mind with the productions of former poets, and cultivating those branches of elegant literature not usually taught at schools at that time, he felt the employment too delightful to admit of much interruption from the concerns of trade. In 1761, he contributed, but without his name, two charming compositions, entitled, Knowledge, an Ode, and A Night Piece, to a collection of poetry published by Donaldson, a bookseller of Edinburgh; and about the same time published some observations on that impious tract, *The History of the Man after God's own Heart*; but whether separately or in any literary journal, is not now known. He had also finished a dramatic poem of considerable length, entitled *The Death of Socrates*, and had begun a poem on Providence, when his studies were interrupted by the importunities of his creditors.

This confusion in his affairs was partly occasioned by his intrusting that to servants which it was in their power to abuse without his knowledge, and partly by imprudently becoming a joint security, for a considerable sum, with a printer in Edinburgh, to whom one of his brothers was then apprentice, which, on his failure, Mickle was unable to pay.

In this dilemma, had he at once compounded with his creditors, and disposed of the business, as he was advised, he might have averted a series of anxieties that preyed on his mind for many years; and he perhaps might have entered into another concern more congenial to his disposition, with all the advantage of dear-bought experience. But some friends interposed at this crisis, and prevailed on his creditors to accept notes of hand in lieu of present payment; a measure which, however common, is generally futile, and seldom fails to increase the embarrassment which it is kindly intended to alleviate. Accordingly, within a few months, Mickle was again insolvent, and almost distracted with the nearer view of impending ruin ready to fall, not only on himself, but on his whole family. His reflections on this occasion, which he expressed in a letter to a brother in London, are such as do honour to his moral and religious sentiments.

Perhaps an unreserved acknowledgment of insolvency might not yet have been too late to shorten his sufferings, had not the same friends again interfered, and again persuaded his creditors to allow him more time to satisfy their demands. This interference, as it appeared to be the last that was possible, in some degree roused him to a more close application to business; but as business was ever secondary in his thoughts, he was induced at the same time to place considerable reliance on his poetical talents, which, as far as known, had been encouraged by some critics of acknowledged taste, in his own country. He therefore began to retouch and complete his poem on Providence, from which he conceived great expectations, and at length had it published in London by Becket, in August, 1762, under the title of *Providence, or Arandus and Emilée*. The character given of it in the *Critical Review* was highly flattering; but the opinion of the





Monthly, which was then esteemed more decisive, being less satisfactory, he determined to appeal to lord Lyttelton. Accordingly, he sent to this nobleman a letter, dated January 21, 1763, under the assumed name of William More, begging his lordship's opinion of his poem, "which," he tells him, "was the work of a young man, friendless and unknown; but that, were another edition to have the honour of lord Lyttelton's name at the head of a dedication, such a pleasure would enable him to put it in a much better dress than what it then appeared in." He concluded with requesting the favour of an answer to be left at Seagoe's coffee-house, Holborn. This letter he consigned to the care of his brother in London, who was to send it in his own hand, and call for the answer. The whole was the simple contrivance of a young man, unacquainted with the real value of the favour he solicited, and who, perhaps, had no very distinct ideas of his own expectations from it.

But before he could receive any answer, his affairs became so deranged that, although he experienced many instances of friendship and forbearance, it was no longer possible to avert a bankruptcy; and, suspecting that one of his creditors intended to arrest him for an inconsiderable debt, he was reduced to the painful necessity of leaving his home, which he did in the month of April, and reached London on the eighth day of May. Here, for some time, he remained friendless and forlorn, reflecting, with the utmost poignancy, that he had, in all probability, involved his family and friends in irremediable distress.

Among other schemes which he hoped might eventually succeed in relieving his embarrassments, he appears to have now had some intentions of going to Jamaica, but in what capacity, or with what prospects, he perhaps did not himself know. There was, however, no immediate plan so easily practicable, by which he could expect, at some distant period, to satisfy his creditors; and the consciousness of this most painful of all obligations, was felt by him in a manner which can be conceived only by minds of the nicest honour and most scrupulous integrity.

While in this perplexity, he was cheered by a letter from lord Lyttelton, in which his lordship assured him, that he thought his genius in poetry deserved to be cultivated, but would not advise the re-publication of his poem without considerable alterations. He declined the offer of a dedication, as a thing likely to be of no use to the poet, "as nobody minded dedications;" but suggested that it might be of some use if he were to come and read the poem with his lordship, when they might discourse together upon what he thought its beauties and faults. In the meantime, he exhorted Mickle to endeavour to acquire greater harmony of versification: and to take care that his diction did not *loiter into prose*, or become hard by new phrases, or words unauthorized by the usage of good authors. Whatever may be thought of lord Lyttelton's subsequent conduct, it cannot be denied that this letter was condescending and friendly; and it is certain, that his lordship readily and zealously performed what he had undertaken.

In answer, Mickle informed his lordship of his real name, and inclosed the elegy of Pollio for his lordship's advice. This was followed by another kind letter from lord Lyttelton, in which he gave his opinion, that the correction of a few lines would make it as perfect as any thing of that kind in our language, and promised to point out its faults when he had the pleasure of seeing the author. An interview accordingly took place, in the month of February, 1764, when his lordship, after receiving him with the utmost politeness and affability, begged him not to be discouraged at such difficulties as a young author must naturally expect, but to cultivate his very promising poetical powers: and, with his usual condescension, added, that he would become his schoolmaster. Other

interviews followed this very flattering introduction, at which Mickle read with him the poem on Providence, and communicated his plan for treating more fully a subject of so much intricacy, intimating that he had found it necessary to discard the philosophy of Pope's ethics.

His ideas on this subject, although not very clear, are thus explained in one of his letters to lord Lyttelton. "What is called God's moral government of the world may be reduced to a few general classes, which may be represented each by a particular fable, and however contrary to common practice, such fable, as was no way out of nature, seemed most proper to me, only heightening it by laying the scene in the east. In the speech of the angel, I thought once to avail myself of the philosophy of Mr. Pope's ethics, but found his system, if I rightly understood it, not clearly compatible with the real miseries that human wisdom cannot foresee, nor human virtue prevent: and that there are such must be owned. That in the scale of being there *must* be such a rank as man in his present condition seems to want proof, and is much further than Mr. Locke goes, who only asserts the probability of a scale of gradation above us; nor, were it granted, is it a satisfactory method to solve the complaint of the sufferer. And though the argument drawn from man's blindness, and that hope is its own reward, may prove the duty of submission, it seems but ill fitted to beget a cheerful resignation. I have mentioned these, my lord, to show what scheme I would wish for: one that owned there was sometimes 'to virtue woe,' though it affirmed,

The broadest mirth unfeeling folly wears,
Less pleasing far than virtue's very tears.

A scheme that considered the individual in the moral world in a manner analogous to what is said of every seed in the natural, that it contains a perfect plant in itself. I never intended to run into discussions."

But, as in order to render his talents as soon productive as possible he had now a wish to publish a volume of poems, he sent to his noble friend that on Providence, Pollio, and an Elegy on Mary Queen of Scots. This produced a long letter from his lordship, in which, after much praise of the two former, he declined criticising any part of the Elegy on Mary, because he wholly disapproved of the subject. He added, with justice, that poetry should not consecrate what history must condemn, and in the view his lordship had taken of the history of Mary, he thought her entitled to pity, but not to praise. In this opinion Mickle acquiesced, from convenience if not from conviction, and again sent his lordship a copy of Providence with further improvements, hoping probably that they might be the last, but he had the mortification to receive it back from the noble critic so much marked and blotted, that he began to despair of completing it to his satisfaction. He remitted therefore a new performance, the Ode on May Day, begging his lordship's opinion "if it could be made proper to appear this spring (1765) along with the one already approved."

Whether any answer was returned to this application, we are not told. It is certain no volume of poems appeared, and our author began to feel how difficult it would be to justify such tardy proceedings to those who expected that he should do something to provide for himself. He had now been nearly two years in London, without any other subsistence than what he received from his brothers, or procured by contributing to some of the periodical publications, particularly the British and St. James's Magazines. All



this was scanty and precarious, and his hopes of greater advantages from his poetical efforts were considerably damped by the fastidious opinions of the noble critic who had voluntarily undertaken to be his tutor. It now occurred to Mickle to try whether his lordship might not serve him more essentially as a patron, and having still some intention of going to Jamaica, he took the liberty to request his lordship's recommendation to his brother William Henry Lyttelton, esq., who was then governor of that island. This produced an interview, in which lord Lyttelton intimated that a recommendation to his brother would be of no real use, as the governor's patronage was generally bespoke long before vacancies take place; he promised, however, to recommend Mickle to the merchants, and to one of them then in London whom he expected to see very soon. He also hinted that a clerkship at home would be desirable, as England was the place for Mickle, but repressed all hopes from this scheme by adding, that as he (lord Lyttelton) was in opposition, he could ask no favours. He then mentioned the East Indies, as a place where perhaps he could be of service, and after much conversation on these various schemes, concluded with a promise, which probably appeared to his client as a kind of anti-climax, that he would aid the sale of his *Odes* with his good opinion when they should be published.

This was the last interview Mickle had with his lordship. He afterwards renewed the subject in the way of correspondence, but received so little encouragement that he was at length compelled, although much against the fond opinion he had formed of his lordship's zeal in his cause, to give up all thoughts of succeeding by his means. It cannot be doubted that he felt this disappointment very acutely; but whether he thought, upon more mature reflection, that he had not sufficient claims on lord Lyttelton's patronage, that his lordship could not be expected to provide for every one who solicited his opinion, or that he was really unable to befriend him according to his honest professions, it is certain that he betrayed no coarse resentment, and always spoke respectfully of the advantages he had derived from his critical opinions.

The conclusion of their correspondence, indeed, was in some respect owing to Mickle himself. Lord Lyttelton so far kept his word as to write to his brother in his favour at the time when Mickle was bent on going to Jamaica, but the latter had, in the meantime, "in order to avoid the dangers attending on uncertainty," accepted the offer of going as a merchant's clerk to Carolina, a scheme which, being delayed by some accident, he gave up for a situation more agreeable to his taste, that of corrector of the Clarendon press at Oxford.

To whom he owed this appointment we are not told. As it is a situation, however, of moderate emolument, and dependent on the printer employed, it required no extraordinary interference of friends. He was already known to the Wartons, and it is not improbable that their mentioning him to Jackson, the printer, would be sufficient. He removed to Oxford in 1765, and in 1767 published *The Concubine*, in the manner of Spenser, which brought him into more notice than any thing he had yet written, and was attributed to some of the highest names on the list of living poets, while he concealed his being the author. It may here be noticed, that when he published a second edition, in 1778, he changed the name to Sir Martyn, as *The Concubine* conveyed a very improper idea both of the subject and spirit of the poem. The change of name is not of much consequence, but the reason here assigned is by no means satisfactory.

In the beginning of 1768, he lost an amiable and favourite brother, whose death he lamented in a pathetic poem, of which the introduction only has been recovered, and is

now added to some other fragments in the present edition of his poems. Mickle appears to have been greatly affected by this event, and to have sought consolation where only it can be found.

Living now in a society from which some of the ablest defenders of Christianity have risen, he was induced to take up his pen in its defence by attacking a Translation of the New Testament published by the late Dr. Harwood. Mickle's pamphlet was entitled *A Letter to Dr. Harwood*, wherein some of his evasive glosses, false translations, and blundering criticisms, in support of the Arian heresy, contained in his literal translation of the New Testament, are pointed out and confuted. Harwood had laid himself so open to ridicule as well as confutation by his foolish translation, that perhaps there was no great merit in exposing what it was scarcely possible to read with gravity; but our author, while he employed rather more severity than was necessary on this part of his subject, engaged in the vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity with the acuteness of a man who had carefully studied the controversy, and considered the established opinion as a matter of essential importance. This was followed by another attempt to vindicate revealed religion from the hostility of the Deists, entitled *Voltaire in the Shades, or Dialogues on the Deistical Controversy*.

In 1772, he formed that collection of fugitive poetry, which was published in four volumes by George Pearch, bookseller, as a continuation of Dodsley's collection. In this Mickle inserted his *Hengist and Mey*, and the *Elegy on Mary Queen of Scots*. He contributed about the same time other occasional pieces, both in prose and verse, to the periodical publications³, when he could spare leisure from his engagements at the Clarendon press, and from a more important design which he had long revolved in his mind, and had now the resolution to carry into execution in preference to every other employment.

This was his justly celebrated translation of *The Lusiad* of Camoens, a poem which he is said to have read when a boy in Castera's French translation, and which at no great distance of time he determined to familiarize to the English reader. For this purpose he studied the Portuguese language, and the history of the poem and of its author, and without greatly over-rating the genius of Camoens, dwelt on the beauties of the *Lusiad*, until he caught the author's spirit, and became confident that he could transfuse it into English with equal honour to his original and to himself. But as it was necessary that the attention of the English public should be drawn to a poem at this time very little known, he first published proposals for his translation to be printed by subscription, and afterwards sent a small specimen of the fifth book to be inserted in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which was then, as now, the common vehicle of literary communications. This appeared in the *Magazine* for March, 1771, and a few months after he printed at Oxford the first book of *The Lusiad*. These specimens were received with indulgence sufficient to encourage him to prosecute his undertaking with spirit, and that he might enjoy the advantages of leisure and quiet, he relinquished his situation at the Clarendon press, and retired to an old mansion occupied by a Mr. Tomkins, a farmer at Forest Hill, about five miles from Oxford. Here he remained until the end of 1775, at which time

³ A correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (vol. lxi. p. 402) asserted that Mickle was employed by Evans, bookseller in the Strand, to fabricate some of the *old* ballads published by him. This calumny, however, was fully refuted in a subsequent letter in p. 504, written as I suppose by Mr. Isaac Reed, who knew Mickle well, and drew up the first account published of his life in the *European Magazine*, 1789. C.

he was enabled to complete his engagement with his numerous subscribers, and publish the work complete in a quarto volume, printed at Oxford.

With the universal approbation bestowed on this work by the critical world he had every reason to be satisfied, and the profits he derived from the sale were far from being inconsiderable to a man in his circumstances; yet the publication was attended by some unforeseen circumstances of a less pleasing kind, for he had again the misfortune to be teased by the prospect of high patronage, which again ended in disappointment. It had at first been suggested to him that he might derive advantage from dedicating his translation of *The Lusiad* to some person of rank in the East India department, but before he had made a choice, his friend the late commodore Johnstone persuaded him to inscribe it to a Scotch nobleman of the highest rank. This nobleman, however, we are told, had been a pupil of Dr. Adam Smith, some of whose doctrines respecting the eastern trade, Mickle had controverted, and upon this account the nobleman is said to have treated the dedication and the poem with neglect. Mickle's biographers have expatiated on this subject at great length, and with much acrimony; but as the nobleman is yet alive, and, what is of more importance, is universally esteemed for his public and private worth, and above all for his liberality, it does not seem respectful to perpetuate a story of which probably one half only can ever be known. Still the treatment Mickle met with, according to Ireland and Sims, was such that we must regret that he had been advised to seek any other patronage than that of the public, or that he should need any other than what he might reasonably expect from the exertion of talents so various and original, united at the same time with such integrity and principle as are rarely found among those who are thrown upon the world in circumstances like his.

Soon after the publication of *The Lusiad*, he returned to London, and was advised by some, who probably in this instance consulted his fame less than his immediate interest, to write a tragedy. The profits of a play, although its merit may not be very high, are generally so great that we ought not to be surprised at his acquiescing in this scheme, and that when he began to execute his task he became fond of it, and conceived very sanguine expectations. The story of his tragedy, which was entitled *The Siege of Marseilles*, was taken from the French history in the reign of Francis I. When completed, his friends recommended it to Garrick, who allowed its general merit, but complained of the want of stage effect, and recommended him to take the advice of Dr. Warton. This able critic was accordingly called in, with his brother Thomas, and with Home the author of *Douglas*. In compliance with their opinion, Mickle made great alterations, and Thomas Warton earnestly recommended the tragedy to Garrick, but in vain[†], and Mickle, his biographers inform us, was so incensed at this, that he resolved to appeal to the judgment of the public by printing it.

His conduct on this occasion must be ascribed to irritation arising from other disap-

[†] Garrick's objections, we must suppose, were, in his own opinion, unanswerable. When Thomas Warton offered to read it, and send it to Garrick with his recommendation, Garrick answered, in a letter, dated April 30, 1771, "I shall consider it now as a new drama, and with great partiality in its favour, as it comes recommended by you; but should I approve, as I wish and expect, it will not be in my power to produce it the next winter: I am more than full for the next season—however, if the author will trust it with me, should it be thought fit for representation, I will bring it out as soon as I can: but unless some of my present engagements are withdrawn, it cannot make its appearance until the winter after next—My best compliments to Mr. Mickle—Has the Dr. (Joseph Warton) at Winchester seen it?—A play underwritten by the two Wartons would certainly merit every attention." *Woolf's Memoirs of Dr. J. Warton.* C.

pointments. The mere printing would have been a harmless, and might have been a profitable, experiment. The public are not sorry to be constituted the judges in a matter where their judgment can seldom be of much use, since a play may be very pleasing in the closet, and yet very unfit for the stage. But Mickle threatened to go further. Having been told by some officious person that Garrick had followed his refusal by sentiments of personal disrespect, he was so enraged as to threaten to write a new *Dunciad*, of which Garrick should be the hero; but his more sensible friends naturally took the alarm at a threat so impotent, and persuaded him to lay aside his design. Let us hope that it was but a threat, and that a man of so many virtues would not have deliberately stained his character by an act of revenge. Yet he drew up an angry preface, and sent a copy of it to Mr. Garrick. It is unnecessary to say more of this play, than that it was afterwards rejected by Mr. Harris and Mr. Sheridan. It is now added to his works, agreeably to his own intention⁵, and as it contains many pathetic passages and interesting situations, every reader will yet wonder that when the author's fame became established, and when a trial on the stage might have been made with no great risk, a succession of managers persisted in rejecting it.

The first edition of *The Lusiad*, consisting of a thousand copies, had so rapid a sale, that a second edition, with improvements, was published in June, 1778. About the same time, as he had yet no regular provision, some means were employed, but ineffectually, to procure him a pension from the crown, as a man of letters. Dr. Lowth, then bishop of London, had more than once intimated that he was ready to admit him into holy orders, and provide for him; but Mickle refused the offer, lest his hitherto uniform support of revealed religion should be imputed to interested motives. This offer was highly honourable to him, as it must have proceeded from a knowledge of the excellence of his character, and the probable advantages which the church must have derived from the accession of such a member. Nor was his rejection of it less honourable, for he was still poor. Although he had received nearly a thousand pounds from the sale and for the copyright of *The Lusiad*, he appropriated all of that sum which he could spare from his immediate necessities to the payment of his debts, and the maintenance of his sisters. He now issued proposals for printing an edition of his original poems, by subscription, in quarto, at one guinea each copy. For this he had the encouragement of many friends, and probably the result would have been very advantageous, but the steady friendship of the late commodore Johnstone relieved him from any further anxiety on this account.

In 1779⁶ this gentleman being appointed commander of the *Rouney* man of war, and

⁵ Life prefixed to the quarto edition of his poems. Of his anger against Garrick the late excellent Dr. Horne, bishop of Norwich, relates the following anecdote. "Mickle, the translator of *The Lusiad*, inserted in his poem an angry note against Garrick, who, as he thought, had used him ill, by rejecting a tragedy of his. Sometime afterward, the poet, who had never seen Garrick play, was asked by a friend in town to go to king Lear. He went, and during the first three acts said not a word. In a fine passage of the fourth, he fetched a deep sigh, and, turning to his friend, "I wish," said he, "the note was out of my book." Life of bishop Horne, by Jones, p. 270. The reader may perceive improbabilities in this story, which, however, had some foundation. Mickle must have seen Garrick play long, and often, before he published *The Lusiad*. C.

⁶ In this year he published a pamphlet in quarto, entitled *A candid Examination of the Reasons for depriving the East India Company of its Charter*. This was written in defence of the company, and against the opinions of Dr. Adam Smith, to whose insinuations Mickle's friends have supposed that he owed the loss of the noble patron to whom he dedicated *The Lusiad*. C.

+ He died at Hoxton Feb. 20. 1811, at. 63

commodore of a squadron, immediately nominated Mickle to be his secretary, by which, though only a non-commissioned officer, he was entitled to a considerable share of prize-money. But what probably afforded him most delight, in the commencement of this new life, was the destination of the squadron to the native shores of his favourite Camoens, which the fame of his translation had already reached. On his landing at Lisbon in November, 1773, he was received with the utmost politeness and respect by prince don John of Braganza, duke of Lafoens, and was introduced to the principal nobility, gentry, and literati of Portugal. In May, 1780, the Royal Academy of Lisbon admitted him a member, and the duke of Braganza, who presided on that occasion, presented him with his portrait as a token of his particular regard. It is almost needless to add, that the admirers of Mickle owe his beautiful, though neglected, poem of Almada Hill to this visit. He is said also to have employed some of his leisure hours in collecting materials for a history of Portugal, which he did not live to prepare for the press.

On his arrival in England, in November, 1780, he was appointed joint agent for the disposal of the valuable prizes taken during the commodore's cruize, and by the profits of this place, and his share of the prize-money, he was enabled to discharge his debts. This had long been the ardent wish of his heart, the object of all his pursuits, and an object which he at length accomplished with the strictest honour, and with a satisfaction to his own mind the most pure and delightful. It is, indeed, among the inexplicable mysteries in human conduct, that so many men of enlightened minds can bear the weight of pecuniary obligation with perfect indifference, and can openly insult the universal opinion of mankind, by deeming the reputation of a few showy public professions an equivalent for the principles of common honesty. Mickle had nothing in common with men of this description.

In 1782, our poet published *The Prophecy of Queen Emma*, a ballad, with an ironical preface, containing an account of its pretended author and discovery, and hints for vindicating the authenticity of the poems of Ossian and Rowley. This irony, however, lost part of its effect by the author's pretending that a poem, which is modern both in language and versification, was the production of a prior of Durham in the reign of William Rufus, although he endeavours to account for this with some degree of humour, and is not unsuccessful in imitating the mode of reasoning adopted by dean Milles and Mr. Bryant, in the case of Chatterton.

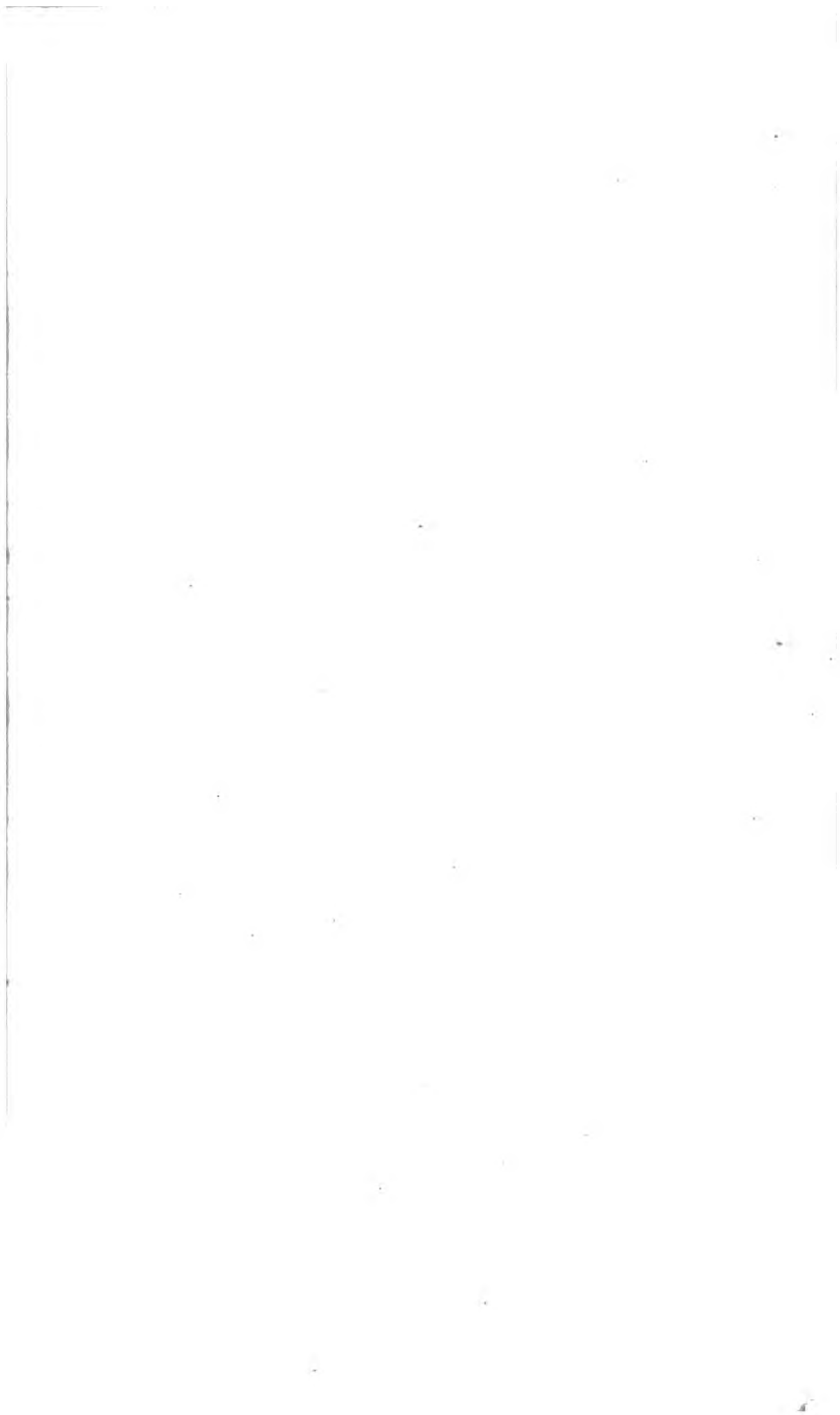
In the same year he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Robert Tomkins, with whom he resided in Oxfordshire while employed in translating *The Lusiad*, and by this lady he left a son, now a clerk in the India-house. The fortune which he obtained by his marriage, and what he acquired under commodore Johnstone, would have enabled him to pass the remainder of his days in ease and independence, and with that view he took a house at Wheatly near Oxford; but the failure and death of a banker, with whom he was connected as agent for the prizes, and a chancery suit in which he engaged rather too precipitately, in order to secure a part of his wife's fortune, involved him in many delays, and much anxiety and expense. He still, however, employed his pen on occasional subjects, and contributed essays entitled *The Fragments of Leo*, and some other articles, to the *European Magazine*. His last production was *Eskdale Braes*, a song in commemoration of the place of his birth.

He died after a short illness at Forest Hill, on the 28th of October, 1788, and was buried in the churchyard of that parish. His character, as drawn by Mr. Isaac Reed

and Mr. John Ireland, who knew him well, may be adopted with safety. "He was in every point of view a man of the utmost integrity, warm in his friendship, and indignant only against vice, irreligion, or meanness. The compliment paid by lord Lyttelton to Thomson, might be applied to him with the strictest truth; not a line is to be found in his works, which, dying, he would wish to blot. During the greatest part of his life, he endured the pressures of a narrow fortune without repining, never relaxing in his industry to acquire, by honest exertions, that independence which at length he enjoyed. He did not shine in conversation, nor would any person, from his appearance, have been able to form a favourable judgment of his talents. In every situation in which fortune placed him, he displayed an independent spirit, undebased by any meanness; and when his pecuniary circumstances made him, on one occasion, feel a disappointment with some force, he even then seemed more ashamed at his want of discernment of character, than concerned for his loss. He seemed to entertain with reluctance an opinion that high birth could be united with a sordid mind. He had, however, the satisfaction of reflecting, that no extravagant panegyric had disgraced his pen. Contempt certainly came to his aid, though not soon: he wished to forget his credulity, and never after conversed on the subject by choice. To conclude, his foibles were but few, and those inoffensive: his virtues were many: and his genius was very considerable. He lived without reproach, and his memory will always be cherished by those who were acquainted with him." To this Mr. Ireland adds, "His manners were not of that obtrusive kind by which many men of the second or third order force themselves into notice. A very close observer might have passed many hours in Mr. Mickle's company, without suspecting that he had ever written a line of poetry. A common physiognomist would have said that he had an unmasked face. Lavater would have said otherwise; but neither his countenance nor manners were such as attract the multitude. When his name was announced, he has been more than once asked if the translator of Camoens was any relation to him. To this he usually answered, with a good-natured smile, that they were of the same family. Simplicity, unaffected simplicity, was the leading feature in his character. The philosophy of Voltaire and David Hume was his detestation. He could not bear their names with temper. For the Bible he had the highest reverence, and never sat silent when the doctrines or precepts of the gospel were either ridiculed or spoken of with contempt."

In 1794, an edition of his poems was published by subscription, with an account of his life by Mr. Ireland. A more full and correct collection of his poems appeared in 1807, with a life by the rev. John Sim, who was his intimate friend when at Oxford, and has done ample justice to his memory. To the present edition I have added his tragedy, although dramatic pieces form no part of this collection. Those who still consider it as unfit for the stage, may be willing to allow of its admission as a dramatic poem. Of his poem on Providence, I have not been able to procure a copy.

Although there is no species of poetry of which he had not afforded favourable specimens, and many striking images and animated descriptions are discoverable in his original pieces, and while we allow that his imagination is considerably fertile, his language copious, and his versification rich and various, yet it cannot be denied that there are too many marks of imitation in all his lesser poems, and that his fame must rest principally, where it is more than probable he intended it should, on his translation of the *Lusiad*. This work, which is now rising in reputation, is inferior only to Pope's *Iliad*, according to the general opinion, which perhaps may be controverted. Pope has given



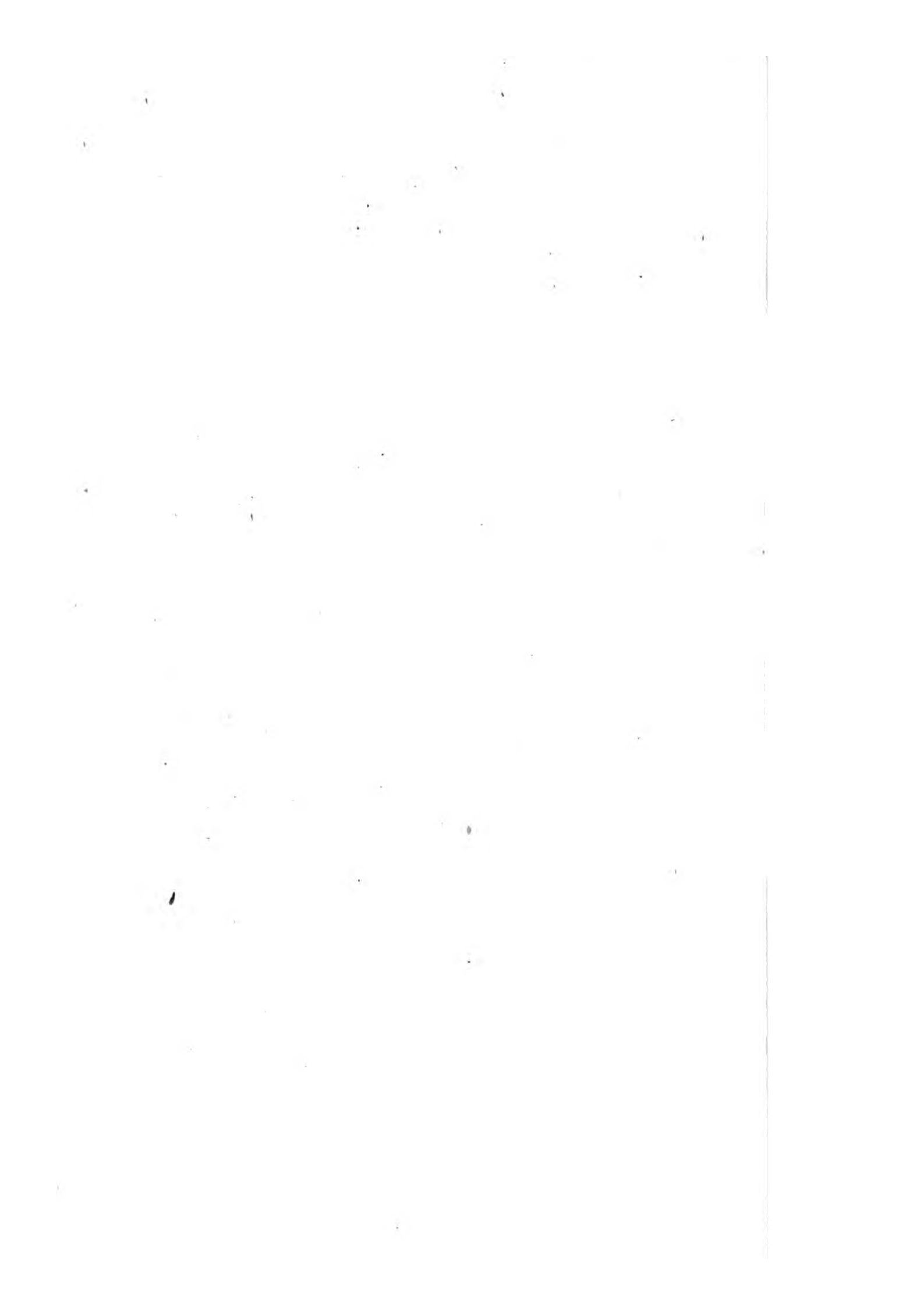


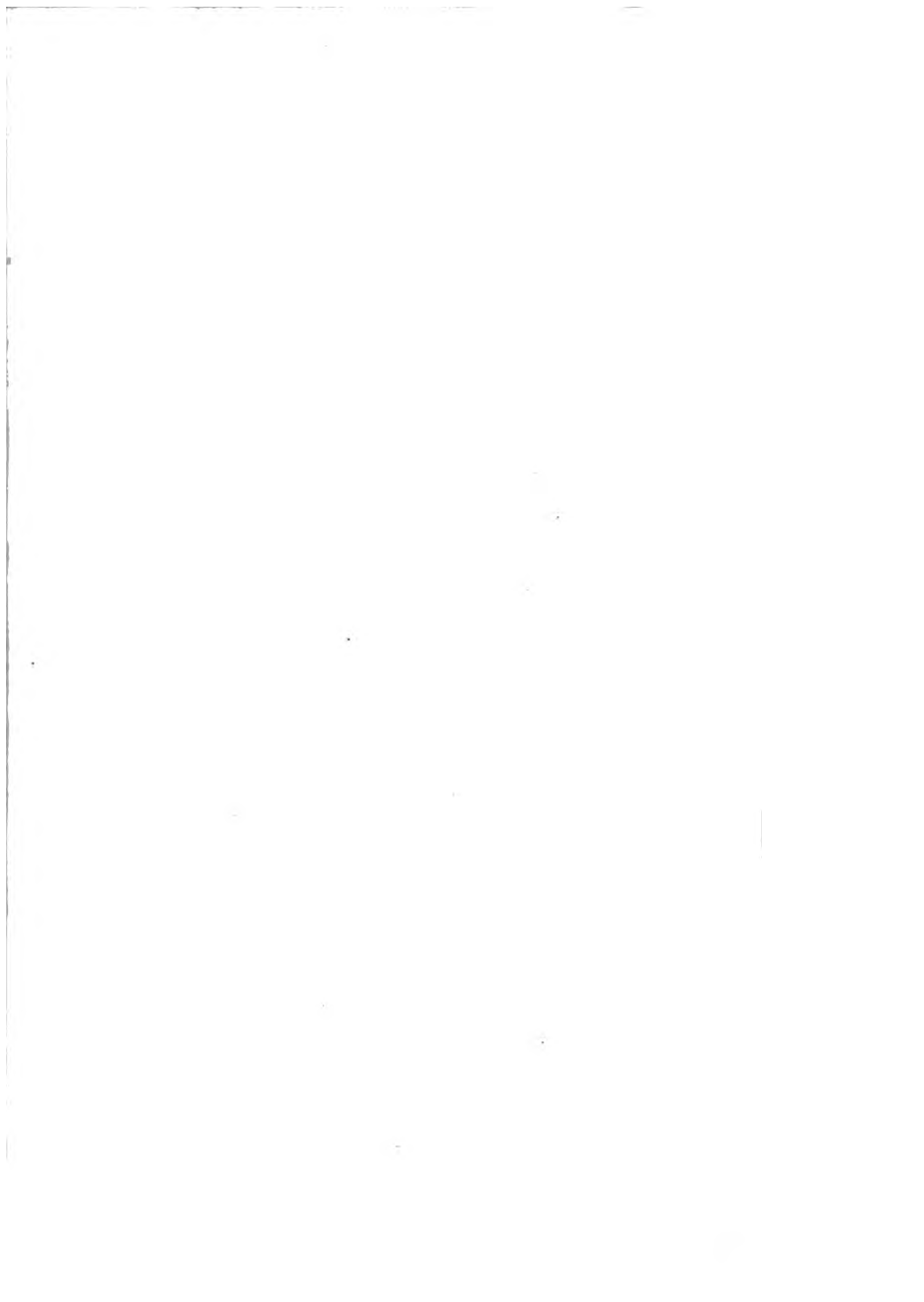
an English poem of unquestionable beauty, but we may say with Bentley, it is not *Homer*. Mickle has not only transfused the spirit, but has raised the character of his original. By preserving the energy, elegance, and fire of Camoens, he has given an English *Lusiad*, a work which, although confessedly borrowed from the Portuguese, has all the appearance of having been invented in the language in which we find it. In executing this, indeed, it must be confessed that Mickle has taken more liberties with his original than the laws of translation will allow; but they are of a kind not usually taken by translators, for he has often introduced beauties of his own equal to any that come from the pen of Camoens. In acknowledging that he has taken such freedoms, however, he has not specified the individual passages, a neglect for which some have praised his humility, and others have blamed his injustice. But with this exception, he has successfully executed what he purposed, not only to make Camoens be understood and relished, but "to give a poem that might live in the English language⁷." Nor ought it to be omitted in this general character of *The Lusiad*, that in his preliminary dissertations, he has distinguished himself as a scholar, a critic, and a historian.

⁷ See vol. xxi. of TRANSLATIONS.



MICKLE.







Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Engraved by J. Heath.

SOAME JENYNS ESQ.^R

THE
LIFE OF SOAME JENYNS,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THIS elegant and ingenious writer was born in Great Ormond Street, London, at twelve o'clock at night, 1703—4. The day of his birth he could not ascertain, and, considering himself at liberty to choose his birth-day, he fixed it on new year's day.

His father, sir Roger Jenyns, knt. was descended from the ancient family of the Jenyns's, of Churchill, in Somersetshire. His country residence was at Ely; where his useful labours as a magistrate, and his loyal principles, procured him the honour of knighthood from king William. He afterwards removed to Bottisham Hall, which he had purchased, a seat not far from Cambridge. Our author's mother was one of the daughters of sir Peter Soame, of Hayden, in the county of Essex, baronet; a lady of great beauty, and highly esteemed for her piety, understanding, and elegance of manners.

Mr. Jenyns received the first part of his education at home, under the care of the rev. Mr. Hill, and afterwards of the rev. Stephen White, who became rector of Holton, in Suffolk. In the year 1722, he was removed to Cambridge, and admitted as a fellow-commoner of St. John's, under Dr. Edmondson, at that time one of the principal tutors of the college. Here he pursued his studies, with great industry, for three years, and found so much satisfaction in the regular discipline and employments of a college life, that he was often heard to say, he accounted the days he had lived there among the happiest in his life.

He left the university, however, without taking a degree, in consequence, probably, of his marriage, which took place when he was very young. His first wife was the natural daughter of his uncle, colonel Soame, of Deerham Grange, in Norfolk. With this lady he received a very considerable fortune; but in all other respects the union was unhappy. After some years, she eloped from him with a Leicestershire gentleman; and a separation being agreed upon in form, Mr. Jenyns consented to allow her a maintenance, which was regularly paid until her death, in 1753.

This affair, it may be conjectured, interrupted the plan of life he had formed after leaving Cambridge. If we may judge from his poetical efforts, his turn was gay, lively

and satirical. His songs, and other amatory pieces, were probably written when young, and bespeak a mind sufficiently at ease to trifle with the passions, and not always attentive to delicacy where it interfered with wit. His first publication, and perhaps his best, was *The Art of Dancing*; printed in 1730, and inscribed to lady Fanny Fielding, one of the daughters of the earl of Denbigh, and afterwards countess of Winchelsea. He did not put his name to this poem; but, when discovered, it was considered as the prelude to greater performances. It must be confessed there is an ease and elegance in the versification, which brought him near to the most favourite poets of his day. In 1735, he wrote the *Epistle to Lord Lovelace*; and this was followed by other pieces of poetry which he contributed to Dodsley's collection, and afterwards printed in a volume, in 1752. He wrote also some occasional essays on political topics, the precise dates of which cannot now be ascertained, as he never put his name to any of his works. They have, however, been since collected by Mr. Cole, in that edition of his works which was published in four volumes, 8vo. 1790, and again in 1793.

Soon after his father's death, at the general election in 1742, he was unanimously chosen one of the representatives for the county of Cambridge. From this time he continued to sit in parliament, either for the county or borough of Cambridge, until the year 1780, except on the call of a new parliament in 1754, when he was returned for the borough of Dunwich. In 1755, he was appointed one of the lords commissioners of the board of trade and plantations, at which he sat during all changes of administration, until the business of the board, which was not great, was removed into another department. At the time of its abolition, it consisted of our author, the present earl of Carlisle, the late lord Auckland, and Gibbon, the historian. Mr. Cumberland, the well-known dramatic poet, was secretary.

His parliamentary conduct was more uniform than is supposed to be consistent with freedom of opinion, or the usual attachments of party. When he was first elected a member, he found sir Robert Walpole on the eve of being dismissed from the confidence of the house of commons; and he had the courage, unassisted and unknown, to give his support to the falling minister, as far as he could without contributing his eloquence, for Mr. Jenyns seldom spoke, and only in reply to a personal question. He was conscious that he could make no figure as a public speaker, and early desisted from the attempt. After the dismissal of sir Robert Walpole, he constantly ranked among the friends of government. Without giving a public assent to every measure of the minister for the day, he contrived to give him no offence, and seems very early to have conceived an abhorrence of systematic oppositions. What his opinions were on great constitutional questions may be found in his writings, where, however, they are not laid down with much precision, and seem at no time of his life to have been steady. In his attendance at the board of trade, he was very assiduous, and bestowed much attention on the commercial interests of his country. He has not left any thing in print expressly on this subject, but his biographer has given some of his private opinions, which are liberal and manly.

In 1757, he published his *Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, which brought him into notice, as one of the most elegant writers of English prose that had appeared since the days of Addison. But the charms of style could not protect this singular work from objections of the most serious kind. It produced from Dr. Johnson, who was then editor of *The Literary Magazine*, a critical dissertation, or *review*, which



is, perhaps, the first of his compositions for strength of argument, keenness of reply, and brilliancy of wit. That Mr. Jenyns felt the force of this powerful refutation may be readily supposed; but it were to be wished he had not retained his resentment for so many years, and then given it vent in a paltry epitaph on Dr. Johnson, which his biographer thought worthy of a place in his works.

Other answers appeared to his Inquiry, of less consequence. Johnson's, after having been read with eagerness in the Magazine, was printed in a small volume, of which two editions were very soon sold. To a subsequent edition of the Inquiry, Mr. Jenyns prefixed a preface, containing a general answer to his opponents, but without retracting any of his positions. In 1761, he reprinted it, along with his poems, in two vols. 12mo. and added the papers he had contributed to *The World*, which are among the first in a collection written by the first wits of their time. There are points in them which prove either the natural purity of his style, and delicacy of his humour, or that he must have "given his days and nights to Addison." It was in one of those papers that he first expressed an opinion in favour of the doctrine of a pre-existent state, which he afterwards insisted upon more seriously in the third letter on the Origin of Evil.

In 1767, he published a small pamphlet, entitled *Thoughts on the Causes and Consequences of the present high Price of Provisions*. Various writers at that time had employed their pens on this subject, some arraigning the bounties on corn, and others blaming the practices of forestallers and monopolizers. Mr. Jenyns imputes the high price of provisions to the increase of the national debt, and the increase of our riches, that is, to the poverty of the public, and the wealth of private individuals. These positions are maintained with much ingenuity; but experience has shown that the influence of such causes has not increased proportionally, and that with ten times more debt and more wealth than the nation had at that time, the price of provisions is found to rise and fall in fluctuations which cannot be explained by his theory. If provisions were dear with the national debt and private wealth of 1767, they ought in 1807 to be inaccessible to all but the most opulent classes. The newspapers were filled with answers to Mr. Jenyns's pamphlet, and the return of plenty made it be forgotten.

But the performance which excited most attention was published by our author in 1776, and seems, indeed, to form an important era in his life. In his younger days he had imbibed the principles of infidelity, and, it has been said, was not sparing in his avowal of them. Time and reflection brought him to a sense of his folly. He studied the holy scriptures with care, and probably called to his aid some of the able defences of Christianity which the infidels in the eighteenth century had provoked. It is certain, however, that he had now adopted the common creed, although with some singular refinements of his own, and determined to avow his sentiments in justice to the cause he had neglected or injured.

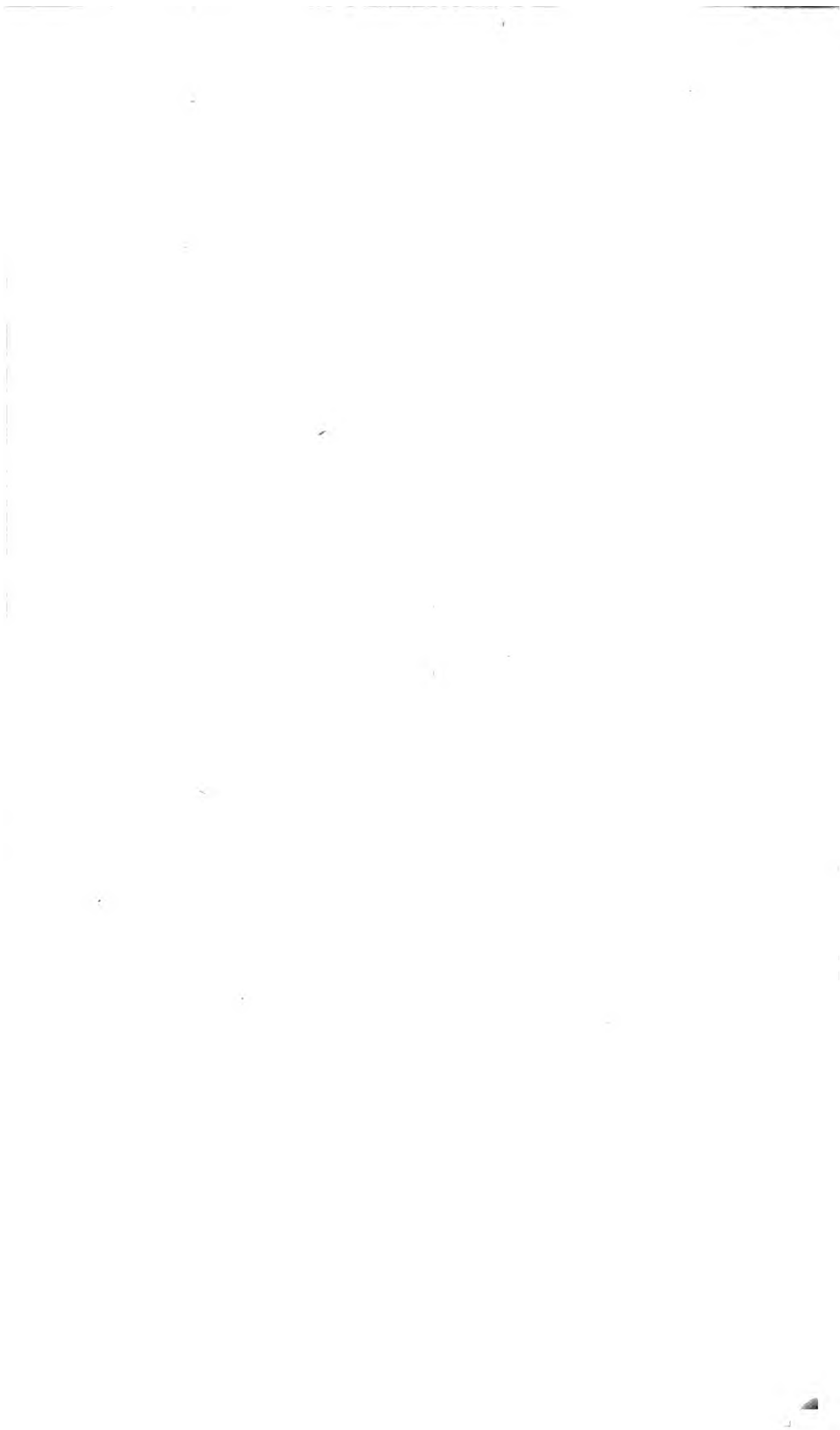
With this honourable resolution, he published *A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, which was at first read as an able defence of Christianity, and the accession of an ingenious layman to the supporters of religion was welcomed by the clergy at large. Others, however, could not help being suspicious of its tendency, and regarded the author as in many points proving himself to be an insidious enemy to the cause he pretended to plead. Those who call themselves *rational Christians* thought he yielded too much to the orthodox believer, and the orthodox believer was shocked that he had conceded the possibility of certain miracles being forgeries.

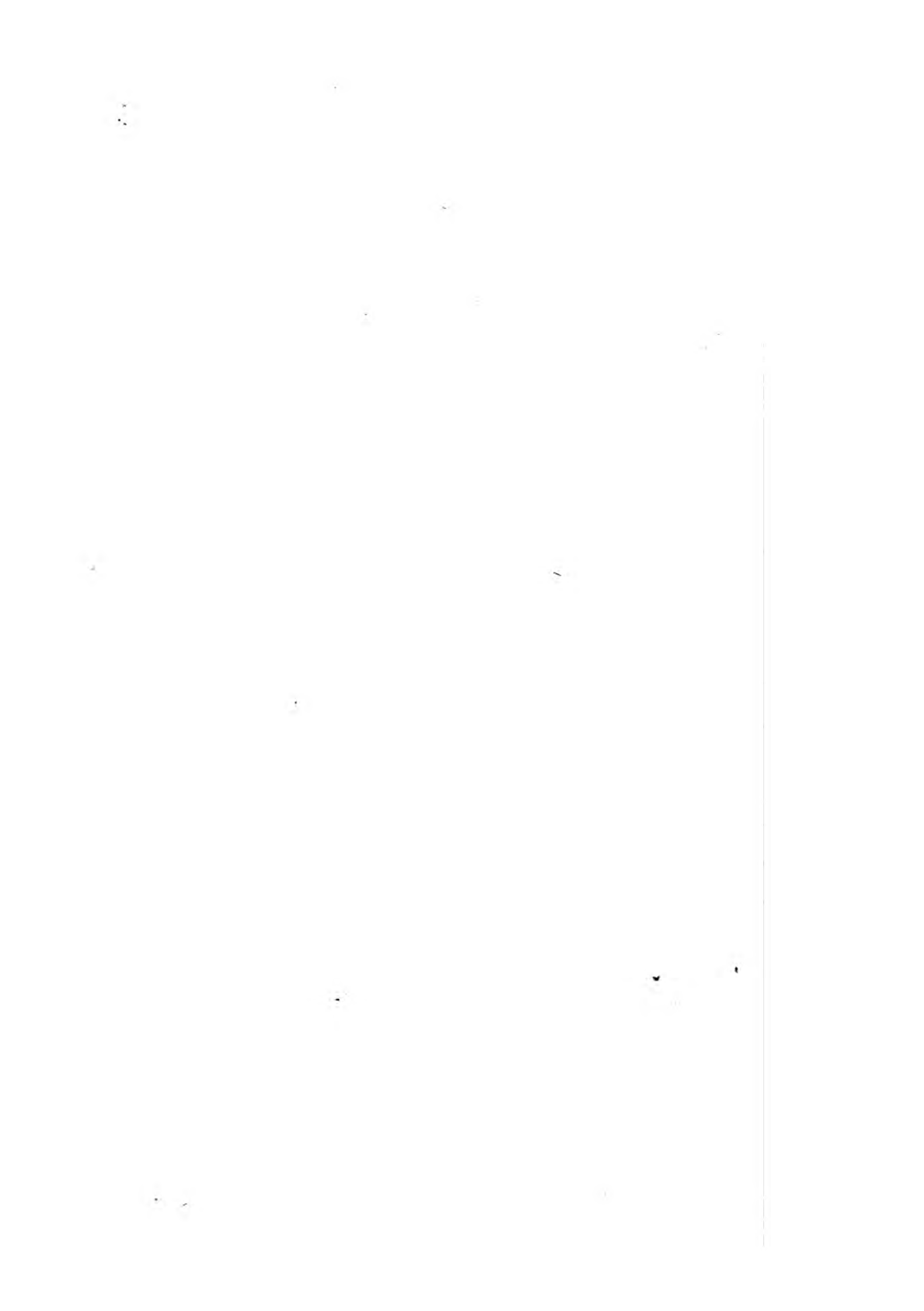
A controversy¹ immediately took place, and continued for some time, greatly to the advantage of Mr. Jenyns's book, which sold most extensively, while the controversy was kept alive, and disappeared with the last answer. During its circulation, it excited the attention of persons of rank, and probably did good. The great error is his neglect of the external evidences, and his admitting the use of reason in some instances, while he refuses it in others.

But whatever difference of opinion was excited by this performance, it would be unjust to question the author's sincerity, or in this, however short, sketch of his life to omit the very explicit declaration he has made of his belief. "Should my work ever have the honour to be admitted into such good company (persons of fashion) they will immediately, I know, determine that it must be the work of some enthusiast or methodist, some beggar, or some madman. I shall therefore beg leave to assure them, that the author is very far removed from all these characters; that he once perhaps believed as little as themselves; but having some leisure, and more curiosity, he employed them both in resolving a question, which seemed to him of some importance—Whether Christianity was really an imposture, founded on an absurd, incredible, and obsolete fable, as many suppose it? or whether it is what it pretends to be, a revelation, communicated to mankind by the interposition of some supernatural power? On a candid inquiry, he soon found that the first was an absolute impossibility; and that its pretensions to the latter were founded on the most solid grounds. In the further pursuits of his examination, he perceived at every step new lights arising, and some of the brightest from parts of it the most obscure, but productive of the clearest proofs, because equally beyond the power of human artifice to invent, and human reason to discover. These arguments, which have convinced him of the divine origin of this religion, he has here put together in as clear and concise a manner as he was able, thinking they might have the same effect upon others; and being of opinion that, if there were a few more true Christians in the world, it would be beneficial to themselves, and by no means detrimental to the public."

In 1782, appeared another volume of doubtful tendency, and certainly more abounding in wild paradoxes, which he entitled *Disquisitions on several Subjects*. These are metaphysical, theological, and political, and in all of them he advances, amidst much valuable matter, a number of fanciful theories, to which he seems to have been prompted merely by a love of novelty, or a desire to show by what ingenuity opinions that contradict the general sense of mankind may be defended. This volume, like the former,

¹ The following are the titles of the principal pamphlets written on this occasion. A Letter to Soame Jenyns, esq. wherein the Futility and Absurdity of some Part of his Reasoning in his *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, is set forth and expressed. By a Clergyman of the Church of England.—*Observations on S. J.'s View, &c.* addressed to its almost Christian Author. By W. Kenrick, LL. D.—A Letter to Soame Jenyns, esq. occasioned by an assertion contained in his *View, &c.* by G. U.—*Short Strictures on certain Passages in a View, &c.* By a Layman.—A Series of Letters addressed to S. J. on occasion of his *View, &c.* By A. Maclaine, D. D. Minister of the English Church at the Hague.—An Examination of the Arguments contained in Dr. Maclaine's Answer to S. J. esq. on his *View, &c.* with general Thoughts and Reflections thereon. By the rev. Edward Fleet, jun. B. A. of Oriel College, Oxford.—A full Answer to a late *View, &c.* In a Dialogue between a rational Christian and his Friend. By the Editor (the Rev. Mr. Taylor) of Ben. Mordecai's *Letters to Elisha Levi*.—*Philosophical Disquisitions on the Christian Religion*. Addressed to Soame Jenyns, esq.—*An Address and Reply, &c.* By the rev. Edward Fleet.





produced a few answers, and what perhaps disturbed our author's tranquillity yet more, an admirable piece of humour, entitled *The Dean and the Squire*, by the author of the *Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers*³. *The dean* was Dr. Tucker, whose opinions on civil liberty approached those of our author. The *Disquisitions* are however an extraordinary production from a man in his seventy-eighth year. Their style is perhaps more elegant and animated than that of any of his former writings; and if mere eloquence could atone for defect of argument, they would yet continue to be read as models of pure and correct English.

In 1784, while the propriety of a parliamentary reformation was in agitation, he published some *Thoughts* on that subject, in which he repeated the objections he had already brought forward in his *Disquisitions*, to any of those innovations which in his opinion tended to anarchy.

This was the last of our author's productions. The infirmities of age were now creeping upon him, and closed his life, Dec. 18, 1787, at his house in Tilney Street, Audley Square⁴.

Mr. Cole, his biographer, has drawn his character at great length, and with the partiality of a friend. Yet, if we except the unsettled state of his opinions, much cannot be deducted from it. As the magistrate, and as the head of a family⁵, he was exemplary in the discharge of the religious and moral duties, and fulfilled his engagements with the strictest integrity, but with a punctuality which brought on him sometimes the charge of being penurious. As a politician we have seen him giving his uniform support to a succession of ministers; but as he did not conceal his opinions, they could not always be in unison with those of his party, and his integrity at least must have been generally acknowledged, since no party offered to remove him.

In private life he was, says Mr. Cole, a man of great mildness, gentleness, and sweetness of temper: his earnest desire was, as far as possible, never to offend any person. This I find confirmed by the rev. Mr. Cole of Milton, who is not remarkable for the lenity of his opinions respecting his contemporaries. "Mr. Jenyns was a man of lively fancy and pleasant turn of wit, very sparkling in conversation, and full of many conceits and agreeable drollery, which was heightened by his inarticulate manner of speaking through his broken teeth, and all this mixed with the utmost humanity and good-nature, having hardly ever heard him severe upon any one, and by no means satirical in his mirth and good-humour⁶."

Mr. Cumberland, in his *Memoirs of his own Life*, lately published, gives us some characteristic *traits* of Mr. Jenyns which correspond with the above. "A disagreement about a name or a date will mar the best story that was ever put together. Sir Joshua Reynolds luckily could not hear an interrupter of this sort; Johnson would not hear, or, if he heard him, would not heed him; Soame Jenyns heard him, heeded him, set him right, and took up his tale, where he had left it, without any diminution of its

³ See *Mason's Works* in this collection. C.

⁴ He was interred in Bottisham church, Dec. 27, where, in the parish register, the rev. Mr. Lort Mansel, now master of Trinity College, Cambridge, introduced a very elegant compliment to his memory. C.

⁵ This alludes to his establishment at Bottisham. He had no issue by either of his wives. C.

Cole's MSS. in British Museum. C.

humour, adding only a few more twists to his snuff-box, a few more taps upon the lid of it, with a preparatory grunt or two, the invariable forerunners of the amenity that was at the heels of them. He was the man who bore his part in all societies with the most even temper and undisturbed hilarity of all the good companions whom I ever knew. He came into your house at the very moment you had put upon your card; he dressed himself to do your party honour in all the colours of the jay; his lace indeed had long since lost its lustre, but his coat had faithfully retained its cut since the days when gentlemen embroidered figured velvets with short sleeves, boot cuffs, and buckram shirts⁷; as nature cast him in the exact mould of an ill-made pair of stiff stays, he followed her so close in the fashion of his coat, that it was doubted if he did not wear them: because he had a protuberant wen just under his pole, he wore a wig that did not cover above half his head. His eyes were protruded like the eyes of the lobster, who wears them at the end of his feelers, and yet there was room between one of these and his nose for another wen that added nothing to his beauty; yet I heard this good man very innocently remark, when Gibbon published his History, that he wondered any body so ugly could write a book.

“ Such was the exterior of a man, who was the charm of the circle, and gave a zest to every company he came into; his pleasantry was of a sort peculiar to himself; it harmonized with every thing; it was like the bread to our dinner; you did not perhaps make it the whole, or principal part of your meal, but it was an admirable and wholesome auxiliary to your other viands. Soame Jenyns told you no long stories, engrossed not much of your attention, and was not angry with those that did; his thoughts were original, and were apt to have a very whimsical affinity to the paradox in them; he wrote verses upon dancing, and prose upon the origin of evil, yet he was a very indifferent metaphysician and a worse dancer⁸; ill-nature and personality, with the single exception of his lines upon Johnson, I never heard fall from his lips: those lines I have forgotten, though I believe I was the first person to whom he recited them; they were very bad, but he had been told⁹ that Johnson ridiculed his metaphysics, and some of us had just then been making extempore epitaphs upon each other. Though his wit was harmless, the general cast of it was ironical; there was a terseness in his repartees, that had a play of words as well as of thought, as when speaking of the difference between laying out money upon land, or purchasing into the funds, he said, ‘ One was principal without interest, and the other interest without principal.’ Certain it is he had a brevity of expression, that never hung upon the ear, and you felt the point in the very moment that he made the push. It was rather to be lamented that his lady, Mrs. Jenyns, had so great a respect for his good sayings, and so imperfect a recollection of them, for though she always prefaced her recitals of them with—*as Mr. Jenyns says*—it was not always what Mr. Jenyns said, and never, I am apt to think, *as Mr. Jenyns said*; but she was an excellent old lady, and twirled her fan with as much mechanical address as her ingenious husband twirled his snuff-box.”

⁷ The *costume* of his latter days was a bath beaver surtout, with blue worsted boot stockings. C.

⁸ It has been said he was in his young days a good dancer, and very fond of the amusement. C.

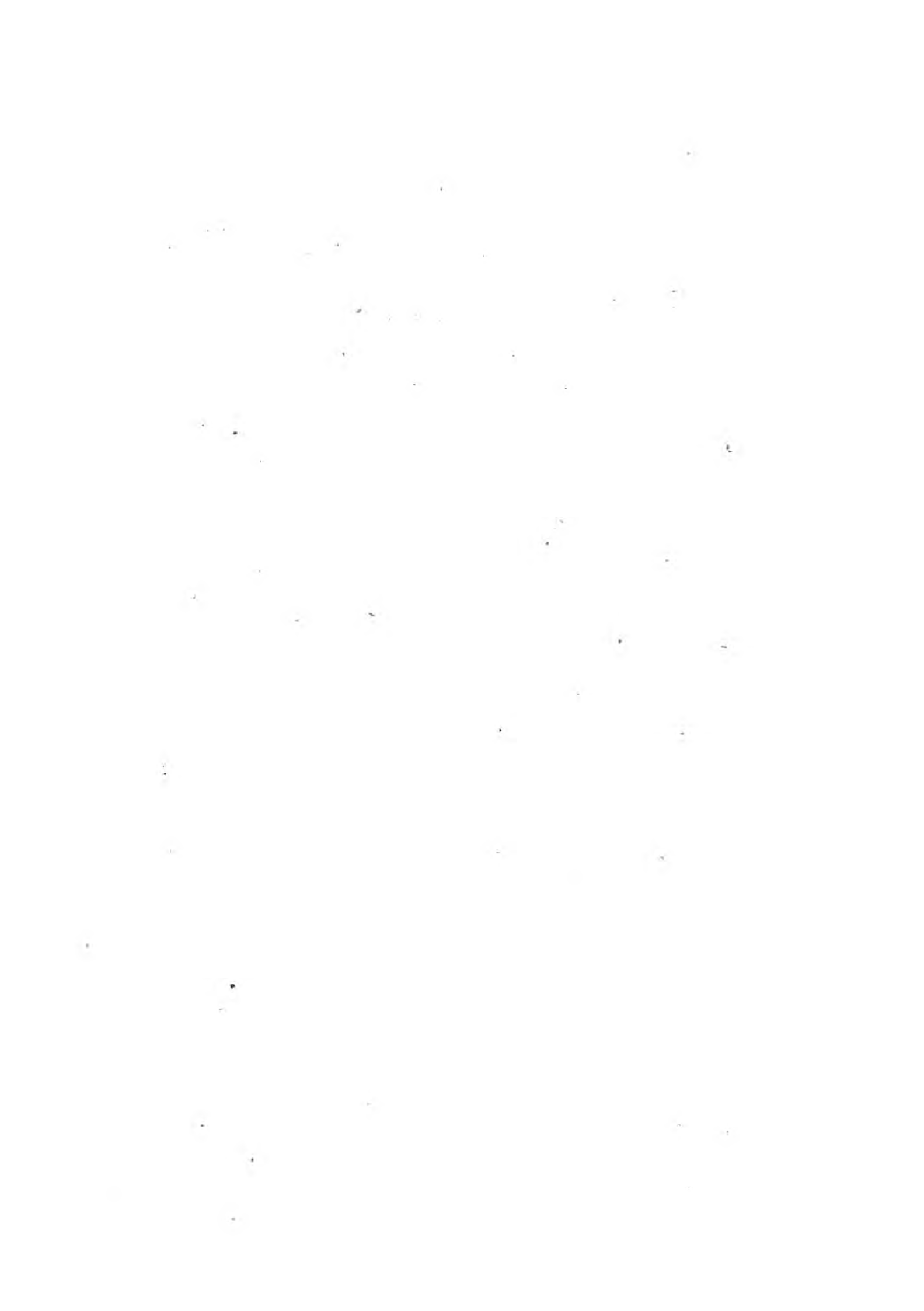
⁹ This is not accurate. He well knew *how* Johnson had ridiculed his metaphysics many years before this period. C.

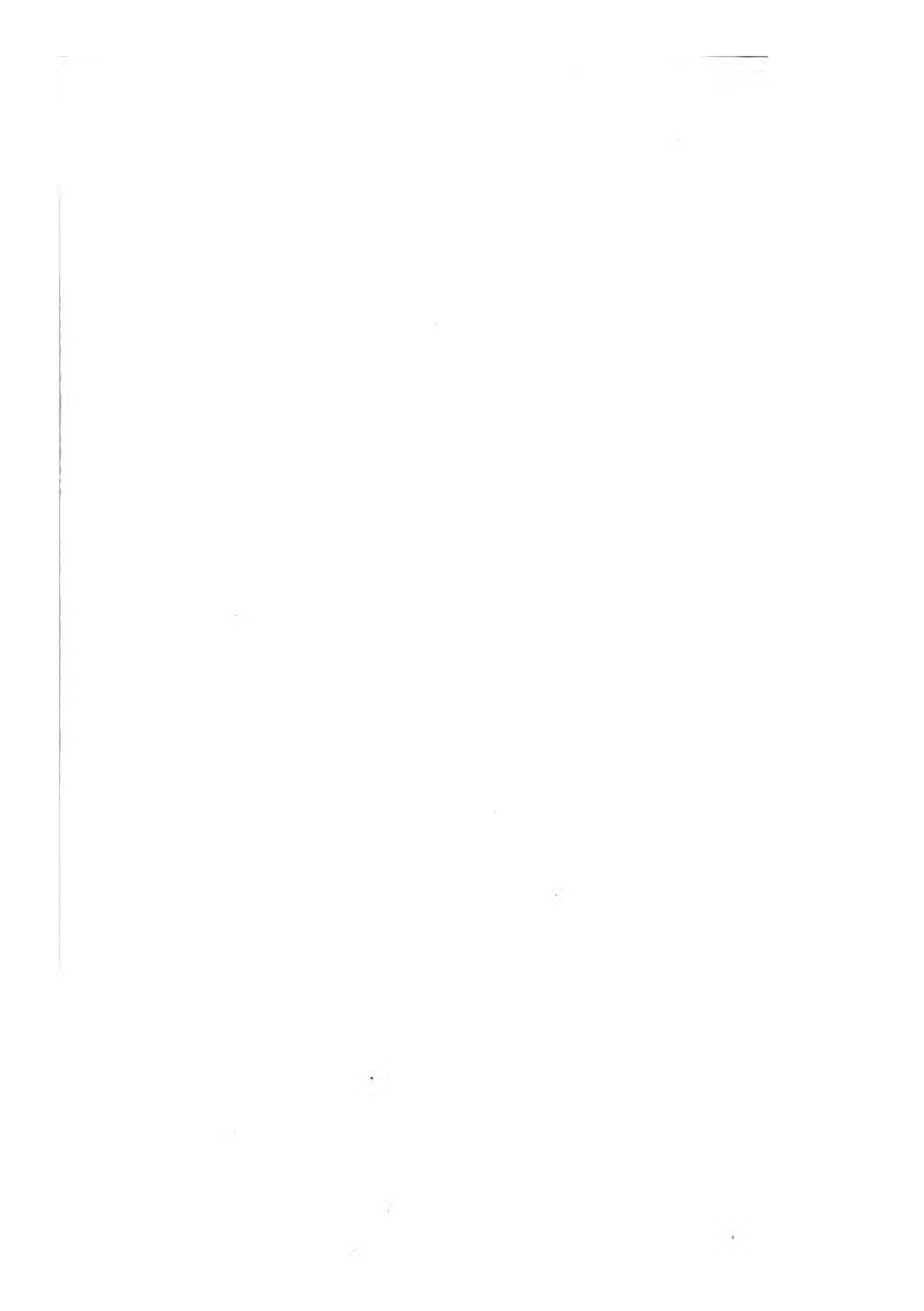




This old lady was the second wife of Mr. Jenyns. His first died July 30, 1753, and in the month of February following he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry Grey, esq. of Hackney, Middlesex. She must at this time have been advanced in life, as she died at the age of ninety-four, July 25, 1796.

Mr. Jenyns's poems were added to the second edition of Dr. Johnson's collection in 1790. They are now reprinted from the edition which his biographer published, with considerable additions, and some explanatory notes. As a prose writer, we have few that can be compared to him for elegance and purity. As a poet he has many equals and many superiors. Yet his poems are sprightly and pleasing; and if we do not find much of that creative fancy which marks the true genius of poetry, there is the spirit, sense, and wit which have rendered so many modern versifiers popular, and have made it impossible for a general collector to abide by the stern laws of Phillips and Warton.





THE
LIFE OF COTTON.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

OF Dr. Cotton's early history no account has been given by his numerous relations. From a passage in one of his letters that will be mentioned hereafter, it may be concluded with some degree of probability, that he was born in the year 1707, but in what county, or of what family, is not known. He studied physic under the celebrated Boerhaave, at Leyden, and it is supposed he took his degree at that university, which was then the first medical school in Europe, and the resort of all who wished to derive honour from the place of their education.

On his return, he endeavoured to establish himself as a general practitioner, but circumstances leading him more particularly to the study of the various species of lunacy, he was induced to become the successor of a Dr. Crawley, who kept a house for the reception of lunatics at Dunstable in Bedfordshire; and having engaged the house-keeper, and prevailed on the patients' friends to consent to their removal, he opened a house for their reception at St. Albans.

Here he continued for some years, adding to his knowledge of the nature of mental disorders, and acquiring considerable fame by the success and humanity of his mode of treatment. When his patients began to increase, he found it necessary to have a larger house, where he formed a more regular establishment, and dignified it by the name of The College. His private residence was in St. Peter's-street, in the town of St. Albans, and was long known as the only house in that town defended from the effects of lightning by a conductor.

The cares of his college, and the education of his numerous family, occupied near the whole of his long life. His poems, and prose pieces, were probably the amusement of such hours as he could snatch from the duties of his profession. He carried on also an extensive correspondence with some of the literary characters of the day, by whom, as well as by all who knew him, he was beloved for his amiable and engaging manners; among others, he corresponded with Dr. Doddridge¹, and appears to have read much, and thought much on subjects which are usually considered as belonging to the province of divines.

¹ Among Dr. Doddridge's Letters, published in 1790, is an affecting letter from Dr. Cotton, on the death of his first wife. C.

He is not known to have produced any thing of the medical kind, except a quarto pamphlet, entitled *Observations on a particular kind of Scarlet Fever* that lately prevailed in and about St. Albans, 1749. The dates of some of his poetical pieces show, that he was an early suitor to the muses. His *Visions in Verse*, were first published in 1751, again in 1764, and frequently since. He contributed likewise a few pieces to Dodsley's collection. A complete collection of his productions, both in prose and verse, was published in 1791, 2 vols. 12mo. by one of his sons, but without any memoir of the author. For much of what is now given, I am indebted to a correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, who appears to have known Dr. Cotton, and kindly and readily answered the inquiries I sent to that never-failing source of literary information.

Dr. Cotton was twice married; first, about the year 1738, to Miss Anne Pembroke, sister to George Pembroke, esq. formerly of St. Albans, receiver-general for the county of Hertford, and to Joseph Pembroke, town-clerk of St. Albans. By this lady, who died in 1749, he had issue; 1. Mary, who became the second wife of John Osborn, esq. of St. Albans, and died without issue, Nov. 2, 1790; 2. Anne, who became the second wife of major Brooke of Bath, and died July 13, 1800, leaving a son and daughter, since dead; 3. Nathaniel, who was entered of Jesus College, Cambridge, where he proceeded B. A. 1766, and M. A. 1769, and is now vicar of Wilford or Welford, in Northamptonshire; 4. Joseph, now a director of the honourable East India Company; 5. Phebe, married to George Bradshaw, esq. since dead; 6. Katharine, who died unmarried, Dec. 2, 1780, and is buried under an altar tomb in the church yard of St. Peter's, St. Albans, with the two following lines under her name:

Time was, like thee, she life possess'd,
And time shall be, that thou shalt rest.

He had also by his first wife, a son and daughter, who died in infancy. He married, secondly, in 1750, or 1751, Miss Hannah Everett, who died May 1772, leaving a son, now living, and two daughters, since dead.

From his letters it appears, that about the year 1780 his health was greatly impaired. He was much emaciated, and his limbs so weak, as to be insufficient to support his weight. The languors, likewise, which he suffered, were so frequent and severe, as to threaten an entire stop to the circulation, and were sometimes accompanied with that most distressing of all sensations, an anxiety *circa præcordia*. His memory too began to fail, and any subject which required a little thought was a burthen hardly supportable. He died August 2, 1788, and we are told his age was so far unknown, that the person who entered his burial in the parish register, wrote after his name, "eighty-eight at least." From the letter, however, alluded to in the beginning of this memoir, we may attain rather more certainty in this matter. That letter was written on the death of his daughter Katharine, in 1780, when he says, "he had passed almost three winters beyond the usual boundary appropriated to human life, and had thus transcended the longevity of a *septuagenarian*." This, therefore, will fix his age at eighty-one, or eighty-two.

He was interred with his two wives in St. Peter's church-yard, under an altar-tomb, between those of his two daughters, Mary, and Katherine, on which nothing more is

inscribed than "Here are deposited the remains of Anne, Hannah, and Nathaniel Cotton."

If we have few particulars of the life of Dr. Cotton, we have many testimonies to the excellence of his character. We find from Mr. Hayley's *Life of Cowper*, that he had at one time, among his patients, that amiable and interesting poet, who speaks of Dr. Cotton's services, in a manner that forms a noble tribute to his memory. The letter in which this passage occurs, is dated July 4, 1765.

"I reckon it one instance of the Providence that has attended me throughout this whole event, that instead of being delivered into the hands of one of the London physicians, who were so much nearer that I wonder I was not, I was carried to Dr. Cotton. I was not only treated by him with the greatest tenderness while I was ill, and with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I could open my mind upon the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long neglected point, made it necessary, that while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it as in that which was more immediately his province. How many physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself, and it is well for me that he was so."

Mr. Hayley says, that Dr. Cotton was "a scholar and a poet, who added to many accomplishments, a peculiar sweetness of manners, in very advanced life," when Mr. Hayley had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him. In a subsequent part of his *Life of Cowper*, the latter, alluding to an inquiry respecting Dr. Cotton's works, pays the following compliment to his abilities—"I did not know that he had written any thing newer than his *Visions*: I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him as to be pious and sensible, and I believe, no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects, as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more, but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects, being connected in his mind, with the firm belief of an omnipotent agent."

To these testimonies, which can be corroborated by a perusal of his writings, little need be added. His writings are uniformly in favour of piety and benevolence, and his correspondence, from which many extracts are given in the late edition of his works, justifies the high respect in which he was held by his numerous friends. His prose pieces consist of reflections on some parts of Scripture, which he has entitled *Sermons*, and various *Essays on Health, Husbandry, Zeal, Marriage*, and other miscellaneous topics. One of these, entitled *Mirza to Selim*, (an imitation of *Lyttelton's Persian Letters*) is said to relate to the death of the rev. Robert Romney, D. D. vicar of St. Albans, which happened in 1743. When dying, this gentleman prophesied that his brother and heir would not long enjoy his inheritance, which proved true, as he died in June 1746.—Some of these *Essays* were probably written for the periodical journals, and others for the amusement of private friends.

His abilities as a poet demand no parade of criticism. He appears to have written with ease, and had a happy turn for decorating his reflections in familiar verse: but we find very little that is original, fanciful, or vigorous. He scarcely ever attempts imagery, or description, and no where rises beyond a certain level diction adapted to the class of readers, whom he was most anxious to please. Yet his Visions have been popular, and deserve to continue so. Every sensible and virtuous mind acquiesces in the truth and propriety of his moral reflections, and will love the poems for the sake of the writer.



THE
LIFE OF JOHN LOGAN.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

JOHN LOGAN was born about the beginning of the year 1747-8, at Soutra, in the parish of Fala, on the southern extremity of Mid-Lothian, where his father rented a small farm. He appears to have been taught the first rudiments of learning at the school of Musselburgh, near Edinburgh; and here, as well as at home, was zealously instructed in the principles of the Calvinistic system of religion, as professed by the Seceders, a species of dissenters from the established church of Scotland.

In 1762, he entered on the usual courses of study at the university of Edinburgh, where he made uncommon proficiency in the learned languages, but discovered no great inclination for mathematics or metaphysics, although he took care not to be so deficient in those branches as to incur any censure, or create any hindrance to his academical progress. His turn being originally to works of imagination, he found much that was congenial, in a course of lectures then read by professor John Stevenson, on Aristotle's Art of Poetry, and on Longinus; and while these directed his taste, he employed his leisure hours in acquiring a more perfect knowledge of Homer, whose beauties he relished with poetical enthusiasm. The writings of Milton, and other eminent poets of the English series, became likewise his favourite studies, and the discovery of Ossian's poems, which took place when he was at college, opened new sources of admiration and improvement.

At what time he began to imitate his favourite models, is doubtful, but as an inclination to write poetry is generally precipitate, it is probable that he had produced many of his lesser pieces while at the university: and he had the advice and encouragement of Dr. John Main, of Athelstoneford, a clergyman of classical taste, in pursuing a track which genius seemed to have pointed out. He had also acquired the friendship and patronage of lord Elibank, and of the celebrated Dr. Blair, who regarded him as a youth of promising talents, and unusual acumen in matters of criticism. By recommendation of Dr. Blair, he was, in 1768, received into the family of Sinclair, as private tutor to the present baronet of Ulbster, the editor of those statistical reports, which have done so much honour to the clerical character of Scotland.

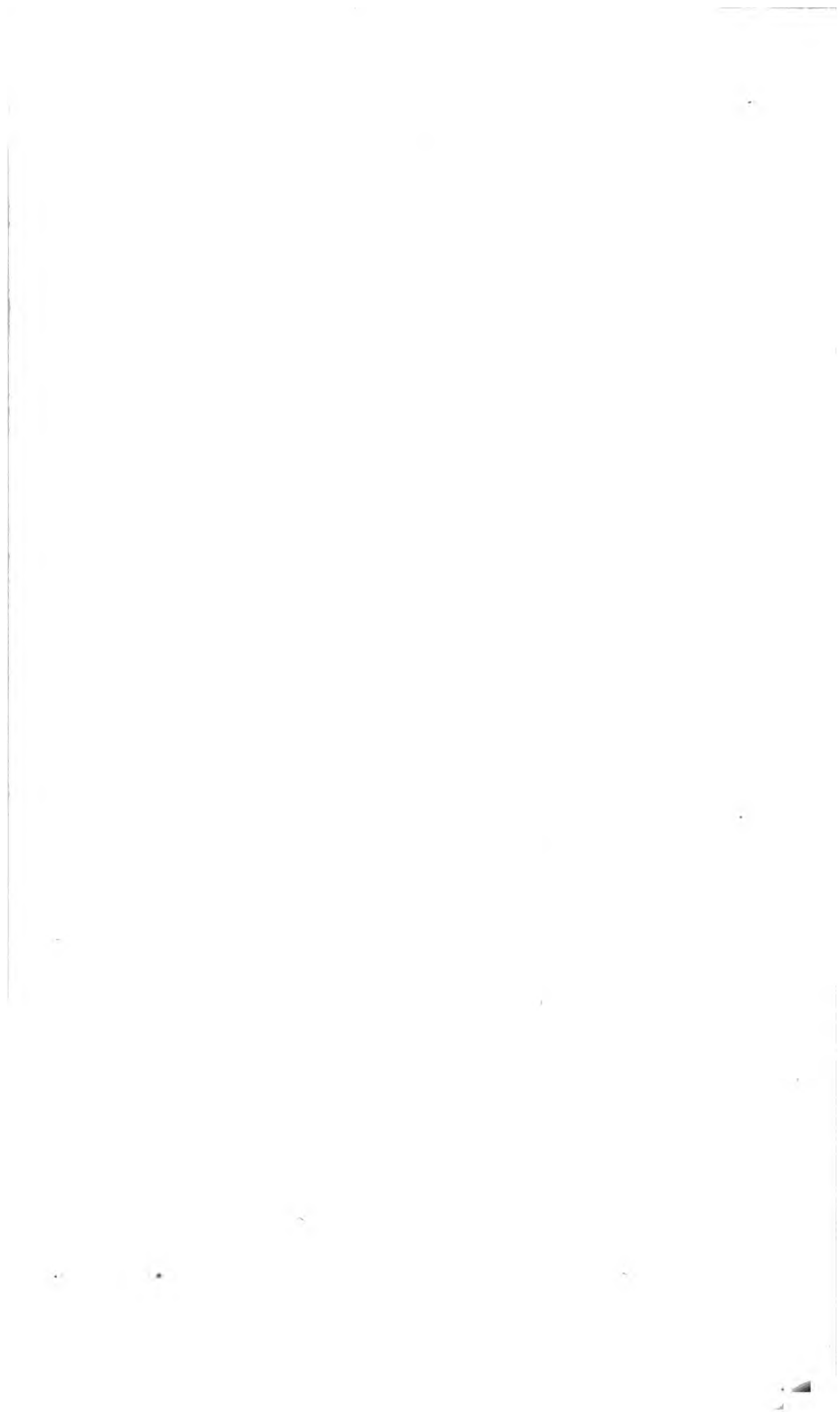
Here, however, Logan did not remain long, but returned to Edinburgh to attend the divinity lectures with a view of entering into the church. Either by reading, or by the company he kept, he had already overcome the scruples which inclined his parents to dissent, and determined to take orders in the establishment.

In 1770, he published a volume under the title of *Poems on several Occasions*, by Michael Bruce, a youth who died at the age of twenty-one, after exhibiting considerable talents for poetry. In this volume, however, Logan chose to insert several pieces of his own, without specifying them; a circumstance which has since given rise to a controversy between the respective friends of Bruce and Logan. Bruce's poems have been very recently published, for the benefit of his aged mother; but as his share seems yet undecided, it has not been thought proper to admit them into the present collection. Those, however, which have been attributed to Logan by his friend and executor Dr. Robertson, of Dalmany, are now added to his avowed productions.

In 1770, after going through the usual probationary periods, Logan was admitted a preacher, and in 1773 was invited to the pastoral charge at South Leith, which he accepted. His poems, which had been hitherto circulated only in private, or perhaps occasionally inserted in the literary journals, pointed him out as a proper person to assist in a scheme for revising the psalmody of the church. For this purpose, he was in 1775, appointed one of the committee ordered by the general assembly (the highest ecclesiastical authority in Scotland) and took a very active part in their proceedings, not only revising and improving some of the old versions, but adding others of his own composition. This collection of *Translations and Paraphrases*, was published in 1781, under the sanction of the general assembly.

About two years before this publication appeared, he had prepared a course of lectures on the Philosophy of History, and had on this occasion consulted Drs. Robertson, Blair, Carlisle, and other eminent men connected with the university of Edinburgh, who seemed liberally inclined to promote his success. The first request, however, which he had to make happened not to be within their power. He desired the use of a room in the college for the delivery of his lectures, but by the statutes no indulgence of that kind can be granted to persons teaching or lecturing on subjects for which regular professors are already appointed. He then hired a chapel, in which he delivered his first course of lectures in 1779-80, and his auditors, if not very numerous, were of that kind whose report was of great consequence to his fame. In his second course, he had a larger auditory, and attracted so much notice, that he entertained very sanguine hopes of being promoted to the professorship of history, which became vacant about this time.

Here, however, an obstacle presented itself which he had not foreseen, and which his friends could not remove. It had been the invariable practice of the patrons to present to this office a member of the faculty of advocates, and in the present instance their choice fell upon Mr. Frazer Tytler, since lord Woodhouselee, a gentleman whose talents, had talents been the criterion, must have excluded all competition.—Whether owing to this appointment, or to the decay of public curiosity, Logan's lectures were no longer encouraged; but in 1781, he published an analysis of them, entitled, *Elements of the Philosophy of History*, and soon after one entire lecture in the form of an *Essay on the Manners of Asia*. Both were favourably received, yet without those



decisive proofs of encouragement which could justify his publishing the whole course, as he probably intended.

In the same year appeared his volume of Poems, which were so eagerly bought up, that a second edition became necessary within a few months. Such popularity induced him to complete a tragedy which he had been for some time preparing, entitled *Ru-namede*, and founded upon the history of the great charter. This tragedy was accepted by the manager of Covent Garden theatre, but was interdicted by the licenser of the stage, as containing political allusions that were improper. It was printed, however, in 1783, and afterwards acted on the Edinburgh theatre, but met with no extraordinary applause either in the closet or on the stage. In this attempt, indeed, the author seems to have mistaken his talents. In Scotland, his biographer informs us, he had to encounter the general prejudices of that country against the interference of the clergy in theatrical concerns.

These disappointments, we are told, "preyed with pungent keenness upon a mind uncommonly susceptible." "His temper," it is added "was still further fretted by the umbrage which some of his parish had *unjustly* taken at his engaging in studies foreign to his profession, and which others, with more reason, had conceived on account of certain deviations from the propriety and decorum of his clerical character, though not a few of them were sufficiently liberal in their allowances for irregularities which could only be attributed to inequality of spirits and irritability of nerves."

This vindication is specious, but will not bear examination. There could surely be no great injustice in complaining of studies which diverted him from his profession, a profession which he had voluntarily chosen, and in which he was liberally settled; or of irregularities which unfitted him to perform its duties, and obliged him at last to compound for his inability or neglect by retiring upon a small annuity. Yet such was the case, and with this annuity, or with the promise of it, he came to London in 1786, and for some time subsisted by furnishing articles for the *English Review*, and perhaps other periodical publications. He wrote also a pamphlet, entitled *A Review of the principal Charges against Mr. Hastings*, which was a very able and eloquent vindication of that gentleman; and probably appeared in that light to the publick at large, for the publisher against whom the friends of the impeachment directed a prosecution, was acquitted by the verdict of a jury. This last consequence, Logan did not live to witness. His health had been for some time broken, and he died at his apartments in Marlborough-street, Dec. 28, 1788, in the fortieth year of his age.

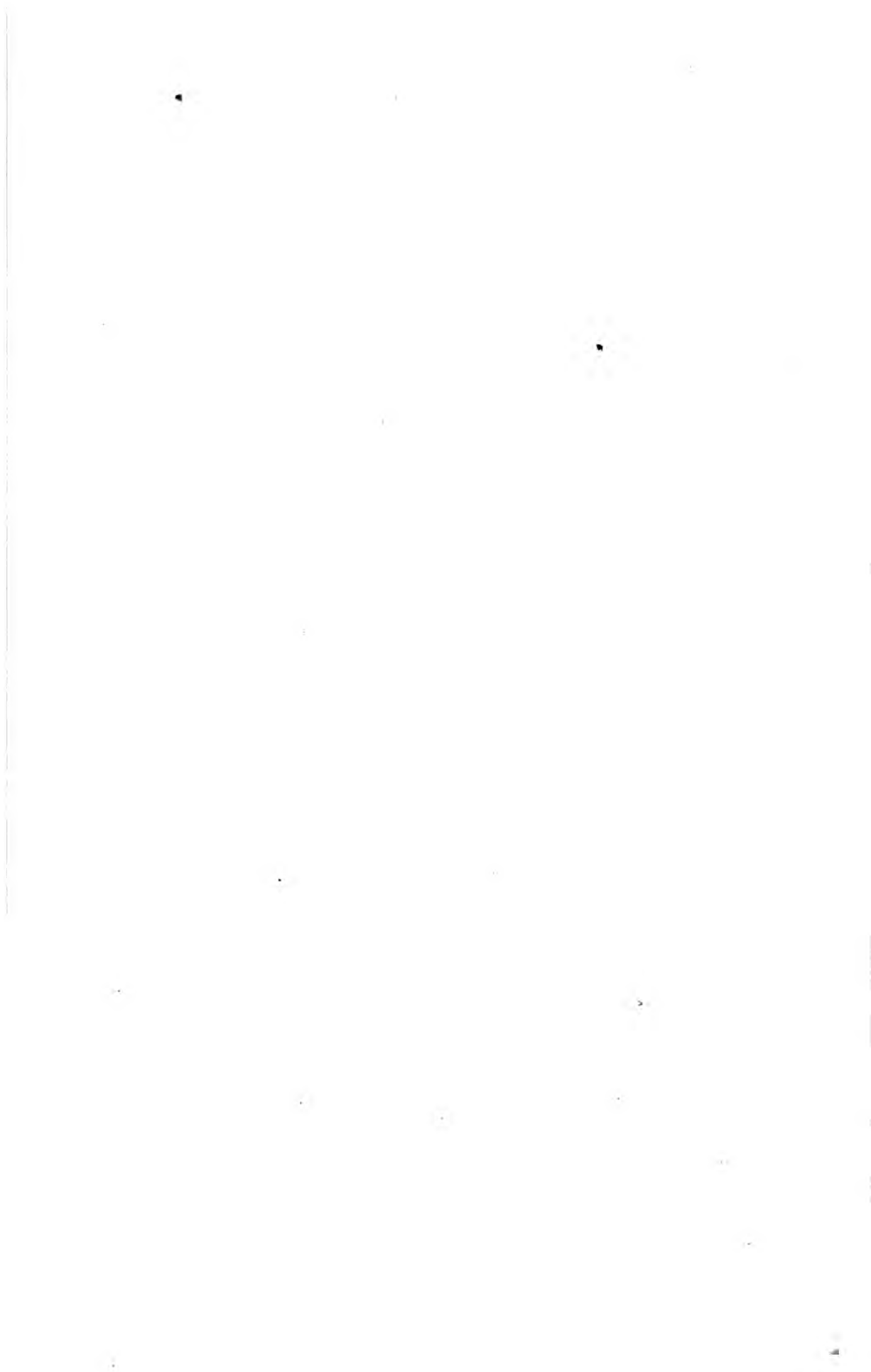
Notwithstanding his failings, it is with pleasure we copy the following passage from the *Life* prefixed to the late edition of his poems.

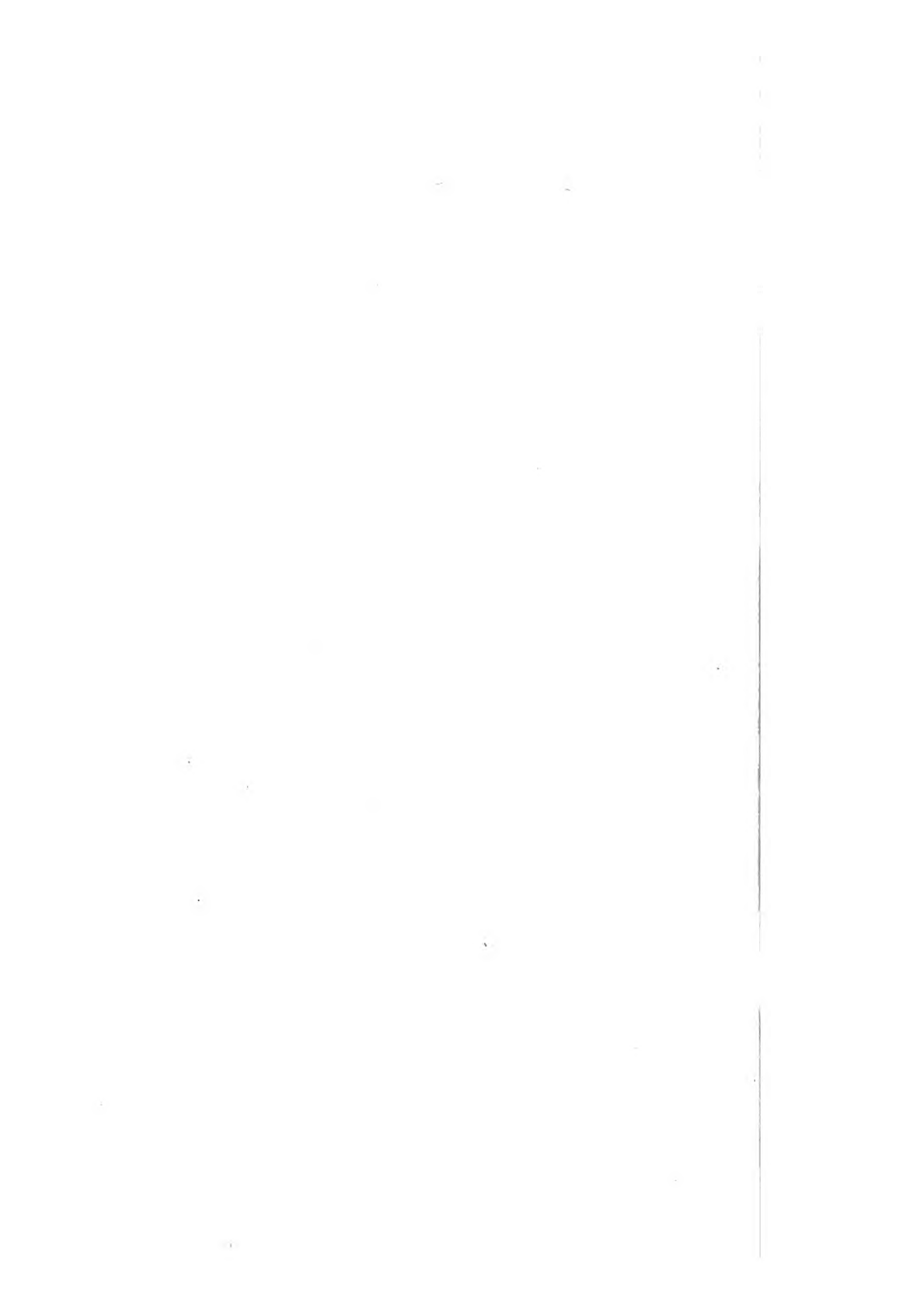
"The end of Logan, was truly Christian. When he became too weak to hold a book, he employed his time in hearing such young persons as visited him read the Scriptures. His conversation turned chiefly on serious subjects, and was most affecting and instructive. He foresaw and prepared for the approach of death, gave directions about his funeral with the utmost composure, and dictated a distinct and judicious will, appointing Dr. Donald Grant, and his ancient and steady friend Dr. Robertson, his executors, and bequeathing to them his property, books, and MSS. to be converted into money, for the payment of legacies to those relations and friends, who had the strongest claims upon his affectionate remembrance in his dying moments."

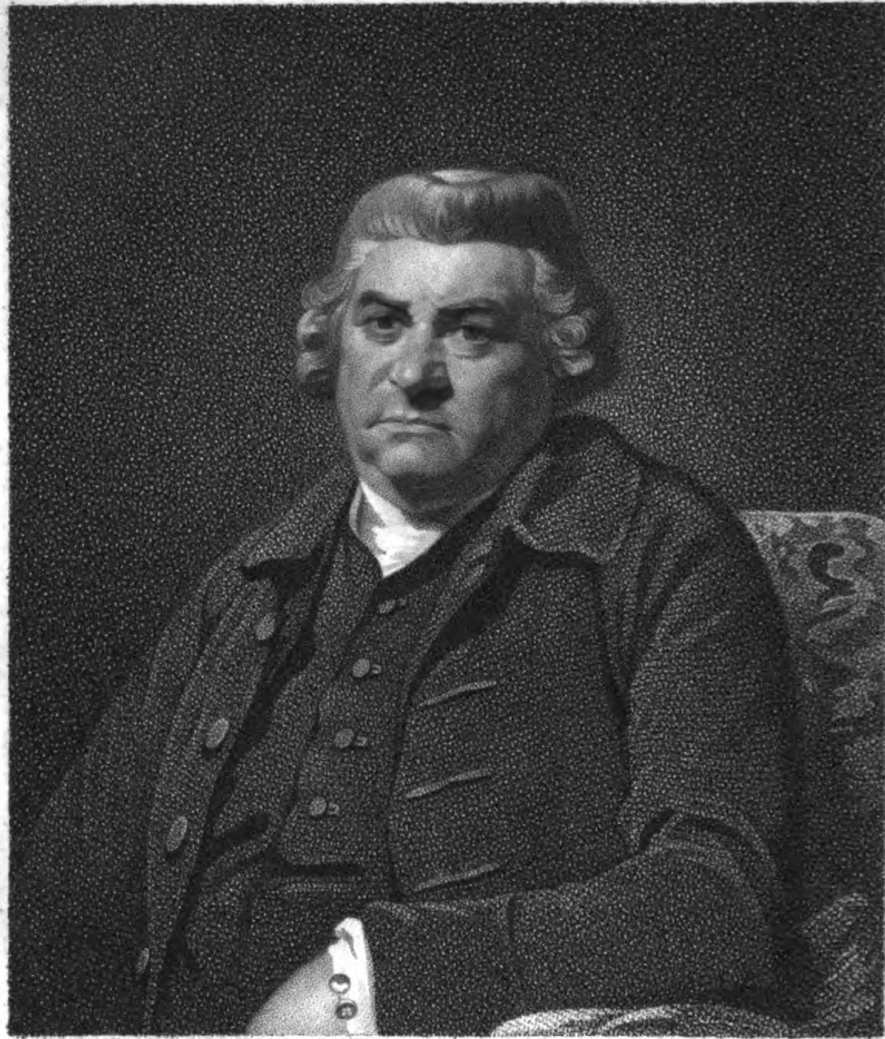
Dr. Robertson accordingly prepared a volume of his Sermons, which was published in 1790, and a second in the following year. They are in general elegant and perspicuous, but occasionally burst into passages of the declamatory kind, which, however, are perhaps not unsuitable to the warmth of pulpit oratory. They have been uncommonly successful, the fifth edition having made its appearance in 1807. He left several other manuscripts which were once intended for publication. Among these are his Lectures on History, and three or four tragedies.

In 1805, a new edition of his poems was published at Edinburgh and London, to which a Life is prefixed by an anonymous writer. From this the facts contained in the present more succinct sketch have been borrowed.

Logan deserves a very high rank among our minor poets. The chief character of his poetry is the pathetic, and it will not perhaps be easy to produce any pieces from the whole range of English poetry more exquisitely tender and pathetic than *The Braes of Yarrow—The Ode on the death of a young Lady, or A Visit to the Country in Autumn—The Lovers*, seems to assume a higher character; the opening lines, spoken by Harriet, rise to sublimity by noble gradations of terrour, and an accumulation of images which are, with peculiar felicity, made to vanish on the appearance of her lover. In the whole of Logan's poems, are passages of true poetic spirit and sensibility. With a fancy so various and regulated it is to be regretted, he did not more frequently cultivate his talents. The episode of *Levina*, among the pieces attributed to him, indicates powers that might have appeared to advantage in a regular poem of narration and description. His sacred pieces are allowed to be of the inferior kind, but they are inferior only as they are not original; he strives to throw an air of modern elegance over the simple language of the East, consecrated by use and devotional spirit; and he fails where Watts and others have failed before him, and where Cowper only has escaped without injury to his general character.







THE REV^d THOMAS WARTON.

*Engraved by W.^m Holl. from a Picture by
Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

THE
LIFE OF THOMAS WARTON, B. D.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

MR. WARTON was descended from an ancient and honourable family of Beverley, in Yorkshire. His father was fellow of Magdalene College, Oxford, poetry professor in that university, and afterwards vicar of Basingstoke, Hants, and Chobham, Surrey: He married Elizabeth, daughter of the late Joseph Richardson, rector of Dunsford, Surrey, and had by her three children: Joseph, the late head master of Winchester school; Thomas, the subject of this memoir, and Jane, a daughter, now living. He died in 1746, and is buried under the rails of the altar of his church at Basingstoke, with an inscription on a tablet near it, written by his sons. They afterwards published a volume of his poems, by subscription, chiefly with a view to pay the few debts he left behind, and supply his children with some assistance in the progress of their education. Whether the success of this volume was equal to their hopes, is uncertain, but the poems acquired no reputation.

Thomas was born at Basingstoke, in 1728, and from his earliest years discovered a fondness for reading, and a taste for poetry. In his ninth year, he sent to his sister the following translation from the Latin of Martial.

When bold Leander sought his distant fair,
(Nor could the sea a braver burthen bear)
Thus to the swelling waves he spoke his woe,
“ Drown me on my return—but spare me as I go.”

This curiosity is authenticated by the letter in which he sent it, still in the possession of his sister. It bears date “ from the school, Nov. 7, 1737.” His biographer, Mr. Mant, says, that he continued under the care of his father until his removal to Oxford, but I have been informed that he was placed for some time at Basingstoke school.

In March 1743, in his sixteenth year, he was admitted a commoner of Trinity College, and soon after was elected a scholar. How much he was ever attached to that college, his writings, and a residence of forty-seven years with very few intervals, sufficiently show. In 1745, he published five pastoral eclogues, which are now added to his other poems; they are authenticated by Mr. Isaac Reed's copy, purchased at his late sale. About the same time, he sent one or two articles to

Dodsley's Museum ¹, to which his brother was likewise a contributor; his next detached publication was *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, of which the first copy is now in my possession, and differs considerably, particularly in the introductory part, from that published in his collection of poems. On the appearance of Mason's *Isis*, reflecting on the loyalty of Oxford, which a foolish riot among some students had brought into question, Mr. Warton, encouraged by Dr. Huddesford, the president of Trinity, published in 1749, *The Triumph of Isis*, in which he retaliated on the sons of Cam in no very courtly strains. The poem, however, discovered beauties of a more unmixed kind, which pointed him out as a youth of great promise. It is remarkable, that although he omitted this piece in an edition of his poems printed in 1777, he restored it in that of 1779: this is said to have been done at Mason's suggestion, who was candid enough to own that it greatly excelled his own elegy, both in poetical imagery and correct flow of versification; but Mason appears to have forgot that his personal share in the contest was but trifling, and that it contained a libel on the university of Cambridge, which ought not to have been perpetuated.

In 1750, our author contributed a few small pieces to the *Student, or Oxford and Cambridge Miscellany*, then published by Newbery. Among these was the *Progress of Discontent*, which had been written in 1746, and was founded on a copy of Latin verses, a weekly exercise, much applauded by Dr. Huddesford, and at his desire, paraphrased into English verse. In this state Dr. Warton preferred it to any imitation of Swift he had ever seen. His talents were now generally acknowledged, and in 1747 and 1748, he held the office of poet laureate, conferred upon him according to an ancient practice in the common room of Trinity College. The duty of this office was to celebrate the lady chosen by the same authority, as the lady patroness, and Warton performed his task, on an appointed day, crowned with a wreath of laurel. The verses, which Mr. Mant says are still to be seen in the common room, are written in an elegant and flowing style, but have not been thought worthy of transcription.

In 1750, he took his master's degree, and in 1751 succeeded to a fellowship. In this last year he published his excellent satire, entitled *Newmarket; An Ode to Music*, performed at the theatre; and *Verses on the death of Frederick prince of Wales*, which he inserted in the Oxford collection, under the fictitious name of John Whetham, a practice not uncommon. In 1753 appeared at Edinburgh, *The Union, or Select Scots and English Poems*; Mr. Warton was the editor of this small volume, in which he inserted his *Triumph of Isis* and other pieces, particularly the *Ode on the approach of Summer*, and the *Pastoral in the manner of Spenser*, which is said to be written by a gentleman formerly of the university of Aberdeen. Why he should make use of such a deception, cannot now be discovered.

About the year 1754, he drew up from the Bodleian and Savilian statutes, a body of statutes for the Radcliffe library. In the same year, he published his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*, in one volume octavo, but afterwards enlarged and published in two volumes, 1762. By this work he not only established his character as an acute critic, but opened to the world at large that new and important field of

¹ These were, a song imitated from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a prose essay on Snuggles, written partly by him and partly by Dr. Vansittart. They are authenticated by Dr. Warton's autograph, in his copy of the *Museum penes me.* C.

criticism and illustration which has since been so ably cultivated by Steevens, Malone, Reed, Todd, and other commentators on our ancient poets.

Soon after the appearance of the Observations, it was attacked in an abusive pamphlet, entitled *The Observer Observed*, written by Huggins, the author of a very indifferent translation of *Aristotle*. Huggins had engaged Mr. Warton in this translation, but when he read what Warton asserted of the inferiority of *Aristotle* to Spenser, he immediately cancelled his share of the translation, and published this angry pamphlet². Mr. Warton, who was now in his thirty-sixth year, had employed fully half that time in an unwearied perusal of the old English poets, and such contemporary writers as could throw light on their obscurities. The Observations on Spenser must have evidently been the result of much industry, and various reading, aided by a happy memory.

Ariosto

In 1757, on the resignation of Mr. Hawkins, of Pembroke College, our author was elected professor of poetry, which office, according to the usual practice, he held for ten years. His lectures were elegant and original. The translations from the Greek anthologies, now a part of his collected poems, were first introduced in them, and his *Dissertatio de Poesi Bucolica Græcorum*, which he afterwards enlarged and prefixed to his edition of *Theocritus*, was also a part of the same course. During the publication of the *Idler*, he sent to Dr. Johnson, with whom he had long been intimate, numbers 33, 93, and 96, of that paper. His biographer, however, is mistaken in supposing that he contributed any paper to the *Connoisseur*. His being invited by Colman and Thornton to engage in a periodical publication, has no relation to the *Connoisseur*. It was Moore, the editor of the *World*, who projected a Magazine soon after the conclusion of that paper, and told the two Wartons, that "he wanted a dull plodding fellow of one of the universities, who understood Latin and Greek!" Mr. Bedingfield, one of Dodsley's poets, and Gataker, the surgeon, were to be concerned in this Magazine, but Moore's death prevented the execution of the scheme.

In 1760 he published, but without his name, *A Description of the City, College, and Cathedral of Winchester*, 12mo. From his own copy, in my possession, he appears to have been preparing a new edition about the year 1771, which was perhaps prevented by a *History of Winchester* published soon after in two volumes, a more showy work, but far more inaccurate. In the same year (1760) he published a piece of exquisite humour, entitled, *A Companion to the Guide*, and a *Guide to the Companion*, being a complete Supplement to all the accounts of Oxford hitherto published. This passed through three editions in a very short time, but for some years has been

² The following paragraph from Huggins' pamphlet, will be a sufficient specimen of the whole. "Sec. II. He (Warton) resumes the poisonous acrimony with which he charges his weapon, which he takes care shall be judiciously two-edged, lest it fail of slashing friend as well as foe. 'Although, (saith our observer) Spenser formed his *Faerie Queene*, upon the fanciful plan of *Ariosto*'—Poor Spenser! Wretched *Ariosto*!—And oh! most mighty Warton!—Let this suffice, for reply to all, he here advances, of falshood against *Ariosto*, which that poem totally confronts; such falshood, that were it truth, is insipid and immaterial: and let us pass the *Chronicles of the Seven Champions*, *Morte Arthur*, *sir Tristram*, the *Blatant Beast*, the *Questyn Beast*, which is afterwards more particularly described, with a bead roll of quotations, no less delectable than erudite, most appositely collected, to give not only a dignity, but also a magnitude to this important tome; that purchasers may be well supplied, for their disbursement of pence, either in their meditative fumigations, or at the Cloacinian offertory." C.

³ Wooll's *Life of Dr. Joseph Warton*. C.

ranked among scarce books ⁴. A more scarce work, however, is his *Inscriptionum Romanarum Metricarum Delectus*, 4to, which ought to have been noticed under the year 1758. The design of this collection was to present the reader with some of the best Roman epigrams and inscriptions, taken from the *Elegantiae antiquorum marmorum*, from Mazochius, Smetius, Gruterus, and other learned men. It contains, likewise, a few modern epigrams, one by Dr. Jortin, and five by himself, on the model of the antique, the whole illustrated with various readings and notes.

About the year 1760 he wrote, for the *Biographia Britannica*, the *Life of Sir Thomas Pope*, which he republished in 8vo 1772, and again in 1780, with very considerable additions and improvements: and in 1761, he published the *Life and Literary Remains of Dr. Bathurst*. In the same year, and in 1762, he contributed to the Oxford collections, verses on the royal marriage, and on the birth of the prince of Wales, and an ode entitled the *Complaint of Cherwell*, under the name of John Chichester, brother to the earl of Donegal ⁵. His next publication was the *Oxford Sausage, or Select Pieces*, written by the most celebrated Wits of the University of Oxford. The preface and several of the poems are undoubtedly his, and the latter are authenticated by his adding them afterwards to his avowed productions. In 1766, he superintended an edition from the Clarendon press of *Cephalus' Anthology*, to which he prefixed a very curious and learned preface. In this he announced his edition of *Theocritus*, which made its appearance in two volumes 4to, 1770, a most correct and splendid, although not absolutely faultless, work, that extended his fame to the continent.

In 1767 he took his degree of B. D. and in 1771 was elected a fellow of the *Antiquarian Society*: in October of the same year he was instituted to the small living of Kiddington, in Oxfordshire, on the presentation of George Henry, earl of Litchfield, then chancellor of the university, a nobleman whose memory he afterwards honoured by an epitaph.

In 1774 he published the first volume of his *History of English Poetry*, the most important of all his works, and to the completion of which the studies of his whole life appear to have been bent. How much it is to be regretted that he did not live to complete his plan, every student in ancient literature must be deeply sensible. He intended to have carried the history down to the commencement of the eighteenth century. A second volume accordingly appeared in 1778, and a third in 1781, after which he probably relaxed from his pursuit, as at the period of his death in 1790, a few sheets only of the fourth volume were printed, and no part left in a state for printing. His original intention was to have comprised the whole in two or three volumes, but it is now evident, and he probably soon became aware, that five would have scarcely been sufficient, if he continued to write on the same scale, and to deviate occasionally into notices of manners, laws, customs, &c. that had either a remote or an immediate connection with his principal subjects: what his reasons were for discontinuing his labours cannot now be ascertained. It is well known to every writer that a work of

⁴ A new edition was published in 1806, by Mr. Cooke of Oxford, with the original cuts. C.

⁵ This information is from Mr. Mant's life. Lord Donegal was, however, one of Mr. Warton's pupils, Shenstone had a visit from both at the Leasowes in the summer of 1758. *Shenstone's Letters*. On these great occasions of academical gratulations, our author sometimes wrote verses for those who could not write for themselves. C.



great magnitude requires temporary relaxation, or a change of employment, and may admit of both without injury: but he might probably find that it was now less easy to return with spirit to his *magnum opus*, than in the days of more vigour and activity. It is certain that he wished the public to think that he was making his usual progress, for in 1785, when he published Milton's Juvenile Poems, he announced the *speedy* publication of the fourth volume of the history, of which from that time to his death ten sheets only were finished. His brother, Dr. Joseph, was long supposed to be engaged in completing this fourth volume. In one of his letters lately published by Mr. Wooll, and dated 1792, he says, "At any leisure I get busied in finishing the last volume of Mr. Warton's History of Poetry, which I have engaged to do—for the booksellers are clamorous to have the book finished (though the ground I am to go over is so beaten) that it may be a complete work." Yet on his death in 1800 it did not appear that he had made any progress.

Mr. Warton's biographer has traced the origin of this work to Pope, who, according to Ruffhead, had sketched a plan of a history of poetry, dividing the poets into classes or schools, but Ruffhead's list of poets is grossly erroneous. Gray, however, Mr. Mason informs us, had meditated a history of English poetry, in which Mason was to assist him. Their design was to introduce specimens of the Provençal poetry, and of the Scaldic, British, and Saxon, as preliminary to what first deserved to be called English poetry, about the time of Chaucer, from whence their history, properly so called, was to commence. Gray, however, was deterred by the magnitude of the undertaking, and being informed that Warton was employed on a similar design, more readily relinquished his own.

Such is Mr. Mant's account, who adds (in p. cxxvi.) that Warton "judiciously preferred the plan on which he had proceeded, to that proposed by Pope, Gray and Mason." It appears to me, however, that Warton had made considerable progress on his own plan, before he knew any thing of Gray's, and that when he heard of the latter, and perhaps at the same time of its being relinquished, he thought proper, which he might then do without indelicacy, to apply to Gray through the medium of Dr. Hurd, requesting that he would communicate any fragments, or sketches of his design. Mr. Gray, in answer to this application, sent the following letter.

"SIR,

"15th April 1770, Pembroke Hall.

"Our friend Dr. Hurd having long ago desired me in your name to communicate any fragments, or sketches of a design I once had to give a history of English poetry, you may well think me rude or negligent, when you see me hesitating for so many months before I comply with your request, and yet (believe me) few of your friends have been better pleased than I to find this subject (surely neither unentertaining nor unuseful) had fallen into hands so likely to do it justice: few have felt a higher esteem for your talents, your taste and industry: in truth the only cause of my delay has been a sort of diffidence, that would not let me send you any thing so short, so slight, and so imperfect, as the few materials I had begun to collect, or the observations I had made on them. A sketch of the division and arrangement of the subjects, however, I venture to transcribe, and would wish to know whether it corresponds in any thing with your own plan, for I am told your first volume is already in the press.

“INTRODUCTION.—On the poetry of the *Galic* (or Celtic) nations, as far back as it can be traced.

“On that of the *Goths*: its introduction into these islands by the Saxons and Danes, and its duration. On the origin of rhyme among the Franks, the Saxons, and Provençaux: some account of the Latin rhyming poetry from its early origin down to the 15th century.

“P. 1.—On the school of Provence, which rose about the year 1100, and was soon followed by the French and Italians: their heroic poetry, or romances in verse, allegories, fabliaux, syrviertes, comedies, farces, canzoni, sonnets, balades, madrigals, sestines, &c. Of their imitators the *French*, and of the first *Italian* school (commonly called the *Sicilian*) about the year 1200, brought to perfection by Dante, Petrarch, Boccace, and others.

“State of poetry in England from the Conquest (1066) or rather from Henry II's time (1154) to the reign of Edward the 3rd (1327).

“P. 2.—On *Chaucer*, who first introduced the manner of the Provençaux, improved by the Italians, into our country; his character and merits at large; the different kinds in which he excelled. Gower, Occlave, Lydgate, Hawes, G. Douglas, Lindsay, Bellenden, Dunbar, &c.

“P. 3.—Second Italian school (of Ariosto, Tasso, &c.) an improvement on the first, occasioned by the revival of letters in the end of the 15th century. The lyric poetry of this and the former age introduced from Italy by lord Surrey, sir T. Wyatt, Bryan, lord Vaux, &c. in the beginning of the 16th century.

“*Spenser*, his character, subject of his poem allegoric and romantic, of Provencal invention: but his manner of creating it borrowed from the second Italian school. Drayton, Fairfax, Phin. Fletcher, Golding, Phaer, &c. this school ends in Milton.

“A *third Italian* school, full of conceit, begun in Q. Elizabeth's reign, continued under James, and Charles the first, by Donne, Crashaw, Cleveland, carried to its height by Cowley, and ends perhaps in Sprat.

“P. 4.—*School of France*, introduced after the Restoration. Waller, Dryden, Addison, Prior and Pope, which has continued down to our own times.

“You will observe that my idea was in some measure taken from a scribbled paper of *Pope*, of which (I believe) you have a copy. You will also see that I have excluded *dramatic* poetry entirely, which if you have taken in, it will at least double the bulk and labour of your book.”⁶ ———

Mr. Mant, very naturally desirous of accounting for Warton's having deviated from Gray's plan, transcribes a part of the preface to the history. Perhaps, however, the reader will be better pleased with Mr. Warton's answer to the above letter, which has never yet appeared, and is now transcribed from his own copy.

⁶ This letter concludes with requesting the favour of some attention to a foreign young gentleman, then entered of one of the colleges. Mr. Mant, who is indebted to the Gentleman's Magazine for the copy he has given, adds, “There seems no reason to doubt of its genuineness, though there may be to question who it was that had the power or right to communicate it.” How it came into the Magazine during Mr. Warton's life-time, I know not. The original, however, is now in my possession, with Warton's answer. C.

+ I gave it to Mrs Dr Burrey of Greenwich.

“ Sir,

“ I am infinitely obliged to you for the favour of your letter.

“ Your Plan for the *History of English Poetry* is admirably constructed, and much improved from an idea of Pope, which Mr. Mason obligingly sent me by application from our friend Dr. Hurd. I regret that a writer of your consummate taste should not have executed it.

“ Although I have not followed this plan, yet it is of great service to me, and throws much light on many of my periods, by giving connected views and details. I begin with such an introduction, or general dissertation, as you had intended: viz. on the Northern Poetry, with its introduction into England by the Danes and Saxons, and its duration. I then begin my *History* at the conquest, which I write chronologically in sections; and continue, as matter successively offers itself, in a series of regular annals, down to and beyond the Restoration. I think with you that dramatic poetry is detached from the idea of my work, that it requires a separate consideration, and will swell the size of my book beyond all bounds. One of my sections, a very large one, is entirely on *Chaucer*, and exactly fills your title of *Part Second*. In the course of my annals, I consider collaterally the poetry of different nations as influencing our own. What I have at present finished ends with the section on Chaucer, and will almost make my first volume: for I design two volumes in quarto. This first volume will soon be in the press. I should have said before, that although I proceed chronologically, yet I often stand still to give some general view, as perhaps of a *particular species* of poetry, &c. and even *anticipate* sometimes for this purpose. These *views* often form *one* section: yet are interwoven into the tenour of the work, without interrupting my historical series. In this respect, some of my sections have the effect of your *parts or divisions*—⁷.

“ I cannot take my leave without declaring, that my strongest incitement to prosecute the *History of English Poetry* is the pleasing hope of being approved by you; whose *true genius* I so justly venerate, and whose *genuine poetry* has ever given me such sincere pleasure. I am, sir, &c.”

“ Winchester College, April 20, 1770.”

It is almost needless to say that the progress of Warton's *History* afforded the highest gratification to every learned and elegant mind. Ritson, however, whose learning appears to have been dear to him only as it administered to his illiberality, attacked our author in a pamphlet, entitled *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry*, in a familiar Letter to the Author, 1782. In this, while he pointed out some real inaccuracies, for which he might have received the thanks of the historian, his chief object seems to have been to violate, by low scurrility and personal acrimony, every principle of liberal criticism, and of that decorous interchange of respect which men of learning, not otherwise acquainted, preserve between one another. What could have provoked all this can be known only to those who have dipped into a heart rendered callous by a contempt for every thing sacred and social.

⁷ This blank is filled up by a notice of the young foreigner recommended by Gray. C.

In 1777, Mr. Warton published a collection of his poems, but omitting some which had appeared before: a second edition followed in 1778, a third in 1779, and a fourth in 1789. The omissions in all these are now restored.

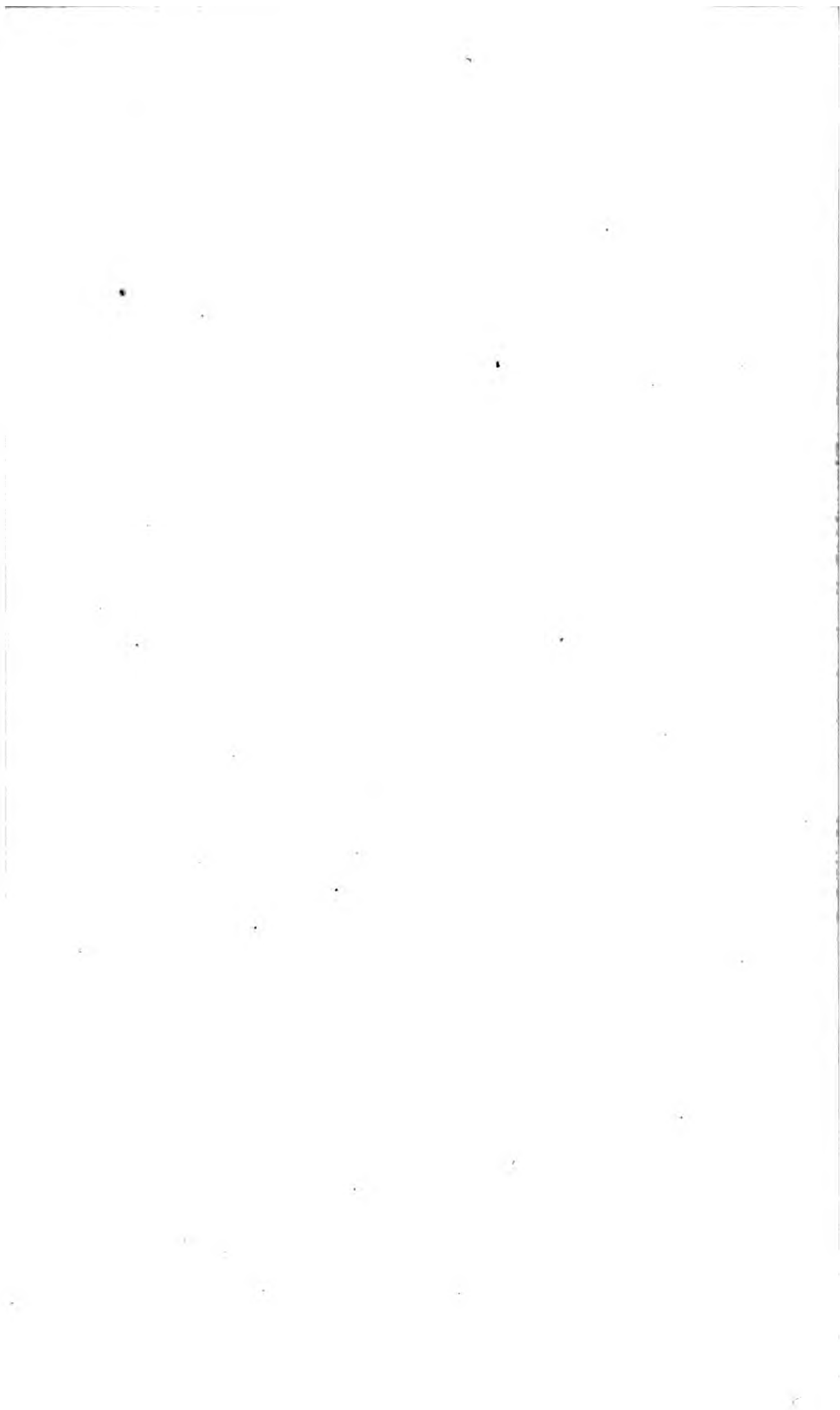
In 1781 he seems to have diverted his mind to a plan as arduous as his *History of Poetry*. He had been for some time making collections for a *Parochial History*, or as it is more usually called, a *County History of Oxfordshire*. As a specimen, he printed a few copies of the *History of the parish of Kiddington*, which were given to his friends, but in 1782 an edition was offered to the public. Topography had long formed one of his favourite studies, and the acuteness with which he had investigated the progress of ancient architecture⁸, gave him undoubtedly high claims to the honours of an antiquary, but as he stood pledged for the completion of his poetical history, it is to be regretted that he should have begun at this advanced period of life to indulge the prospect of an undertaking which he never could complete.

In 1782 he took an active part in the Chattertonian controversy, by publishing an *Enquiry into the authenticity of the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley*. He had already introduced the question into his history, and now more decidedly gave his opinion that these poems were the fabrication of Chatterton. The same year, he published his verses on sir Joshua Reynolds's painted window in New College chapel. This produced a letter to him from sir Joshua, in which, with a pardonable vanity, if it at all deserve that appellation, he expresses a wish that his name had appeared in the verses. In a second edition, Warton complied with a wish so flattering to himself by implying the duration of his poetry, and REYNOLDS was substituted for the word ARTIST.

In this year also he was presented by his college to the donative of Hill Farrance, in Somersetshire, and about the same time became a member of the Literary Club, composed of those friends of Dr. Johnson whose conversations form so interesting a part of his life by Boswell. In 1785, he was chosen Camden professor of history on the resignation of Dr. (now sir William) Scott. By the letters added to Wooll's life of his brother, we find that our author was making interest for the professorship of modern history in 1768, when Vivian was preferred. Warburton on this occasion sent him a letter, complimenting him on the heroic manner in which he bore his disappointment, and informing him, as a piece of consolation, that Vivian had an ulcer in his bladder, which was likely to prove fatal in a short time!—As Camden professor, he delivered an inaugural lecture, ingenious, learned, and full of promise, but, says his biographer, “he suffered the rostrum to grow cold while it was in his possession.”

The office of poet laureate was accepted by him this year, as it was offered at the express desire of his majesty, and he filled it with credit to himself and to the place. Whitehead, his immediate predecessor, had the misfortune to succeed Cibber, and could with difficulty make the public look seriously on the periodical labours of the laureate, yet by perseverance he contrived to restore some degree of respect to the office. Warton succeeded yet better by varying the accustomed modes of address, and by recalling the mind to gothic periods and splendid events. The facetious au-

⁸ In his *Observations on Spenser*; and since published, with other essays on the same subject, by Mr Taylor of Holborn, 1800. C.



thors, indeed, of the Probationary Odes, (a set of political satires) took some freedom with his name, but they seemed to be aware "that another Cibber would have suited their purpose better; and Warton, who possessed a large share of humour, and a quick sense of ridicule, was not to be offended because he had for once been "the occasion of wit in other men"."

His last publication was an edition of the Juvenile Poems of Milton, with notes, the object of which was "to explain his author's allusions, to illustrate or to vindicate his beauties, to point out his imitations, both of others and of himself, to elucidate his obsolete diction, and by the adduction and juxtaposition of parallels gleaned both from his poetry and prose, to ascertain his favourite words, and to show the peculiarities of his phraseology." The first edition of this work appeared in 1785, and the second in 1791, a short time after his death. It appears that he had prepared the alterations and additions for the press some time before. It was indeed ready for the press in 1789, and probably begun about that time, but was not completed until after his death, when the task of correcting the sheets devolved upon his brother. His intention was to extend his plan to a second volume, containing the Paradise Regained and Sampson Agonistes, and he left notes on both. He had the proof sheets of the first edition printed only on one side, which he carefully bound. They are now in my possession, and demonstrate what pains he took in avoiding errors, and altering expressions which appeared on a second review to be weak or improper. The second edition of Milton was enriched by Dr. Charles Burney's learned remarks on the Greek verses, and by some observations on the other poems by Warburton, which were communicated to the editor by Dr. Hurd. At the time of our author's death, a new edition of his poems was also preparing for publication.

His death was somewhat sudden. Until his sixty-second year, he enjoyed vigorous and uninterrupted health. On being seized with the gout, he went to Bath, from which he returned recovered, in his own opinion, but it was evident to his friends that his constitution had received a fatal shock. On Thursday, May 20, 1790, he passed the evening in the common room, and was for some time more cheerful than usual. Between ten and eleven o'clock he was suddenly seized with a paralytic stroke, and expired next day about two o'clock. On the 27th his remains were interred in the antechapel of Trinity College, with the highest academical honours; the ceremony being attended, not only by the members of his own college, but by the vice-chancellor, heads of houses, and proctors. His grave is marked by a plain inscription which enumerates his preferments, with his age, and the date of his death.

⁹ We have his brother's authority that "he always heartily joined in the laugh, and applauded the exquisite wit and humour that appeared in many of those original satires." Mr. Bowles's evidence may be cited as more impartial, and as affording the testimony of an excellent judge to the character of Warton. "I can say, being at that time a scholar of Trinity College, that the laureat, who did the greatest honour to his station from his real poetical abilities, did most heartily join in the laugh of the Probationary Odes: for a man more devoid of envy, anger, and ill-nature, never existed. So sweet was his temper, so remote from pedantry and all affectation was his conduct, that when even Ritson's scurrilous abuse came out, in which he asserted that his back was "*broad enough*, and his heart *hard enough*", to bear any thing Ritson could lay on it, he only said, with his usual smile, "*a black-letter'd dog, sir!*"—Bowles's Edition of Pope's Works, VI. 325. C.

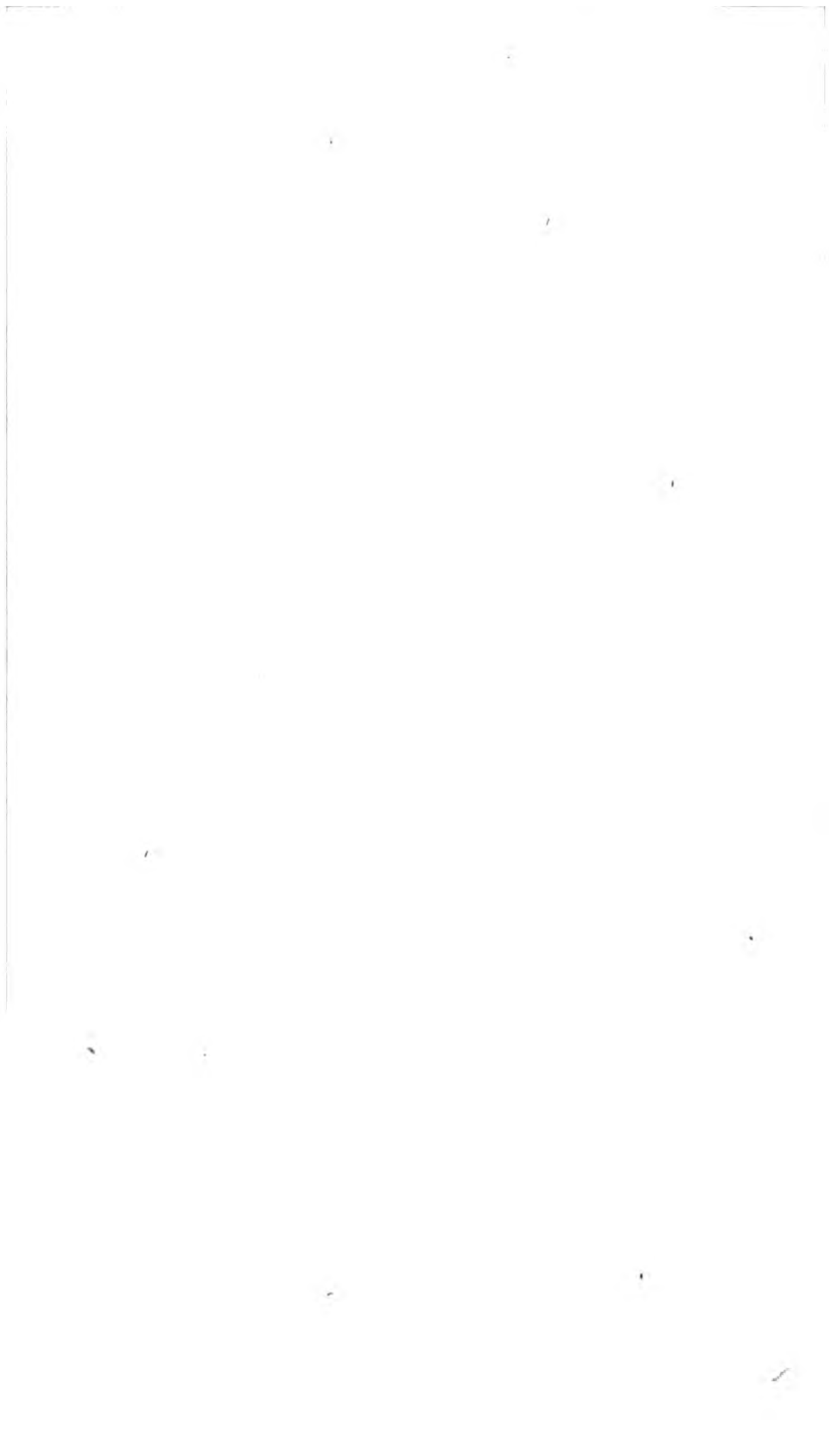
To these particulars, some of which have been taken from Mr. Mant's life of Warton, prefixed to an edition of his poems, published in 1802, it may now be added on another authority, that from April 1755 to April 1774, he served the curacy of Woodstock, except during the long vacations, and although his pulpit oratory does not appear to have ever entitled him to particular notice, many are still alive who speak of him with more regard and affection than of any person who ever officiated there¹⁰.

Mr. Warton's personal character has been drawn at great length by Mr. Mant, and seems to have no defects but what are incident to men who have passed their days in retirement from polished life. A few peculiarities are recorded which might perhaps have been omitted without injury to the portrait. Some of them seem to be given upon doubtful authority, and others are not strictly speaking characteristic, because not habitual, or, if habitual, are too insignificant for notice. It is of as little consequence to know that Mr. Warton smoked tobacco, as that Gibbon took snuff, and Johnson preserved the chips of oranges. It has been said, however, that Mr. Warton was a lover of low company, a more serious charge, if it could be substantiated. But what low company means is not always very obvious. It is not asserted that Warton disgraced his character by a constant association with low company, and that he should have occasionally amused himself with the manners and conversation of humble tradesmen, mechanics, or peasants, was surely no great crime in one whose researches imposed in some degree the necessity of studying mankind in all ranks, and who, in the illustration of our ancient poets, had evidently profited by becoming acquainted with the conversation of the modern vulgar.

In literary company he is said to have been rather silent, but this, his surviving friends can recollect, was only where the company consisted of a majority of strangers; and a man who has a reputation to guard will not lightly enter into conversation before he knows something of those with whom he is to converse. In the company of his friends, among whom he could reckon the learned, the polite, and the gay, no man was more communicative, more social in his habits and conversation, or descended more frequently from the grave interchange of sentiment, to a mere play of wit.

His temper was habitually calm. His disposition gentle, friendly, and forgiving. His resentments, where he could be supposed to have any, were expressed rather in the language of jocularly than anger. Mr. Mant has given as a report what it were to be wished he had omitted, that Dr. Johnson said of Warton, "he was the only man of genius that he knew without a heart." It is highly improbable that Johnson, who loved and practised truth and justice, should say this of one with whom he had exchanged so many acts of personal and literary friendship. It is to be regretted, indeed, that towards the end of Johnson's life, there was a coolness between him and the Wartons, but if it be true that he wept on the recollection of his past friendship, it is very unlikely that he would have characterised Mr. Warton in the manner reported. Whatever was the cause of the abatement of their intimacy, Mr. Warton discovered no resentment when he communicated so many pleasing anecdotes of Johnson to Mr. Boswell, nor when he came to discuss the merits of Milton in opposition to

¹⁰ Baldwin's Literary Journal, 1803, where are some other anecdotes and characteristics very honourable to Mr. Warton, and evidently written by one who knew him well. C.



the opinions of that eminent critic. Dr. Warton, indeed, as may be seen in his notes on Pope, mixed somewhat more asperity with his review of Johnson's sentiments.

Instances of Warton's tenderness of heart, affectionate regard for children, and general humanity, have been accumulated by all who knew him. Nor is this wonderful, for he knew nothing of one quality which ever keeps the heart shut. He had no avarice, no ambition to acquire the superiority which wealth is supposed to confer. For many years he lived on his maintenance from college, and from the profits of a small living, with the occasional fruits of his labour as a teacher or as a writer. It cannot be doubted that as he had been tutor to the son of the prime minister, (lord North) and to the sons of other persons of rank, he might reasonably have expected higher preferment. But it happens with preferment more generally than the world suspects, that what is not asked is not given. Warton had a mind above servile submission, yet he would have asked where asking is a matter of course, had not his contented indolence, or perhaps the dread of a refusal, induced him to sit down with the emoluments which cost neither trouble or anxiety. What he got by his writings could not be much. However excellent in themselves, they were not calculated for quick and extensive sale, and it is said he sold the copy-right of his History of Poetry for less than four hundred pounds.

In the exercise of his profession as a divine, Mr. Mant has not heard that he was much distinguished. He went through the routine of parochial duty in a respectful manner, but a hurried mode of speaking, partly owing to habit and partly to a natural impediment, prevented his being heard with advantage¹¹. It is a more serious objection, that he has, particularly in his notes on Milton, expressed opinions on religious topics, the consequence of which he had not deliberately considered. He hated Puritans and Calvinists, but does not seem to have understood very clearly that his own church, and every pure church, has many doctrines in common with them. His opinions on psalmody, and on the observation of Sunday, are particularly objectionable.

As a contributor to the literature of his country few men stand higher than Warton. He was the first who taught the true method of acquiring a taste for the excellencies of our ancient poets, and of rescuing their writings from obscurity and oblivion. In this respect he is the father of the school of commentators, and if some have, in certain instances, excelled their master, they ought to recollect to whom they are indebted for directing them to the paths of research. Of Warton it may be said as of Addison, "He is now despised by some who perhaps would never have seen his defects, but by the lights which he afforded them." His erudition was extensive, and his industry must have been at one time incessant. The references in his History of Poetry only, indicate a course of various reading, collation and transcription, to which the common life of man seems insufficient. He was one of those scholars who have happily rescued the study of antiquities from the reproaches of the frivolous or indolent. Amidst the most rugged tracks of ancient lore, he produces cultivated spots, flowery paths, and gay prospects. Many of the digressions that have been censured in his history, appear to have been contrived for this purpose, and the relief which his own mind demanded, he thought would not be unacceptable to his fellow-travellers.

¹¹ Two sermons which he preached repeatedly are in my possession, but neither written by himself. One is a printed sermon for the Martyrdom, curiously abridged: the other is in an old hand, probably his father's. C.

To the industry which he employed in all his literary undertakings, there can be no doubt he was indebted for much of that placid temper and contentment which distinguished him as a resident member of the university. The miseries of indolence are known only to those who have no regular pursuit, nothing in view, however easy or arduous, nothing by which time may be shortened by occupation, and occupation rendered easy by habit. To all this waste of time and talent, Warton was a stranger. During the long vacation, indeed, he generally resided with his brother at Winchester, but even this was a change of place rather than of occupation. There he found libraries, scholars and critics, and could still indulge his delight in "cloysters pale," "the tapered choir," and "sequestered isles of the deep dome;" and there as well as at home, he continued his researches, and enjoyed solitude or society in such proportions as suited his immediate inclination.

Yet as he pursued an untried path, and was the founder of his own studies, it cannot be a matter of great surprise, if he failed in conducting them with due method. To this it was owing that the emendations and additions to his first and second volumes are so numerous as to have been made the ground of a serious charge against his diligence and accuracy. But had he lived to complete the work, he could have no doubt offered such excuses as must have been readily accepted by every reflecting mind. If we admit the magnitude of the undertaking, which evidently exceeded his own idea when he fondly hoped that it might have been finished in two or three volumes; if we consider the vast number of books he had to consult for matters apparently trifling, but really important; that he had the duties of a clergyman and tutor to perform while engaged in this work, and above all, that his friends were assisting him, often too late, with additional illustrations or references, it will not appear highly censurable that he dismissed his volumes capable of improvement. From his own copy of the first volume of his History, and of his edition of Milton, both now before me, it appears that he corrected with fastidious care, and was extremely anxious to render his style what we now find it, perspicuous, vigorous, and occasionally ornamented. His corrections, however, are often written in an indistinct hand, and this perhaps occasioned fresh errors which he had not an opportunity to correct. He had not found out the secret, which appears to be yet a secret to most writers, the danger and inconvenience of sending unfinished works to the press. This was not the practice of our eminent historians. Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon completed every line of their volumes before they began to print. But whoever attempts to feed the press from day to day, will soon find his stores exhausted, and himself obliged to furnish a hasty, crude copy, which, if he is afterwards ashamed of it, he finds it too late to withdraw, and not very easy to mend.—With all its faults, however, this history will ever remain a monument of learning, taste, and judgment, such as few men in any nation have been able to produce.

His poetry, as well as that of his brother, has been the occasion of some difference of opinion among the critics, and the school of Warton, as it is called, has not of late been always mentioned with the respect it deserves. Among the characteristics of our author's poetry, however, his style may be considered as manly and energetic, but seldom varied by the graces of simplicity. His habits of thought led him to commence all his poems in a style pompous and swelling: his ideas often ran on the imaginary



days of gothic grandeur, and mighty achievement; and where such subjects were to be treated, as in his *Triumph of Isis*, and in his *Laureat Odes*, no man could have clothed them in language more appropriate.

The *Triumph of Isis* was written in his twenty-first year, and exhibits the same beauties and faults which are to be found in his mature productions. Among these last, is a redundancy of epithet, which is more frequently a proof of labour than of taste. The *Pleasures of Melancholy* appears to me to be a more genuine specimen of early talent. He was only in his seventeenth year, when his mind was so richly stored with striking and elegant imagery.

In general, he seems to have taken Milton for his model, and throughout his poems we find expressions borrowed with as much freedom from Milton, as he has proved that Milton borrowed from others. One piece only, *Newmarket*, is an imitation of Pope, and is certainly one of the finest satires in our language. In this he has not only adopted the versification of Pope, and emulated his wit and point, but many of his lines are parodies on what he recollected in Pope's *Satires*. This freedom of borrowing, however, seems so generally allowed, that it can form no higher objection against Warton, than against Pope, Gray, and others of acknowledged eminence. We cannot be surprised that the memory of such a student as Warton, should be familiar with the choicest language of poetry, and that he should often adopt it unconscious of its being the property of another.

The frequent use of alliteration is a more striking defect. It is wonderful, that he who had an ear for music, could tolerate such lines as

Issues to clothe in gladsome glist'ring green
The genial globe—

or,

The due clock swinging slow with sweepy swing,

which, by the way, is a parody on a more expressive line,

Swinging slow with sullen roar.

These however are strictures which ought not to interfere with the general merit of Warton, as a poet of original genius. His descriptive pieces, had he written nothing else, would have proved his claim to that title. Nothing can be more natural, just, or delightful, than his pictures of rural life. The *first of April*, and the *Approach of Summer*, have seldom been rivalled, and cannot perhaps be excelled. The only objection which some critics have started is, that his descriptions are not varied by reflection. He gives an exquisite landscape, but does not always express the feelings it creates. His brother, speaking of Thomson, observes, that the unexpected insertion of reflections, "imparts to us the same pleasure that we feel, when, in wandering through a wilderness or grove, we suddenly behold in the turning of the walk a statue of some Virtue or Muse." Yet in Warton's descriptive poetry, it is no small merit to have produced so much effect, so many exquisite pictures without this aid.

The *Suicide* perhaps deserves a yet higher character, rising to the sublime by gradations which speak to every imagination. It has indeed been objected that it is imperfect, and too allegorical. It appeals, however, so forcibly to the heart, awakens so many important reflections, and contains so happy a mixture of terrour and consolation, that it seems difficult to lay it down without unmixed admiration. The *Crusade*

and the Grave of Arthur, are likewise specimens of genuine poetical taste, acting on materials that are difficult to manage. Both in invention and execution, these odes may rank among the finest of their species in our language.

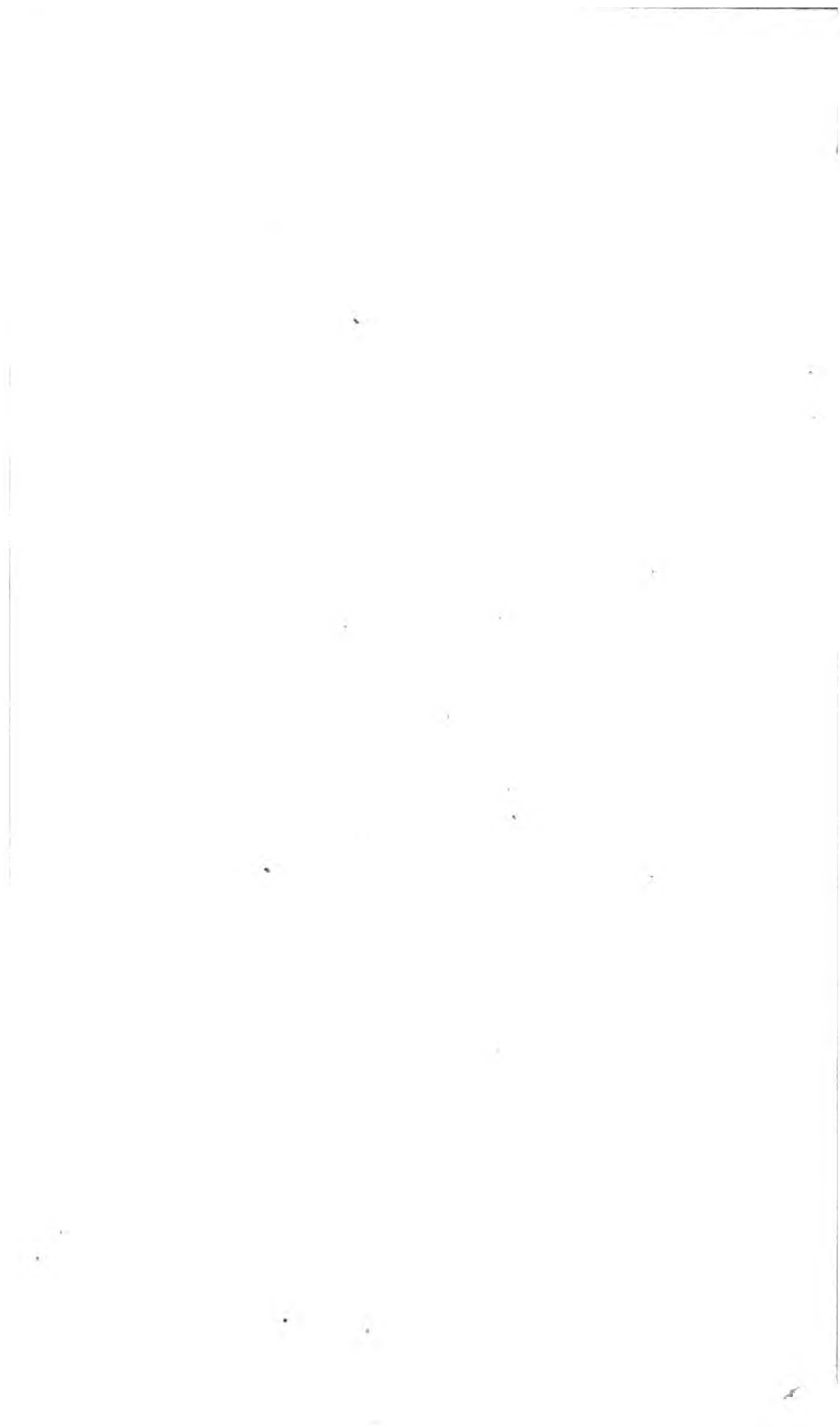
Warton has afforded many proofs of an exquisite relish for humour in his Panegyric on Oxford Ale, the Progress of Discontent, and other pieces classed under that denomination. His success in these productions leads once more to the remark that few men have combined so many qualities of mind, a taste for the sublime and the pathetic, the gay and humorous, the pursuits of the antiquary, and the pleasures of amusement, the labours of research, and the play of imagination.

Upon the whole, it may be allowed, that as a poet, he is original, various and elegant, but that in most of his pieces he discovers the taste that results from a studied train of thought, rather than the wild and enraptured strains that arise from passion, inspired on the moment, ungovernable in their progress, and grand even in their wanderings. Still he deserves to be classed among the revivers of genuine poetry, by preferring "fiction and fancy, picturesque description and romantic imagery," to "wit and elegance, sentiment and satire, sparkling couplets, and pointed periods"¹².

¹² Preface to Milton's Poems. C.



REV^d THOMAS WARTON.





THE
LIFE OF DR. JOSEPH WARTON,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

DR. JOSEPH WARTON was born at the house of his maternal grandfather, the rev. Joseph Richardson, rector of Dunsford, in the year 1722. Except for a very short time that he was at New College school, he was educated by his father until he arrived at his fourteenth year. He was then admitted on the foundation of Winchester College, under the care of the present venerable Dr. Sandby, at that time the head of the school, and now chancellor of Norwich.

He had not been long at this excellent seminary before he exhibited considerable intellectual powers, and a laudable ambition to outstrip the common process of education. Collins, the poet, was one of his school-fellows, and in conjunction with him and another boy, young Warton sent three poetical pieces to the Gentleman's Magazine, of such merit as to be highly praised in that miscellany, but not, as his biographer supposes, by Dr. Johnson. A letter also to his sister, which Mr. Woolf has printed, exhibits very extraordinary proofs of fancy and observation in one so young.

In September 1740, being superannuated according to the laws of the school, he was removed from Winchester, and having no opportunity of a vacancy at New College, he went to Oriel. Here he applied to his studies, not only with diligence, but with that true taste for what is valuable, which rendered the finer discriminations of criticism habitual to his mind. During his leisure hours he completed several of his poems, among which his biographer enumerates the *Enthusiast*, or the *Lover of Nature*, the *Dying Indian*, and a prose satire entitled *Ranelagh House*. He appears likewise to have sketched an allegorical work of a more elaborate kind, which he did not find time or inclination to complete. On taking his bachelor's degree in 1744, he was ordained to his father's curacy at Basingstoke, and officiated in that church till February 1746: he next removed to the duty of Chelsea, whence, in order to complete his recovery from the small pox, he went to Chobham.

About this time he had become a correspondent in Dodsley's *Museum*, to which he contributed, as appears by his copy of that work now before me, *Superstition*, an ode, dated Chelsea, April 1746, and Stanzas written on taking the air after a long illness. In the preceding year, as noticed in his brother's life, he published by subscription, a

volume of his father's poems, partly to do honour to his memory, but principally with the laudable purpose of paying what debts he left behind him, and of raising a little fund for himself and family. Whether this scheme answered his full expectations is uncertain, but he appears to have been encouraged by some of his father's opulent friends, and probably was no loser. The correspondence Mr. Wooll has published, shows with what prudence the two brothers husbanded their scanty provision, and with what affection they endeavoured to support and cheer each other while at school and college.

Owing to some disagreement with the parishioners of Chelsea, which had taken place before he left that curacy, he accepted the duty of Chawton and Droxford, but after a few months returned to Basingstoke. In 1747-8 he was presented by the duke of Bolton to the rectory of Winslade, and as this, although a living of small produce, was probably considered by him as the earnest of more valuable preferment, he immediately married Miss Daman, of that neighbourhood, to whom, his biographer informs us, he had been some time enthusiastically attached. In 1747, according to Mr. Wooll's account, he had published a volume of odes, in conjunction with Collins, but on consulting the literary registers of the time, it appears that each published a volume of poems in 1746, and in the same month. It cannot now be ascertained what degree of fame accrued to our author from this volume, but in the preface we find him avowing those sentiments on the nature of genuine poetry which he expanded more at large afterwards, and which were the foundation of what has since been termed "the school of the Wartons."

"The public," he says, "has been so much accustomed of late to didactic poetry alone, and essays on moral subjects, that any work, where the imagination is much indulged, will perhaps not be relished or regarded. The author therefore of these pieces is in some pain, lest certain austere critics should think them too fanciful or descriptive. But as he is convinced that the fashion of moralizing in verse has been carried too far, and as he looks upon invention and imagination to be the chief faculties of a poet, so he will be happy, if the following Odes may be looked upon as an attempt to bring back poetry into its right channel."—In 1749 he published his ode to Mr. West.

In 1751, his patron the duke of Bolton invited him to be his companion in a tour to the south of France¹. For this, Mr. Wooll informs us, he had two motives, "the society of a man of learning and taste, and the *accommodation* of a protestant clergyman, who, immediately on the death of his dutchess, then in a confirmed dropsy, could marry him to the lady with whom he lived, and who was universally known and distinguished by the name of Polly Peachum."

Whichever of these motives predominated in the duke's mind, it is much to be regretted that our author so far forgot what was due to his character and profession as to accept the offer. But if any circumstance besides the consciousness of doing wrong,

¹ "On this occasion his brother wrote that beautiful Ode sent to a Friend on leaving a favourite Village in Hampshire; which alone, in my opinion, would place him in the higher order of poets: and which is one of the most exquisite descriptive pieces in the whole body of English poetry. Every line paints, with the nicest and most discriminative touches, the scenery about Wynslade and Hackwood." Brydges' *Censura Literaria*, vol. 5. 178. C.

could embitter the remembrance of this solitary blemish in his public life, it was, that, after all, the only hopes which could justify his compliance were very ungraciously disappointed. For some reason or other, he was obliged to leave his patron, and come to England before the dutchess died, and when that event took place, and he solicited permission to return to the duke, he had the mortification to learn that the ceremony had been performed by Mr. Devisme, chaplain to the embassy at Turin.

Soon after his return to England, he published his edition of Virgil in English and Latin, the *Æneid* translated by Pitt, and the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* by himself, who also contributed the notes on the whole. Into this publication, he introduced Warburton's Dissertation on the sixth *Æneid*: a commentary on the character of Iapis by Atterbury, and on the shield of *Æneas* by Whitehead, the laureat, originally published in Dodsley's Museum; and three Essays on Pastoral, Didactic and Epic Poetry written by himself. Much of this valuable work, begun in 1748-9, was printed when he was abroad, and the whole completed in 1753. It is unnecessary to add that his share in the translation, his notes, and especially his *Essays*, raised him to a very high reputation among the scholars and critics of his age. The second edition, which appeared a few years after, was much improved. In addition to the other honours which resulted from this display of classical taste, the university of Oxford conferred upon him the degree of master of arts, by diploma, dated June 23, 1759. Such is Mr. Wooll's account, but it is evident from the date that his *Essay* likewise preceded this just mark of esteem.

During the year 1753, he was invited to assist in the *Adventurer*, which was begun by Hawkesworth, in 1752. The invitation came from his friend Dr. Johnson, who informed him that the literary partners wished to assign to him the province of criticism.

His contributions to the *Adventurer* amount to twenty-four papers. Of these a few are of the humourous cast, but the greater part consist of elegant criticism, not that of cold sagacity, but warm from the heart, and powerfully addressed to the finer feelings as well as to the judgment. His critical papers on Lear have never been exceeded for just taste and discrimination. His disposition lay in selecting, and illustrating those beauties of ancient and modern poetry, which, like the beauties of nature, strike and please many who are yet incapable of describing or analysing them. No. 101, on the blemishes in the *Paradise Lost*, is an example of the delicacy and impartiality with which writings of established fame ought to be examined. His observations on the *Odyssey*, in Nos. 75, 80, and 83, are original and judicious, but it may be doubted whether they have detached many scholars from the accustomed preference given to the *Iliad*. If any objection may be made to Dr. Warton's critical papers, it is that his Greek occurs too frequently in a work intended for domestic instruction. His style is always pure and perspicuous, but sometimes it may be discovered, without any other information, that "he kept company with Dr. Johnson." The first part of No. 139, if found detached, might have been attributed to that writer. It has all his manner; not merely "the contorsions of the sybil" but somewhat of the "inspiration?"

² I hope I shall be excused for transcribing this character of Dr. Warton's *Adventurers*, written when the subject was fresh in memory, for the *British Essayist*, vol. xxiii. pref. p. xxxix. C.

About this time he appears to have meditated a history of the revival of literature. His first intention was to publish Select Epistles of Politian, Erasmus, Grotius and others, with notes, but after some correspondence with his brother, who was to assist in the undertaking, it was laid aside, a circumstance much to be lamented, as few men were more extensively acquainted with literary history, or could have detailed it in a more pleasing form. At a subsequent period he again sketched a plan of nearly the same kind, which was likewise abandoned. Collins, some time before this, had published proposals for a History of the Revival of Learning, with a Life of Leo the Tenth, but probably no part was executed, or could indeed be reasonably expected from one of his unhappy state of mind.

In 1754, our author was instituted to the living of Tunworth, on the presentation of the Jervoise family³; and in 1755, on the resignation of the rev. Samuel Speed, he was elected second master of Winchester-school, with the management and advantages of a boarding house. In the following year, sir George Lyttelton, then advanced to the peerage, commenced the patronage of his nobility by bestowing a scarf on Mr. Warton. He had for some time enjoyed the familiar acquaintance of sir George, and assisted him in the revisal of his history of Henry II.

Amidst all these honours and employments, he now found leisure to complete the first volume of his celebrated Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, which he dedicated to Dr. Young, but did not subscribe his name. Dodsley likewise, although the real publisher, thought proper to employ his deputy Mrs. Cooper on this occasion. The following passage from one of Dodsley's letters published by Mr. Wooll, will probably throw some light on his motive. "Your Essay is published, the price 5s. bound. I gave Mrs. Cooper directions about advertising, and have sent it to her this afternoon, to desire she will look after its being inserted in the evening papers. I have a pleasure in telling you that it is liked in general, and particularly by such as you would wish should like it. But you have surely not kept your secret: Johnson mentioned it to Mr. Hitch as yours.—Dr. Birch mentioned it to Garrick as yours.—And Dr. Akenside mentioned it as yours to me.—And many whom I cannot now think on have asked for it as yours or your brother's. I have sold many of them in my own shop, and have dispersed and pushed it as much as I can: and *have said more than I could have said if my name had been to it.*" The objections made to this admirable piece of criticism will be considered hereafter. In the mean time, they were powerful enough to damp the ardour of the essayist, who left his work in an imperfect state for the long space of twenty-six years.

In May 1766, he was advanced to the head mastership of Winchester school, a situation for which he was eminently qualified, and in which his shining abilities, urbanity of manners, and eminent success in producing scholars of distinguished talents, will be long and affectionately remembered. In consequence of this promotion he once more visited Oxford, and proceeded to the degree of bachelor and doctor in divinity. In 1772, he lost the wife of his early affection, by whom he had six children. The stroke was severe, but the necessity of providing a substitute for his children, and an intelligent and tender companion for himself, induced him in the

³ About this time he sent some of his juvenile pieces to Dodsley's Collection of Poems. C.

following year to marry Miss Nicholas, daughter of Robert Nicholas, esq. a descendant of Dr. Nicholas, formerly warden of Winchester.

The tenour of his life was now even. During such times, as he could spare from the school, and especially on the return of the Christmas vacation, he visited his friends in London, among whom were the whole of that class who composed Dr. Johnson's literary club, with some persons of rank by whom he was highly respected, but who appear to have remembered their old master in every thing but promotion. In 1782, he was indebted to his friend and correspondent Dr. Lowth, bishop of London, for a prebend of St. Paul's, and the living of Thorley in Hertfordshire, which, after some arrangements, he exchanged for Wickham. This year also he published his second and concluding volume of the *Essay on Pope*, and a new edition, with some alterations, of the first.

In 1788, through the interest of lord Shannon, he obtained a prebend in Winchester cathedral, and through that of lord Malmesbury, the rectory of Easton, which, within the year, he was permitted to exchange for Upham. The amount of these preferments was considerable, but surely not beyond his merit, and it must be observed, they came late when his family could no longer expect the advantages of early income and economy. He was sixty years of age before he had any benefice, except the small livings of Wynslade and Tunworth, and nearly seventy before he enjoyed the remainder. The unequal distribution of ecclesiastic preferments would be a subject too delicate for discussion, if they were uniformly the rewards of ecclesiastical services, but as, among other reasons, they are bestowed on account of literary attainments, we may be allowed to wonder that Dr. Warton was not remunerated in an early period of life, when he stood almost at the head of English scholars, and when his talents, in their full vigour, would have dignified the highest stations.

In the year 1793, he came to a resolution to resign the mastership of Winchester. He was now beginning to feel that his time of life required more ease and relaxation than the duties of the school permitted, and his resolution was probably strengthened by some unpleasant proceedings at that period among the scholars. Accordingly he gave in his resignation on the twenty-third of July, and retired to his rectory at Wickham. A vote of thanks followed from the wardens, &c. of the school, for the encouragement he had given to genius and industry, the attention he had paid to the introduction of a correct taste in composition and classical learning, and the many and various services which he had conferred on the Wiccamical societies through the long course of years in which he filled the places of second and head master. These were not words of course, but truly felt by the addressers, although they form a very inadequate character of him as master.

During his retirement at Wickham, he was induced by a liberal offer from the booksellers of London, and more probably, by his love for the task, to superintend a new edition of Pope's Works, which he completed in 1797, in nine volumes octavo. That this was the most complete and best illustrated edition of Pope was generally allowed, but it had to contend with objections, some of which were not urged with the respect due to the veteran critic who had done so much to reform and refine the taste of his age. It was proper to object that he had introduced one or two pieces which ought never to have been published, but it was not so proper or necessary to object that he

had given us his *Essay* cut down into notes. Besides that this was unavoidable, they who made the objection had not been very careful to compare the new with the old matter; they would have found upon a fair examination that his original illustrations were very numerous, and that no discovery respecting Pope's character or writings made since the edition of Warburton, was left untouched.

It has already been mentioned that he had once an intention of compiling a *History of the Revival of Learning*, and that he had abandoned it. About the year 1784⁴, however, he issued proposals for a work which would probably have included much of his original purpose. This was to have been comprised in two quarto volumes, and to contain the *History of Grecian, Roman, Italian, and French Poetry* in four parts. I. From Homer to Nonnus: II. From Ennius to Boetius: III. From Dante to Metastasio: IV. From W. de Lorriss to Voltaire. This he announced as "preparing for the press." Probably his brother's death, and his desire to complete his *History of English Poetry*, diverted him from his own design: but it does not appear that he made any progress in either.

After the publication of Pope, he entered on an edition of Dryden, and about the year 1799, had completed two volumes with notes, which are now in the possession of his son, the rev. John Warton, who has undertaken to give them to the world. At this time the venerable author was attacked by an incurable disorder in his kidneys, which terminated his useful and honourable life on Feb. 23, 1800, in his seventy-eighth year⁵. He left a widow, who died in 1806, a son and three daughters, the youngest by his second wife. He was interred in the same grave with his first wife, in the north aisle of Winchester cathedral: and the Wiccarnists evinced their respect for his memory by an elegant monument by Flaxman, placed against the pillar next to the entrance of the choir on the south-side of the centre aisle.

In 1806, the rev. John Wooll, master of the school of Midhurst in Sussex, published *Biographical Memoirs of Dr. Warton, with a Selection from his Poetry and a Literary Correspondence*. From all these, the present sketch has been compiled, with some additional particulars gleaned from the literary journals of the times, and other sources of information.

The personal character of Dr. Warton continues to be the theme of praise with all who knew him. Without affectation of superior philosophy, he possessed an independent spirit, and amidst what would have been to others very bitter disappointments, he was never known to express the language of discontent or envy. As a husband and parent he displayed the tenderest feelings mixed with that prudence which implies sense as well as affection. His manners partook of what has been termed the old court: his address was polite and even elegant, but occasionally it had somewhat of measure and stateliness. Having left the university after a short residence, he mixed early with the world, sought and enjoyed the society of the fair sex, and tempered his studious habits with the tender and polite attentions necessary in promiscuous

⁴ My copy of his Proposals has no date, but as Mr. Maty published them in his *Review* for 1784, I presume that was the time of their being issued. C.

⁵ "His cheerfulness and resignation in affliction were invincible; even under the extreme of bodily weakness, his strong mind was unbroken, and his limbs became paralyzed in the very act of dictating an epistle of friendly criticism. So quiet, so composed was his end, that he might more truly be said to cease to live than to have undergone the pangs of death." Wooll's *Memoirs*, pp. 102, 103. C.

intercourse. In this respect there was a visible difference between him and his brother, whose manners were more careless and unpolished. In the more solid qualities of the heart, in true benevolence, kindness, hospitality, they approached very closely. Yet though their inclinations and pursuits were congenial, and each assisted the other in his undertakings, it may be questioned, whether at any time they could have exchanged occupations: with equal stores of literature, with equal refinement of taste, it may be questioned whether the author of the *Essay on Pope* could have pursued the history of English poetry, or whether the historian of poetry could have written the papers we find in the *Adventurer*.

In conversation, Dr. Warton's talents appeared to great advantage. He was mirthful, argumentative, or communicative of observation and anecdote, as he found his company lean to the one or to the other. His memory was more richly stored with literary history than perhaps any man of his time, and his range was very extensive. He knew French and Italian literature most intimately; and when conversing on more common topics, his extempore sallies and opinions bore evidence of the same delicate taste and candour which appear in his writings.

His biographer has considered his literary character under the three heads of a poet, a critic, and an instructor, but it is as a critic principally that he will be known to posterity, and as one who, in the language of Johnson, has taught "how the brow of criticism may be smoothed, and how she may be enabled, with all her severity, to attract and to delight." A book, indeed, of more delightful variety than his *Essay on Pope*, has not yet appeared, nor one in which there is a more happy mixture of judgment and sensibility. It did not, however, flatter the current opinions on the rank of Pope, among poets, and the author desisted from pursuing his subject for many years. Dr. Johnson said that this was owing "to his not having been able to persuade the world to be of his opinion as to Pope." This was probably the truth, but not the whole truth. Motives of a delicate nature are supposed to have had some share in inducing him to desist for a time. Warburton was yet alive, the executor of Pope and the guardian of his fame, and Warburton was no less the active and zealous friend, and correspondent of Thomas Warton: nor was it any secret that Warburton furnished Ruffhead with the materials for his life of Pope, the chief object of which was a rude and impotent attack on the *Essay*. Warburton died in 1779, and in 1782, Dr. Warton completed his *Essay*, and at length persuaded the world that he did not differ from the common opinion so much as was supposed⁶. Still by pointing out what is not poetry, he gave unpardonable offence to those whose names appear among poets, but whom he has reduced to moralists, and versifiers.

In all this, however, our author produced no new doctrine. The severe arrangement of poets in his dedication to Young, which announced the principles he intended to apply to Pope and to the whole body of English poetry, was evidently taken from Phillips, the nephew of Milton. In the preface to the *Theatrum* of this writer, it is

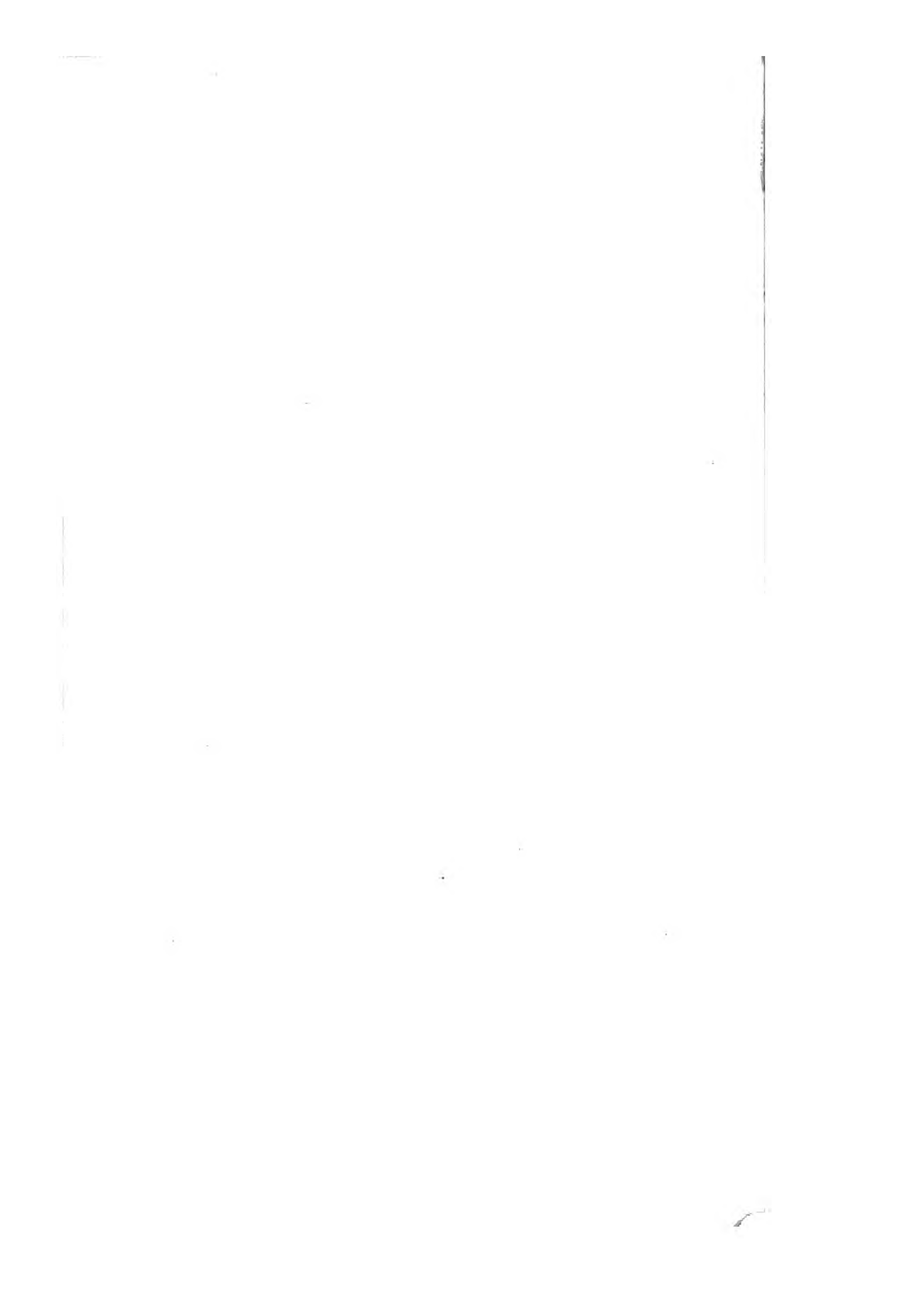
⁶ "I thank you for the friendly delicacy in which you speak of my *Essay on Pope*, I never thought we disagreed so much as you seem to imagine. All I said, and all I think, is comprehended in these words of your own. "He chose to be the poet of reason rather than of fancy." Letter from Dr. Warton to Mr. Hayley, published by Mr. Wooll, p. 406. C.

asserted that "wit, ingenuity and learning in verse, even elegance itself, though that comes nearest, are one thing: true native poetry is another: in which there is a certain air and spirit, which, perhaps, the most learned and judicious in other arts do not perfectly apprehend: much less is it attainable by any art or study." On this text the whole of the Essay is founded, and whatever objections were raised to it, while that blind admiration of Pope which accompanied his long dictatorship continued in full force, it is now generally adopted as the test of poetical merit by the best critics, although the partialities which some entertain for individual poets may yet give rise to difference of opinion respecting the provinces of argument and feeling.

That Dr. Warton advanced no novel opinions is proved from Phillips's Preface; and Phillips, there is reason to suppose, may have been indebted to his uncle Milton for an idea of poetry so superior to what was entertained in his day. It has already been noticed, that the opinions of the two Wartons, "the learned brothers," as they have been justly styled, were congenial on most topics of literature, but perhaps in nothing more than their ideas of poetry, which both endeavoured to exemplify in their own productions, although with different effect. Dr. Warton was certainly, in point of invention, powers of description, and variety, greatly inferior to the laureat. The *Enthusiast*, the *Dying Indian*, the *Revenge of America*, and one or two of his odes, are not deficient in spirit and enthusiasm, but the rest are more remarkable for a correct and faultless elegance than for any striking attribute of poetry. His Odes, which were coeval with those of Collins, must have suffered greatly by comparison. So different is taste from execution, and so strikingly are we reminded of one of his assertions, that "in no polished nation, after criticism has been much studied, and the rules of writing established, has any very extraordinary work appeared." But while we are reminded of this by his own productions, it may yet be doubted whether what may be true when applied to an individual who has lived a life of criticism, will be equally true of a nation. Even among our living poets, we may find more than one who have given proofs that extraordinary poetry may yet be produced, and that the rules of writing are not so fixed, nor criticism so studied as to impede the progress of real genius. All that can be concluded respecting Dr. Warton is, that if his genius had been equal to his taste, if he could have produced what he appreciates with such exquisite skill in others, he would have undoubtedly been in poetry what he was in erudition and criticism.

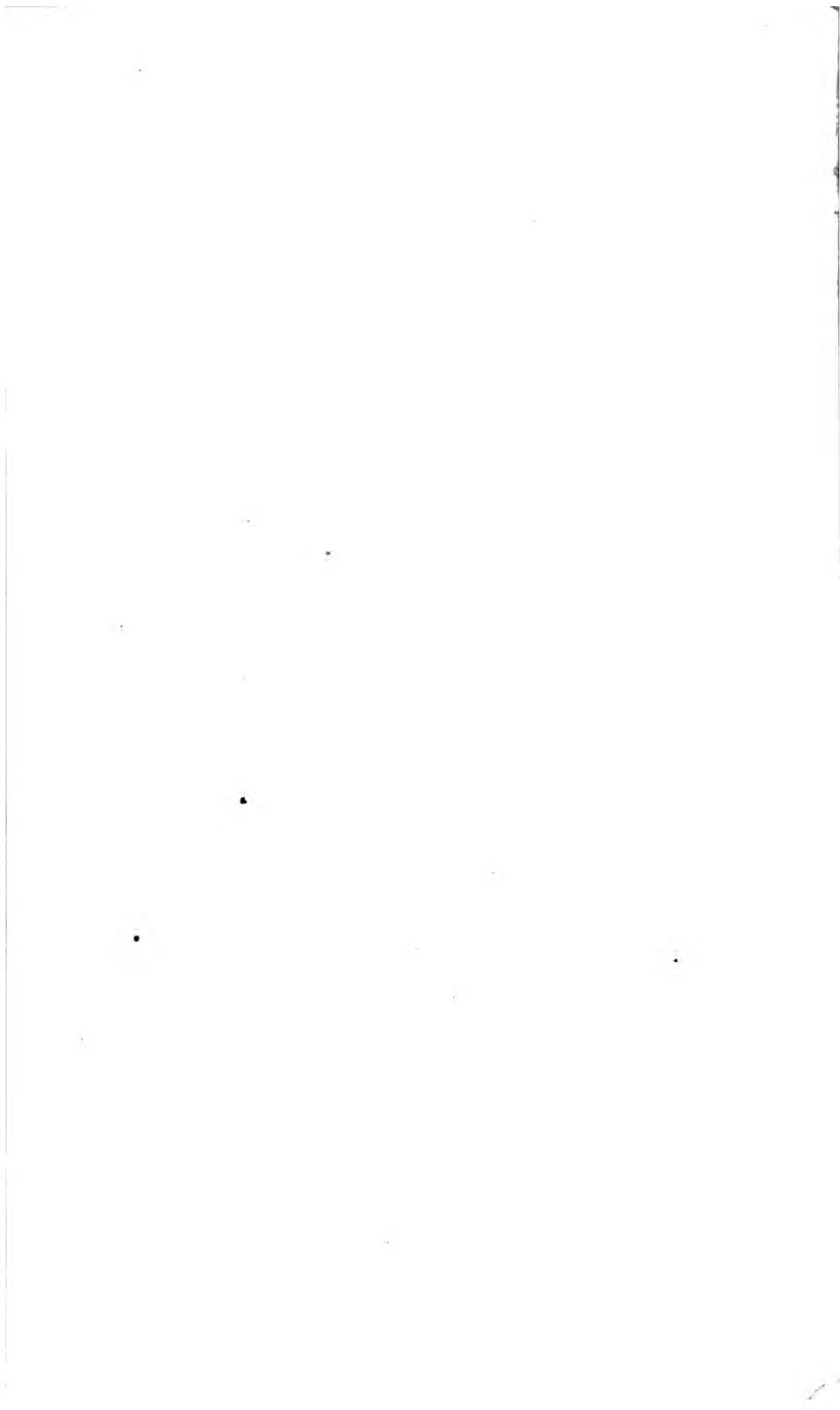
As an instructor and divine, Mr. Wooll's opinion of him may be adopted with safety.

"His professional exertions united the qualities of criticism and instruction. When the higher classes read under him the Greek tragedians, orators, or poets, they received the benefit not only of direct and appropriate information, but of a pure, elegant lecture on classical taste. The spirit with which he commented on the *protopœia* of *Œdipus* or *Electra*, the genuine elegance and accuracy with which he developed the animated rules and doctrines of his favourite Longinus, the insinuating but guarded praise he bestowed, the well-judged and proportionate encouragement he uniformly held out to the first dawning of genius, and the anxious assiduity with which he pointed out the paths to literary eminence, can never, I am confident, be





forgotten by those who have hung with stedfast attention on his precepts, and enjoyed the advantage of his superior guidance. Zealous in his adherence to the church establishment, and exemplary in his attention to its ordinances and duties, he was at the same time a decided enemy to bigotry and intolerance. His style of preaching was unaffectedly earnest and impressive; and the dignified solemnity with which he read the Liturgy (particularly the Communion-Service) was remarkably awful. He had the most happy art of arresting the attention of youth on religious subjects. Every Wiccamical reader will recollect his inimitable commentaries on Grotius, on the Sunday evenings, and his discourse annually delivered in the school on Good Friday: the impressions made by them cannot be forgotten."



THE
LIFE OF BLACKLOCK,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THIS very extraordinary poet was born in the year 1721, at Annan in the county of Dumfries, in Scotland. His parents were natives of Cumberland, of the lower order, but industrious and well informed. Before he was six months old he lost his sight by the small-pox, and therefore as to all purposes of memory or imagination, may be said never to have enjoyed that blessing. His father and friends endeavoured to lessen the calamity by reading those books which might convey the instruction suitable to infancy, and as he advanced, they proceeded to others which he appeared to relish and remember, particularly the works of Spenser, Milton, Prior, Pope, and Addison. And such was the kindness which his helpless situation and gentle temper excited, that he was seldom without some companion who carried on this singular course of education, until he had even acquired some knowledge of the Latin tongue. It is probable that he remembered much of all that was read to him, but his mind began very early to make a choice. He first discovered a predilection for English poetry, and then at the age of twelve endeavoured to imitate it in various attempts, one of which is preserved in the present collection, but rather with a view to mark the commencement than the perfection of his talent.

In this manner his life appears to have past for the first nineteen years of his life, at the end of which he had the misfortune to lose his father, who was killed by the accidental fall of a malt-kiln. For about a year after this, he continued to live at home, and began to be noticed as a young man of genius and acquirements such as were not to be expected in one in his situation. His poems, which had increased in number as he grew up, were now handed about in manuscript, with confidence that they were worthy of the attention of the discerning, and some of them having been shown to Dr. Stevenson, an eminent physician of Edinburgh, he formed the benevolent design of removing the author to that city, where his genius might be improved by a regular education. He came accordingly to Edinburgh in the year 1741, and continued his studies in the university, under his kind patron, till the year 1745, and in 1746 a volume of his poems, in octavo, was published, but with what effect we are not told. The rebellion, however, which then raged in Scotland, disturbed arts and

learning, and our author returned to Dumfries, where he found an asylum in the house of Mr. M'Murdo, who had married his sister, and who by company and conversation, endeavoured to amuse his solitude, and keep up his stock of learning. At the close of the rebellion, he returned to Edinburgh, and pursued his studies for six years longer.

He now obtained the acquaintance of Hume, the celebrated historian, who interested himself with great zeal in his behalf, and among other services, promoted the publication of the quarto edition of his poems in 1756, but previously to this a second edition of the octavo had been published at Edinburgh in 1754. In this last mentioned year, he became known to the rev. Joseph Spence, poetry professor of Oxford, who introduced him to the English public, by An Account of the Life, Character and Poems of Mr. Blacklock, student of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh. In this pamphlet Mr. Spence detailed the extraordinary circumstances of his education and genius with equal taste and humanity, and a subscription was immediately opened at Dodsley's shop for a quarto edition to be published at a guinea the large, and half a guinea the small paper.

Having completed his education at the university, he began a course of study, with a view to give lectures on oratory to young gentlemen intended for the bar or the pulpit, but by Hume's advice he desisted from a project which the latter thought unlikely to succeed, and determined to study divinity, which promised to gratify and enlarge the pious feelings and sentiments that had grown up with him. Accordingly, after the usual probationary course, he was licensed a preacher of the gospel, agreeably to the rules of the church of Scotland, in the year 1759. In this character he attained considerable reputation, and was fond of composing sermons, of which he has left some volumes in manuscript, as also a treatise of morals, both of which his friends once intended for the press. Two occasional sermons are said to have been published in his life-time, but probably never reached this country, as no notice of them occurs in our literary journals.

His occupations and disposition at this period of his life are thus related by the rev. Mr. Jameson, of Newcastle, who knew him intimately.

"His manner of life," says that gentleman, "was so uniform, that the history of it during one day, or one week, is the history of it during the seven years that our personal intercourse lasted. Reading, music, walking, conversing, and disputing on various topics, in theology, ethics, &c. employed almost every hour of our time. It was pleasant to hear him engaged in a dispute, for no man could keep his temper better than he always did on such occasions. I have known him frequently very warmly engaged for hours together, but never could observe one angry word to fall from him. Whatever his antagonist might say, he always kept his temper. "*Semper paratus et refellere sine pertinacia, et refelli sine iracundia.*" He was, however, extremely sensible to what he thought ill usage, and equally so whether it regarded himself or his friends. But his resentment was always confined to a few satirical verses, which were generally burnt soon after."

"The late Mr. Spence (the editor of the quarto edition of his poems) frequently urged him to write a tragedy; and assured him that he had interest enough with Mr. Garrick to get it acted. Various subjects were proposed to him, several of which

+ See reference in ...
2012, Feb 12

he approved of, yet he never could be prevailed on to begin any thing of that kind¹. It may seem remarkable, but as far as I know, it was invariably the case, that he never could think or write on any subject proposed to him by another.

“ I have frequently admired with what readiness and rapidity he could sometimes make verses. I have known him dictate from thirty to forty verses, and by no means bad ones, as fast as I could write them ; but the moment he was at a loss for a rhyme or a verse to his liking, he stopt altogether, and could very seldom be induced to finish what he had begun with so much ardour.”

To this his elegant biographer adds, “ All those who ever acted as his amanuenses, agree in this rapidity and ardour of composition which Mr. Jameson ascribes to him in the account I have copied above. He never could dictate till he stood up ; and as his blindness made walking about without assistance inconvenient or dangerous to him, he fell insensibly into a vibratory sort of motion of his body, which increased as he warmed with his subject, and was pleased with the conceptions of his mind. This motion at last became habitual to him, and though he could sometimes restrain it when on ceremony, or in any public appearance, such as preaching, he felt a certain uneasiness from the effort, and always returned to it when he could indulge it without impropriety.”

In 1762, he married Miss Sarah Johnston, daughter of Mr. Joseph Johnston, surgeon in Dumfries, a connexion which formed the great solace of his future life. About the same time he was ordained minister of the town and parish of Kircudbright, in consequence of a presentation from the crown, obtained for him by the earl of Selkirk ; but the parishioners having objected to the appointment, after a legal dispute of nearly two years, his friends advised him to resign his right, and accept of a moderate annuity in its stead. If their principal objection was to his want of sight, it was certainly not unreasonable. He would probably in the course of a few years have found it very inconvenient, if not painful, to execute all the duties of the pastoral office.

With the slender provision allowed by this parish he returned to Edinburgh in 1764, and adopted the plan of receiving a limited number of young gentlemen into his house, not only as boarders, but as pupils whose studies he might occasionally assist. And this plan succeeded so well that he continued it till the year 1787, when age and infirmity obliged him to retire from active life.

In 1767, the degree of doctor of divinity was conferred upon him by the University and Marischal College of Aberdeen, doubtless at the suggestion of his friend and correspondent Dr. Beattie, to whom he had in the preceding year sent a present of his works, accompanied by some verses. Dr. Beattie returned a poetical epistle, which is now prefixed to Blacklock's poems, and ever after maintained a correspondence with him, and consulted him upon all his subsequent works, particularly his celebrated Essay on Truth.

¹ Mr. Jameson was probably ignorant of the circumstance of his writing, at a subsequent period, a tragedy ; but upon what subject, his relation, from whom I received the intelligence, cannot recollect. The manuscript was put into the hands of the late Mr. Crossbie, then an eminent advocate at the bar of Scotland, but has never since been recovered. Mackenzie.

In the same year he published, *Paraclesis: or Consolations deduced from Natural and Revealed Religion: in two Dissertations*; the first supposed to have been composed by Cicero: now rendered into English: the last originally written by Dr. Blacklock. The plan of the original dissertation is to prove the superiority of the consolations to be derived from the Christian revelation, but it is painful to find by his preface that his motive for writing it, was "to alleviate the pressure of repeated disappointments, to soothe his anguish for the loss of departed friends, to elude the rage of implacable and unprovoked enemies, in a word, to support his own mind, which, for a number of years, besides its literary difficulties, and its natural disadvantages, had maintained an incessant conflict with fortune." Of what nature his disappointments were, or who could be implacable enemies to such a man, we are not told. His biographer, indeed, informs us, that he "had from nature a constitution delicate and nervous, and his mind, as is almost always the case, was in a great degree subject to the indisposition of his body. He frequently complained of a lowness and depression of spirits, which neither the attention of his friends, nor the unceasing care of a most affectionate wife, were able entirely to remove." Let us hope, therefore, for the honour of mankind, that his complaints were those, not of a man who had enemies, but of one who was sensible that, with strong powers of mind, and well-founded consolations, he was yet excluded from many of the rational delights of which he heard others speak, and of which, if he formed any idea, it was probably disproportioned and distressing.

In 1768, he published a translation, from the French of the rev. James Armand, minister of the Walloon church in Hanau, of two discourses on the spirit and evidence of Christianity, with a long dedication from his own pen, calculated for the perusal of the clergy of the church of Scotland. In this, as in all his prose writings, his style is elegant, nervous, and animated, and his sentiments such as indicate the purest zeal for the interests of religion. His last publication, in 1774, was the *Graham*, an Heroic Ballad; in four Cantos: intended to promote harmony between the inhabitants of Scotland and England. As a poem however, it added little to his reputation, and has been excluded from the collection formed by Mr. Mackenzie, which is here adopted.

In 1791, he was seized with a feverish disorder, which at first seemed of a slight, and never rose to a very violent kind; but his weak frame was unable to support it, and he died after about a week's illness, July 7, 1791, in the seventieth year of his age. A monument was afterwards erected to his memory, with an elegant Latin inscription from the pen of Dr. Beattie.

Such are the few events of Dr. Blacklock's life. His character, and the character of his writings, are more interesting, and will probably ever continue to be the subject of contemplation with all who study the human mind, or revere the dispensations of Providence. His perseverance in acquiring so extensive a fund of learning, amidst those privations which seem to bar all access to improvement, is an extraordinary feature in his character, and notwithstanding the kind zeal of the friends who endeavoured to make up for his want of sight by reading to him, many of his attainments must ever remain inexplicable.

With respect to his personal character, his biographer, and indeed all who knew him, have expatiated on the gentleness of his manners, the benignity of his disposition



and that warm interest in the happiness of others which led him so constantly to promote it in the young people who were committed to his charge. In their society he appeared entirely to forget the loss of sight, and the melancholy which, at other times, it might produce. "He entered," says his biographer, "with the cheerful playfulness of a young man, into all the sprightly narrative, the sportive fancy, the humorous jest that rose around him. It was a sight highly gratifying to philanthropy, to see how much a mind endowed with knowledge, kindled by genius, and above all lighted up with innocence and piety, like Blacklock's, could overcome the weight of its own calamity, and enjoy the content, the happiness, and the gaiety of others. Several of those inmates of Dr. Blacklock's house retained, in future life, all the warmth of that impression which his friendship at this early period had made upon them; and in various quarters of the world, he had friends and correspondents from whom no length of time or distance of place had ever estranged him.

"Music, which to the feeling and the pensive, in whatever situation, is a source of extreme delight, but which to the blind must be creative, as it were, of idea and of sentiment, he enjoyed highly, and was himself a tolerable performer on several instruments, particularly on the flute. He generally carried in his pocket a small flageolet², on which he played his favourite tunes; and was not displeased when asked in company to play or to sing them; a natural feeling for a blind man, who thus adds a scene to the drama of his society."

With regard to his poetry, there seems no occasion to involve ourselves in the perplexities which Mr. Spence first created, and then injudiciously as well as ineffectually endeavoured to explain. The character of his poetry is that of sentiment and reason: his versification is in general elegant and harmonious, and his thoughts sometimes flow with an ardent rapidity that betokens real genius. But it is impossible to ascribe powers of description to one who had seen nothing to describe; nor of invention to one who had no materials upon which he could operate. Where we find any passages that approach to the description of visible objects, we must surely attribute them to memory. As he had the best English poets frequently read to him, he attained a free command of the language of poetry, both in simple and compound words, and we know that all poets consider these as common property. It is not therefore wonderful that he speaks so often of mountains, vallies, rivers, nor that he appropriates to visible objects their peculiar characteristics, all which he must have heard repeated until they became fixed in his memory: but as no man pursues long what affords little more than the exercise of conjecture, we are still perplexed to discover what pleasure Mr. Blacklock could take, first in a species of reading which could give him no ideas, and then in a species of writing in which he could copy only the expressions of others. There are few of his poems in which some passage does not occur which tempts us to ask, what idea could he affix to this? When he speaks of "insect crowds that 'scape the nicest eye," how could he judge of crowds or insects

² "His first idea of learning to play on this instrument he used to ascribe to a circumstance rather uncommon, but which, to a mind like his, susceptible at the same time and creative, might naturally enough arise, namely, a *Dream*, in which he thought he met with a shepherd's boy on the side of a pastoral hill, who brought the most exquisite music from that little instrument." Mackenzie.

that had no eyes? "Starry skies" he might have borrowed, but what train of thought led him to say of night,

Clouds peep on clouds, and, as they rise,
Condense to solid gloom the skies.

"Pale fear," "pale terrour," "white robed innocence," "iron sway," "livid phantoms," "rosy bowl," "angel form," and many others, he had often heard, but the following images, if borrowed in parts, are certainly combined with the hand of a master.

As swift descending show'rs of rain,
Deform with mud the clearest streams;
As rising mists Heav'n's azure stain,
Thng'd with Aurora's blush in vain;
As fades the flow'rs in mid-day beams
On life thus tender sorrows prey,
And wrap in gloom its promis'd day.—

Thro' tears behold a sister's eyes
Emit a faded ray."—

Say, could no song of melting woe,
Revoke the keen determin'd blow,
That clos'd his sparkling eye?
Thus roses oft, by early doom,
Robb'd of their blush and sweet perfume,
Grow pale, recline, and die.

What idea our author had of these appearances, and what kind or degree of pleasure they afforded him, it is impossible to discover. He has himself written a very long article on Blindness in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, but it affords no light to the present subject, containing chiefly reflections on the disadvantages of blindness, and the best means of alleviating them. His poems, however, especially where attempts are made at description, indicate powers which seem to have wanted the aid of sight only to bring them into the highest rank. We know that poetical genius is almost wholly independent of learning, and seems often planted in a soil where nothing else will flourish, but Blacklock's is altogether an extraordinary case: we have not even terms by which we can intelligibly discuss his merits, and we may conclude with Denina in his *Disorso della Letteratura*, that "Blacklock will appear to posterity a fable, as to us he is a prodigy. It will be thought a fiction, a paradox, that a man blind from his infancy, besides having made himself so much a master of various foreign languages, should be a great poet in his own; and without having hardly ever seen the light, should be so remarkably happy in description."

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THE
LIFE OF RICHARD OWEN CAMBRIDGE,

BY MR. CHALMERS.

RICHARD CAMBRIDGE was born in London, Feb. 14, 1717, of ancestors belonging to the county of Gloucester. His father, who was a younger brother, had been bred to business as a Turkey merchant, and died in London not long after the birth of his son, the care of whom then devolved on his mother and his maternal uncle Thomas Owen, esq. who adopted him as his future representative. He was sent to Eton school, where quickness of parts supplied the place of diligence, and although he was averse to the routine of stated tasks, he stored his mind with classical knowledge, and amused it by an eager perusal of works addressed to the imagination. He became early attached to the best English poets, and to those miscellaneous writers who delineate human life and character. A taste likewise for the beauties of rural nature began to display itself at this period, which he afterwards exemplified at his seat in Gloucestershire, and that at Twickenham.

In 1734, he entered as a gentleman commoner of St. John's College, Oxford, and, without wishing to be thought a laborious scholar, omitted no opportunity of improving his mind in such studies as were suitable to his age and future prospects. His first, or one of his first poetical effusions was on the Marriage of the Prince of Wales, which was published with the other verses composed at Oxford on the same occasion. In 1737, he became a member of Lincoln's Inn, where he found many men of wit and congenial habits, but as he had formerly declined taking a degree at Oxford, he had now as little inclination to pursue the steps that lead to the bar, and in 1741, in his twenty-fourth year, he married Miss Trenchard, the second daughter of George Trenchard, esq. of Woolverton in Dorsetshire, a lady who contributed to his happiness for upwards of half a century, and by whom he had a family equally amiable and affectionate. She died Sept. 5, 1806, having survived her husband four years.

He now settled at his family seat of Whitminster in Gloucestershire, for seven or eight years, where his life, though easy and independent, was never idle or useless. While he continued to cultivate polite literature, his more active hours were employed in heightening the beauties of the scenery around his seat; for this purpose he made the little river Stroud navigable for some distance, and not only constructed boats for

pleasure or carriage, but introduced some ingenious improvements in that branch of naval architecture, which were approved by the most competent judges. In one of these boats or barges, he had the honour to receive the prince and princess of Wales, and other distinguished visitors, who were delighted with the elegance of his taste, and the novelty and utility of his various plans. For the sports of the field he had little relish; not, however, from a motive of tenderness, for he practised the bow and arrow, and we read, but with no great pleasure, that "the head of a duck, swimming in the river, was a favourite mark, which he seldom missed." As he ever endeavoured to unite knowledge with amusement, he studied the history of archery, and became a connoisseur in its weapons as used by modern and ancient nations. The collection he formed while this pursuit occupied his attention, he afterwards sent to sir Ashton Lever's museum.

During his residence at Whitminster, he wrote his most celebrated poem, *The Scribleriad*. The design he imparted to some of his particular friends, and communicated his progress from time to time. He had naturally a rich fund of humour, which he could restrain within the bounds of delicacy, or expand to the burlesque, as his subject required, and the topics which he introduced had evidently been the result of a course of multifarious reading. But such was his diffidence in his own powers, or in the sincerity of his friends who praised his labours, that he laid his poem aside for many years after it was completed, until he could ascertain, by their impatience, that they consulted his reputation in advising him to publish it.

In consequence of the death of his uncle (in 1748) to whom he was heir, he added the name of Owen to his own. He now took a house in London, but after about two years residence, finding the air of London disagree with himself and with Mrs. Cambridge, he purchased a villa at Twickenham, immediately opposite Richmond hill. He quitted at the same time his seat in Gloucestershire, and with it all desire of farther change, for he resided at Twickenham during the remainder of his very long life. How much he improved this villa, cannot now be remembered by many: two generations have admired it only in its improved state. His mode of living has been affectionately yet justly described by his biographer. He was at once hospitable and economical, accessible and yet retired. By his knowledge and manners he was fitted to the highest company, yet although his circle was extensive, he soon learned to select his associates, and visiting became a pleasing relief, instead of a perpetual interruption.

The same year in which he commenced his establishment at Twickenham, he became known to the public, as the author of the *Scribleriad*, which was published in 1751. Some of his lesser poems succeeded. *The Dialogue between a Member of Parliament and his Servant*, in 1752; *The Intruder*, in 1754; and *The Fakeer*, in 1756. About the same time he appeared as a writer in *The World*, to which he contributed twenty-one papers, which are unquestionably among the best in that collection. Lord Chesterfield, who knew and respected him, drew the following character in one of his own excellent papers.

"Cantabrigius drinks nothing but water, and rides more miles in a year than the keenest sportsman: the former keeps his head clear, the latter his body in health: it is not from himself that he runs, but to his acquaintance, a synonymous term for his

friends. Internally safe he seeks no sanctuary from himself, no intoxication for his mind. His penetration makes him discover and divert himself with the follies of mankind, which his wit enables him to expose with the truest ridicule, though always without personal offence. Cheerful abroad because happy at home, and thus happy because virtuous¹."

On the commencement of the war with France in 1756, in the events of which he appears to have taken a more lively interest than could have been expected from a man of his retired disposition, he was induced to undertake a History of the Rise and Progress of the British Power in India, in order to enlighten the public mind in the nature and importance of that acquisition. At first he intended that this work should be on a very large scale, but as recent events demanded such information as could be immediately procured, and promised to be useful, he produced his History of the War upon the Coast of Coromandel, which was published in 1761. He then resumed his original design, and obtained permission from the East India Company to inspect such of their papers as might be requisite. "He had also a promise of Mr. Orme's papers, but that gentleman happening to return from India at this juncture, with an intention to publish himself the history which afterwards appeared, Mr. Cambridge considered that his own work would now be in a great measure superfluous, and therefore relinquished the further prosecution of his plan²." What he had published, however, was considered as an important memoir of the period it embraced, and as a fair and correct statement of the French proceedings in India; and it served to introduce him more into the study of India affairs, in which he ever afterwards delighted. It led him also to an intimate acquaintance with lord Clive, general Carnac, Mr. Scrafton, major Pearson, Mr. Varelst, general Caliaud, Mr. Hastings, and others, who had gained distinguished reputation by their services in the East.

Mr. Cambridge survived the publication of this work above forty years, but appeared no more before the public as an author. Many of the smaller pieces now added to his works, were written as amusements for his friends, and circulated only in private. The long remainder of his life passed in the enjoyment of all that elegant and polished society could yield. Most of the friendships of his youth were those of his advanced age, and they were contracted with such men as are not often found within the reach of a stationary individual. At Eton, he became acquainted with Bryant, Gray, West, Walpole, Dr. Barnard, and Dr. Cooke; at Lincoln's Inn, he found Mr. Henry Bathurst, afterwards lord chancellor, the hon. Charles Yorke, Mr. Wray, and Mr. Edwards. To these he afterwards added lord Anson, Dr. Atwell, bishop Benson, sir Charles Williams, Mr. Henry Fox, Mr. William Whitehead, Villiers lord Clarendon, lord Granville, lord Lyttelton, Mr. Grenville, lord Chesterfield, Mr. Pitt, lord Bath, lord Egremont, Soame Jenyns, lord Hardwicke, admiral Boscawen, lord Barrington, James Harris, Andrew Stone, bishop Egerton, lord Camelford, Welbore Ellis, lord North, Garrick, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Porteus, now bishop of London, and the

¹ This character stands at the close of a paper written to expose the folly and ill effects of hard drinking: and lord Chesterfield names my father, who was a water drinker, as a living example of one, who did not require the exhilarating aid of wine to enliven his wit or increase his vivacity." *Life of Mr. Cambridge*, by his Son, prefixed to his works, p. 44. C.

² *Life*, ubi supra.

illustrious navigators Byron, Wallis, Carteret, Phipps, Cook, and Vancouver. In the company of these, some of whom were long his neighbours at Twickenham, he delighted to increase his knowledge by an interchange of sentiments on topics of literature and common life. His conversation was enriched by various reading, and embellished by wit of the most delicate and unobtrusive kind. His temper made him universally beloved. It was uniformly cheerful, mild, and benevolent.

The conclusion of his life is thus related by his biographer. "He was considerably advanced in his eighty-third year before he was sensible, to any considerable degree, of the infirmities of age: but a difficulty of hearing, which had for some time gradually increased, now rendered conversation troublesome and frequently disappointing to him. Against this evil, his books, for which his relish was not abated, had hitherto furnished an easy and acceptable resource; but, unfortunately, his sight also became so imperfect, that there were few books he could read with comfort to himself. His general health, however, remained the same, and his natural good spirits and cheerfulness of temper experienced no alteration. Having still the free use of his limbs, he continued to take his usual exercise, and to follow his customary habits of life, accepting of such amusement as conversation would afford, from those friends who had the kindness to adapt their voices to his prevailing infirmity: and that he still retained a lively concern in all those great and interesting events which were then taking place in Europe, may be seen in some of his latest productions. But as his deafness increased, he felt himself grow daily more unfit for the society of any but his own family, into whose care and protection he resigned himself with the most affectionate and endearing confidence, receiving those attentions which it was the first pleasure of his children to pay him, not as a debt due to a fond and indulgent parent, but as a free and voluntary tribute of their affection. In the contemplation of these tokens of esteem and love, he seemed to experience a constant and unabating pleasure, which supplied, in no small degree, the want of other interesting ideas.

"It is well known, that among the many painful and humiliating effects that attend the decline of life, and follow from a partial decay of the mental powers, we have often to lament the change it produces in the heart and affections: but from every consequence of this sort, my father was most happily exempt. This I allow myself to say upon the authority of the medical gentleman³ of considerable eminence, by whose skill and friendly attentions he was assisted through the progressive stages of his slow decline; and who has repeatedly assured me, that, in the whole course of his extensive practice, he had never seen a similar instance of equanimity and undeviating sweetness of temper.

"During this gradual increase of feebleness, and with the discouraging prospect of still greater suffering, which he saw before him, his exemplary patience and constant care to spare the feelings of his family were eminently conspicuous: nor did the distressing infirmities, inseparably attendant on extreme debility, ever produce a murmur of complaint, or even a hasty or unguarded expression. It is somewhat singular, and may be regarded as a proof of an unusually strong frame, that no symptom of disease took place: all the organs of life continued to execute their respective functions, until nature, being wholly exhausted, he expired without a sigh, on the 17th of September, 1802, leaving a widow, two sons, and a daughter."

³ "David Durdass, esq. of Richmond."



It appears from the whole of his son's very interesting narrative, that few men have enjoyed a life of the same duration so little interrupted by vexation or calamity. His fortune, if not relatively great, was rendered ample by judicious management, and as he had been highly favoured by Providence in his person and in his family, he felt the importance of those blessings with the gratitude of a Christian. Such information as the following, so honourable to the subject of it, and to him who relates it, ought not to be suppressed.

“ At an early age he attentively examined the evidences of Christianity, and was fully satisfied of its truth. His was, in the truest sense, the religion of the heart; and he always felt that a constant conformity to its precepts was the strongest and best proof he could give of the sincerity of his faith. Of its prescribed forms and exterior duties, he was no less a strict observer: whatever were his engagements, he constantly passed his Sundays at home with his family, at the head of whom he never failed to attend the public service of the day, until prevented by a bodily infirmity, for some years before his death; but he still continued his practice of reading prayers to them every evening: a usage of more than sixty years: these were taken from our liturgy, of which he was a great admirer.

“ When no longer able to partake of the communion at church, he continued to receive it at home, on the festivals and other suitable occasions, to the latest period, and his manner of joining in this service, furnished an edifying example of the happy influence of a mind void of offence towards God and man.

“ His devotional exercises were always expressed in so solemn a manner, and with such unaffected piety, as showed that his lips spoke the language of his heart; but his impressive tone of voice, when offering prayer and thanksgiving, marked that to be the branch of worship most suited to his feelings: and in conformity with this sentiment, he frequently remarked, that ‘ in our petitions we are liable to be misled, both as to their object and motive; but in expressing our thanksgivings to the Deity, we can never err, the least favoured among us having received sufficient tokens of the bounty of Providence, to excite emotions of the sincerest gratitude.’

“ This principle of piety led him also to bear afflictions in the most exemplary manner. Whatever trials or deprivations he experienced through life, he always met with fortitude, and his demeanour under the losses which he was ordained to suffer in his own family, was such, that those only who saw him near, and knew how sacred he held the duty of submission to the Divine Will, and the self command this produced, could form any idea how poignantly they were felt.”—

Of his literary character, his son has formed a just estimate, when he says, that he is to be regarded rather as an elegant than a profound scholar. Yet where he chose to apply, his knowledge was far from being superficial, and if he had not at an early period of life indulged the prospect of filling the station of a retired country gentleman, it is probable that he might have made a distinguished figure in any of the learned professions. It is certain that the ablest works on every subject have been produced, with very few exceptions, by men who have been scholars by profession, to whom reputation was necessary as well as ornamental, and who could not expect to rise but in proportion to the abilities they discovered. Mr. Cambridge, without being insensible to the value of fame, had yet none of the worst perils of authorship to

encounter. As a writer he was better known to the world, but he could not have been more highly respected by his friends.

About a year after his death his son, the rev. George Owen Cambridge, published a splendid edition of all his works (except his *History of the War*) to which he prefixed an account of his *Life and Writings*. To this very interesting narrative, the present sketch is indebted for all that is valuable in it; but from what is here borrowed the reader can have but a feeble conception of a composition which does so much honour to the moral and literary reputation of the father, and to the filial piety and chastened affection of the son.

The *Scribleriad*, which entitles Mr. Cambridge to a place in this collection, is one of those poems that, with great merits, yet make their way very slowly in the world. It was received so coolly, on the publication of the first two parts, that he found it necessary to write a preface to the second and complete edition, explaining his design.

He had some reason to apprehend that it had been mistaken, and that the poem was in danger of being neglected. In this preface, he lays down certain rules for the mock heroic, by which, if his own production be tried, it must be confessed he has executed all that he intended, with spirit and taste. As an imitator of the true heroic, he is in general faithful, and his parodies on the ancients show that he had studied their writings with somewhat different from the ardour of an admirer of poetry, or the acuteness of a critical linguist. But it may be doubted whether the rules he wishes to establish are sufficiently comprehensive, whether he has not been too faithful to his models, and whether a greater and more original portion of the burlesque would not have conferred more popularity on his performance.

His preference of *Don Quixote*, as a true mock heroic, is less a matter of dispute. In all the attributes of that species of composition, it is unquestionably superior to any attempt ever made, and probably will ever remain without a rival, for what subject can the wit of man devise so happily adapted to the intention of the writer? Its great excellence, too, appears from its continuing to please every class of readers, although the folly ridiculed no longer exists, and can with some difficulty be supposed to have ever existed. But Cervantes is in nothing so superior, as in the delineation of his hero, who throughout the whole narrative creates a powerful interest in his favour, and who excites ridicule and compassion in such nice proportions as never to be undeserving of sympathy, or overpowered by contempt.

Mr. Cambridge was not so fortunate in a hero. He was content to take up *Scriblerus*, where Pope and Swift, or rather Arbuthnot, left him; a motley, ideal being, without an exemplar, combining, in one individual, all that is found ridiculous in forgotten volumes, or among the pretenders to science and the believers of absurdities. Mr. Cambridge's hero, therefore, without any qualities to secure our esteem, is an antiquary, a pedant, an alchymist, and what seldom is found among such characters, a poet. In conducting him through a series of adventures, upon the plan sketched by the triumvirate above mentioned, it is with great difficulty that he is able to avoid the error they fell into, either of inventing nonsense for the sake of laughing at it, or of glancing their ridicule at the enthusiasm of useful research, and the ardour of real science, and justifiable curiosity.

False science, like every thing else that is false, may be a legitimate object of ridi-

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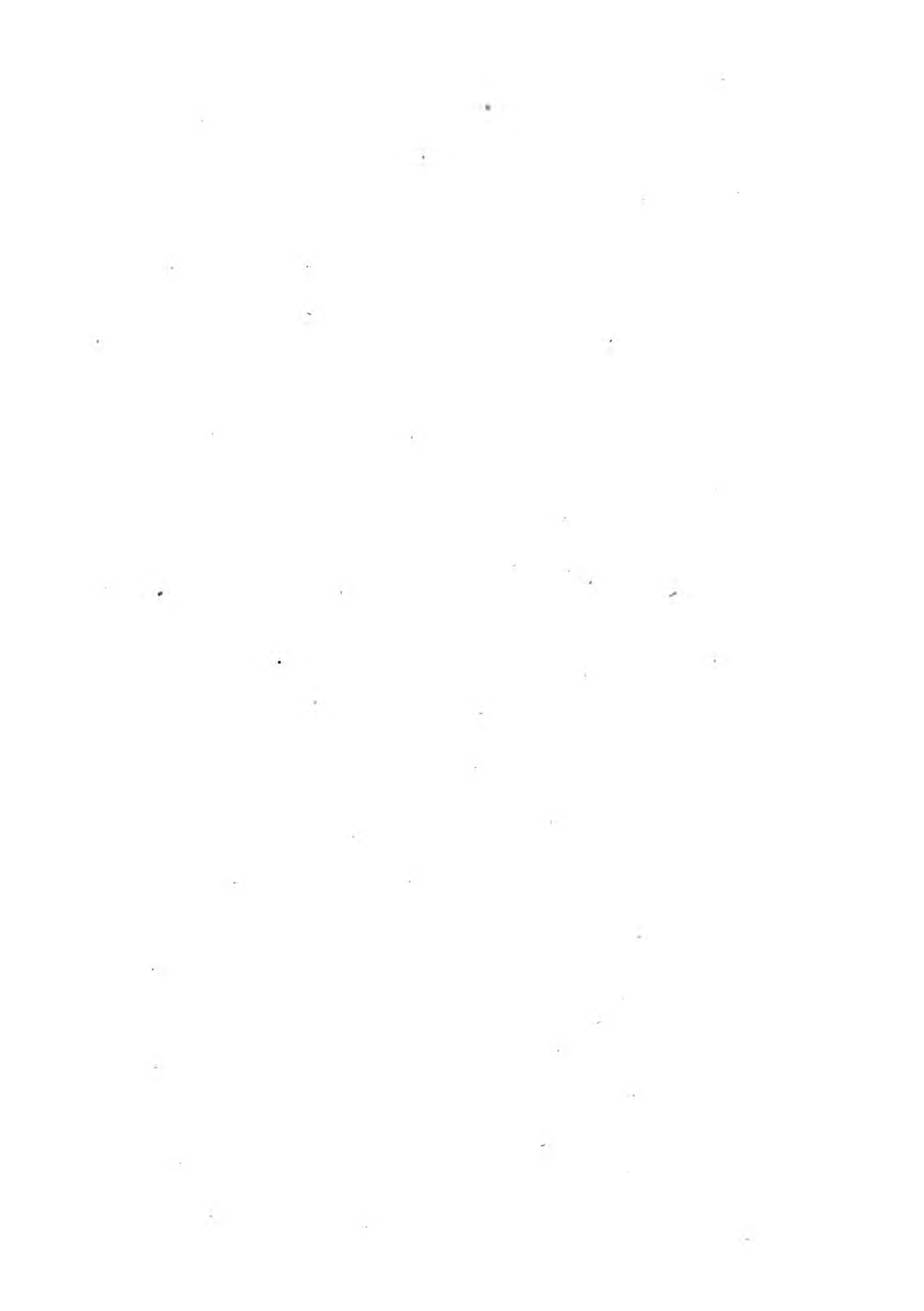
cule, but to distinguish true from false science is not the business of a single decision, but the result of the experience of ages. By the illiterate all remarkable improvements are at once condemned as impossible and therefore absurd. By the learned all remarkable improvements are effected by supposing them possible. There is a speculation in science as well as in commerce, and he who has hazarded much and lost much, does not thereby prove that his design was fundamentally wrong.

Mr. Cambridge had too much sense and too much learning to follow the steps of his predecessors in the history of Scriblerus; but yet it may be presumed that his poem was unsuccessful with the public at large, either from its making sport of what had ceased to engage the attention of philosophers, or from its treating popular superstitions and historical credulity in a vein of ridicule, too delicate for common readers.

The composition of the Scribleriad is in general so regular, spirited and poetical, that we cannot but wish the author had chosen a subject of more permanent interest. Many striking passages may be pointed out to justify this wish, and perhaps there are few descriptions so happily imagined as the approach of the army of rebusses and acrostics. The versification is elegant, and the epithets chosen with singular propriety. The events, although without much connexion, all add something to the character of the hero; and the conversations most gravely ironical, while they remind us of the serious epics, are never unnecessarily protracted.

It is to be regretted, and perhaps it may be mentioned as another hindrance to the popularity of the Scribleriad, that the author determined to avoid moral reflections,—reflections which he could have easily furnished. His periodical papers exhibit a happy union of wit and sentiment, and few men were better acquainted with local manners, and the humours and whims of interest and passion. If such reflections arise naturally from the subject, they are surely not only useful, but lead to many of the most striking beauties of imagery. No zealous admirer of the flights of imagination is unwilling to be sometimes relieved by those reflections which recal his judgment. In the ardour of youth, poets are too apt to undervalue reason, but in advanced age they more readily admit its alliance with genius. Let it also be remembered how much Hudibras, the first of all English mock heroics, owes to the frequency of those reflexions and maxims, which, having become proverbial, serve to perpetuate the fame of their author.—The Scribleriad, however, will ever be considered by impartial judges, with whom popularity is not an indispensable qualification, as a poem that does honour to the taste and imagination of Mr. Cambridge, and as deserving a place with the most favourite attempts of the satirical muse.

Of the lesser pieces in this collection, the Dialogue between a Member of Parliament and his Servant, The Fakeer, and The Intruder are to be distinguished for sprightliness of wit, and felicity of diction. Public degeneracy, impertinence, and superstitious cunning are no where more elegantly satirized. These have been repeatedly printed in Dodsley's and other collections. His other occasional pieces discover the same observation of human conduct and manners, keen and shrewd, and expressed in easy and polished verse.



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Mr. Mason?

Published as the Act directs by Turner & Hood, 31 Poultry March 31 1799.

THE
LIFE OF MASON.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THESE Memoirs of Mr. Mason are far less complete than could have been wished. He is said to have left his poems, and some unpublished works, for the benefit of a charitable institution; but eleven years have elapsed since his death, and no step has been taken to fulfill his intention, or to honour his memory. What is now offered, has been collected from various sources, and it is hoped without falling into any very important error.

William Mason was the son of the vicar of St. Trinity Hall, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and was born in the year 1725. His education, previously to his going to the university, was probably superintended by his father, whose indulgence, in permitting him to follow the bent of his youthful mind towards poetry and painting, he acknowledges in an Epistolary Address, written in 1746. He went to Cambridge in 1742-3, and was entered of St. John's College, where his tutor, Dr. Powell, encouraged him to publish his excellent Monody to the Memory of Pope, which appeared in 1747. He took his bachelor's degree in 1745, and his master's in 1749; but little else has been recorded of his academical progress, except that his attachment to the Muses continued during his residence at the university, of which he took leave in an ode complimentary to his college and his tutor.

In 1747, by means of Gray, with whom he had become acquainted, and who, on account of ill-treatment had left Peterhouse for Pembroke Hall, he was nominated to a vacant fellowship in the latter college, but owing to a dispute between the fellows and their master, he was not elected till 1749. His own account of this affair has lately been published.—“ I have had the honour since I came here last to be elected by the fellows of Pembroke into their society; but the master, who has the power of a negative, has made use of it on this occasion, because he will not have an *extraneus* when they have fit persons in their own college. The fellows say, they have a power from their statutes *indifferenter eligere ex utraque academia*, and are going to try it with him at common law, or else get the king to appoint a visitor. If this turns

out well it will be a very lucky thing for me, and much better than a *Platt*¹, which I came hither with an intention to sit for, for they are reckoned the best fellowships in the university."

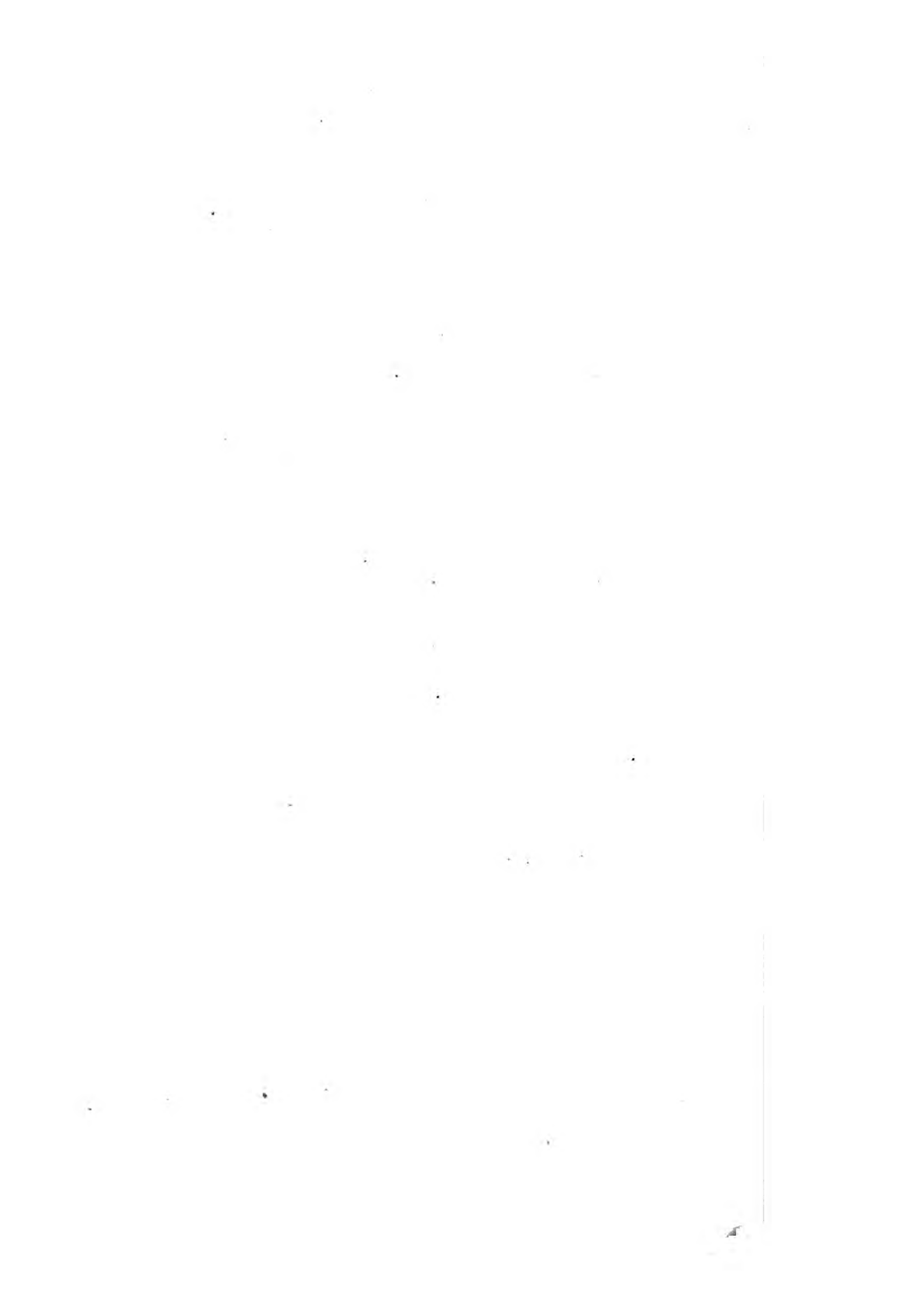
His intimacy with Gray was cordial and lasting. Their correspondence shows the high respect they had for each other, and their friendship was never interrupted by the freedom and unfeigned candour with which they criticised each other's performances. About this time, Gray describes him as a young man "of much fancy, little judgment, and a good deal of modesty," as "a good and well-meaning creature, but in simplicity, a child; he reads little or nothing, writes abundance, and that with a design to make a fortune by it," which does not, however, appear to have been the case; "a little vain, but in so harmless and comical a way that it does not offend: a little ambitious, but withal so ignorant of the world and its ways, that this does not hurt him in one's opinion; so sincere and undisguised, that no mind with a spark of generosity would ever think of hurting him, he lies so open to injury; but so indolent, that if he cannot overcome this habit, all his good qualities will signify nothing at all." Some of these characteristics of the poetical temperament adhered to our author throughout life; others were effaced by a closer intimacy with the world.

He appears to have been early attached to what he considered as the cause of freedom. Of this he gave proof in a poem entitled *Isis*, which was printed in 1748, directed chiefly against the supposed Jacobitism of Oxford. Whatever truth might be in the accusation, it had the happy effect of producing *The Triumph of Isis*, by Mr. Thomas Warton, which Mason had the candour to allow was a superior poem. Thus early these two writers attracted notice by the defence of their respective universities; but their generous rivalry did not end in mutual respect, for which perhaps, the difference of political principle may in some measure account.

Mason was now requested to compose an ode for the installation of the Duke of Newcastle, as chancellor of the university of Cambridge in 1749, to which he does not appear to have acceded with much love of the subject. Gray thought his production "uncommonly well for such an occasion," but the author had no pleasure in the recollection, and omitted it in his works.

In 1752, he published *Elfrida*, a dramatic poem, constructed on the model of the ancients, to which he was enthusiastically attached, and having once formed the opinion that dramas might be successfully written in this way he persisted in it to the last, contrary to argument and experience. In the present instance he attempted the plan with certain limitations. He professed that his intention was only to follow the ancient method as far as it is probable a Greek poet, were he alive, would now do, in order to adapt himself to the genius of our times, and the character of our tragedy. How far he has executed an intention, evidently suggested by a series of conjectures, will hardly now admit of a question. All critics are agreed that *Elfrida* is neither

¹ The *Platt* fellowships at St. John's are similar to what are called the bye-fellowships in some other colleges at Cambridge, and are not on the foundation. Their original number was six, with a stipend of 20*l.* per annum each, besides rooms and commons at the fellows' table. They were founded by William Platt, esq. an opulent citizen of London. See *Gent. Mag.* vol. lxvi, p. 452. and vol. lxxi, p. 681; in which Mr. Mason's account of this affair is given. C.



adapted to the genius of our times, nor to the character of our tragedy. The letters, however, which he published, are retained in this edition, and may yet be perused as ingenious apologies for his judgment; and whatever the decision may be, there can be little difference of opinion respecting the merit of *Elfrida* as a poem.—In 1772, Mr. Colman, at that time manager of Covent-garden theatre, made such alterations as were supposed necessary to its appearance on the stage, and besides the decoration of splendid scenery, Dr. Arne contributed some characteristic music. The author, however, was so much offended at the alterations, as to have meditated a very angry address to Colman, who, on his part, threatened him with the introduction of a chorus of Grecian washerwomen in some future stage entertainment. Mr. Mason afterwards, in 1778 or 1779, made his own alterations and arrangements, and had it performed at the same theatre, but neither attempt was successful.

His father died in 1753, and in 1754 he went into orders; and through the interest of the earl of Holderness, whose patronage he had obtained, he was preferred to be one of the King's Chaplains, and received about the same time the living of Aston. The reputation he had acquired by the odes of his *Elfrida*, encouraged him to publish, in 1756, four compositions of that class on Memory, Independency, Melancholy, and the Fate of Tyranny, which were not received with favour or kindness. Both ridicule and legitimate criticism seem to have been employed on this occasion to expose the wanton profusion of glittering epithets, and the many instances of studied alliteration scattered over these odes. Colman and Lloyd, who were now beginning to look for satirical prey, published two excellent parodies on one of them, and on one of Gray's. His praise of Andrew Marvell, and attack on bishop Parker, produced about the same time a dull letter of censure, which probably gave him less uneasiness than the cool reception of his odes by those who then dispensed the honours of literary fame. On the death of Cibber, he was proposed to succeed him as poet laureat, but, instead of an offer of this place, an apology was made to him by lord John Cavendish, that "being in orders, he was thought, merely on that account, less eligible for the office than a layman." The notice of this circumstance in his life of W. Whitehead, is followed by a declaration of his indifference. "A reason so politely put, I was glad to hear assigned, and if I had thought it a weak one, they who know me, will readily believe that I am the last man in the world who would have attempted to controvert it." The probability, indeed is, that Mr. Mason would not have thought himself honoured by the situation if compelled to fulfil its duties, for though by his mediation the office was tendered to Gray, it was "with permission to hold it as a mere sinecure."

The severity exercised on his odes, deprived him of no fame but what he amply recovered by the publication of *Caractacus*² in 1759, another dramatic poem on the plan of the ancients, and possessing all the beauties and defects of the former, with more poetry and passion, yet with touches of nature, which, although sometimes spoiled by useless expletives, are in general just, natural, and affecting. Gray bestows

² In a note on his Ode to Mr. Pitt, we are informed that *Caractacus* was read in manuscript by the late earl of Chatham, who honoured it "with an approbation which the author was proud to record." C.

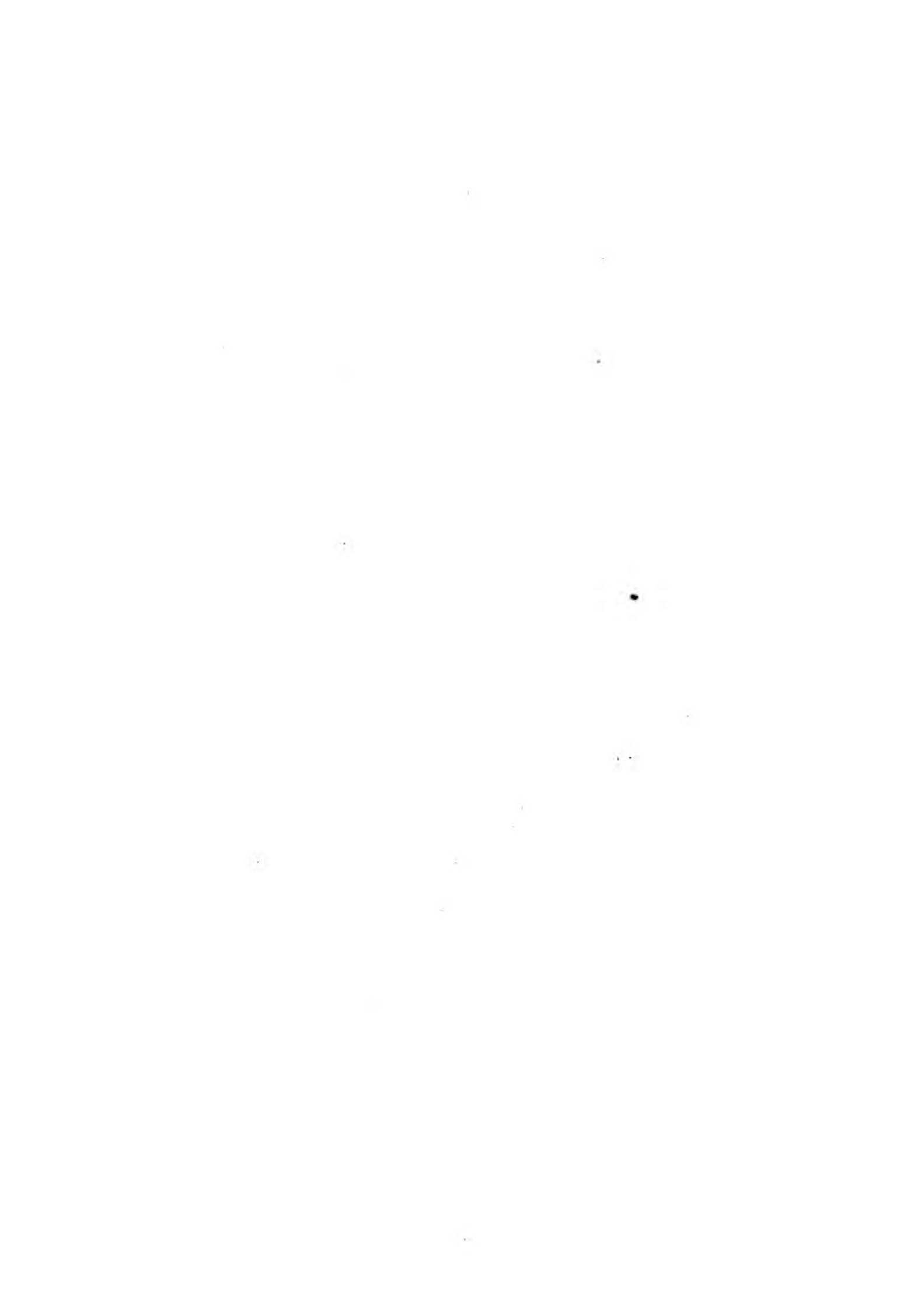
high praise on the choruses of this drama, particularly that beginning "Hark! Heard ye not yon footstep dread? &c." Notwithstanding the objections of the critics, *Caractacus* continued to be read with interest, and the author was not the only person who thought, that with some alterations, under the inspection of a connoisseur in stage effect, it might become an acting play. Accordingly it was performed on Covent Garden theatre in 1776, and received with considerable applause, but it obtained no permanent rank on the stage, and it was thought, that the alterations which made it more dramatic, made it less poetical. Some years after, it was again brought into public notice, by a translation into Greek from the pen of the rev. G. H. Glasse, who proved himself by this effort one of the first writers of Greek poetry in England.

In 1762, Mason published three *Elegies*, which are elegant, tender, and correct beyond the productions of any of his contemporaries. These, with all his former pieces except the *Isis* and the *Installation Ode*, were collected into one volume and published in 1764, with a beautiful dedicatory *Sonnet* to his patron the earl of Holderness. Why he omitted *Isis* from this collection is not very evident. We have, indeed, his own authority, that he never would have published it if a surreptitious copy had not found its way to the press; but although he omitted it now, he reprinted it in the third volume of his poems, published in 1796, when his sentiments on political topics were more perfectly in unison with those held at Oxford. Mr. Mant, in his life of Mr. T. Warton, informs us that several years after he had written this elegy, he was coming into Oxford on horseback, and as he passed over Magdalen Bridge, (it was then evening) he turned to his friend, and expressed his satisfaction, that, as it was getting dusk, they should enter the place unnoticed. His friend did not seem aware of the advantage. "What!" rejoined the poet, "do you not remember my *Isis*?" This may be reckoned an instance of the "harmless and comical vanity" which Gray attributed to him when at college.

But a more singular omission occurs in this volume, in the *Ode to a Water Nymph*. This formerly concluded with a handsome compliment to lord Lyttelton, both as a poet, and as a speaker in the senate.

Whether to gloom beneath the shady grove,
Or in the mead reflect the sparkling ray.
Not Hagley's various stream shall thine surpass,
Though Nature, and her Lyttelton ordain
That there the Naiad band should grace
With every watry charm the plain;
That there the frequent rills should roll,
And health to every flower dispense,
Free as their master pours from all his soul
The gen'rous tide of warm benevolence;
Should now glide sweetly plaintive through the vale
In melting murmurs querulously slow;
Soft as that master's love-lorn tale,
When Lucy calls forth all his woe:
Should now from steepy heights descend,
Deep thund'ring the rough rocks among,
Loud as the praise applauding senates lend,
When England's cause inspires his glowing tongue.





These were now removed, and a favourite description was substituted.—In the same year, his majesty presented our author to the canonry and prebend of Driffield, in the cathedral church of York, together with the precentorship of that church, vacant by the promotion of Dr. Newton to the bishopric of Bristol.

Mason was probably not enrolled among the friends of liberty when Churchill wrote. That libeller takes frequent opportunities to turn his writings into ridicule, but pays him, perhaps unconsciously, a well-turned compliment on his extreme correctness.

In the small compass of my careless page
Critics may find employment for an age :
Without my blunders they were all undone ;
I twenty feed where Mason can feed one.

Against the author of these unprovoked attacks, our author betrayed no immediate resentment, and when he speaks of Churchill's abuse of his friend Whitehead, disdains to recollect that he was the object of the same malignity.

His principal residence about this time was at Aston, where he displayed his taste in improving the grounds and scenery near his parsonage-house, and was yet more assiduous in discharging the duties of his clerical function. In Sept. 1765, he married Miss Sherman, daughter of William Sherman, esq. of Kingston-upon Hull, a very amiable lady, with whom his happiness was but short. Throughout the greater part of their connection, he had little intermission from the misery of watching the progress of consumption, which terminated her life in 1767, at Bristol, whither he had been advised to remove her in hopes of recovery. The lines he wrote on this occasion, need no recommendation to a feeling heart, nor would it be easy to discover a poem which conveys more quick sympathy in the whole range of elegiac poetry.

In 1772, he published the first book of his *English Garden*, a work in which Mr. Warton says, "didactic poetry is brought to perfection, by the happy combination of judicious precepts, with the most elegant ornaments of language and imagery." This opinion is quoted not only because it appears to be just, but because it proves that Mr. Warton entertained a very high opinion of Mason as a poet, although there did not exist so much cordiality of friendship as could have been wished, between men who were certainly among the ornaments of literature in their day.—The usual objections to didactic poetry are undoubtedly in force against this specimen, yet the *English Garden* was read with avidity and approbation. The subject was more familiar and interesting than those of former poems of instruction, and it afforded him more frequent opportunities to introduce rural imagery, and those descriptions which give scope to a poetical imagination. But the approbation of his friends did not flatter him into carelessness and precipitation. He appears to have been one of the few authors who are desirous to retain the fame they have acquired. The remaining books of the *English Garden* were published at periods sufficiently distant to admit all the niceties of polish and frequent correction. Book II. appeared in 1777, Book III. in 1779, and Book IV. in 1782.

During some of these intervals he executed a very important task, which devolved on him in consequence of the death of his friend Gray. This justly celebrated poet

gratified him by a visit at Aston in 1770, and after his return to Pembroke Hall, was seized with the gout in his stomach, which proved suddenly fatal. Mason hastened to Cambridge to pay the last duties of friendship, but arrived too late for the funeral, which had been conducted by Dr. Brown, master of Pembroke Hall, who was appointed joint-executor. To Mason, Gray left the sum of 500*l.* with all his books, manuscripts, musical instruments, medals, &c. and Mason undertook to write his life, and to publish such of his manuscripts as might appear to be worthy of his high character in the literary world. In his biography, he chose to deviate from the usual plan, by adopting one which seemed to present more advantages. Objections have been made to it, because the biographer seldom appears either as the narrator or the critic, but it must be allowed that the whole is rendered more interesting, and that the attention of the reader being constantly fixed on the principal character, he is enabled to form a more impartial opinion than if he had perused no evidence but the assertions of the biographer. The plan has since been followed in the cases of Johnson, Cowper, sir William Jones, Mrs. Carter, and Dr. Beattie, and where lives of equal importance to literary curiosity are to be recorded, which cannot be often, it appears to be not only the most engaging species of minute biography, but also the most impartial.

The Memoirs of Gray were published in 1775, in an elegant quarto volume, including an edition of his poems, with additions and a series of his correspondence, illustrative of those particulars, of education, genius, opinion, and temper, which, insignificant as they may often appear, are all that form the life of a scholar. In executing this task, Mr. Mason has been accused of partiality, but his partiality appears to be more in intention than effect. Some things he may have omitted, and others are certainly thrown into shade; but by exhibiting so much of his friend's correspondence he has laid him more open to public inspection than could have been done by any species of narrative. So much may be known of Gray from this volume, that probably very little is concealed which was necessary to be told, and accordingly we find that it has been appealed to with equal confidence by Gray's enemies, and by his admirers.

In 1779, he published his political creed in the shape of an animated Ode to the Naval Officers of Great Britain, written immediately after the trial of admiral Keppel in February of that year. Although attached to a retired life, he became tired of forbearance when the disappointments of the American war had incited the Whig party to discover the more distant or latent sources of national misfortune, and to propose remedies by which Britain should be always prosperous and always victorious. He was already one of those who thought the decision of parliament on the Middlesex election a violation of the rights of the people, and when the counties began, in 1779, to associate for parliamentary reform, he took an active part in assisting their deliberations, and wrote several patriotic manifestos, which raised him as high in the opinion of his own party, as they degraded him in the eyes of the other. He is even said to have given so much offence at court that he found it convenient to resign his chaplainship. It appears, however, by the poems he wrote in his latter days, that the fever of reform had abated, and that his cure, which was begun by Mr. Fox's India Bill, was afterwards completed by the French revolution. His ode to Mr. Pitt, published in 1783,

expresses the sanguine hopes he entertained of the virtues and talents of that young statesman. When he prepared this ode for a new edition in 1795, he altered the last line from

Be thine the Muse's wreath; be thou the people's friend.

to

To claim thy sovereign's love, be thou thy country's friend.

The reason of this alteration he assigns in a note, "a person (Mr. Fox) had *usurped* the name of the Friend of the People &c." To such vicissitudes are the eager assertors of theoretic liberty exposed.

Among Mr. Mason's accomplishments, his taste for painting was perhaps not inferior to that he displayed for poetry, and it has been thought that his judgment was more uniformly correct in the former than in the latter. His translation of Du Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*, which appeared in 1783, was begun, as he informs us, in his early years, with a double view of implanting in his memory the principles of a favourite art, and of acquiring a habit of versification, for which purpose the close and condensed style of the original seemed peculiarly calculated, especially when considered as a sort of school exercise. The task, however, proved so difficult, that it was long laid aside for original composition, and his translation would have never been made public, if sir Joshua Reynolds had not requested a sight of it, and offered to illustrate it by a series of notes. This induced him to revise the whole with such scrupulous care that it may be considered, in a great measure, as the production of his mature talents, and whether perused as an original or a translation is certainly not inferior to his most favourite works. In the poetical address, however, to sir Joshua Reynolds, he has not been thought so happy, and some inaccuracies of rhyme may be objected to a translation which is generally elegant and faithful. How much its value was enhanced to the artist and to the connoisseur by the annotations of sir Joshua Reynolds, is too obvious to be noticed.

His last separate publication of the poetical kind was a Secular Ode in commemoration of the glorious revolution, 1688, and appeared when men of all parties joined in festal meetings to celebrate the restoration and establishment of English liberty. In the same year he condescended to be the biographer and editor of the poems of his friend William Whitehead, esq. Of his life of Whitehead, some notice has been already taken. Neither his subject nor his materials could furnish such memoirs as he has given of Gray; but it is interesting, in an inferior degree, and would not have detracted much from his fame as a biographer, had he suppressed his splenetic notice of Dr. Johnson, and shown that he had preserved that simplicity of character and those generous feelings which Gray once attributed to him. He appears to have been equally mistaken in a pamphlet which he published about this time, animadverting on the government of the York Lunatic Asylum; but the mistake was rather of the head than the heart, for he was a cordial and liberal supporter of that institution, and was betrayed into a degree of intemperance of remark by excess of zeal for its prosperity. Of his general humanity, or what he has termed "moral patriotism," he afforded during this year an eloquent proof in a discourse delivered in York Cathedral on the

subject of the African slave trade. He was one of the first who contributed to expose the infamy of that trade, and to invigorate those remonstrances which have at length been heard with effect.

In 1795 he published a judicious, comprehensive and elegant essay, historical and critical, on English Church Music. This work embraces so many subjects connected with the decorous administration of public worship, as to deserve much more attention than has yet been bestowed upon it. His answer to Mr. Thomas Warton's objections to metrical psalmody is not the least valuable part, and the spirit and intelligence which he displays on this subject do credit to him both as a poet and a divine. His knowledge of music was very accurate, and he is said to have composed a *Te Deum*, a hymn, and other pieces for the choir of York. The improvement, if not the invention of the piano forte is also attributed to him in an elaborate article on that subject inserted in Dr. Gleig's supplement to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

In all the editions of his poems hitherto published, Mr. Mason omitted some pieces for various reasons; but about the year 1796, he determined to collect the whole into an additional or third volume, interspersed with some which had never been printed. This appeared in 1797 immediately after his death. The collection now before the reader consists only of the pieces which have long been considered as common property.

His death, although he had reached his seventy second year, was not the consequence of age. His health was yet more robust than most men enjoy at that advanced period, and his faculties had undergone no perceptible alteration, when he received a hurt in stepping into a carriage, which, producing a mortification, terminated his life on the 7th of April 1797. A monument has been since erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey adjoining to that of Gray, with the following inscription.

Optimo Viro

GULIELMO MASON. A. M.

Poetæ,

Si quis alius

Culto, casto, pio.

Sacrum.

The countess Harcourt also erected an urn to his memory in the flower garden at Nuneham, with an inscription celebrating his "simple manners, piety, and steady friendship." A yet higher tribute of respect has been paid by his friend Mr. Gisborne in some elegant verses which are prefixed to the present edition of his poems. The opinion of so good a man as Mr. Gisborne is entitled to confidence, and there is no reason to doubt that Mason deserved the praise he has given him, nor, considering the general and acknowledged frailty of human nature, will this panegyric suffer by the few exceptions which truth and justice to the merits of others, his contemporaries, may offer.

Mr. Mason's life appears to have been principally devoted to the duties of his profession, occasionally relieved by the cultivation of the fine arts. His associates, at least in the latter part of his life, were few. He had the misfortune to survive the



greater number, whose friendship he had cultivated in his early years, and he was not ambitious of new connections. This brought on him the imputation of that pride, or distance of manner which is ascribed to men of unsocial habits. But Mason's heart was not inaccessible, and his friendships were inviolable. The simplicity, however, attributed to him in his young days by Gray, and the patience with which lord Orford informs us, he heard his faults, did not accompany him through life. On the publication of Gray's life, he was ready to allow, that "twenty-five years had made a very considerable abatement in his general philanthropy," and by philanthropy he seems here to mean a diffidence of opinion on matters of literature, and an unwillingness to censure acknowledged merit. It can have no reference to philanthropy in the more general acceptation of the word, for he was to the last liberal, humane, and charitable. What it really means, indeed, we find in the work just alluded to. The contemptuous notice of Waterland, Akenside, and Shenstone, which he did not suppress in Gray, he employed himself with more harshness whenever he could find an opportunity to attack the writings of Dr. Johnson. The opinion this great critic pronounced on Gray may be probably quoted as the provocation, and great allowance is to be made for the warmth and zeal with which he guards the memory of his departed friend. But surely one of his notes on Gray's Letters may be here fairly quoted against him. "Had Mr. Pope disregarded the sarcasms of the many writers that endeavoured to eclipse his poetical fame, as much as Mr. Gray appears to have done, the world would not have been possessed of a Dunciad; but it would have been impressed with a more amiable idea of its author's temper." Nor was his prosecution of Murray for taking about fifty lines from his works of Gray into an edition which that bookseller published, much to the credit of his liberality, especially as he refused to drop the prosecution, when requested to name his own terms of compensation. Such littlenesses are to be regretted in a man who was the friend of genius and literature, whose circumstances placed him far above want, and whose regular discharge of the duties of piety and humanity bespoke an ambition for higher enjoyments than fame and wealth can yield.—Of his regard for sacred truth and the respect due to it, he exhibited a proof in a letter to lord Orford, on his lordship's childish epitaph on two piping bullfinches, to which he received an answer that was probably not very satisfactory.

As a poet, his name has been so frequently coupled with that of Gray, and their merits have been supposed to approach so nearly, that what has been said of the one will in some degree apply to the other. It is evident that they studied in the same school, and mutually cultivated those opinions which aim at restoring a purer species of poetry than was taught in the school of their predecessor Pope. Whether we consider Mason as a lyric, dramatic, or didactic writer, we find the same grandeur of outline, the same daring and inventive ambition which carries out of the common track of versification and sentiment into the higher regions of imagination. His attachment to the sister art, and his frequent contemplation of the more striking and sublime objects of nature, inclined him to the descriptive; and his landscapes have a warmth and colouring, often rich and harmonious, but perhaps too frequently marked with a glare of manner peculiar to the artist. His compositions, however, even on the same subject, have all the variety of a fertile invention. Although we have even-

ing, morning, &c. often depicted, they are to be distinguished, and the preference we are inclined to give is regulated by the feeling which the varieties of natural appearances excite in different minds, and in the same mind at different times.

Mason's correctness is almost proverbial, and his ambition undoubtedly was to be equally correct and elegant; yet his style must often lead the reader to question his judgment, and to wonder that he could not see what every one else saw. That a man with so many endowments as a scholar, a critic, and an admirer of the simplicity of the ancients, should have fallen so frequently into a style ornamented with a finical profuseness, would be sufficiently remarkable, if his decorations had readily presented themselves; but when we see him so frequently pausing for an epithet that encumbers what it cannot illustrate, when we see him more attentive to novelty than strength of imagery, and, above all, taxing his memory to produce repeated alliterations, we are forced to conclude, that judgment is not always consistent, or that in some men it occasionally exists independent of true taste. With these exceptions, however, few indeed of the modern poets in this collection deserve a higher rank than Mason, as a lyric and descriptive poet, nor has he given any finished piece to the world from which examples of excellence may not be quoted.

It is now necessary to advert to a series of poems which are added to Mr. Mason's works in the present edition. The author of the Heroic Epistle was long concealed from the world, and for reasons which are obvious: but it had merit enough to be ascribed to the best living satirists, to Mason, Walpole, Hayley, Cowper, Anstey and others. It appears, however, to be now universally given to Mason. Mr. Thomas Warton was of opinion that "it might have been written by Walpole and buckramed by Mason." Mr. Malone, in a note on this opinion, which occurs in Boswell's Life of Johnson, says "it is now known that the Heroic Epistle was written by Mason." Mr. Mant, in his Life of Warton, informs us, that when it was first published, Warton ascribed it to Mason, and endeavoured to confirm his opinion by internal evidence. Mason heard of this, and sent to him a letter in 1777, published by Mr. Mant, in which he professes to expostulate with him for raising a report merely from critical conjecture.—"I have been told that you have pronounced me very frequently in company to be the author of the Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers, and I am told too that the premier himself suspects that I am so, upon your authority. Surely, sir, mere internal evidence (and you can possibly have no other) can never be sufficient to ground such a determination upon, when you consider how many persons in this rhyming age of our's are possessed of that knack of Pope's versification, which constitutes one part of the merit of that poem, and as to the wit, humour, or satire which it contains, no part of my writings could ever lead you, by their analogy, to form so peremptory a judgment. I acquit you, however, in this procedure of every, even the slightest degree of ill-nature: and believe that what you have said was only to show your critical acumen. I only mention it that you may be more cautious of speaking of other persons in like manner, who may throw such anonymous bantings of their brain into the wide world. To some of these it might prove an essential injury: for though they might deserve the frown of power (as the author in question certainly does) yet I am persuaded that your good nature would be hurt if that frown was either increased or fixed by your ipse dixit.



“To say more on this trivial subject, would betray a solicitude on my part very foreign from my present feelings or inclination. My easy and independent circumstances make such a suspicion sit mighty easy upon me; and the minister, nay the whole ministry, are free to think what they please of a man, who neither aims to solicit, nor wishes to accept any favour from them.”

What our author has here remarked concerning internal evidence, has probably occurred to all who fixed their suspicions on him. From the works published under his name, no person could for a moment suppose him to be a man of humour, or inclined to personal and political satire. He might even have asked whether it was probable that a man whose pen had been uniformly devoted to solemn and serious poetry, and who had never brought forward the shadow of a claim for the honours of wit, should at an advanced period of life suddenly eclipse his contemporaries and some of his predecessors, by exhibiting a humour which he had never been suspected to possess, and a spirit which would have better become a Paul Whitehead, or a Charles Churchill: and that he should carry this humour and this spirit through six poems of no inconsiderable length, on dissimilar subjects. Yet as even this, however remarkable, is not beyond the reach of genius, it was surely in his power to bring the question to a more prompt issue. But this he evades, and uses every argument against Mr. Warton's opinion but that which must have at once refuted it, the plain and flat denial of a man of honour and principle.

On this account, therefore, the Heroic Epistle, and the other pieces published under the name of Macgregor, are now added to Mr. Mason's works, but not without a wish that they could have been attributed to some writer of less private and public worth. If they be his, they will add to his literary reputation, by placing him among the first satirical poets of his day, if not above the first; but whoever contemplates the disaffected spirit in which they are written will probably be of opinion, that by adopting the floating invectives and prejudices of a party and of a turbulent period, he did not consult the consistency of his character, or the dignity of his Muse.







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been yet a more extraordinary woman than all the heroes, for we see



Sir William Jones.

Published by Verner & Hood 31. Poultry, February 28. 1799.

THE
LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM JONES.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THE life of sir William Jones, one of the most illustrious characters of the eighteenth century, forms a history of unexampled talents, industry, and taste, employed to the most valuable purposes. In what he executed and in what he projected, there is a grasp of mind and a vigour of intellect to which no short narrative can do justice. Yet the purpose of the present sketch will be fully answered if it shall send the reader with eagerness to the more ample and satisfactory volume lately published by lord Teignmouth.

The family of this eminent scholar is ancient, and may be traced through a long catalogue of names, none of which have obtained a place in biography, except that of his father, who was highly and deservedly celebrated as a philosopher and mathematician during and after the time of sir Isaac Newton. He was a native of Anglesea, from which he removed to the humble occupation of teaching mathematics on board a man of war. After pursuing this course of life for some years, he became a teacher of the same science in London, and the author of some works in great esteem. His excellent character and talents recommended him to the acquaintance and patronage of lord Hardwicke, sir Isaac Newton, lord Macclesfield and others, which he enjoyed until his death in 1749. By his wife, Mary Nix, the daughter of a cabinet-maker in London, he had three children, George, who died in infancy; Mary, who became the wife of Mr. Rainsford a merchant, and lost her life in 1802, in consequence of her clothes taking fire, and William, the subject of the present memoir, who was born on the eve of the festival of St. Michael 1746.

As his father died when he had scarcely reached his third year, the care of his education devolved on his mother, whose talents and virtues eminently qualified her for the task. Her husband, with affectionate precision, characterised her as one who "was virtuous without blemish, generous without extravagance, frugal but not niggard, cheerful but not giddy, close but not sullen, ingenious but not conceited, of spirit but not passionate, of her company cautious, in her friendship trusty, to her parents dutiful, and to her husband ever faithful, loving and obedient." She must have been yet a more extraordinary woman than all this imports, for we are told that under

her husband's tuition she became a considerable proficient in algebra, and with a view to act as preceptor to her sister's son, who was destined for the sea, she made herself perfect in trigonometry, and the theory of navigation, sciences of which it is probable she knew nothing before marriage, and which she now pursued amidst the anxious, and, usually, monopolizing cares of a family.

In educating her son she appears to have preferred a method at once affectionate and judicious. Discovering in him a natural curiosity and thirst for knowledge, beyond what children generally display, she made the gratification of those passions to depend on his own industry, and constantly pointed to a book as the source of information. So successful was this method, that in his fourth year he was able distinctly and rapidly to read any English book, while his memory was agreeably exercised in getting by heart such popular pieces of poetry as were likely to engage the fancy of a child. His taste for reading gradually became a habit, and having in his fifth year, while looking over a bible, fallen upon the sublime description of the Angel in the tenth chapter of the Apocalypse, the impression which his imagination received from it was never effaced.

In his sixth year an attempt was made to teach him Latin, but the acquisition of a new language had as yet no charms. At Michaelmas 1753, when he had completed his seventh year, he was placed at Harrow school, under the tuition of Dr. Thackeray. Here during the first two years he applied with diligence to his prescribed tasks, but without indicating that superiority of talents which in eminent characters biographers are desirous to trace to the earliest years. It was enough, however, that he learned what was taught, and it was fortunate that his mind was gradually informed without being perplexed. During the vacations his mother resumed her "delightful task," and initiated him in the art of drawing, in which she excelled. Her private instructions became more necessary, and indeed indispensable, when in his ninth year his thigh-bone was accidentally fractured. During his confinement, which lasted twelve months, his mother diverted his taste for reading to the best English poets, whom he already endeavoured to imitate, but whether any of these very early efforts are in existence his biographer has not informed us.

On his return to school, he was placed in the same class which he should have attained if the progress of his studies had not been interrupted. Whether this was from favour or caprice in the master, it might have been attended with fatal consequences to young Jones, had his temper been of that irascible and wayward kind which sometimes accompanies genius. He found himself in a situation in which he was necessarily a year behind his school-fellows, and yet his master affected to presume on his equal proficiency, and goaded him by punishment and degradation to perform tasks for which he had received no preparatory instructions. In a few months, however, he applied himself so closely during his leisure hours to recover what he had lost, that he soon reached the head of his class, and uniformly gained every prize offered for the best exercise. In his twelfth year he moved into the upper school, when he entered upon the study of the Greek, and, as was his practice when in the lower, exercised himself in various translations and compositions which, not being required by his instructors, elevated him in the eyes of his school-fellows, while his kindness prevented the usual effects of jealousy. They felt nothing unpleasant in the superiority of a





schoolfellow whose talents were employed in their service, either to promote their learning or their amusements. On one occasion when they proposed to act the play of the *Tempest*, but had no copy at hand, he wrote it for them so correctly from memory, that they acted it with as much reputation as they probably could have derived from the best edition. His own part was *Prospero*. On another occasion he composed a dramatic piece on the story of *Meleager*, which was acted by his school-fellows, as a tragedy. Such efforts of memory and invention at so early an age are truly wonderful. His tragedy, indeed, will not bear criticism, but the lines which his biographer has given as a specimen, will not suffer much by a comparison with the general strain of verses in the infant era of English tragedy.

His predilection for whatever concerned poetry appeared in the pains he now took to study the varieties of the Roman metre. His proficiency was indeed so superior to that of most of his associates in every pursuit, that they were glad to consult him as a preceptor, and to borrow from him as a friend those helps which they were otherwise unable to procure. During the holidays he learnt French and arithmetic, and as he was admitted to the company of the ingenious philosopher Mr. Baker, and his learned friends, his mother recommended to him the *Spectacle de la Nature*, as a book that might enable him to understand their conversation. He obeyed her injunction, as he uniformly did upon every occasion, and was probably not uninterested in many parts of that once instructive work, but he had not yet begun to make excursions into the field of natural history, and he acknowledged that he was more entertained with the *Arabian Tales* and *Shakspeare*.

Although he did not yet cease to be the boy, he frequently gave indications of the man, and perhaps in nothing more than the useful turn of his amusements, which generally had some reference to his studies, and proved that learning was uppermost in his mind. Of this disposition the following anecdote, related by lord Teignmouth, is pleasingly characteristic.—“ He invented a political play, in which Dr. William Bennet, bishop of Cloyne, and the celebrated Dr. Parr, were his principal associates. They divided the fields in the neighbourhood of Harrow, according to a map of Greece, into states and kingdoms; each fixed upon one as his dominion, and assumed an ancient name. Some of their schoolfellows consented to be styled barbarians, who were to invade their territories and attack their hillocks, which were denominated fortresses. The chiefs vigorously defended their respective domains against the incursions of the enemy; and in these imitative wars, the young statesmen held councils, made vehement harangues, and composed memorials, all doubtless very boyish, but calculated to fill their minds with ideas of legislation and civil government. In these unusual amusements, Jones was ever the leader; and he might justly have appropriated to himself the words of Catullus:

Ego gymnasii flos, ego decus olei.

Dr. Bennett informs us that “ great abilities, great particularity of thinking, fondness for writing verses and plays of various kinds, and a degree of integrity and manly courage, distinguished him even at this period.” And Dr. Thackeray, the master of the school, however niggardly in general of his praises before the objects of his esteem, confessed in private that “ he was a boy of so active a mind, that if he were left naked

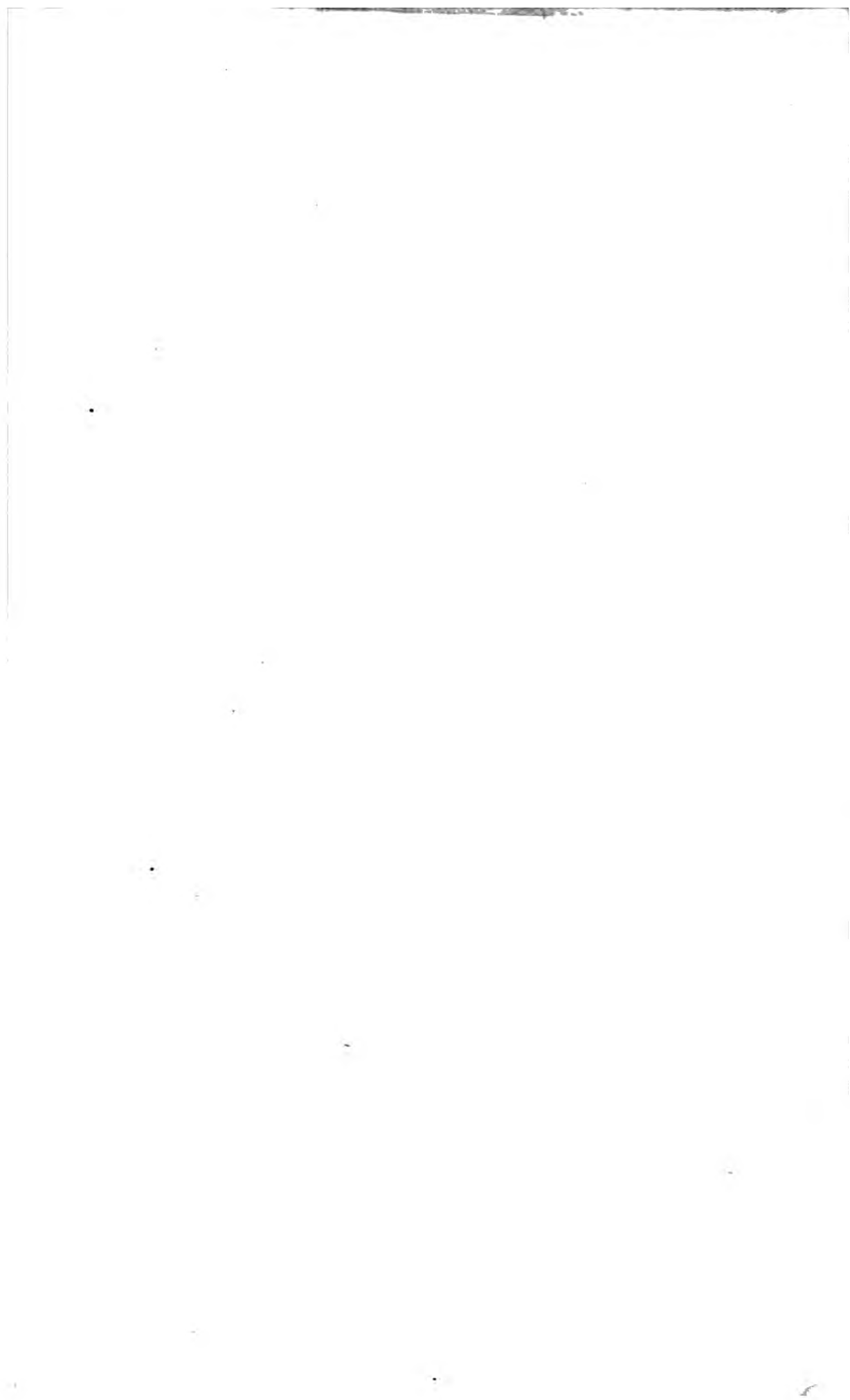
and friendless on Salisbury Plain, he would nevertheless find the road to fame and riches."

When Dr. Sumner succeeded Dr. Thackeray in 1761, he more publicly distinguished Mr. Jones, as one whose proficiency was marked by uncommon diligence and success. To a critical knowledge of Greek and Latin, he began now to add some acquaintance with the Hebrew, and even learned the Arabic characters, while during the vacations he improved his former knowledge of the French and Italian languages. His ardent thirst for knowledge, however, at this time, induced him to study with so little intermission from sleep or exercise, that he was beginning to contract a weakness of sight. On this occasion his friends interposed their advice, and for some time he consented to relax from fatigues so unsuitable to his tender age. It is probable, however, that he had already gone too far, for weakness of sight was one of the first complaints which impeded his studies when in India.

A letter to his sister, written at the age of fourteen, which his biographer has inserted at this period of his history, contains reflections on the folly of sorrowing for the death of friends, which perhaps might be placed in a more just light, but from one of his age certainly indicate very extraordinary powers of thinking: and the transition from these to the common trifles of correspondence, shows an inclination to play the youthful philosopher, which gives considerable interest to this singular epistle. The reflections, it is true, are trite, but they could not have been trite to one just entering upon life, nor could so lively a youth have long revolved the uncertainties of fame and happiness.

When he had attained the age of seventeen, his friends determined to remove him to one of the universities, but his mother had been advised to place him in the office of some special pleader. He had in the course of his desultory reading, perused a few law books, and frequently amused his mother's visitors by discussing topics of legal subtlety. But the law had not taken a complete hold on his inclination at this time, and his preceptor, Dr. Sumner, easily prevailed in recommending an academical course. He was accordingly, in the spring 1764, entered of University College, Oxford, in which city his mother now took up her residence. This latter circumstance was peculiarly grateful to Mr. Jones, who was as much distinguished above the mass of mankind for filial affection as for his literary accomplishments.

The passion he had imbibed for general learning, and the desultory manner in which his unremitting application left him at liberty to indulge it, were at first in danger of being interrupted by the necessity of attending to a routine of instructions from which he imagined he could derive very little advantage. But in time he became accustomed to the mode of study then prevalent, and without neglecting any thing which it was necessary to know, pursued at his leisure hours that course of classical and polite literature which had already proved that he was not to be satiated by the common allowances of education. Oriental literature presented itself to his mind with unusual charms, as if the plan of his future life and the avenues to his future fame had been regularly laid down before him; and he had not applied himself long to the Arabic and Persic, before he conceived that greater advantages were to be reaped from those languages than from the more popular treasures of Greece and Rome. Such was at the time his enthusiasm in this undertaking, that, having accidentally discovered one



Mirza, a native of Aleppo, in London, he prevailed on him to accompany him to Oxford, not without hopes that he might induce some of his companions to avail themselves of this Syrian's labours, and assist him in defraying the expense of his maintenance; but in this he was disappointed, and for some months the whole of the burthen fell upon himself.

During his residence at Oxford, his time was regularly divided into portions, each of which was filled up with the study of the ancients or moderns, and there have been few examples of such extensive accumulation of knowledge by one so young: yet amidst this severe course of application, he regularly apportioned some time for the practice of those manly exercises which promote health.

As his residence at the university necessarily became expensive, he anxiously wished for a fellowship, that he might be enabled to relieve his mother from a burthen which she could ill support. He had obtained a scholarship a few months after his matriculation, but a fellowship appeared more remote, and he was beginning to despair of achieving this object when he received an offer to be private tutor to lord Althorpe, now earl Spencer. He had been recommended to the Spencer family by Dr. Shipley, who had seen and approved some of his performances at Harrow, and particularly a Greek oration in praise of Lyon who founded the school at that place in the reign of Elizabeth.

This proposal was cheerfully accepted by Mr. Jones, and, in the summer of 1765, he went for the first time to Wimbledon Park to take upon him the education of his pupil, who was just seven years old, and with whose manners he was delighted. It would be needless to point out the advantages of such a situation as this to a young man of Jones's accomplishments and expectations. It presented every thing he could wish, liberal patronage to promote his views, elegant society to form his manners, and opportunities for study which were inferior only to what he enjoyed at Oxford. In the course of the following summer, he obtained a fellowship, which, although not exceeding one hundred pounds, appeared to him a sufficient provision and a solid independency. His time was now divided between Oxford, London, Wimbledon, and Althorpe, and, in 1767, he visited the continent with the Spencer family, and during this trip, which was but short, acquired some knowledge of the German language. Before setting out, and in the twenty-first year of his age, he began his Commentaries on Asiatic Poetry, in imitation of Dr. Lowth's Prelections at Oxford, on the sacred poetry of the Hebrews, and soon after his return, in the winter of 1767, he nearly completed his Commentaries, transcribed an Asiatic manuscript on Egypt and the Nile, and copied the keys of the Chinese language, which he wished to add to his other acquisitions.

Into these pursuits Mr. Jones appears to have been insensibly led, without the hopes of higher gratification than the pleasure they afforded, but a circumstance now occurred which may be considered as the first step of his progress to what finally constituted his fame as a scholar and public character. The circumstance is thus related by lord Teignmouth nearly in Mr. Jones's words.

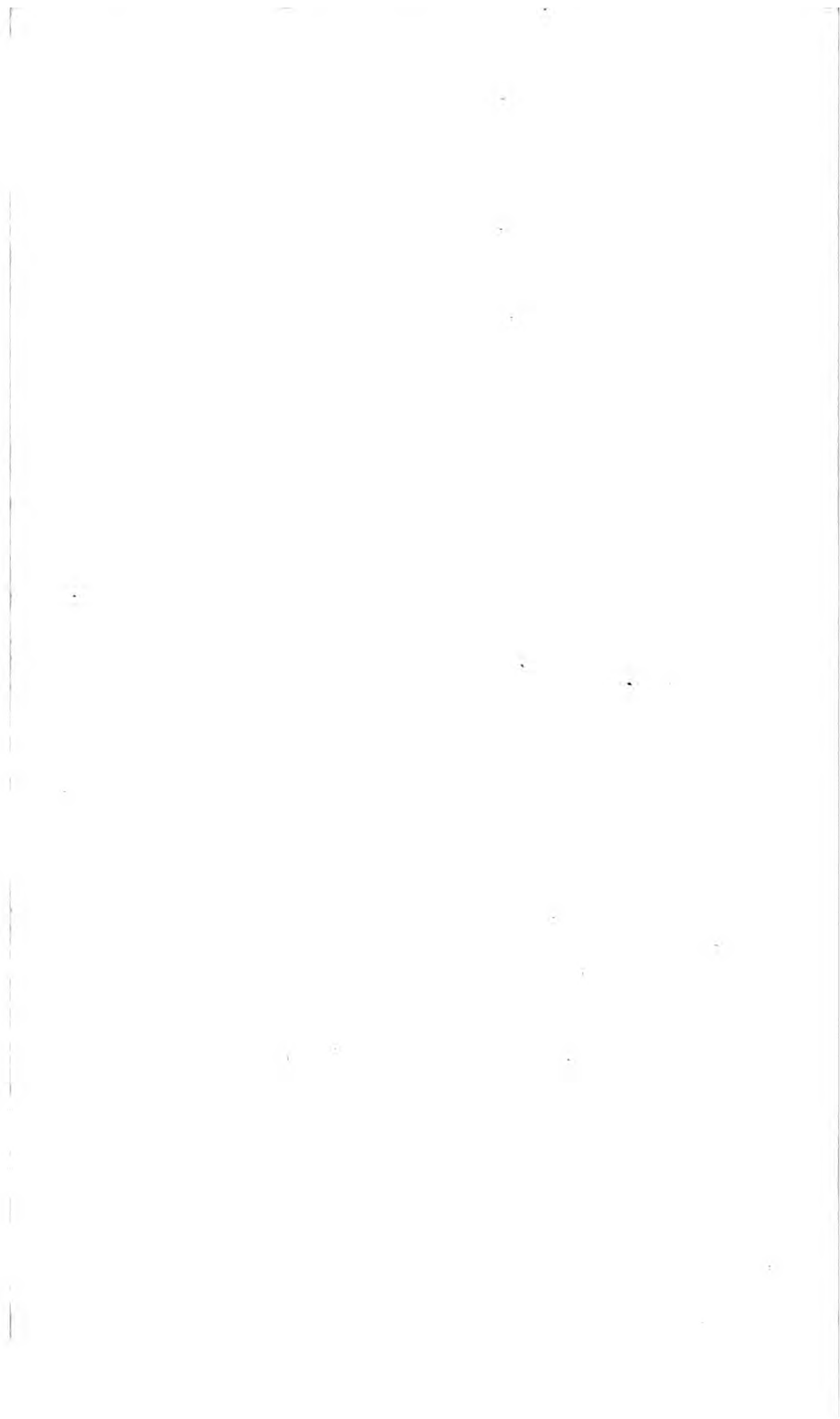
"The king of Denmark, then upon a visit to this country (1768) had brought with him an eastern manuscript, containing the life of Nadir Shah, which he was desirous of having translated in England. The secretary of state with whom the Danish

minister had conversed upon the subject, sent the volume to Mr. Jones, requesting him to give a literal translation of it in the French language; but he wholly declined the task, alleging for his excuse, the dryness of the subject, the difficulty of the style, and chiefly his want both of leisure and ability, to enter upon an undertaking so fruitless and laborious. He mentioned, however, a gentleman, with whom he was not then acquainted, but who had distinguished himself by the translation of a Persian history, and some popular tales from the Persic, as capable of gratifying the wishes of his Danish majesty. Major Dow, the writer alluded to, excused himself on account of his numerous engagements, and the application to Mr. Jones was renewed. It was hinted, that his compliance could be of no small advantage to him, at his entrance into life; that it would procure him some mark of distinction, which would be pleasing to him; and above all, that it would be a reflection upon this country, if the king should be obliged to carry the manuscript to France. Incited by these motives, and principally the last, unwilling to be thought churlish or morose, and eager for reputation, he undertook the work, and sent a specimen of it to his Danish majesty, who returned his approbation of the style and method, but desired that the whole translation might be perfectly literal, and the oriental images accurately preserved. The task would have been far easier to him, if he had been directed to finish it in Latin; for the acquisition of a French style was infinitely more tedious, and it was necessary to have every chapter corrected by a native of France, before it could be offered to the discerning eye of the public, since in every language there are certain peculiarities of idiom, and nice shades of meaning, which a foreigner can never attain to perfection. The work, however arduous and unpleasant, was completed in a year, not without repeated hints from the secretary's office, that it was expected with great impatience by the court of Denmark. The translation was not, however, published until 1770. Forty copies upon large paper were sent to Copenhagen: one of them, bound with uncommon elegance, for the king himself; and the others as presents to his courtiers."

What reward he received for this undertaking is but obscurely related. His Danish majesty, we are told, sent him a diploma, constituting him a member of the Royal Society of Copenhagen, and recommended him, in the strongest terms, to the favour and benevolence of his own sovereign. In all this there seems but an inadequate recompense for a work which at that time perhaps no person could have executed but himself¹.

His noble pupil being removed to Harrow, Mr. Jones had an opportunity of renewing his intimacy with Dr. Sumner, who had always estimated his talents and learn-

¹ Mr. Jones, in a letter to one of his correspondents, says, "When he (the king of Denmark) was considering what recompense he should bestow upon me, a noble friend of mine informed his majesty, that I neither wished for nor valued money, but was anxious only for some honorary mark of his approbation." Whether Mr. Jones had instructed his noble friend to use this language does not appear, but it is certain that he felt a degree of disappointment. In 1773, when he published an abridged Life of Nadir Shah, in his preface he takes an opportunity to lament that the profession of literature leads to no benefit or true glory whatsoever, and adds "Unless a man can assert his own independence in active life, it will avail him little, to be favoured by the learned, esteemed by the eminent, or recommended even to kings." C.



ing at their full value. While here, he transcribed a Persian grammar, which he had three years before composed for the use of a school-fellow destined for India, and also began a dictionary of the Persian language, in which the principal words were illustrated from the most celebrated authors of the East; but he appears to have been aware of the expense attending this work, and was unwilling to continue it, unless the East India company would purchase it. In the year 1770, he issued proposals for a new edition of Meninski's Dictionary. This appears to be what his biographer alludes to. It was to have been published in 1773, but the scheme was dropt for want of encouragement.

Amidst these occupations, so far beyond the common reach of literary industry, he became a serious inquirer into the evidences of Christianity, about which he appears at this time to have entertained some doubts. In this, as in all his studies, his application was intense, and his inquiries conducted upon the fairest and most liberal principles. The result was a firm belief in the authenticity and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and a life dignified by purity of conduct and the exercise of every Christian virtue.

In 1770, he passed the winter on the continent with the Spencer family, during which, he informs one of his correspondents, his occupations were "music, with all its sweetness and feeling: difficult and abstruse problems in mathematics: and the beautiful and sublime in poetry and painting." He wrote also in English a tract on education in the analytical manner; a tragedy founded on the story of Mustapha who was put to death by his father Soliman; and made various translations from the oriental poets. He appears on this tour to have been less intent on those objects of curiosity which usually interest travellers, than on adding to his knowledge of languages, and habituating himself to composition in all its modes, from the gay and familiar letter of friendship, to the serious and philosophical disquisition. Of the tract on education just mentioned, a fragment only remains, which his biographer has published. It appears to include the plan which he pursued in his own case. The tragedy has been totally lost, except part of a preface, in which he professes to have taken Shakspeare for his model, not by adopting his sentiments, or borrowing his expressions, but by aiming at his manner, and by striving to write as he supposes he would have written himself, if he had lived in the eighteenth century. The loss of such a curiosity cannot be too much regretted, unless our regret should be lessened by reflecting on the hazard of any attempt to bring Shakspeare on the modern stage. It is surely not less difficult than that of Mason, who unsuccessfully strove to write as the Greek tragedians "would have written, had they lived in the eighteenth century."

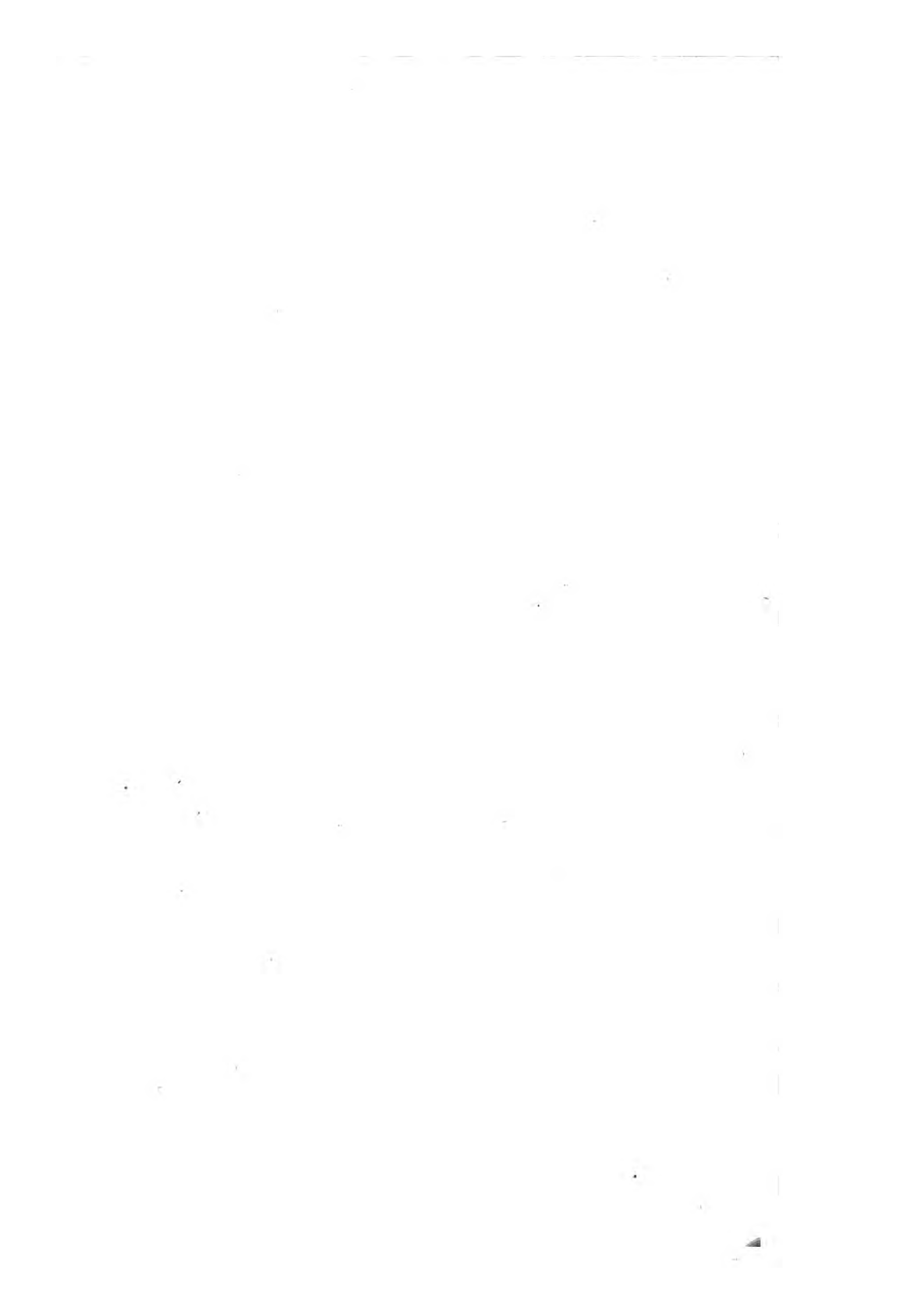
On his return from this tour, he appears to have contemplated his situation as not altogether corresponding with the feelings of an independent mind, and with the views he entertained of aiming at the dignity and usefulness of a public character. The advice given by some of his friends, when he left Harrow school, probably now recurred to his memory, and was strengthened by additional and more urgent motives, for he finally determined on the law as a profession: and, having resigned his charge in lord Spencer's family, was admitted into the Temple on the nineteenth of September, 1770, in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

Those who consider the study of the law as incompatible with a mind devoted to

the acquisition of polite literature, and with a taste delighting in frequent excursions to the regions of fancy, will be ready to conclude that Mr. Jones would soon discover an invincible repugnance to his new pursuit. But the reverse was in a great measure the fact. He found nothing in the study of the law so dry or laborious as not to be overcome by the same industry which had enabled him to overcome, almost in childhood, the difficulties which frequently deter men of mature years: and he was stimulated by what appears to have predominated through life, an honest ambition to rise to eminence in a profession which, although sometimes successfully followed by men of dull capacity, does not exclude the most brilliant acquirements. Still, however, while labouring to qualify himself for the bar, he regarded his progress in literature as too important or too delightful to be altogether interrupted, and from the correspondence published by lord Teignmouth, it appears that he snatched many an hour from his legal inquiries, to meditate plans connected with his oriental studies. What he executed, indeed, did not always correspond with what he projected, but we find that within the first two years of his residence in the Temple, he sketched the plan of an epic poem, and of a Turkish history, and published a French letter to Anquetil du Perron, who, in his Travels in India had treated the university of Oxford, and some of its learned members and friends of Mr. Jones, with disrespect. In this letter he corrected the petulance of the French writer with more asperity than perhaps his maturer judgment would have approved, but yet without injustice, for Perron stood convicted not only of loose invective, but of absolute falsehood.—Besides these Mr. Jones published, in 1772, a small volume of poems, consisting chiefly of translations from the Asiatic languages, with two prose dissertations on Eastern poetry and on the arts commonly called imitative. As those elegant and original Essays are intimately connected with his Translations, no apology will be necessary for adding them to the present edition. Most of these poems had been written long before this period, but were kept back until they had received all the improvements of frequent revisal, and the criticisms of his friends.

From his first entrance into the university, until Michaelmas 1768, when he took his bachelor's degree, he had kept terms regularly, but from this period to 1773 only occasionally. During the Encænia, in Easter-term 1773, he took his master's degree, and composed an oration which he intended to have spoken in the theatre; but which was not published till about ten years after. In the beginning of the year 1774, he published his Commentaries on Asiatic Poetry, which have been already noticed, as having been begun in 1766, and finished in 1769, when he was only in his twenty-third year. The same motives which induced him to keep back his poems prevailed in the present instance, a diffidence in his own abilities, and a wish to profit by more mature examination, as well as by the opinions of his friends. By the preface to this work it would appear that he was not perfectly satisfied with the profession in which he had engaged, and that had circumstances permitted he would have been better pleased to have devoted his days to an uninterrupted course of study. But such was his fate that he must now renounce polite literature; and having been admitted to the bar in 1774, he adhered to this determination inflexibly for some years³, during

³ About this time, he issued proposals for publishing his father's mathematical works, in which, however, either for want of time or encouragement, he proceeded no farther. C.



which his books and manuscripts, except such as related to law and oratory, remained locked up at Oxford. He seems to have been seriously convinced that the new science he was about to enter upon was too comprehensive to admit of union with other studies, and he accordingly pursued it with his usual avidity, endeavouring to embrace the whole of jurisprudence in its fullest extent, and to make himself not only the technical but the philosophical lawyer. For some time he had but little practice, but it gradually came in, and with it a very considerable share of reputation. Towards the end of the year 1776, he was appointed a commissioner of bankrupts, a favour which he seems inclined to estimate beyond the value usually put upon it by professional men.

Notwithstanding his determination to suspend the study of ancient literature, there was a gratification in it which he found impossible to resign, while his practice continued so scanty as to afford him any disposable time. In the year last mentioned, we find him reading the Grecian orators again and again, and translating the most useful orations of Isæus. Some part of his time likewise he devoted to philosophical experiments and discoveries, attended the meetings of the Royal Society, of which he had been elected a fellow in 1772, and kept up an extensive epistolary intercourse with many of the literati of Europe. In these letters, subjects of law seldom occur unless as an apology for his barrenness on topics more congenial. From the commencement of the unhappy contest between Great Britain and America, he was decidedly against the measures adopted by the mother country.

In 1778, he published his translation of the Orations of Isæus, in causes concerning the succession to property at Athens; with a prefatory discourse, notes historical and critical, and a commentary. This work he dedicated to earl Bathurst, who among all his illustrious friends, was as yet his only benefactor, by conferring on him the place of commissioner of bankrupts. The elegant style, profound research, and acute criticism displayed in this translation attracted the applause of every judge of classical learning.

His next publication was a Latin Ode to Liberty, under the title of *Julii Melesigoni ad Libertatem*, a name formed by the transposition of the letters *Gulielmus Jonesius*. In this ode, the author of which was soon known, he made a more ample acknowledgment of his political principles, and this, it is feared, had an unfavourable influence on the hopes which he was encouraged to entertain of promotion by the then administration. In 1780, there was a vacant seat on the bench of Fort William in Bengal, to which the kindness of lord North led him to aspire, but for some time, he had very little prospect of success⁴. During the time that this matter was in suspence, on the resignation of sir Roger Newdigate, he was advised to come forward as a candidate for the representation of the university of Oxford in parliament. But finding that there was no chance of success, he declined the contest before the day of election. His avowed principles on the great question of the American war were so decidedly hostile, not only to the measures pursued by administration, but to the sentiments entertained by the majority of the members of the university, that although he might be disappointed, he could not be surprised at his failure, and accordingly appears to have resigned himself to his former pursuits with tranquil satisfaction.

⁴ This vacancy, if I mistake not, occurred in 1778 by the death of M. Le Maitre. In the newspapers Mr. Jones was at this time called "the extraordinary linguist." C.

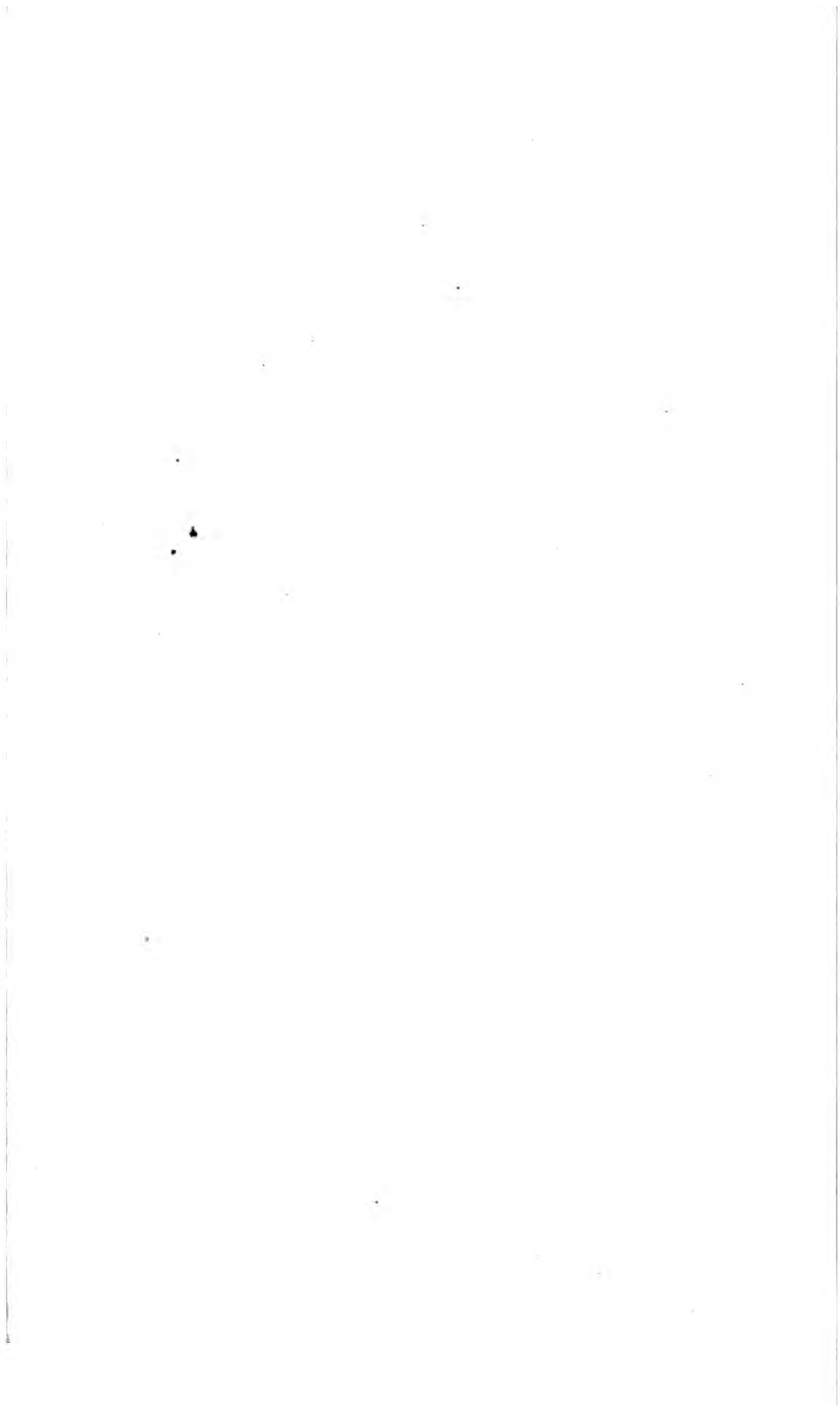
During this year (1780) he published *An Enquiry into the legal Mode of suppressing Riots, with a Constitutional Plan of Future Defence*, a pamphlet suggested by the dreadful riots in London, of which he had been a witness. His object is to prove that the common and statute laws of the realm then in force, give the civil state in every country a power, which, if it were perfectly understood, and continually prepared, would effectually quell any riot or insurrection, without assistance from the military, and even without the modern riot-act. In a speech which he intended to have delivered at a meeting of the freeholders of Middlesex in September following, he more explicitly avowed his sentiments on public affairs, and in language rather stronger than usual with him, although suited to the state of popular opinion in that county.

During a short visit to Paris, he appears to have formed a design of writing a history of the war. On his return, however, he recurred to his more favourite studies, and his biographer had printed a curious memorandum, dated 1780, in which Mr. Jones resolves to learn no more rudiments of any kind, but to perfect himself in the languages he had already acquired, viz. Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, German, and English, as the means of acquiring a more accurate knowledge of history, arts and sciences. With such wonderful acquisitions, he was now only in his thirty-third year.

In the winter of 1780-1, he found leisure to complete his translation of seven ancient poems of the highest reputation in Arabia, which, however, were not published till 1783: and he celebrated, about the same time, the nuptials of lord Althorpe with Miss Bingham, in an elegant ode entitled *The Muse Recalled*. In his professional line he published an *Essay on the Law of Bailments*, a subject handled under the distinct heads of analysis, history and synthesis: in which mode he proposed at some future period to discuss every branch of English law, civil and criminal, private and public. His object in all his legal discussions was to advance law to the honours of a science. It may be doubted which at this time predominated in his mind, his professional plans, or his more favourite study of the Eastern poets. He now, however, undertook a work in which he might gratify both duty and inclination, by translating an Arabian poem on the Mahomedan law of succession to the property of intestates. The poem had indeed but few charms to reward his labour by delighting his fancy, but in the prospect of obtaining a judge's seat in India, he foresaw advantages from every opportunity of displaying his knowledge of the Mohomedan laws.

In 1782, he took a very active part among the societies formed to procure a more equal representation in the commons' house of parliament. The speech which he delivered at the London tavern on this subject was long admired for its elegance, perspicuity and independent spirit. He was also elected a member of the society for Constitutional Information, and bestowed considerable attention to the objects it professed. The *Dialogue between a Farmer and a Country Gentleman on the Principles of Government*, which he wrote some time before, was circulated by this society with much industry. When the dean of St. Asaph (afterwards his brother-in-law) was indicted for publishing an edition of it in Wales, Mr. Jones sent a letter to lord Kenyon, then chief justice of Chester, avowing himself to be the author, and maintaining that every position in it was strictly conformable to the laws and constitution of England.





On the succession of the Shelburne administration, whose views of political affairs were in some respects more consonant to Mr. Jones's principles than those of their predecessors, by the particular interest of lord Ashburton, he achieved the object to which for some time past he had anxiously aspired. In March 1783, he was appointed a judge of the supreme court of judicature at Fort William, on which occasion the honour of knighthood was conferred on him. In April following he married a young lady to whom he had been long attached, Anna Maria Shipley, eldest daughter of the bishop of St. Asaph. He had now secured, as his friend lord Ashburton congratulated him, "two of the first objects of human pursuit, those of ambition and love."

His stay in England after these events was very short, as he embarked for India in the month of April. During the voyage his mind was sensibly impressed with the importance of the public station he was now about to fill, and began to anticipate the objects of inquiry which would engage his attention, and the improvements he might introduce in India from the experience of a life, much of which had passed in acquiring a knowledge of its learning and laws. Among other designs, very honourable to the extent of his benevolent intentions, which he formed at his onset, we find the publication of the Gospel of St. Luke in the Arabic, the Psalms in Persian verse, and various law tracts in Persian and Arabic. He intended also to compose elements of the laws of England, a history of the American war, already noticed, and miscellaneous poems, speeches and letters, on subjects of taste, oratory or general polity. But the pressure of his official duties, during the short remainder of his life, prevented his completing most of those designs.

He arrived at Calcutta in September, and was eagerly welcomed by all who were interested in the acquisition of a magistrate of probity and independence, of a scholar who was confessedly at the head of oriental literature, and one in the prime and vigour of life, who bade fair to be long the ornament of the British dominions in India. His own satisfaction was not less lively and complete. He had left behind him the inconstancy and the turbulence of party, and felt no longer the anxieties of dependence and delay. New scenes were inviting his enthusiastic research, scenes which he had delighted to contemplate at a distance, and which promised to enlarge his knowledge as a scholar, and his usefulness as a public character. He was now brought into those regions whose origin, manners, language and religion had been the subject of his profound inquiries, and while his curiosity was heightened, he drew nearer to the means of gratification.

He had not been long in his new situation before he began, with his usual judgment, to divide his time into such regular portions, that no objects connected with duty or science should interfere. One of his first endeavours was to institute a society in Calcutta, the members of which might assist him in those scientific pursuits which he foresaw would be too numerous and extended for his individual labour: and he had no sooner suggested the scheme than it was adopted with avidity. The new association assembled for the first time in January 1784. The government of Bengal readily granted its patronage, and Mr. Hastings, then governor general, who had ever been a zealous encourager of Persian and Sanscrit literature, was offered the honorary title of president, but as his numerous engagements prevented his acquiescence, sir William Jones was immediately and unanimously placed in the chair. The importance of this

society has been long acknowledged, and their Transactions are a sufficient testimony of their learning, acuteness and perseverance, qualities the more remarkable that they have been found in men most of whom embarked for India, with views of a very different kind, and which might have occupied their whole attention without their incurring the imputation of neglect or remissness.—To detail the whole of sir William Jones's proceedings and labours as president of this society would be to abridge their Transactions, of which he lived to see three volumes published, but the following passage from lord Teignmouth's narrative appears necessary to complete the sketch now attempted.

Soon after his arrival, " he determined to commence the study of the Sanscrit. His reflection had before suggested, that a knowledge of this ancient tongue would be of the greatest utility, in enabling him to discharge with confidence and satisfaction to himself, the duties of a judge, and he soon discovered, what subsequent experience fully confirmed, that no reliance could be placed on the opinions or interpretations of the professors of the Hindu law, unless he were qualified to examine their authorities and quotations, and detect their errors and misrepresentations. On the other hand, he knew that all attempts to explore the religion or literature of India, through any other medium than a knowledge of the Sanscrit, must be imperfect and unsatisfactory: it was evident, that the most erroneous and discordant opinions on these subjects, had been circulated by the ignorance of those who had collected their information from oral communications only, and that the pictures exhibited in Europe, of the religion and literature of India, could only be compared to the maps constructed by the natives, in which every position is distorted, and all proportion violated. As a lawyer, he knew the value and importance of original documents and records, and as a scholar and man of science, he disdained the idea of amusing the learned world with secondary information on subjects which had greatly interested their curiosity, when he had the means of access to the original sources. He was also aware, that much was expected by the literati of Europe, from his superior abilities and learning, and he felt the strongest inclination to gratify their expectations in the fullest possible extent."

The plan to be promoted by his knowledge of the Sanscrit was at this time very distant as to probability of execution, but he had carefully weighed it in his mind, and was gradually preparing the way for its accomplishment. It was, indeed, worthy of his great and liberal mind, to provide for the due administration of justice among the Indians, by compiling a digest of Hindu and Mohammedan laws, similar to that which Justinian gave to his Greek and Roman subjects. When he had made such progress in the language as might enable him to take a principal part in this important design, he imparted his views to lord Cornwallis, then (1788) governor general, in a long letter, which will ever remain a monument of his extensive understanding, benevolence and public spirit. That his plan met with acceptance from lord Cornwallis will not appear surprising to those who knew that excellent nobleman, who, while contemplating the honour which such an undertaking would confer on his own administration, conceived the highest hopes from sir William Jones's offer to co-operate or rather to superintend the execution of it. "At the period," says his biographer, "when this work was undertaken by sir William Jones, he had not resided in India more than four years and a half, during which time he had not only acquired a thorough knowledge of the Sanscrit language, but had extended his reading in it so

far, as to be qualified to form a judgment upon the merit and authority of the authors to be used in the compilation of his work; and although his labour was only applied to the disposition of materials already formed, he was enabled by his previous studies to give them an arrangement superior to any existing, and which the learned natives themselves approved and admired. In the dispensations of Providence, it may be remarked, as an occurrence of no ordinary nature, that the professors of the Braminical faith should so far renounce their reserve and distrust, as to submit to the direction of a native of Europe, for compiling a digest of their own laws."

In 1789, the first volume of the Asiatic Researches was published, and the same year sir William Jones finished his translation of *Sacontala*, or the Fatal Ring, an ancient Indian drama, and one of the greatest curiosities that the literature of Asia had yet brought to light. In 1794, he published as an institute, prefatory to his larger work, a translation of the ordinances of Menu, who is esteemed by the Hindus the first of created beings, and not only the oldest, but the holiest of legislators. The judgment and candour of the translator, however, led him to appreciate this work no higher than it deserved, as not being calculated for general reading, but exhibiting the manners of a remarkable people in a remote age, as including a system of despotism and priest-craft, limited by law, yet artfully conspiring to give mutual support, and as filled with conceits in metaphysics and natural philosophy which might be liable to misconstruction.—Amidst these employments, he still carried on his extensive correspondence with his learned friends in Europe, unfolding with candour his various pursuits and sentiments, and expressing such anxiety about every branch of science as proved that even what he called relaxation was but the diversion of his researches from one channel into another. In addition to the various studies already noticed, botany appears to have occupied a considerable share of his attention, and in this, as in every new acquisition, he disdained to stop at a moderate progress, or be content with a superficial knowledge.

The indisposition of lady Jones, in 1793, rendered it absolutely necessary that she should return to England, and her affectionate husband proposed to follow her in 1795, but still wished to complete the system of Indian laws before he left the situation in which he could promote this great work with most advantage. But he had not proceeded long in this undertaking before symptoms appeared of that disorder which deprived the world of one of its brightest ornaments. The following account of his dissolution is given in the words of his biographer.

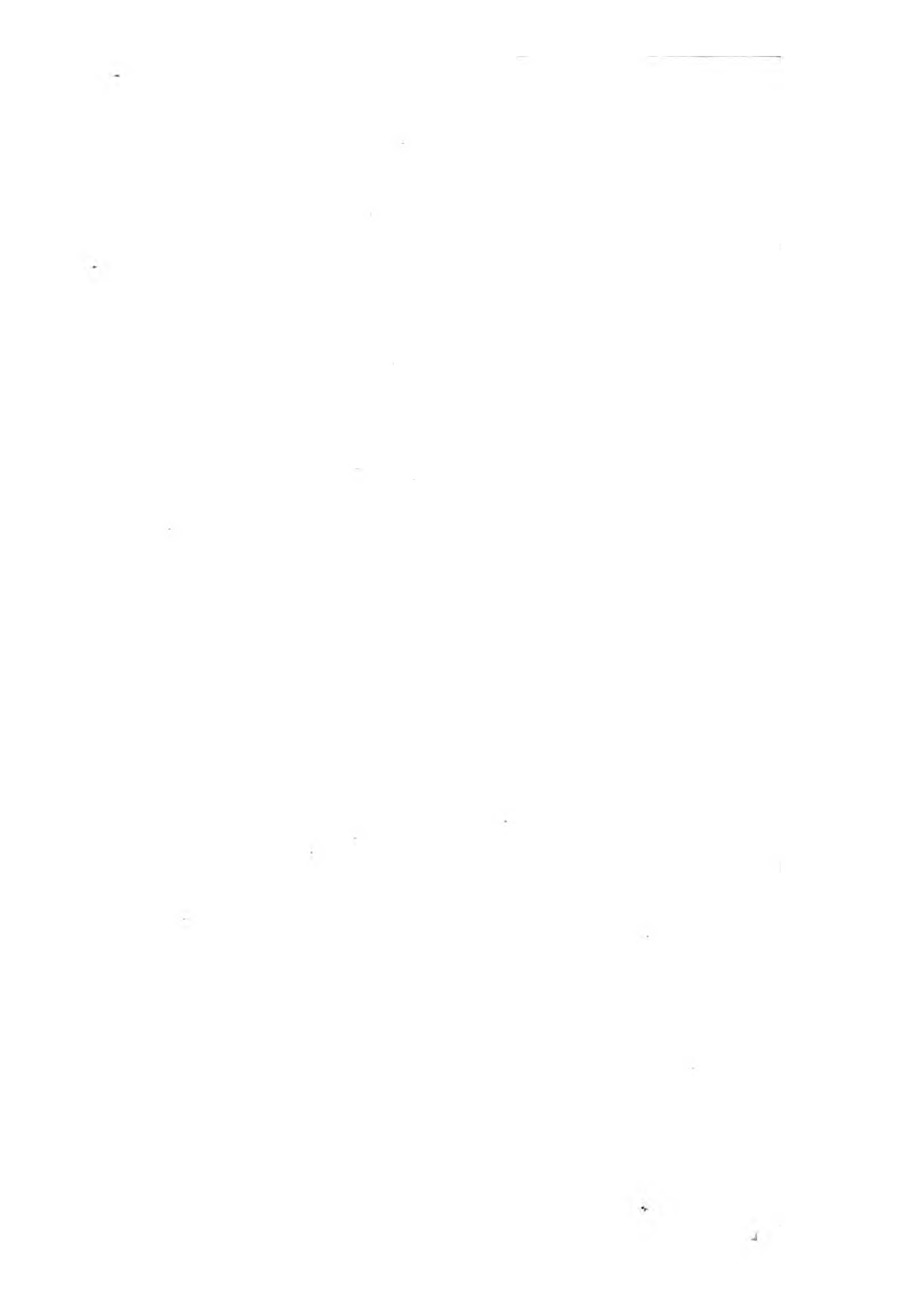
"On the evening of the twentieth of April, or nearly about that date, after prolonging his walk to a late hour, during which he had imprudently remained in conversation, in an unwholesome situation, he called upon the writer of these sheets, and complained of aguish symptoms, mentioning his intention to take some medicine, and repeating jocularly an old proverb, that, "an ague in the spring is medicine for a king." He had no suspicion at the time of the real nature of his indisposition, which proved in fact to be a complaint common in Bengal, an inflammation in the liver. The disorder was, however, soon discovered by the penetration of the physician, who, after two or three days, was called in to his assistance; but it had then advanced too far to yield to the efficacy of the medicines usually prescribed, and they were administered in vain. The progress of the complaint was uncommonly rapid, and terminated fatally on the 27th of April, 1794. On the morning of that day, his attendants,

alarmed at the evident symptoms of approaching dissolution, came precipitately to call the friend who has now the melancholy task of recording the mournful event. Not a moment was left in repairing to his house. He was lying on his bed in a posture of meditation; and the only symptom of remaining life was a small degree of motion in the heart, which after a few seconds ceased, and he expired without a pang or groan. His bodily suffering, from the complacency of his features and the ease of his attitude, could not have been severe: and his mind must have derived consolation from those sources where he had been in the habit of seeking it, and where alone, in our last moments, it can ever be found."

Thus ended the life of a man who was the brightest example of rational ambition, and of extensive learning, virtue and excellence that modern times have produced, a man who must ever be the subject of admiration, although it can happen to the lot of few to equal and perhaps of none to excel him. When we compare the shortness of his life with the extent of his labours, the mind is overpowered, yet his example, however disgraceful to the indolent, and even apparently discouraging to the humble scholar, will not be without the most salutary effects, if it be allowed to prove that no difficulties in science are insurmountable by regular industry, that the human faculties can be exalted by exercise beyond the common degrees with which we are apt to be satisfied, and that the finest taste is not incompatible with the profoundest studies. It was the peculiar felicity of this extraordinary man, that the whole plan of his life appears to have been the best that could have been contrived to forward his views and to accomplish his character. In tracing its progress we see very little that could have been more happily arranged: few adverse occurrences, and scarcely an object of serious regret, especially when we consider how gently his ambition was chastened and his integrity purified by the few delays which at one time seemed to cloud his prospects⁵.

But it is foreign to the design of the present writer, and it must be left to a very superior pen, to discuss the character of sir William Jones as a scholar, a philosopher, and a lawyer. He is introduced in this collection as a poet, and his claims are such as, it is hoped, will justify this step. The greater part of his poems, indeed, consist of translations, but they indicate a taste so greatly refined, that there can be no scruple in admitting him to a very high rank among modern poets. He has presented to the English reader a new set of images, and opened new sources of the sublime and the pathetic by familiarizing the scenery and manners of the eastern regions. The judgment with which those are selected leads us to regret, that his original productions are few, since it is universally acknowledged that, independent of the language and versification, both polished to a high degree of excellence, they are distinguished for true poetical fancy, ardour, and sensibility.

⁵ In 1799, his works were published in six volumes quarto, and have been since reprinted in thirteen volumes octavo, with the addition of his Life by lord Teignmouth, which first appeared in 1804. Among the public tributes to his memory, are, a monument by Flaxman, in University College, at the expense of lady Jones; a monument to be erected in St. Paul's, and a statue at Bengal, both voted by the honourable East India company. A society of gentlemen at Bengal, who were educated at Oxford, subscribed a sum for a prize dissertation on his character and merits, which was adjudged to Mr. Henry Philpots, M. A. of Magdalen College. Among the many poetical tributes paid to his memory, that by the rev. Mr. Maurice of the British Museum seems entitled to the preference, from his accurate knowledge of sir William Jones's character and studies. C.



THE
LIFE OF DR. JAMES BEATTIE.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

DR. BEATTIE¹ was born at Laurencekirk, in the county of Kincardine, Scotland, on the 25th day of October 1735. His father, who was a farmer of no considerable rank, is said to have had a turn for reading and for versifying: but, as he died in 1742, when his son James was only seven years of age, could have had no great share in forming his mind.

James was sent early to the only school his birth-place afforded, where he passed his time under the instructions of a tutor named Milne, whom he used to represent "as a good grammarian, and tolerably skilled in the Latin language, but destitute of taste as well as of some other qualifications essential to a good teacher." He is said to have preferred Ovid as a school-author, whom Mr. Beattie afterwards gladly exchanged for Virgil. Virgil he had been accustomed to read with great delight in Ogilvy's and Dryden's translations, as he did Homer in that of Pope; and these, with Thomson's Seasons and Milton's Paradise Lost, of all which he was very early fond, probably gave him that taste for poetry which he afterwards cultivated with so much success. He was already, according to his biographer, inclined to making verses, and among his school fellows went by the name of The Poet.

At this school he made great proficiency by unremitting diligence, which he was sensible was the only stock he could command; and appeared to much advantage on his entering Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1749, where he obtained the first of those bursaries or exhibitions left for the use of students whose parents are unable to support the entire expenses of academical education. Here he first studied Greek, under Principal Thomas Blackwell, author of the Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer; Letters concerning Mythology; and Memoirs of the Court of Augustus, a teacher who, with much of the austerity of pedantry, was kind to his diligent

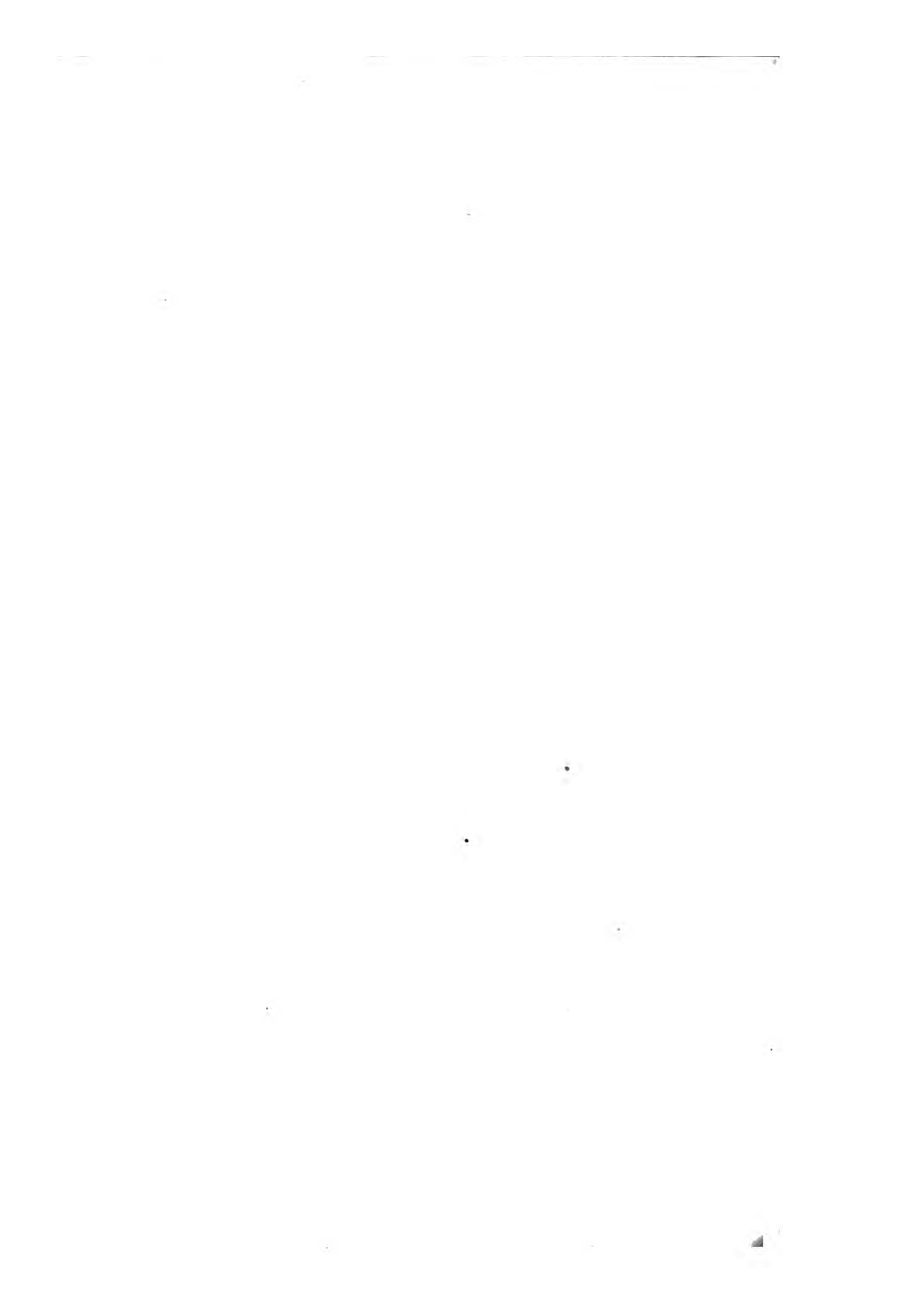
¹ The principal part of this memorial was drawn up in 1803 for an edition of Dr. Beattie's poems published by Mr. Mawman, and it afforded the editor no small pleasure to find that it coincided in the leading facts and opinions with the more elaborate and valuable Life since published by sir William Forbes, while his long personal acquaintance with Dr. Beattie enabled him to add a few particulars which had escaped that biographer. C.

scholars, and found in Mr. Beattie a disposition worthy of cultivation and of patronage. In the following year he bestowed on him the premium for the best Greek analysis, which happened to be part of the fourth book of the *Odyssey*, and at the close of the session 1749-50, he gave him a book elegantly bound, with the following inscription: "Jacobus Beattie, in prima classe, ex comitatu Mernensi², post examen publicum librum hunc ἀριστοῦτερον, premium dedit T. Blackwell, Aprilis 3, MDCCL." The other professor, with whom Mr. Beattie was particularly connected, was the late Dr. Alexander Gerard, author of the *Genius and Evidences of Christianity*; *Essays on Taste and Genius*; and other works. Under these gentlemen our author's proficiency, both at college and during the vacations, was very exemplary, and he accumulated a much more various stock of general knowledge than is usual with young men whose ultimate destination is the church. The delicacy of his health requiring amusement, he found as he supposed, all that amusement can give in cultivating his musical talents, which were very considerable. But there is reason to think that his hours of relaxation were too few, and that the earnestness with which he dissuaded his son from excessive study, arose from his repenting that he had not paid more attention to the exercises which promote health.

The only science in which he made no extraordinary proficiency, and to which he even seemed to have a dislike, was mathematics. In this, indeed, he performed the requisite tasks, but was eager to return to subjects of taste, or general literature. In every other branch of academical study, he never was satisfied with what he learned within the walls of the college. His private reading was extensive and various, and it was with him as it appears to have been with almost every man of learning, of whom we have had a minute account; that he became insensibly partial to the cultivation of those branches on which his future celebrity was to depend.

In 1753, having gone through every preparatory course of study, he took the degree of master of arts, the only one attainable by students (except of medicine) in any of the universities of Scotland. The first degree of bachelor is not known, and that of doctor of laws or divinity is usually bestowed on application, at any time of life after leaving college, without the necessity of keeping terms. Mr. Beattie, therefore, had now technically finished his education, and had a profession to seek. He had hitherto been supported by the generous kindness of an elder brother; but he was anxious to exonerate his family from any farther burden. With this laudable view, there being a vacancy for the office of school-master and parish-clerk, to the parish of Fordoun, adjoining to Laurencekirk, he accepted the appointment August 1, 1753. There can be no doubt that he performed the duties of this situation with punctuality, but it was neither suited to his disposition, nor advantageous to his progress in life. The emoluments were very scanty, the site remote and obscure; and there was nothing in it to excite emulation, or gratify the ambition which a young man, conscious as he must have been of superior powers and knowledge, might indulge without presumption. He obtained in this place, however, a few friends, particularly lord Gardenstown, and lord Monboddo, who honoured him with encouraging notice; and his imagination was delighted by the beautiful and sublime scenery of the place, which he appears to have contemplated with the eye of a poet. His leisure hours he employed on some poetical

² "The Mearns," the vernacular name for the county of Kincardine. C.



attempts, which, as they were published in the Scots Magazine, with his initials, and sometimes with his place of abode, must have contributed to make him yet better known and respected. There are few introductions into life more successful than a pleasing or popular poem; and, indeed, any literary production from an obscure part of the country is generally considered as a phenomenon. These poems attracted the more attention that they happened to be dated from a village little known, and written by a man never heard of.

The church of Scotland was at this time the usual resource of well educated young men, and with their academical stores in full memory, there were few difficulties to be surmounted before their entrance on the sacred office. Although this church presents no temptations to ambition, Mr. Beattie appears to have regarded it as the only means by which he could obtain an independent rank in life; and with his diligence, was confident that the transition from the studies of philosophy and ethics to that of divinity would be easy. He returned, therefore, during the winter to Marischal College, and attended the divinity lectures of Dr. Robert Pollock, of that college, and of professor John Lumsden, of King's, and performed the exercises required by the rules of both. One of his fellow-students informed sir William Forbes, that during their attendance at the divinity-hall, he heard Mr. Beattie deliver a discourse, which met with much commendation, but of which it was remarked by the audience, that he spoke poetry in prose.

While the church seemed his only prospect, and one which, I have been told, he never contemplated with satisfaction, although few young men lived a more pious and regular life, there occurred in 1757, a vacancy for one of the masters of the grammar school of Aberdeen, a situation of considerable importance in all respects. This school, which is a public foundation, is conducted by a rector, or head master, and three subordinate masters; the whole is in the patronage of the magistrates of the city, who are, however, governed in their choice by the issue of a very severe trial of the candidate's ability, carried on by the professors of the university. On this occasion, Mr. Beattie was advised to become a candidate; but he was diffident of his qualifications, and did not think himself so retentive of the grammatical niceties of the Latin language as to be able to answer readily any question that might be put to him by older and more experienced judges. In every part of life, it may be here observed, Mr. Beattie appears to have formed an exact estimate of his own talents; and in the present instance he failed just where he expected to fail, rather in the circumstantial than the essential requisites for the situation to which he aspired. The other candidate was accordingly preferred. But Mr. Beattie's attempt was attended with so little loss of reputation, that a second vacancy occurring a few months after, and two candidates appearing both unqualified for the office, it was presented to him by the magistrates in the most handsome manner, without the form of a trial, and he immediately entered upon it in June 1758. He was now in the midst of literary society, and had easy access to books, and his conversation-talents, it is yet remembered, daily increased the number of his friends. His emoluments were not great, but his situation had a consequence in the opinion of the public, which to so young a man was not a little flattering.

He had not been long an usher at this school before he published a volume of poems. An author's first appearance is always an important era. Mr. Beattie's was certainly attended with circumstances that are not now common. This volume was

announced to the public in a more humble manner than the present state of literature is thought to demand in similar cases. On the 18th of March 1760, not the volume itself, but Proposals for printing original Poems and Translations, were issued. The poems appeared accordingly on Feb. 16, 1761, and were published both in London and Edinburgh. They consisted partly of originals, and partly of the pieces formerly printed in the Scots Magazine, but altered and corrected, a practice which Mr. Beattie carried almost to excess in all his poetical works ³.

The praise bestowed on this volume was very flattering. The English critics, who then bestowed the rewards of literature, considered it as an acquisition to the republic of letters, and pronounced that since Mr. Gray (whom in their opinion Mr. Beattie had chosen for his model) they had not met with a poet of more harmonious numbers, more pleasing imagination, or more spirited expression ⁴. This verdict they endeavoured to confirm by extracts from the Ode to Peace, and the Triumph of Melancholy. But notwithstanding praises which so evidently tended to give a currency to the poems, and which were probably repeated with eagerness by the friends who had encouraged the publication, the author, upon more serious consideration, was so dissatisfied with this volume as to destroy every copy he could procure, and I have been assured by many of his oldest friends that they have in vain endeavoured to obtain a sight of it ⁵. Nor was this a sudden or splenetic humour in our author. Some years after, when his taste and judgment became fully matured, he refused to acknowledge above four of them, namely Retirement, Ode to Hope, Elegy on a Lady, and the Hares, and these he almost re-wrote before he would permit them to be printed with the Minstrel.

But notwithstanding the lowly opinion of the author, these poems during their first circulation, which was chiefly in manuscript, contributed so much to the general reputation he had acquired, that he was considered as an honour to his country, and deserving of a higher rank among her favoured sons. Accordingly a vacancy happening in Marischal College, his friends made such earnest applications in his behalf, that in September 1760 he was appointed by his late majesty's patent professor of philosophy. His department in this honourable office extended to moral philosophy and logic; and it added, in his mind, a very affecting importance to it, that his was the last course of instruction previous to the students leaving college, and dispersing themselves in the world.

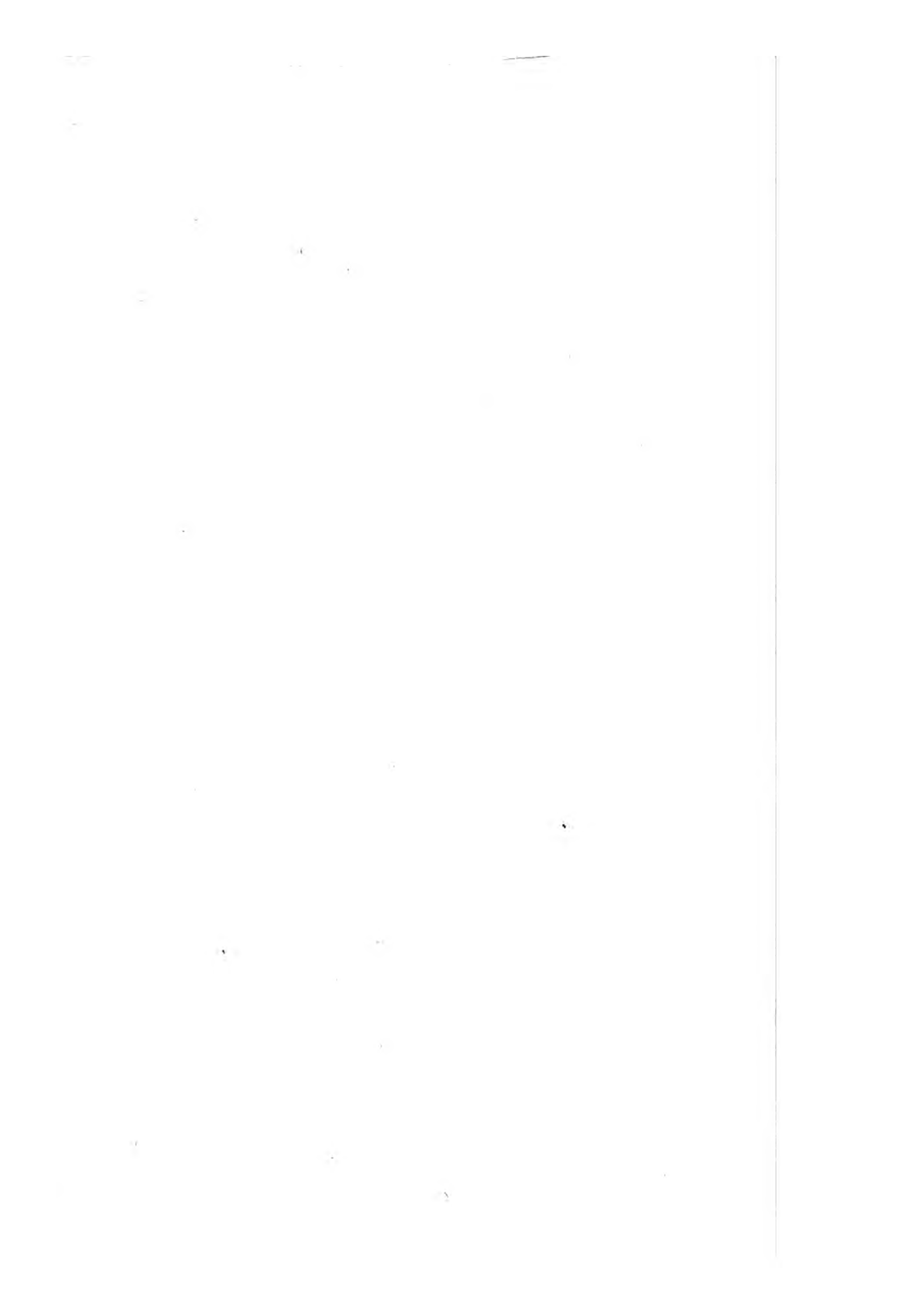
This promotion was sudden and unexpected; and it may be supposed that a youth of twenty-five must be ill prepared to give a course of lectures, and a train of instruction on subjects which have been but imperfectly treated by veteran philosophers. Yet it is evident from his printed works, that most of the subjects which belong to his province, had been familiarized to him by a long course of reading and thinking, and that he had very early accustomed himself to composition; and it is highly probable that he brought into the professor's chair such a mass of materials as might with very little trouble be moulded into shape for his immediate purpose. It is certain, however, that such was his diligence, and such his love of these studies, that within a few years he

³ The translations were from Virgil's Pastorals, the twenty-second Ode of Anacreon, Invocation to Venus from Lucretius, and two Odes of Horace. These he afterwards totally discarded, but they are now added to his other pieces. C.

⁴ Monthly Review, vol. xxiv. 1761. C.

⁵ He never spoke of it to his son, and seems to think he had never seen it. C.





was not only enabled to deliver an admirable course of lectures on moral philosophy and logic, but also to prepare for the press those works on which his fame rests; all of which, there is some reason to think, were written, or nearly written, before he gave the world the result of his philosophical studies in the celebrated Essay on Truth. It may be added likewise, that the rank he had now attained in the university entitled him to associate more upon a level with Reid and with Campbell, with Gerard and with Gregory, men whose opinions were in many points congenial, and who have all been hailed by the sister country among the revivers of Scotch literature. Yet their names, it is gratifying to recollect, are but a small part of that catalogue which has, in less than half a century, dispelled national prejudice, and has left none of the effects of comparison except a generous and beneficial emulation. With the gentlemen already mentioned, and a few others, he formed a society, or club, for the discussion of literary and philosophical subjects. A part of their entertainment was the reading a short essay, composed by each member in his turn. It is supposed that the works of Reid, Campbell, Beattie, Gregory and Gerard, or at least the outlines of them, were first discussed in this society, either in the form of essays, or of a question for familiar conversation.

In 1765 Mr. Beattie published *The Judgment of Paris*, a poem, in 4to. Its design was to prove that virtue alone is capable of affording a gratification adequate to our whole nature, the pursuits of ambition or sensuality promising only partial happiness, as being adapted not to our whole constitution, but only to a part of it. So simple a position seems to require the graces of poetry to set it off. The reception of this poem however was unfavourable, and although he added it to a new edition of his poems in 1766, yet it was never again reprinted, and even his biographer has declined reviving its memory by an extract. To this edition of 1766, he added a poem On the talk of erecting a Monument to Churchill in Westminster ~~Hall~~; which, sir Wm. Forbes says, was first published separately and without a name. That it was printed separately, I am informed on undoubted authority, but I question if it was ever published for sale unless in the above mentioned edition of his poems. The asperity with which these lines are marked, induced his biographer, contrary to his first intention, to omit them, but they are now added to his other poems ⁶.

Although Mr. Beattie had now acquired a station in which his talents were displayed with great advantage, and commauded a very high degree of respect, the publication of the *Essay on Truth* was the great era of his life; for this work carried his fame far beyond all local bounds and local partialities. It is not, however, necessary to enter minutely into the history of a work so well known. Its professed intention was to trace the several kinds of evidence and reasoning up to their first principles, with a view to ascertain the standard of truth, and explain its immutability. He endeavours to show that his sentiments, however inconsistent with the genius of scepticism, and with

⁶ "In the autumn of the year 1765, Mr. Gray came to Scotland on a visit to the late earl of Strathmore. Dr. Beattie, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Gray, as soon as he heard of his arrival, addressed to him a letter, which procured him an invitation to Glamis castle, and this led to a friendship and correspondence between these two eminent poets and amiable men, which continued without interruption, till the death of Mr. Gray." Sir Wm. Forbes, vol. i. p. 70. In the same year he became acquainted with his biographer, who has, by the *Life of Beattie*, raised a monument to the excellence of his own character scarcely inferior to that he intended for his friend. C.

the practice and principles of sceptical writers, were yet perfectly consistent with the genius of true philosophy, and with the practice and principles of those whom all acknowledge to have been the most successful in the investigation of truth; and he concludes with some inferences or rules, by which the most important fallacies of the sceptical philosophy may be detected by every person of common sense, even though he should not possess acuteness of metaphysical knowledge sufficient to qualify him for a logical confutation of them.

When this work was completed, so many difficulties occurred in procuring it to be published, that his friends sir William Forbes and Mr. Arbuthnot were obliged to become the purchasers, unknown to him, at a price with which they thought he would be satisfied. Sir William accordingly wrote to him that the manuscript was sold for fifty guineas, as the price of the first edition. So little of the spirit of enterprise was then among the booksellers; and, it may be added, such was the slender opinion of the author himself, that in a very grateful letter addressed to his friends, he says that "the price really exceeded his warmest expectations."

The first edition of this Essay was published in an octavo volume in 1770, and bought up with such avidity that a second was called for, and published in the following year. The interval was short, but as the work had excited the public attention in an extraordinary degree, the result of public opinion had reached the author's ear, and to this second edition he added a postscript, in vindication of a certain degree of warmth of which he had been accused, but which in our opinion does not appear, either in withholding justice from his adversaries, or in treating them with a language unbecoming the importance of the subject. He engaged in no personal controversy, and except for Hume, could not be supposed to entertain any personal regard for the writers whose sophistry he endeavoured to expose. This postscript, however, is highly valuable on many accounts. It may be read detached from the work, and read with advantage. It is not only one of the most elegant specimens of writing in our language, but a more faithful summary of the general conduct and artifices of modern sceptics than we have any where seen; and it contains a prediction of the consequences of scepticism on the happiness of mankind, which all who have lived to witness infidelity let loose upon an infatuated nation, without limitation and without punishment, must acknowledge to be true in every respect.

The Essay on Truth, whatever objections were made to it, and it met with very few public opponents⁷, had a more extensive circulation than probably any work of the kind ever published. This may be partly attributed to the charms of that popular style in which the author conveyed his sentiments on subjects which his adversaries had artfully disguised in a metaphysical jargon, the meaning of which they could vary at pleasure; but the eagerness with which it was bought up and read, arose chiefly from the just praise bestowed upon it by the most distinguished friends of religion and learning in Great Britain. With many of these, of high rank both in church and state, the author had the pleasing satisfaction of dating his acquaintance from the

⁷ The principal publication was Dr. Priestley's Examination of Dr. Reid on the Human Mind; Dr. Beattie on the Nature and Immutability of Truth; and Dr. Oswald's Appeal to common Sense, Oct. 1775. Dr. Priestley prefers the system of Dr. Hartley, which he was then endeavouring to introduce; but the flippant and sarcastic style he assumed on this occasion was disapproved even by his own friends. C.

publication of this work. There appeared, indeed, in the public in general an honourable wish to grace the triumph of sound reasoning over pernicious sophistry. Hence in less than four years five large editions of the Essay were sold⁸, and it was translated into several foreign languages, and attracted the notice of many eminent persons in France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and other parts of the continent.

Among other marks of respect, the university of Oxford conferred the degree of⁹ doctor of laws on the author, and on his second arrival in London he was most graciously received by his majesty, who not only bestowed a pension on him, but admitted him to the honour of a private conference. Many years after, when Dr. Beattie went to pay his respects to his majesty, he was still received with every mark of royal condescension and kindness. In the last, or nearly the last conversation I enjoyed with him, he observed how much he was always surprised with the intelligent remarks and intimate knowledge which his majesty displayed, not only on general topics of national literature, but even the minute history of what was going on at the Scotch universities.

It was in July 1771 that Dr. Beattie first visited London, and commenced a personal acquaintance with men of the first eminence, with lord Mansfield and lord Lyttelton, Drs. Hurd, Porteus, Johnson, Mr. Burke, and, indeed, the whole of the literary society whose conversations have been so pleasantly detailed by Mr. Boswell; and returned to Scotland with a mind elevated and cheered by the praise, the kindness, and the patronage of the good and great. It was, however, on his second visit to London, in 1773, that he received his degree from Oxford, and those honours from his majesty, which we anticipated as a direct, though not an immediate consequence of the services he rendered to his country by the publication of the Essay on Truth. His conversation with his majesty is detailed at some length by himself in a Diary, published by sir William Forbes.

Soon after this visit to London he was solicited by a very flattering proposal sent through the hands of Dr. Porteus, to enter into the church of England. A similar offer had been made some time before by the archbishop of York, but declined. It was now renewed with more importunity, and produced from him the important reasons which obliged him still to decline an offer which he could not but consider as "great and generous." By these reasons, communicated in a letter to Dr. Porteus, we find that he was apprehensive of the injury that might be done to the cause he had espoused, if his enemies should have any ground for asserting that he had written his Essay on Truth, with a view to promotion: and he was likewise of opinion, that it might have the appearance of levity and insincerity, and even of want of principle, were he to quit, without any other *apparent* motive than that of bettering his circumstances, the church of which he had hitherto been a member. Other reasons he assigned, on this occasion, of some, but less weight, all which prevailed on his friends to withdraw any farther solicitation, while they honoured the motives by which he was influenced. In the same year he refused the offer of a professor's chair in the

⁸ The first appeared in May 1770, the second April 1771, the third in 1772, the fourth, Jan. 1773 and the fifth Feb. 1774. C.

⁹ I believe he had received this honour some time before from King's College, Aberdeen. He was afterwards chosen member of the Zealand Society of Arts and Sciences, and of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. C.

university of Edinburgh, considering his present situation as best adapted to his habits and to his usefulness, and apprehending that the formation of a new society of friends might not be so easy or agreeable in a place where the enemies of his principles were numerous. To some of his friends, however, these reasons did not appear very convincing

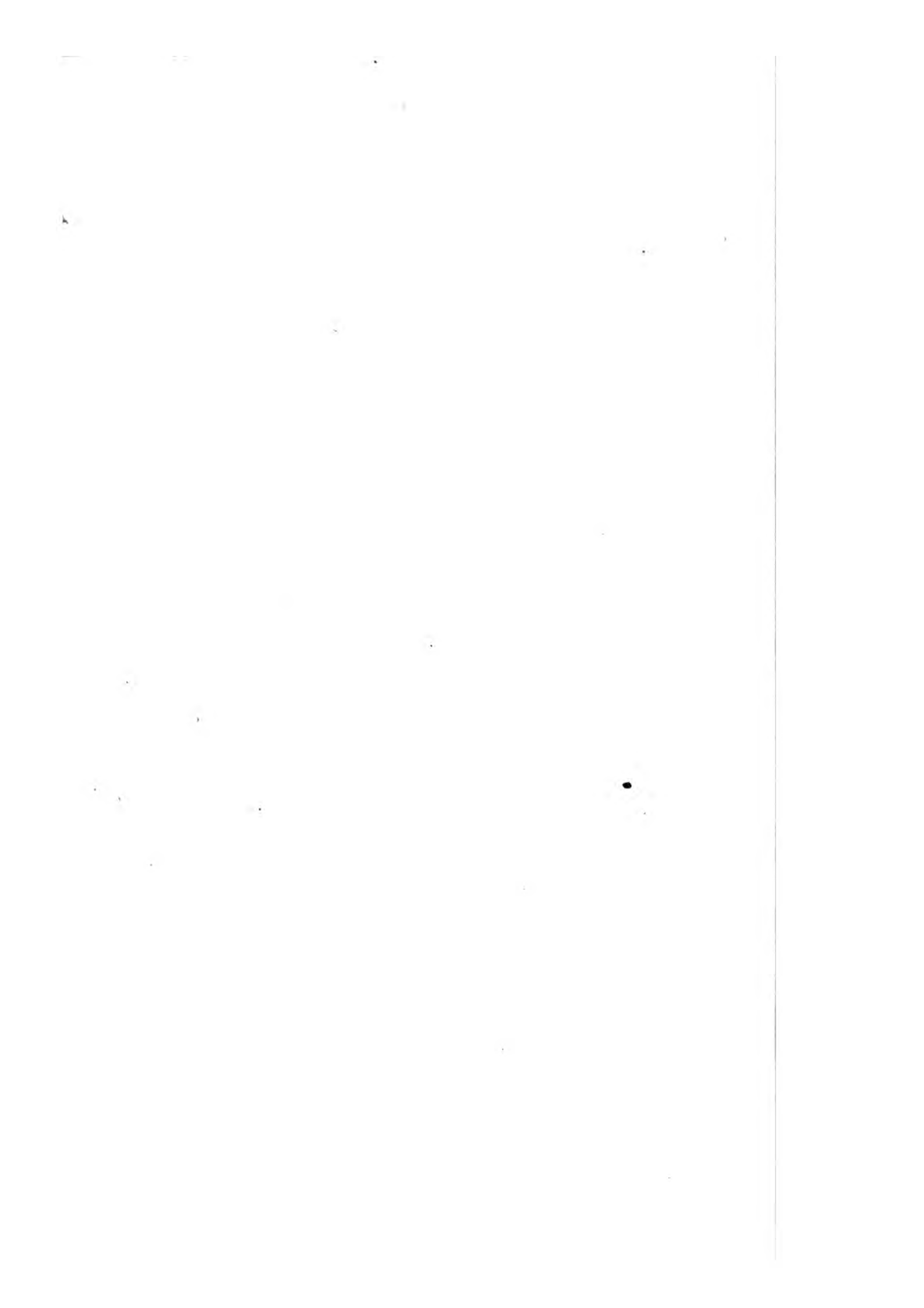
Although Mr. Beattie had apparently withdrawn his claims as a poet, by cancelling as many copies of his juvenile attempts as he could procure, he was not so unconscious of his admirable talents, as to relinquish what was an early and favourite pursuit, and in which he had probably passed some of his most-delightful hours. A few months after the appearance of the *Essay on Truth*, he published the first book of the *Minstrel*, in 4to, but without his name. By this omission, the poem was examined with all that rigour of criticism which may be expected in the case of a work, for which the author's name can neither afford protection or apology. He was accordingly praised for having adopted the measure of Spenser, because he had the happy enthusiasm of that writer to support and render it agreeable; but objections were made to the limitation of his plan to the profession of the *Minstrel*, when so much superior interest might be excited by carrying him on through the practice of it. It was objected, also, that the sentiment of the first stanza appeared too close a copy from a passage in Gray's celebrated *Elegy*; and several lines were pointed out as unequal, and inconsistent with the general measure, or with the dignity of the subject.

These objections appear to have coincided with the author's re-consideration: and he not only adopted various alterations recommended by his friends, particularly Mr. Gray, but introduced others, which made the subsequent editions of this poem far more perfect than the first. Of the original preface he retained so little, that an exact copy of it may not be unacceptable to our readers, as the old editions of the *Minstrel* are become very rare.

"The first hint of this performance was suggested by Dr. Percy's ingenious *Essay on the English Minstrels*, prefixed to his first volume of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.

"My design was to trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude and illiterate age, from the first dawns of fancy and reason, till that period in which he may be supposed capable of supporting the character of a *Minstrel*, that is, of an itinerant poet and musician—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable but sacred. A poetical illustration of such a subject seemed to promise variety of amusement, and even some topics of instruction both moral and philosophical. Perhaps I mistook it, as well as my own abilities: however, in making a trial there could not be much harm. My friends are pleased with what I have done; but, as they cannot entirely acquit themselves of partiality, advise me to lay a specimen before the public.

"The pursuits and amusements of the *Minstrel's* childhood and early youth are described in this first book; which, if the title were altered, and a few phrases struck out that refer to a sequel, might perhaps be considered as a sort of whole by itself. The incidents that qualify him for his profession, and determine him to enter upon it, will furnish materials for the books that are to follow. If this be honoured with the public approbation, I shall think it has merit sufficient to justify my bestowing some time in finishing what remains, which is already in great forwardness. Should it be



unsuccessful, I will, with no great concern, relinquish a scheme which cannot be completed without such expense of time and thought as a person in my way of life cannot easily spare. If, as the critics tell us, the chief end of poetry is to please, surely the man who writes verses with some inconvenience to himself, and without any pleasure to the public, spends his time to very little purpose.

“ I have endeavoured to imitate Spenser, not in his allegory or antiquated dialect, which, though graceful in him, appear sometimes awkward in modern writers, but in the measure and harmony of his verse, and in the simplicity and variety of his composition. All antiquated expressions I have studiously avoided; admitting, however, some old words, where they seemed peculiarly suitable to the subject; but I hope none will be found that are now obsolete, or in any degree unintelligible to a reader of English poetry.

“ To those who may be disposed to ask, what could induce me to write in so difficult a measure, I can only answer, that it pleases my ear, and seems from its gothic structure and original to bear some relation to the subject and spirit of the poem. It admits both simplicity and magnificence of sound and language, beyond any other stanza that I am acquainted with. It allows the sententiousness of the couplet, and something too of the diversified cadence and complicated modulation of blank verse. What some of our critics have remarked of its uniformity growing at last tiresome to the ear, will be found to hold true only when the poetry is faulty in other respects.”

The *Minstrel*, however, in its first form, contained so many passages of genuine poetry, the poetry of nature and of feeling, and was so eagerly applauded by those whose right of opinion was incontestible, that it soon ran through four editions; and in 1774 the author produced the second book. This, although of a more philosophical cast, and less luxurious in those descriptions which appeal to every heart, yet contained such noble imagery, and so many proofs of the “ lively, plastic imagination,” as to place the author in the first rank of modern poets. As the success of the second book was not inferior to that of the first, it was the general wish that the author would fulfil his promise by completing the interesting subject, but the increasing business of education, the cares of a family, and the state of his health, originally delicate, and never robust, deprived him of the time and thought which he considered as requisite. In 1777, however, he was induced to publish the two parts of the *Minstrel* together, and to add a few of his juvenile poems. In his advertisement he informs us, that “ they are all of which he is willing to be considered as the author.” Some poems about this time had been ascribed to him which he never wrote; and those pieces which he wished to consign to oblivion, had been published by persons who hoped to profit by the now established fame of the author¹⁰.

During the preceding year, 1776, he prepared for the press a new edition of the *Essay on Truth*, in a more splendid form than it had hitherto appeared in, and attended with circumstances of public esteem which were very flattering. These will be best understood in his own modest advertisement.

“ About three years ago some persons of distinction in England, who had honoured me with their friendship, were pleased to express a desire that the *Essay on Truth*

¹⁰ In 1780 a spurious edition appeared of his *Juvenile Poems*, with some which he never wrote, from Dodsley's Collection. This volume he disowned in a public advertisement. Even the publishers' names were spurious. C.

should be printed in a more splendid form than that in which it had hitherto appeared; and so as to ensure profit, as well as honour, to the author. And the proprietors of the copyright, being at the same time applied to, declare their willingness to permit an edition to be printed for his advantage, on his agreeing to certain terms, which were thought reasonable.

“ It was then proposed that a new edition of the Essay should be printed in quarto by subscription. To this the author had some objections; he was apprehensive that the size of that work might be inadequate to such a purpose. Besides, to publish in this manner a book which had already gone through two or three editions, seemed hazardous, because unprecedented; and might to those who were uninformed of the affair, give ground to suspect the author of an infirmity, which no person who knows him will ever lay to his charge, an excessive love of money.

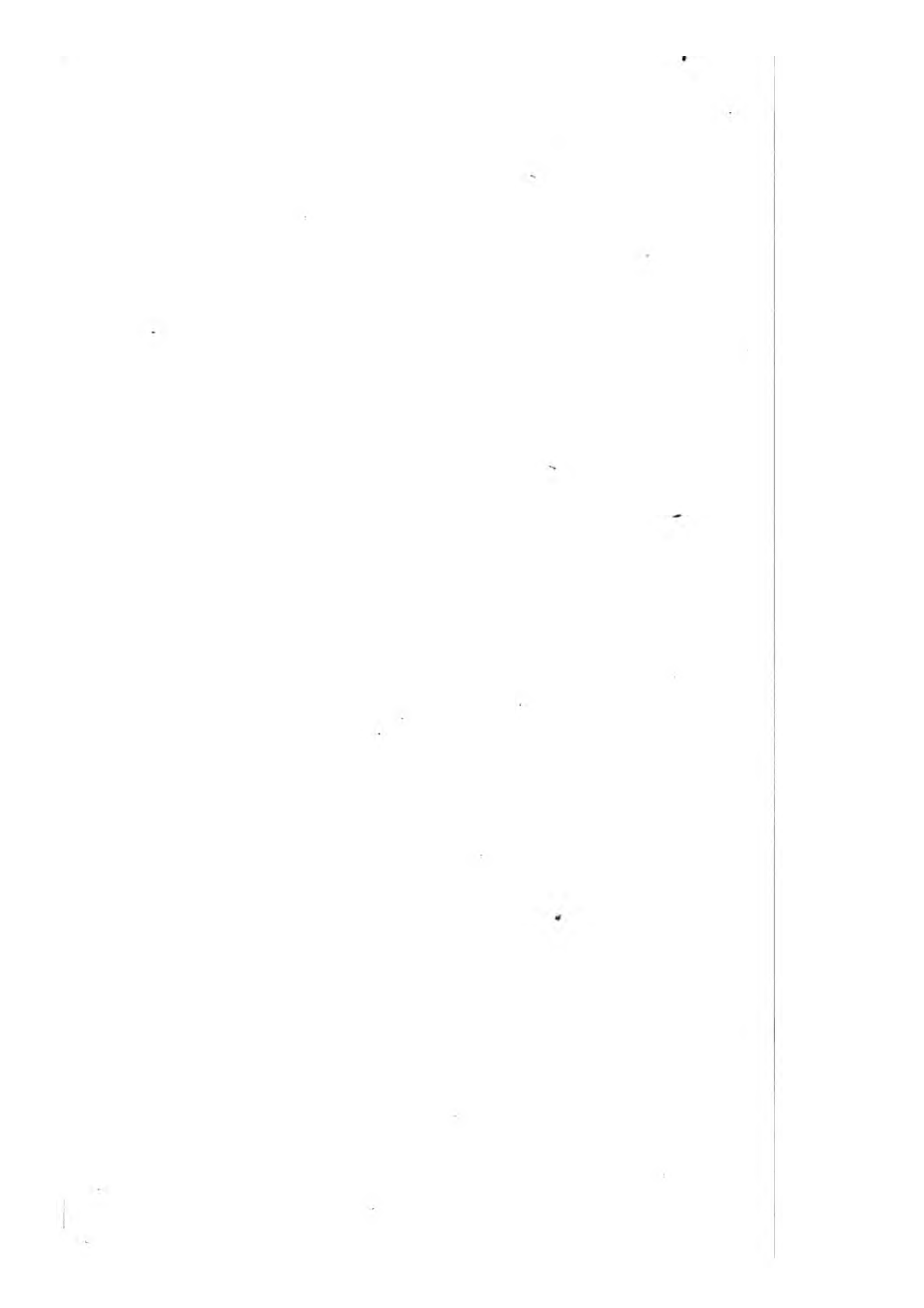
“ It was answered, that the volume might be extended to a sufficiency of size, by printing, along with that on Truth, some other Essays, which, though not originally designed for the press, his friends, who had seen them, were pleased to think not unworthy of it; and that the proposed subscription, being of a peculiar kind, should be conducted in a peculiar manner. ‘ It shall never,’ said the promoters of the undertaking, ‘ be committed to booksellers, nor made public by advertisements: nobody shall be solicited to join in it; we, by ourselves and our friends, shall carry it on, without giving you any further trouble, than just to signify your consent, and prepare your materials; and if there be, as we have reason to think there are, many persons of worth and fortune who wish for such an opportunity as this will afford them, to testify their approbation of you and your writings, it would seem capricious in you to deprive them of that satisfaction, and yourself of so great an honour.’

“ To a proposal so uncommonly generous the author could not refuse his consent, without giving himself airs which would not have become him. He therefore thankfully acquiesced, &c.”

The subscription money was a guinea, but I am not certain that subscribers were limited to that sum. The list of subscribers amounted to four hundred and seventy-six names of men and women of the first rank in life, and of all the distinguished literary characters of the time. The copies subscribed for amounted to seven hundred and thirty-two, so that no inconsiderable sum must have accrued in this delicate manner to the author. Dr. Beattie was by no means rich; his pension was only two hundred pounds, and the annual amount of his professorship, I have reason to think, never reached that sum.

The Essays added to this volume, and which he afterwards printed separately in octavo, were on Poetry and Music: on Laughter and ludicrous Composition; and on the Utility of Classical Learning. They were written many years before publication, and besides being read in the private literary society already mentioned, had been submitted to the judgment of his learned friends in England, who recommended them to the press. In ordinary cases this advice has no value, because it is a matter of course; but Dr. Beattie could have easily discerned flattery had it been offered him, and was too good a critic to be deceived by the common-place returns to such applications. His friends, however, in this instance, only anticipated the praises of a more numerous class, to whom his Essays appeared to discover a taste and style, formed and improved on the chastest models, and remarkable for elegance, correctness, and sound





judgment. The first, which was written in 1762, when the author had only reached his twenty-seventh year, evinces a great fund of reading, and such acquaintance with antient and modern learning, and such discrimination in objects of criticism, as are rarely found in persons of that age. He is particularly happy in his illustrations; and as he had no new theories to advance, and no paradoxes to catch applause at the expence of established truths, perhaps there are few books that may with more safety be placed in the hands of a young man to regulate his taste, and direct him in the study of polite literature. This opinion, which belongs more particularly to the first two of these Essays, may yet be applied to the third, where we have an important question in education discussed with logical precision, and with a force of argument which it will be difficult to answer. It is, however, still more pleasing to remark, that in these as well as in his next work, he never fails to introduce into questions of taste allusions to those subjects of piety and morals, of which, as a teacher of youth, he never lost sight, and was eager to inculcate.

For the frequent introduction of practical and serious observations, he offers a satisfactory reason in the preface to *Dissertations Moral and Critical, on Memory and Imagination; on Dreaming; the Theory of Language; on Fable and Romance; on the Attachments of Kindred; and Illustrations on Sublimity*, 4to, 1783. These, he informs us, were at first composed in a different form, being part of a course of prelections read to those young gentlemen whom it was his business to initiate in the elements of moral science; and he disclaims any nice metaphysical theories, or other matters of doubtful disputation, as not suiting his ideas of moral teaching. Nor was this the disgust of a metaphysician "retired from business." He had ever been of the same opinion. In a letter to his friend Gray, dated March 30, 1767, he says, "It is a fault common to almost all our Scotch authors, that they are too metaphysical. I wish they would learn to speak more to the heart and less to the understanding; but alas! this is a talent which Heaven only can bestow; whereas a philosophical spirit (as we call it) is merely artificial, and level with the capacity of every man who has much patience, a little learning, and no taste." Dr. Beattie's aim was, indeed, in all his lectures, "to inure young minds to habits of attentive observation; to guard them against the influence of bad principles; and to set before them such views of nature, and such plain and practical truths, as may at once improve the heart and the understanding, and amuse and elevate the fancy."¹¹

Of these Essays, the preference has been generally given to those on Memory and Imagination, and on Fable and Romance, and on the Theory of Language. In re-publishing the latter separately for the use of seminaries of education, he complied

¹¹ Cowper's praise of this volume is too valuable to be omitted—"Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and, which is very rare, we see not only the writer but the man; and the man so gentle, so well tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him, if one has any sense of what is lovely." Hayley's *Life of Cowper*, vol. iii. p. 247.—In a letter I received from Dr. Beattie, a few weeks before the appearance of the *Dissertations*, he says, "I am very doubtful of their success, very doubtful, indeed; however it is now too late to perplex myself on that head—a great deal is added, and a very great deal corrected since I ——— to have you in my little auditory." C.

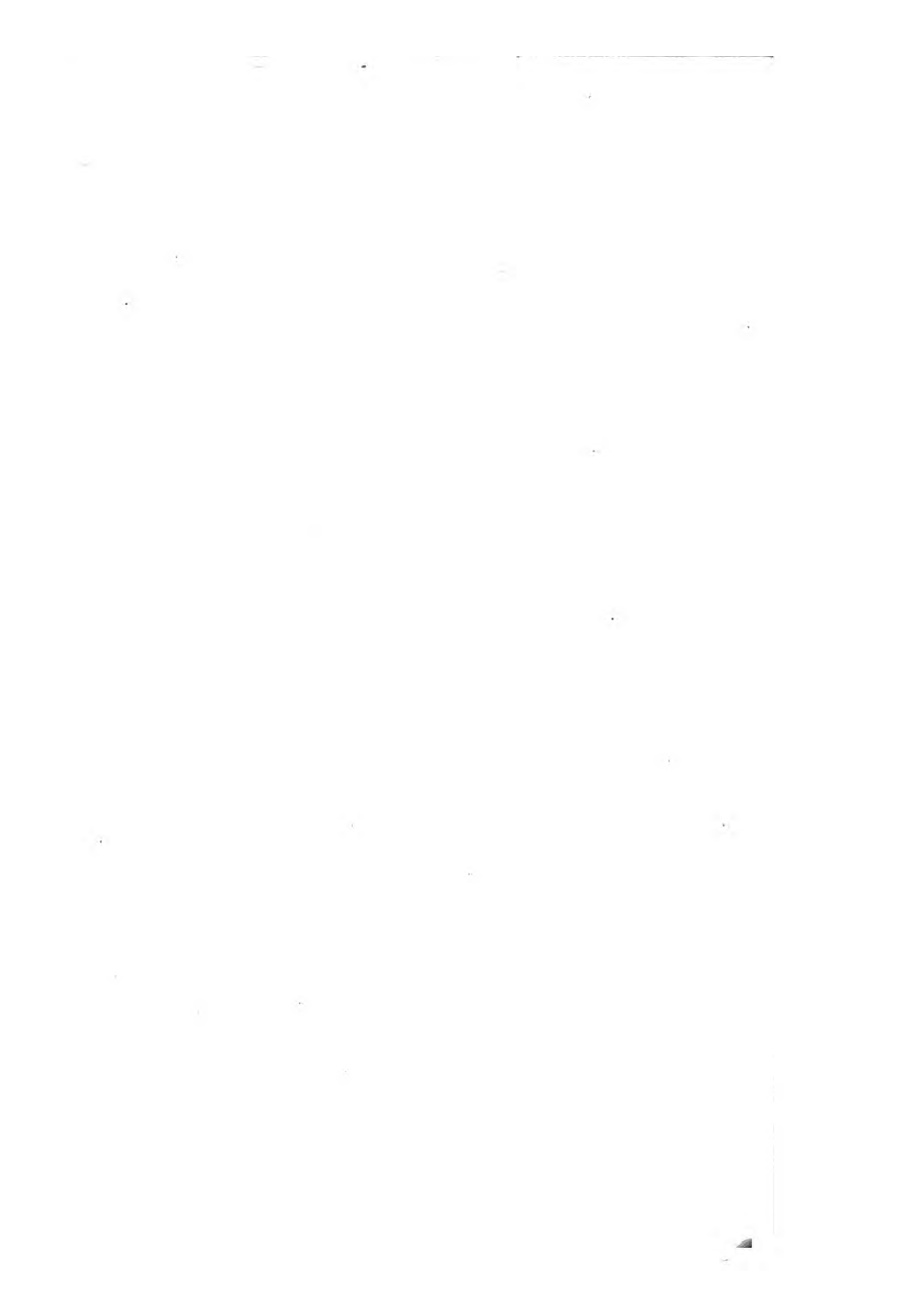
with the wish of many readers and critics. In all these Essays, his elegant and pertinent remarks, forcible illustrations, and occasional anecdotes and digressions, afford a variety and pleasure in the perusal which are rarely to be expected from the discussion of such subjects, when the writer's object is to surprise by paradoxical assertions, and, at whatever expense of truth and sense, to obtain the praise due to original theory.

During a visit to the metropolis in 1784, Dr. Beattie submitted to the present bishop of London, with whose friendship he had long been honoured, a part of a work which at that excellent prelate's desire he published in 1786, entitled *Evidences of the Christian Religion* briefly and plainly stated, 2 vols. 12mo. This likewise formed part of his concluding lectures to his class, and he generally dictated an abstract of it to them in the course of the session. From a work of this kind and on a subject which had employed the pens of the greatest and best English writers, much novelty was not to be expected, nor in its original form was any novelty intended. It must be allowed, however, that he has placed many of the arguments for the evidences of Christianity in a very striking and persuasive light, and it is not too much to suppose that if he could have devoted more time and study to a complete review and arrangement of what had, or might be advanced on these evidences, he would have produced a work worthy of his genius, and worthy of the grandeur and importance of the subject ¹².

In the preface to Dr. Beattie's *Dissertations*, he intimated a design of publishing the whole of his *Lectures on Moral Science*, but from this he was diverted by the cogent reasons there assigned. He was encouraged, however, to present to the public, in a correct and somewhat enlarged form, the abstract which he used to dictate to his scholars. Accordingly, in 1790, he published *Elements of Moral Science*, vol. i. 8vo. including psychology, or perceptive faculties and active powers; and natural theology; with two appendixes on the incorporeal nature and on the Immortality of the Soul. The second volume was published in 1793; containing ethics, economics, politics, and logic. All these subjects are necessarily treated in a summary manner; but it will be found sufficiently comprehensive, not only for a text-book, or book of elements, which was the professed intention of the author, but also as an excellent aid to the general reader who may not have an opportunity of attending regular lectures, and yet wishes to reap some of the advantages of regular education. To the religious, moral or literary opinions occasionally interspersed, it will not be easy to find an objection; and in this, as in his former works, his peculiar excellence lies in exposing the sophistries of modern philosophy, sometimes by the argumentative process, and sometimes by showing how incapable and unworthy they are of any serious refutation.

In vol. ii. there occurs a dissertation against the Slave Trade, which the author informs us he wrote in 1778 with a view to a separate publication. He exposed the weak defences set up for that abominable traffic with wonderful acuteness, and thus had the honour to contribute to that mass of conviction, which at length became irresistible, and delivered the nation from her greatest reproach.

¹² In a letter which I received from Dr. Beattie, dated March 26, 1786, he says of his *Evidences*—"In closeness of matter and style I should not scruple to prefer (this work) to any of my other things." C.



These Elements have not had the success of some of his other works, yet perhaps they may be preferred to all in point of utility. It were to be wished, however, that the work had been accompanied by an index, and by that pathetic lecture with which he was accustomed to conclude his course. He has also omitted the list of books on subjects treated in his lectures, which he dictated to his scholars. This list, indeed, would now perhaps appear very imperfect, although his criticisms on books were always valuable; but he had so much more pleasure in praise than in censure, that in his essays and dissertations and in his lectures he expatiated chiefly on those authors of whom he could speak with delight, and whom he could recommend as models of elegant taste and pure morals. It was one of his parting exhortations to his scholars to "read no bad books, as the world afforded more good ones than they could ever have leisure to read with the attention they deserved."

To the second volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, published in 1790¹³, he contributed Remarks on some Passages of the Sixth Book of the *Æneid*. This was, in fact, a dissertation on the mythology of the Romans, as poetically described by Virgil, in the episode of the descent of *Æneas* into Hell; and the author's object was to vindicate his favourite poet from the charges of impiety, &c. brought against him by Warburton and others. In the same year he is said to have superintended an edition of Addison's periodical papers, published at Edinburgh in 4 vols. 8vo. To this, however, he contributed only a few notes to Tickell's Life of Addison, and to Dr. Johnson's remarks. It were to be wished he had done more. Addison never had a warmer admirer, nor a more successful imitator. He always recommended Addison's style to his pupils, and it is evident from the whole of his works that it was his own model. No man in our times has imitated the chaste simplicity and perspicuity for which Addison is distinguished with such palpable success. I know that he "gave his days and nights to Addison," and it was by this that he attained an English style, "familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious."

In 1794 appeared the last work our author composed, and its history requires some notice of his family. In 1767 he married Miss Mary Dun, daughter of Dr. James Dun, rector or head master of the grammar school of Aberdeen, a man of great personal worth, and an excellent classical scholar. He had been either a teacher or rector of that school above half a century, and will be long remembered by his numerous pupils, as one who united the dignity of the master to the suavity of the parent.

With this lady Dr. Beattie enjoyed for many years as much felicity as the married state can add; and when she visited London with him, she shared amply in the respect paid to him, and in the esteem of his illustrious friends. By her he had two sons, James Hay, so named from the earl of Errol, one of his old and steady friends; and Montague, from the celebrated Mrs. Montague, in whose house Dr. Beattie frequently resided when in London. While these children were very young, Mrs. Beattie was seized with an indisposition, which, in spite of all care and skill, terminated in the

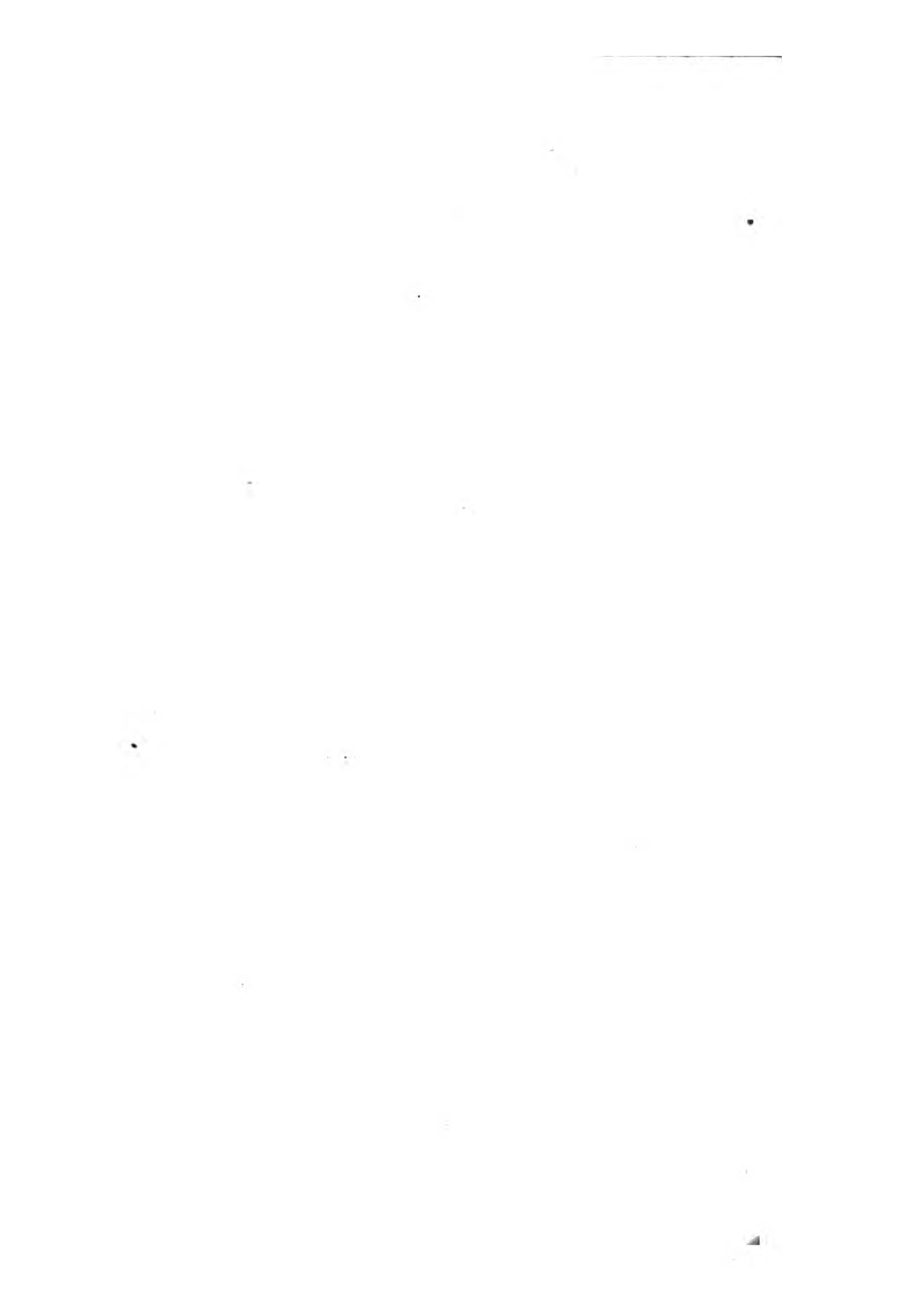
¹³ About the year 1778 he printed a Letter to Dr. Blair on the improvement of Psalmody in Scotland. This was only privately circulated. It contained, if I remember right, a few specimens of translations of the Psalms. He printed also some years after a list of Scotticisms, for the use of his students. These he used to make them transcribe; but in this list are some expressions which, in my MS. copy of his Lectures when he borrowed it of me in 1778, he altered to *English barbarisms*. C.

painful necessity of separation from her husband ¹⁴. The care of the children now entirely devolved on the father, whose sensibility received such a shock from the melancholy circumstance alluded to, as could only be aggravated by an apprehension that the consequences of Mrs. Beattie's disorder might not be confined to herself. This alarm, which often preyed on his spirits, proved happily without foundation. His children grew up without the smallest appearance of the hereditary evil; but when they had just begun to repay his care by a display of early genius, sweetness of temper and filial affection, he was compelled to resign them both to an untimely grave. His eldest son died November 19, 1790, in his twenty-second year; and his youngest on March 14, 1796, in his eighteenth year. The death of the latter was occasioned by a rapid fever. The suddenness of the shock made it more deeply felt by the father, as he had not yet recovered from the loss of the eldest, who was taken from him by the slow process of consumption.

Soon after the death of James Hay, his father drew up an account of his Life and Character; to which were added, Essays and Fragments, written by this extraordinary youth. Of this volume a few copies only were printed, and were given as "presents" to those friends with whom the author was particularly acquainted or connected." Dr. Beattie was afterwards induced to permit the Life and some of the Essays and Fragments to be printed for publication. The life is perhaps one of the most interesting and affecting narratives in our language. It is written with great simplicity of style, and with so much impartiality in those passages where praise or censure can have admittance, that there is probably no reader of whatever judgment who would not rather subscribe to his opinion than exert the privilege of criticism. It is impossible, indeed, to contemplate without emotion the exquisite tenderness of an affectionate and mourning parent, soothing himself by the remembrance of filial piety and departed excellence; and humbly, yet fondly, endeavouring to engage the sympathies of the world in behalf of a genius that might have proved one of its brightest ornaments.

After the loss of this amiable youth, who in 1787 had been appointed successor to his father, and had occasionally lectured in the professor's chair, Dr. Beattie resumed that employment himself, and continued it, although with intervals of sickness and depression, until the unexpected death of his second and last child, in 1796. His hopes of a successor, of his name and family, had probably been revived in this youth, who exhibited many proofs of early genius, and for some time before his death had prosecuted his studies with great assiduity. But here too he was compelled again to subscribe to the uncertainty of all human prospects. Great, however, as the affliction was, it would be pleasing to be able to add that he acquiesced with pious resignation, and laid hold on the hopes he knew so well how to recommend, and which yet might have cheered, if not gladdened his declining life. But from this period he began to withdraw from society, and brooded over the sorrows of his family, until they overpowered his feelings, and abstracted him from all the comforts of friendship and all power of consolation. Of the state of his mind, sir William Forbes has given an instance so extremely affecting, that no apology can be necessary for introducing it here.

¹⁴ Sir Wm. Forbes intimates that her symptoms of insanity were of an earlier date. "Although it did not, for a considerable time, break out into open insanity, yet in a few years after their marriage, showed itself in caprices that embittered every hour of his life, till, at last, it unquestionably contributed to bring him to his grave." C.



“The death of his only surviving child completely unbinged the mind of Dr. Beattie, the first symptom of which, ere many days had elapsed, was a temporary but almost total loss of memory respecting his son. Many times he could not recollect what had become of him: and after searching in every room of the house, he would say to his niece, Mrs. Glennie, ‘You may think it strange, but I must ask you if I have a son, and where he is?’ She then felt herself under the painful necessity of bringing to his recollection his son Montagu’s sufferings, which always restored him to reason. And he would often, with many tears, express his thankfulness that he had no child, saying, ‘How could I have borne to see their elegant minds mangled with madness!’ When he looked, for the last time, on the dead body of his son, he said, ‘I have now done with the world:’ and he ever after seemed to act as if he thought so.”

The last three years of his life were passed in hopeless solitude, and he even dropt his correspondence with many of those remote friends with whom he had long enjoyed the soothing interchange of elegant sentiment and friendly attachment. His health, in this voluntary confinement, gradually decayed, and extreme and premature debility, occasioned by two paralytic strokes, terminated his good and useful life, on the 18th day of August, 1803. His reputation was so well founded and so extensive, that he was universally lamented as a loss to the republic of letters, and particularly to the university to which he had been so long a public benefactor and an honour.

Of his general character a fair estimate may be formed from his works, and it is no small praise that his life and writings were in strict conformity. No man ever felt more strong impressions of the value of the virtues he recommended than Dr. Beattie. Although he disdained the affectation of feeling, and the ostentation of extraordinary purity, he yet more abhorred the character of those writers whose professions and practice are at variance. His zeal for religious and moral truth, however censured by those to whom religion and truth are adverse, originated in a mind fully convinced of the importance of what he prescribed to others, and anxious to display, where such a display was neither obtrusive nor boastful, that his conviction was sincere, and his practice resolute.

It may not be amiss in this place to take some notice of a slander which the friends, at least the injudicious ones, of Hume have been industrious to propagate, because, if true, it would have proved a littleness of mind of which none who knew Dr. Beattie could accuse him. It has been said that he submitted his juvenile poems to Mr. Hume, at that time considered as the arbiter of taste, who either returned them with severe censure, or spoke of them with contempt, and that this was the real motive which prompted Dr. Beattie to write the *Essay on Truth*. Such is the story; and whoever compares the provocation with the revenge, will not think it very probable¹⁵. It is the part of malignity itself to search painfully for one bad motive where so many good ones are at hand. Nothing surely can be more false or absurd than this piece of slander. If Mr. Hume criticised Dr. Beattie’s poetry with severity, which may be admitted, he certainly could not have been a more rigid censor than the author himself. Dr. Beattie, almost as soon as his volume of early poems was published, and while the praises of every friend and of many strangers were yet sounding in his ears, suppressed the farther publication, and endeavoured to recover the copies that had been circula-

¹⁵ See a letter on this subject, in sir Wm. Forbes’ *Life*, vol. 1. p. 330.

ted; and for many years refused all applications to reprint the few articles in our present volume, and that with the utmost pertinacity. The presumption therefore must be, either that he originally thought as slightly of those poems as Mr. Hume, or that Mr. Hume had brought him over to his opinion. In either case there could be no such breach of friendship, and surely no such indignant recollection as to provoke the *Essay on Truth*. The fact will be acknowledged by all who had personal intimacy with Dr. Beattie, and they only can be the proper judges of his feelings, that it was not the severity of criticism that he at any time dreaded or avoided. In Gray, who was his intimate friend and correspondent, he found a critic whose opinions might have mortified the vanity of the least conceited of youthful poets. On one occasion, indeed, Gray placed the dangers of poetry before his eyes in such a striking light that he appeared willing to renounce the Muses altogether¹⁶. Such was our author's diffidence in all his productions, that he ventured nothing without consulting his friends, and received very few proposals of correction in which he did not acquiesce. If with this humble and respectful disposition Mr. Hume insulted his feelings, or wished to discourage the early attempts of genius, although his conduct might not provoke the *Essay on Truth*, it forms a part of his character on which his friends ought to be silent, unless they can explain it in a more satisfactory manner.

As a poet, it must be confessed that Dr. Beattie came slowly into the world; he did not astonish in his days of childhood and ignorance, by those wonderful efforts which speak the extraordinary teachings of nature. That he had a talent for poetry will not be denied, but it was a talent to be cultivated, and in this respect he has not differed from the most eminent names on the list of English poets. "To touch and re-touch," says Cowper, "although some writers boast of negligence, and others would be ashamed to show their foul copies, is the secret of almost all good writing, especially in verse." Dr. Beattie was a poet without self-love and without conceit, and his fame might be safely trusted in his own hands. What he wrote, and at whatever period of his life, he was able to criticise with impartiality and with taste. He had an eye rather to future than to present reputation, and so far was he from soliciting the complimentary opinions of friends, that I suspect he did not rate very highly the judgment of those who had praised the early productions of his Muse. It is certain that he suppressed those poems, in defiance of their suffrages; and, until he was encouraged to publish *The Minstrel*, never in his own opinion had laid a fair claim to the reputation of a poet. The many touchings and retouchings he made in this excellent poem are no inconsiderable proofs of his judgment and his diffidence, for he frequently corrected that which all who then distributed the rewards of fame considered as perfect.

As a philosopher, it is no deduction from his merit that his celebrated *Essay* is now little read. It rose to higher reputation in its day than any work of the kind ever published; and the little opposition made to it is a proof that it answered the full purpose of the author. His expectations, indeed, were moderate: he knew that in controversy it is more easy to gain the victory than to impose terms on the vanquished. Hume, we are told, remained silent, in consequence of a resolution he had formed, not to answer any opponent; and after declining all notice of Dr. Campbell, whose superiority, in his *Essay on Miracles*, has never been disputed, it was not to be supposed he would

¹⁶ Mason's *Life of Gray*, p. 319, edit. 4to. 1775.

break his engagement in favour of Dr. Beattie. But that he felt the attack is generally acknowledged, for this was the first time that the sophistry of his general system had been detected in a popular manner, and the absurdity as well as the mischief accruing from his principles fairly laid open. As to the French philosophers, whom our author incidentally noticed, it was not their object at that time to provoke a public controversy. They were effecting their purpose by surer means, and Dr. Beattie lived to see their principles triumphant in the destruction of religion, humanity, and social order.

Infidel writings have been obtruded on the world at different periods, and after having been set to rest for a time, have again been revived to serve new purposes. But on these revivals, it does not always happen that the controversial works of one period will supply the wants of the next. New means of attack require new means of defence. The infidel publications which appeared about the conclusion of the last century, were, in substance, mere transcripts of those which appeared at the beginning of it. But style was altered, and cunning assumed new shapes: a new class of men were to be influenced, and what once was confined to the speculations of the learned, was now to be adapted to a certain weak and feverish state of mind among the vulgar: until at length the controversy seemed to be taken entirely out of the hands of men of literature, and placed in those of mechanics and paupers. The blasphemies of Paine might have sunk into contempt, had they not been circulated, with liberal industry, among those who could read, but could not think, and who wanted a palliative to their conscience, or a screen to their profligacy. To debauch the minds of the lower classes was the last effort of the last race of infidels, and the suppression of them necessarily devolved on the civil magistrate.

But whatever reputation Dr. Beattie enjoyed from his philosophical and critical works, his praise was yet higher in all the personal relations of public and private life. His excellence as an instructor may be gathered from his printed works; but it remains to be added, that few men have exceeded him in anxious and kind attentions to his pupils. It was his practice, while under his care, to invite them by small parties to his house, and unbend his mind in gay conversation, encouraging them to speak with familiarity on common topics, and to express their doubts with freedom on any subjects connected with their studies. Those whom he observed particularly regular and attentive in the class, and who by their answers or remarks discovered the improvements of private assiduity, he honoured with his kindest patronage, and corresponded on easy and friendly terms with many of them, long after they quitted the university. By these means he was so endeared to his scholars, that I am not able to mention him at all as a disciplinarian. I can recollect no instance in which he found it necessary to command attention by any influence more strong than the reverence which his character and manners procured without any effort, and continued without any abatement.

As a husband and father, if he had any fault, it was that of extreme tenderness and sensibility. He was indeed "tremblingly alive" to every circumstance that affected the objects of his love. Yet who will arraign these feelings, or set bounds to parental care? The danger, let it be remembered, was all his own: his children betrayed none of the wayward consequences of indulgence; they amply repaid his anxious fondness, and he derived a pleasure from their advancement, which was very remote from the unsteady caprice of parental weakness. The talents of his eldest son, as they were cultivated chiefly in retirement, were not generally known; but those with whom he

associated knew him for a youth of wonderful innocence, purity and simplicity of mind and manner. Nor was his brother, of whom however I knew less from personal acquaintance, inferior in the valuable qualities of the heart. On them, therefore, the father's fondness produced none of the consequences of an affection which in many is rather a weakness than a virtue. He was himself the only sufferer by his excess of sensibility; and we must ever lament that it embittered those years which good men usually pass in cheerful remembrances, and exemplary resignation.

None were more affected by his melancholy retreat from society, than those who could recollect him in his happier days of health and hope. As a companion, few men exhibited more captivations. From his assiduous application to study, and the time he found it necessary to devote to his published works and to his academical duties, it may easily be supposed he could not spare many hours to company. Yet he had a keen relish for social intercourse, and was remarkably cheerful and communicative. It has not yet been mentioned, but it may be observed from various parts of his writings, that he had a turn for humour, and a quick sense of the ridiculous. This, however, was so chastened by the elegance of his taste, and the benevolence of his disposition, that whatever fell from him of that kind was devoid of coarseness or asperity. In conversation he never endeavoured to gain superiority, or to compel attention, but contrived to take his just share, without seeming to interrupt the loquacity of others. He had however what most men have who are jealous of their reputation, a degree of reserve in promiscuous company, which he entirely discarded among those whom he loved, and in whom he confided. Among strangers, too, there was a studied correctness in his expression, which was either unnecessary, or appeared more easy and natural, in his familiar hours.

Of his talent for humour, he gave some specimens in a periodical journal published at Aberdeen, which seem not unworthy of being added to his miscellaneous works, if they could be ascertained; but he did not seek the reputation of a wit, and I am not sure that he permitted his name to transpire. In London, it is yet remembered that his conversation-talents were much admired, and no doubt procured him a long continuance of those friendships with men of rank, which are rarely to be preserved without something more than the mere possession of genius. His modest and engaging manners rendered him equally acceptable to the courtly and elegant Mansfield, and to the rough and unbending Johnson. To Mrs. Montague's literary parties he was ever a most acceptable addition; and he lived with the present bishop of London, with sir Joshua Reynolds, and with Mr. Burke, on terms of the easiest intimacy. If flattery could have spoiled him, he had enough; as in England, for whatever reason, his character always stood higher than in his own country.

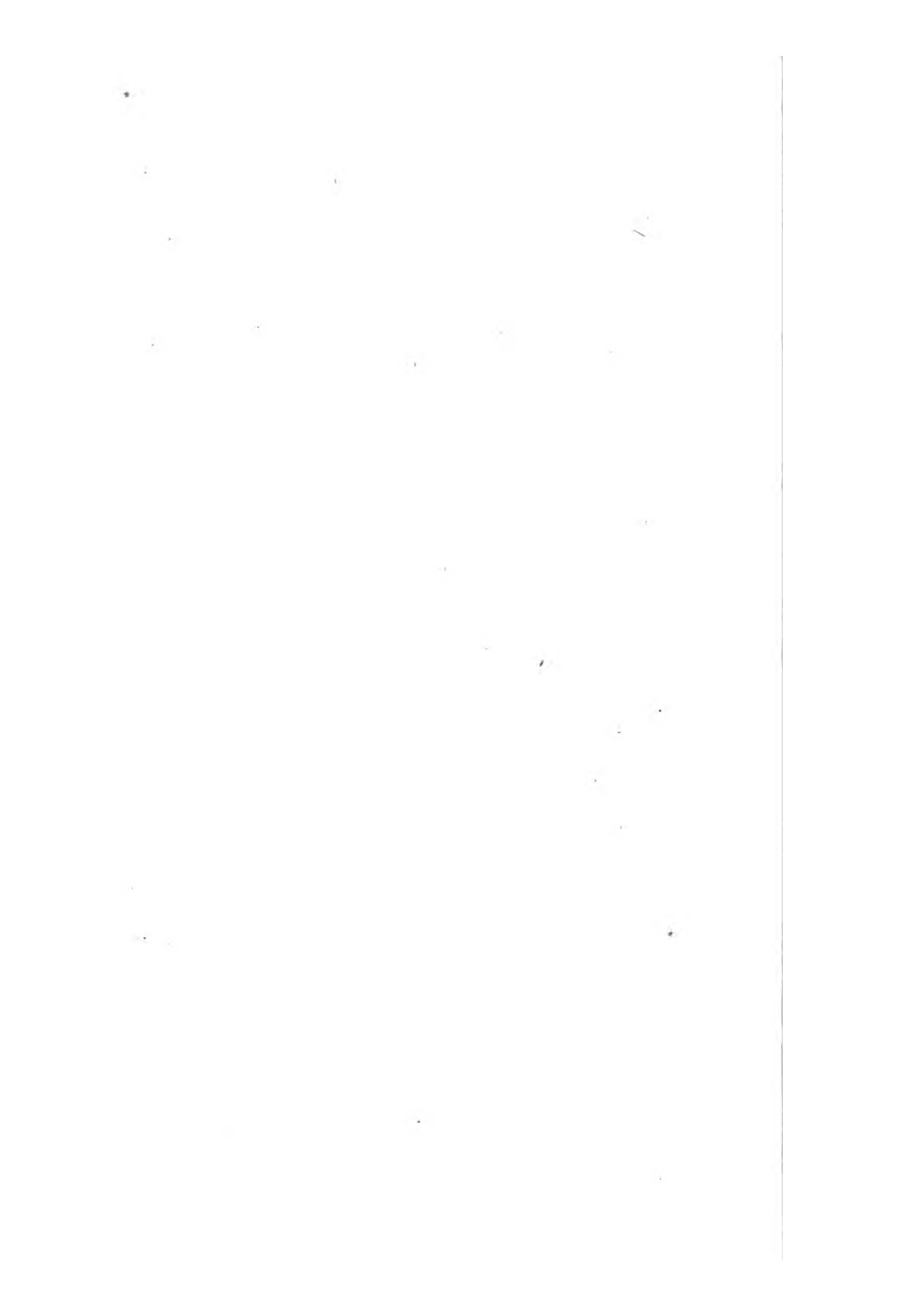
Dr. Beattie's person was rather above the middle size. His countenance was very mild, and his smile uncommonly placid and benign. His eyes were remarkably piercing and expressive, and there was a general composure in his features which sir Joshua Reynolds has given admirably in his picture, which has been engraven for his Life.

His person was apparently stout and even robust, but this certainly was not the case. Its original conformation may have been that of strength and vigour; but he had frequent interruptions from sickness at a very early period of life. As he advanced, he discovered all the delicate and valetudinary temperament of genius. At the age of forty-five he had the walk and manner and precautions that are usually observable at

sixty, and was much afflicted with head-achs and other symptoms that are commonly called nervous. When I saw him on his last visit to London, he seemed painfully affected by sudden noises of any kind, and was particularly averse to the bustle of the London streets. There was evidently a great portion of irritability in his habit. That this was precipitated by the loss of his domestic endearments, cannot be doubted; but the primary cause must be sought in his application to study, which at all times of his life, but particularly in his youth, was too close, and absolutely inconsistent with a healthy habit of body. Of this he was so sensible, that it appears to have been his constant object to prevent his son from falling into the same error; and I received some letters from him many years ago on the subject, in which he strongly deprecates an unremitting attention to books.

The Life of Dr. Beattie, lately published by sir William Forbes, exhibits him in the character of an epistolary writer. His letters embrace a very large portion of the literary history of his time, but it may be doubted whether they have always the ease and vivacity which are expected in this species of composition. They are valuable, however, as exhibiting many lesser traits of his character, and as disclosing its lesser infirmities.

It was the original intention of the present writer to have given no more of his poems in this collection than were contained in the last authorized edition, and the arguments in favour of this intention are still prevalent. In compliance, however, with the opinion of sir William Forbes, and others who have pleaded for a revival of many pieces which their author thought proper to reject, they are all now reprinted.





THE
LIFE OF WILLIAM COWPER.

BY MR. CHALMERS.

THIS very ingenious poet was the descendant of an ancient and honourable family. His father was the second son of Spenser Cowper (a younger brother of the lord chancellor Cowper) who was appointed chief justice of Chester in 1717, and afterwards a judge in the court of Common Pleas. He died in 1728, leaving a daughter, Judith, a young lady who had a striking taste for poetry, and who married colonel Madan, and transmitted her poetical taste and devotional spirit to a daughter. This daughter was married to her cousin major Cowper, and was afterwards the friend and correspondent of our poet. His father, John Cowper, entered into the church and became rector of Great Berkhamstead in Hertfordshire. He married Anne, the daughter of Roger Donne, esq. of Ludlam Hall in Norfolk, by whom he had several children, who died in their infancy, and two sons, William and John, who survived their mother. William was born at Berkhamstead Nov. 26, 1731, and from his infancy appears to have been of a very delicate habit both of mind and body.

To such a child the loss of a mother is an incalculable misfortune, and must have been particularly so to young Cowper. In his biographer's opinion, it contributed in the highest degree to the dark colouring of his subsequent life. Undoubtedly when a child requires a more than ordinary share of attention, the task can seldom be expected to be performed with so much success as by a mother, who to her natural affection joins that patience and undisturbed care which are rarely to be found in a father: but at the same time, it may be remarked that Cowper's very peculiar frame of mind appears to have been independent of any advantages or misfortunes in education.

In 1737, the year of his mother's death, he was sent to a school at Market-Street in Hertfordshire, under the conduct of Dr. Pitman, but was removed from it, at what time is uncertain, on account of a complaint in his eyes, for which he was consigned to the care of a female oculist for the space of two years. It does not, however, appear that he profited so much from her aid, as from the small-pox, which seized him at the age of fourteen, and removed the complaint for the present, but left a disposition to inflammation, to which he was subject nearly the whole of his life.

At Market-Street as well as at Westminster-school, to which he was now removed,

he is reported to have suffered much from the wanton tyranny of his school-fellows, who, with the usual unthinking cruelty of youth, triumphed over the gentleness and timidity of his spirit. As he informs us, however, that he "excelled at cricket and football," he could not have been wholly averse from joining in youthful sports, yet a preponderance of uneasiness from the behaviour of his companions was such, that in his advanced years he retained none but painful recollections of what men in general remember with more pleasure than any other period of their lives. These recollections no doubt animated his pen with more than his usual severity in exposing the abuses of public schools, to which he uniformly prefers a domestic education. This subject has since been discussed by various pens, and the conclusion seems to be, that the few instances which occur of domestic education successfully pursued are strongly in its favour where it is practicable, but that from the occupations and general state of talents in parents it can seldom be adopted, and is continually liable to be interrupted by accidents to which public schools are not exposed. In the case of Cowper, the public school might have been judiciously recommended to conquer his constitutional diffidence and shyness which, it was natural to suppose, would have been increased by a seclusion from boys of his own age, but the effect disappointed the expectations of his friends.

He left Westminster school in 1749, at the age of eighteen, and was articled to Mr. Chapman, an attorney, for the space of three years. This period he professed to employ in acquiring a species of knowledge which he was never to bring into use, and to which his peculiarity of disposition must have been averse. We are not told whether he had been consulted in this arrangement, but it was probably suggested as that in which his family interest might avail him. His own account may be relied on. "I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton-Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future lord chancellor (Thurlow) constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law¹." Yet with this apparent *gaieté de cœur*, and with every advantage, natural and acquired, that bade fair for his advancement in public life, he was kept back by an extreme degree of modesty and shyness from all intercourse with the world, except the society of a few friends, who knew how to appreciate his character, and among whom he found himself without restraint. The loss of a friend and of a mistress appear, among other adversities, to have aggravated his sufferings at this time, and to have strengthened that constitutional melancholy which he delighted to paint, and which, it is to be feared, he loved to indulge.

When he had fulfilled the terms of his engagement in Mr. Chapman's office, he entered the Temple with a view to the further study of the law, a profession that has been more frequently deserted than any other by men of lively genius. Cowper was destined to add another instance to the number of those who, under the appearance of applying to an arduous and important public study, have employed their time in the cultivation of wit and poetry. He is known to have assisted some contemporary publications with essays in prose and verse, and what is rather more extraordinary, in

¹ Letter to Lady Hesketh. Hayley's Life, vol. ii. 377. oct. edit. C.

a man of his purity of conduct, cultivated the acquaintance of Churchill, Thornton, Lloyd, and Colman, who had been his school-fellows at Westminster. It is undoubtedly to Churchill and Lloyd, that he alludes in a letter to lady Hesketh, dated Sept. 4, 1765. "Two of my friends have been cut off during my illness, in the midst of such a life, as it is frightful to reflect upon, and here am I, in better health and spirits, than I can almost remember to have enjoyed before, after having spent months in the apprehension of instant death. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Why did I receive grace and mercy? Why was I preserved, afflicted for my good, received, as I trust, into favour, and blessed with the greatest happiness, I can ever know, or hope for, in this life, while these were overtaken by the great arrest, unawakened, unrepenting, and every way unprepared for it?"

About the period alluded to, he assisted Colman with some papers for the *Connoisseur*, and probably Thornton and Lloyd, who then carried on various periodical undertakings, but the amount of what he wrote cannot now be ascertained, and was always so little known, that on the appearance of his first volume of poems when he had reached his fiftieth year (1782), he was considered as a new writer. But his general occupations will best appear in an extract from one of his letters to Mr. Park, in 1792. "From the age of twenty to thirty-three" (when he left the Temple) "I was occupied, or ought to have been, in the study of the law: from thirty-three to sixty, I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness, and where, when I had not either a magazine or a review, I was sometimes a carpenter, at others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author:—it is a whim that has served me longest, and best, and will probably be my last." His first poetical effort was a translation of an elegy of Tibullus made at the age of fourteen: at eighteen he wrote the beautiful verses *On finding the Heel of a Shoe*, but as little more of his juvenile poetry has been preserved, all the steps of his progress to that perfection which produced the *Task*, cannot now be traced.

Unfit as he was from extreme diffidence to advance in his profession, his family interest procured him a situation which seemed not ill adapted to gratify his very moderate ambition, while it did not much interfere with his reluctance to public life. In his thirty-fourth year, he was nominated to the offices of reading clerk, and clerk of the private committees of the house of lords. But in this arrangement his friends were disappointed. It presented to his mind the formidable danger of reading in public, which was next to speaking in public; his native modesty therefore recoiled at the thought, and he resigned the office. On this, his friends procured him the place of clerk of the journals to the house of lords, the consequence of which is thus related by Mr. Hayley.

"It was hoped from the change of his station that his personal appearance in parliament might not be required, but a parliamentary dispute made it necessary for him to appear at the bar of the house of lords, to entitle himself publicly to the office.

"Speaking of this important incident in a sketch, which he once formed himself of passages in his early life, he expresses what he endured at the time, in these remarkable words: 'They, whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition

of themselves is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horrors of my situation—others can have none.

“ His terrors on this occasion arose to such an astonishing height, that they utterly overwhelmed his reason : for although he had endeavoured to prepare himself for his public duty, by attending closely at the office for several months, to examine the parliamentary journals, his application was rendered useless by that excess of diffidence, which made him conceive, that, whatever knowledge he might previously acquire, it would all forsake him at the bar of the house. This distressing apprehension increased to such a degree, as the time for his appearance approached, that when the day, so anxiously dreaded, arrived, he was unable to make the experiment. The very friends, who called on him for the purpose of attending him to the house of lords, acquiesced in the cruel necessity of his relinquishing the prospect of a station so severely formidable to a frame of such singular sensibility.

“ The conflict between the wishes of just affectionate ambition and the terrors of diffidence, so entirely overwhelmed his health and faculties, that after two learned and benevolent divines (Mr. John Cowper, his brother, and the celebrated Mr. Martin Madan, his first cousin) had vainly endeavoured to establish a lasting tranquillity in his mind, by friendly and religious conversation ; it was found necessary to remove him to St. Alban's, where he resided a considerable time, under the care of that eminent physician, Dr. Cotton.”

The period of his residence here was from Dec. 1763 to July 1764, and the mode of his insanity appears to have been that of religious despondency ; but this, about the last mentioned date, gave way to more cheering views, which first presented themselves to his mind during a perusal of the third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

After his recovery from this awful visitation, he determined to retire from the busy world altogether, finding his mind alienated from the conversation and company, however select, in which he had hitherto delighted, and looking back with particular horror on some of his former associations : and by the advice of his brother the rev. John Cowper of Bennet College, Cambridge, he removed to a private lodging in Huntingdon. He had not, however, resided long in this place, before he was introduced into a family that had the honour for many years of administering to his happiness, and of evincing a warmth of friendship of which there are few examples. This intercourse was begun by Mr. Cawthorn Unwin, a young man then a student at Cambridge and son to the rev. Mr. Unwin, rector of Grimston, but now a resident at Huntingdon. Mr. Unwin the younger, was one day so attracted by Cowper's uncommon and interesting appearance, that he attempted to solicit his acquaintance, and achieved this purpose with such reciprocity of delight, that Cowper was finally induced to take up his abode with his new friend's amiable family, which then consisted of the rev. Mr. Unwin, Mrs. Unwin, the son just mentioned, and a daughter. It appears to have been about the month of September 1765, that he formed this acquaintance, and about February 1766, he became an inmate in the family. In July 1767, Mr. Unwin senior was killed by a fall from his horse. The letters which Mr. Hayley has published, “ describe in the clearest light, the singularly peaceful and devout life of the amiable



writer, during his residence at Huntingdon, and this melancholy accident which occasioned his removal to a distant county."

About this time he added to the number of his friends, the late venerable and pious John Newton, rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, but then curate of Olney in Buckinghamshire, who being consulted by Mr. Cowper as to an eligible residence for Mrs. Unwin, recommended a house at Olney, to which that lady, her daughter, and our poet removed on the 14th of October, 1767. At this residence, endeared to them by the company and public services of a man of congenial sentiments, Cowper for some years continued to enjoy those blessings of a retired and devotional life which had constituted his only happiness since his recovery. His correspondence at this era evinces a placid train of sentiment, mixed with an air of innocent gaiety, that must have afforded the highest satisfaction to his friends. Among other pleasures of the purest kind, he delighted in acts of benevolence, and as he was not rich, he had the additional felicity of being employed as an almoner in the secret benevolences of that most charitable of all human beings, the late John Thornton, esq. an opulent merchant of London, whose name he has immortalized in his poem on Charity, and in some verses on his death which Mr. Hayley first published. Mr. Thornton stately allowed Mr. Newton the sum of 200*l.* *per annum*², for the use of the poor of Olney, and it was the joint concern of Mr. Newton and Mr. Cowper to distribute this sum in the most judicious and useful manner. Such a bond of union could not fail to increase their intimacy. "Cowper," says Mr. Newton, "loved the poor; he often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses: and those who were seriously disposed, were often cheered and animated by his prayers." Of their intimacy, the same writer speaks in these emphatic terms—"For nearly twelve years we were seldom separated for seven hours at a time, when we were awake and at home—the first six I passed in daily admiring, and aiming to imitate him: during the second six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death." Among other friendly services about this time, he wrote for Mr. Newton some beautiful hymns, which the latter introduced in public worship, and published in a collection long before Cowper was known as a poet.

On these employments Mr. Hayley passes the following opinion. "Where the nerves are tender, and the imagination tremblingly alive, any fervid excess in the exercise of the purest piety may be attended with such perils to corporeal and mental health, as men of a more firm and hardy fibre would be far from apprehending. Perhaps the life that Cowper led, on his settling at Olney, had a tendency to increase the morbid propensity of his frame, though it was a life of admirable sanctity." It appears, however, by his letters, that this was the life of his choice, and that it was varied by exercise and rational amusements. How such a life could have a tendency to increase a morbid propensity, or what mode of life could have been contrived more likely to diminish that propensity, it is difficult to imagine.

In 1770, his brother John died at Cambridge, an event which made a lasting, but

² Cecil's Life of Newton, p. 142. Mr. Newton told his biographer that he thought he had received upwards of 3000*l.* in this way from Mr. Thornton, during the time that he resided at Olney, little more than fifteen years. C.

not unfavourable impression on the tender and affectionate mind of our poet. While the circumstances of this event were recent he committed them to paper, and they were published by Mr. Newton in 1802. Cowper afterwards introduced some lines to his memory in the *Task* :

—————" I had a brother once
Peace to the mem'ry of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of manners too," &c.

For some years this brother withstood, but finally adopted, our author's opinions in religious matters; and severely as the survivor felt the loss of so amiable a relative it produced no other effect on his mind than to increase his confidence in the principles he had adopted, and to rejoice in the consolations he derived from them.

From this period, his life affords little of the narrative kind, until 1773, when, in the language of his biographer, " he sunk into such severe paroxysms of religious despondency, that he required an attendant of the most gentle, vigilant, and inflexible spirit. Such an attendant he found in that faithful guardian (Mrs. Unwin) whom he had professed to love as a mother, and who watched over him, during this long fit of depressive malady, extended through several years, with that perfect mixture of tenderness and fortitude, which constitutes the inestimable influence of maternal protection. I wish to pass rapidly over this calamitous period, and shall only observe, that nothing could surpass the sufferings of the patient, or excell the care of the nurse. That meritorious care received from Heaven the most delightful of all rewards, in seeing the pure and powerful mind, to whose restoration it has contributed so much, not only gradually restored to the common enjoyments of life, but successively endowed with new and marvellous funds of diversified talents, and courageous application."

His recovery was slow, and he knew enough of his malady to abstain from literary employment while his mind was in any degree unsettled. The first amusement which engaged his humane affections was the taming of three hares, a circumstance that would have scarcely deserved notice unless among the memoranda of natural history, if he had not given to it an extraordinary interest in every heart by the animated account he wrote of this singular family. In the mean time, his friends Mrs. Unwin and Mr. Newton redoubled their efforts to promote his happiness, and to reconcile him to the world in which he had yet a very important part to act: but as, in 1780, Mr. Newton was obliged to leave Olney and accept of the living of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, he contrived to introduce Cowper to the friendship of the rev. Mr. Bull of Newport Pagnell. This gentleman, who had many excellent qualities to recommend him as a fit successor to Mr. Newton, soon acquired the unreserved confidence of our author³. It was at Mr. Bull's request that he translated several spiritual songs from the French of Madame De La Mothe Guion⁴, which have since been published separately. His recovery from this second illness may be dated from the summer of 1778, after which he began to meditate those greater exertions upon which his fame rests.

About this time he was advised to make application to lord Thurlow, who had been

³ See Cowper's character of him. Hayley, vol. ii. p. 90. C.

⁴ Cowper says, " Her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable: there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud, with so much reason, in the compositions of Prior." Hayley, vol. ii. p. 51. C.

one of his juvenile companions, for some situation of emolument, but he declined this from motives of highly justifiable delicacy, intimating that he had hopes from that quarter, and that it would be better not to anticipate his patron's favours by solicitation. He afterwards sent a copy of his first volume of poems to his lordship, accompanied with a very elegant letter, and seems to murmur a little, on more occasions than one, at his lordship's apparent neglect. A correspondence took place between them at a more distant period, but whether from want of a proper representation of his situation, or from forgetfulness, it is to be lamented that this nobleman's interest was employed when too late for the purpose which Cowper's friends hoped to promote. It will be difficult to impute a want of liberality to Lord Thurlow, while his voluntary and generous offer to Dr. Johnson remains on record.

In the mean time, our author continued to amuse himself with reading such new books as his friends could procure, with writing short pieces of poetry, tending his tame hares, and birds, and drawing landscapes, a talent which he discovered in himself very late in life, and which he employed with considerable skill. In all this perhaps there was not much labour, but it was not idleness. A short passage in one of his letters to the rev. William Unwin, dated May 1780, will serve to make the distinction. "Excellence is providentially placed beyond the reach of indolence, that success may be the reward of industry, and that idleness may be punished with obscurity and disgrace. So long as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind: I never received a *little* pleasure from any thing in my life: if I am delighted, it is in the extreme. The unhappy consequence of this temperature is, that my attachment to any occupation, seldom outlives the novelty of it."

Urged, however, by his amiable friend and companion, Mrs. Unwin, he employed the winter of 1780-1, in preparing his first volume of poems for the press, consisting of the *Table-Talk*, *Hope*, the *Progress of Errour*, *Charity*, &c. But such was his diffidence in their success, that he appears to have been in doubt whether any bookseller would be willing to print them on his own account. He was fortunate enough, however, to find in Mr. Johnson of St. Paul's Church Yard, (his friend Mr. Newton's publisher,) one whose spirit and liberality immediately set his mind at rest. The volume was accordingly completed, and Mr. Newton furnished the preface, a circumstance which his biographer attributes to "his extreme diffidence in regard to himself, and his kind eagerness to gratify the affectionate ambition of a friend whom he tenderly esteemed." It was published in 1782.

The success of this volume was undoubtedly not equal to its merit, for, as his biographer has justly observed, "it exhibits such a diversity of poetical powers, as have been given very rarely, indeed, to any individual of the modern, or of the ancient world." As an apology for the inattention of the public to a present of such value, Mr. Hayley has supposed that he gave offence by his bold eulogy on Whitfield, "whom the dramatic satire of Foote, in his comedy of the *Minor*, had taught the nation to deride as a mischievous fanatic;" and that he hazarded sentiments too precise and strict for public opinion. The character of Whitfield, however, had been long rescued from the impious buffooneries of Foote, and the public could now bear his eulogium with tolerable patience, but that there are austerities in these poems, which indicate

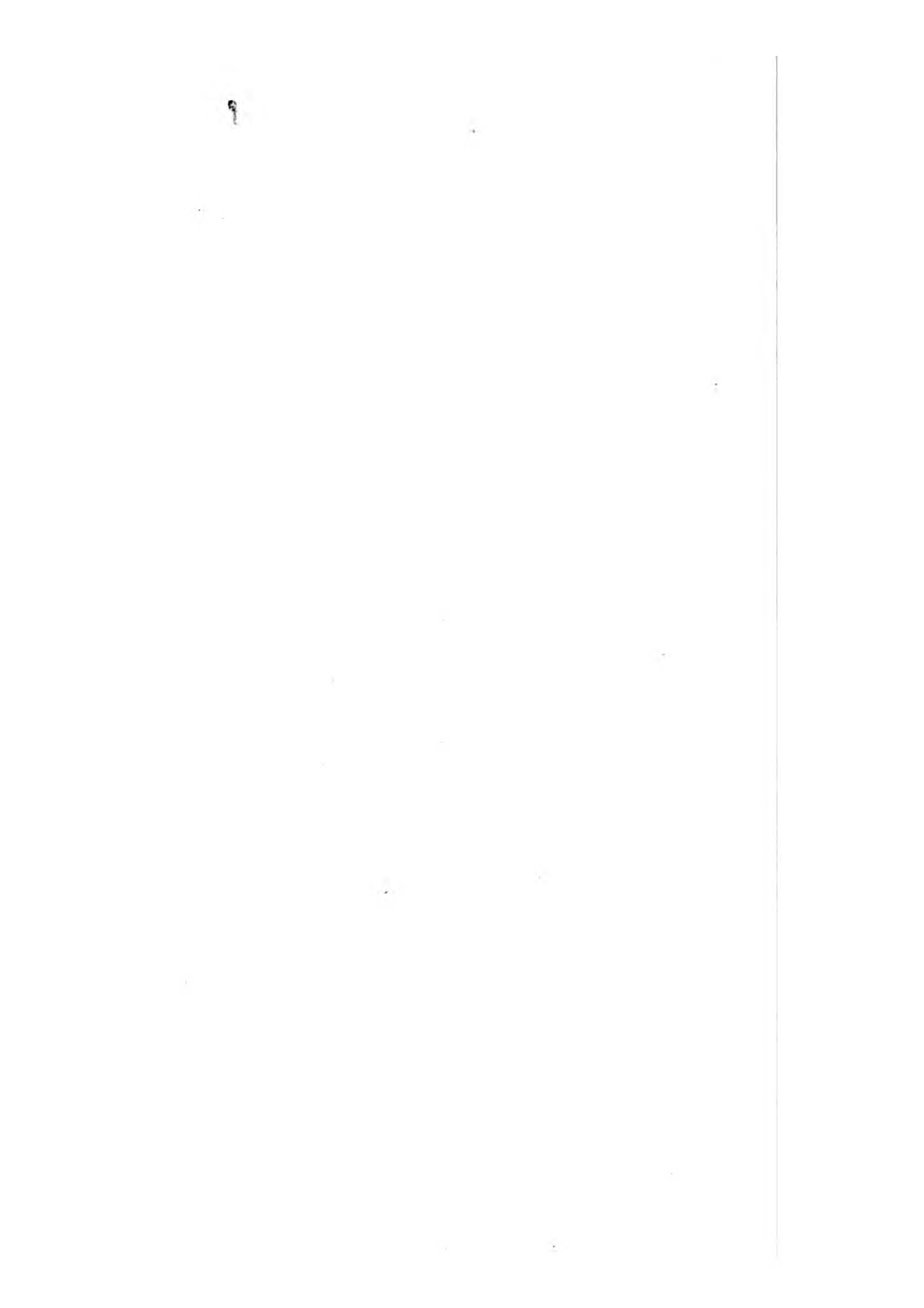
the moroseness of a recluse, Cowper was not unwilling to allow. Whether he softened them in the subsequent editions, his biographer has not informed us. It may be added that the volume was introduced into the world without any of the quackish parade so frequently adopted, and had none of those embellishments by which the eye of the purchaser is caught at the expence of his pocket. The periodical critics, whose opinions Cowper watched with more anxiety than could have been wished in a man so superior to the common candidates for poetic fame, were divided, and even those who were most favourable, betrayed no extraordinary raptures. In the mean time the work crept slowly into notice, and acquired the praise of those who knew the value of such an addition to our stock of English poetry.

Some time before the publication of this volume, Mr. Cowper made a most important acquisition in the friendship and conversation of lady Austen (widow of sir Robert Austen) whom he found a woman of elegant taste, and such critical powers as enabled her to direct his studies by her judgment and encourage them by her praise. An accidental visit which this lady made to Olney served to introduce her to the poet, whose shyness generally gave way to a display of mental excellence and polished manners. In a short time, lady Austen shared his esteem with his older friend Mrs. Unwin, although not without exciting some little degree of jealousy, which Mr. Hayley has noticed with his usual delicacy. Cowper, without at first suspecting that the feelings of Mrs. Unwin could be hurt, "considered the cheerful and animating society of his new accomplished friend, as a blessing conferred on him by the signal favour of Providence." Some months after their first interview, lady Austen quitted her house in London, and having taken up her residence in the parsonage house of Olney, Cowper, Mrs. Unwin, and she, became almost one family, dining always together alternately in the houses of the two ladies.

Among other small pieces which he composed at the suggestion of lady Austen, was the celebrated ballad of John Gilpin, the origin of which Mr. Hayley thus relates: "It happened one afternoon, that lady Austen observed him sinking into increasing dejection: it was her custom, on these occasions, to try all the resources of her sprightly powers for his immediate relief. She told him the story of John Gilpin (which had been treasured in her memory from her childhood) to dissipate the gloom of the passing hour. Its effect on the fancy of Cowper had the air of enchantment: he informed her the next morning, that convulsions of laughter brought on by his recollection of her story, had kept him waking during the greatest part of the night, and that he had turned it into a ballad." Mrs. Unwin sent it to the Public Advertiser, where the late Mr. Henderson, the player, first saw it, and conceiving it might serve to display his comic powers, read it at Free-Mason's-hall, in a course of similar entertainments given by himself and Mr. Thomas Sheridan. It became afterwards extremely popular among all classes of readers, but was not generally known to be Cowper's, until it was added to his second volume.

The public was soon laid under a far higher obligation to lady Austen for having suggested our author's principal poem, *The Task*, "a poem," says Mr. Hayley, "of such infinite variety, that it seems to include every subject, and every style, without any dissonance or disorder: and to have flowed without effort, from inspired philanthropy, eager to impress upon the hearts of all readers, whatever may lead them,





most happily, to the full enjoyment of human life, and to the final attainment of heaven."

This admirable poem appears to have been written in the years 1783 and 1784, but underwent many careful revisions. The public had done much for Cowper, but he had too much regard for it and for his own character, to obtrude what was incorrect, or might be made better. It was his opinion, an opinion of great weight from such a critic, that poetry, in order to attain excellence, must be indebted to labour; and it was his correspondent practice to revise his poems with scrupulous care and severity. In a letter to his friend Mr. Bull, on this poem, he says "I find it severe exercise, to mould and fashion it to my mind." Much of it was written in the winter, a season generally unfavourable to the author's health, but there is reason to think that the encouragement and attention of his amiable and judicious friends animated him to proceed, and that the regularity of his progress was favourable to his health and spirits. Disorders, like his, have been known to give way to some species of mental labour, if voluntarily undertaken, and pursued with steadiness. The Task filled up many of those leisure hours, for which rural walks and employments would have amply provided at a more favourable season. It may be added, likewise, that no man appears to have had a more keen relish for the snugness of a winter fire-side, and that, free from ambition or the love of grand and tumultuous enjoyments, his heart was elated with gratitude for those humbler comforts which a mind like his would be apt to magnify by reflecting on the misery of those who want them.

In November 1784, *The Task* was sent to the press, and he began the *Tirocinium*, the purport of which, in his own words, was, "to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in public schools; especially in the largest: and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home a domestic tutor where it is not: and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of some rural clergyman whose attention is limited to a few."

In this year, when he was beginning his translation of Homer, the quiet and even tenour of his life was disturbed by the necessity he felt of parting with lady Austen. A short extract from Mr. Hayley will give this matter as clear explanation as delicacy can permit. They who cannot apologize for the feelings of both ladies on this occasion, know but little of the human heart.

"Delightful and advantageous as his friendship with lady Austen had proved, he now began to feel, that it grew impossible to preserve that triple cord, which his own pure heart had led him to suppose not speedily to be broken. Mrs. Unwin, though by no means destitute of mental accomplishments, was eclipsed by the brilliancy of the poet's new friend, and naturally became uneasy, under the apprehension of being so, for to a woman of sensibility, what evil can be more afflicting, than the fear of losing all mental influence over a man of genius and virtue, whom she has long been accustomed to inspirit and to guide?"

"Cowper perceived the painful necessity of sacrificing a great portion of his present gratifications. He felt, that he must relinquish that ancient friend, whom he regarded as a venerable parent: or the new associate whom he idolized, as a sister of a heart and mind peculiarly congenial to his own. His gratitude for past services of unexampled

magnitude and weight, would not allow him to hesitate; with a resolution and delicacy, that do the highest honour to his feelings, he wrote a farewell letter to lady Austen, explaining and lamenting the circumstances, that forced him to renounce the society of a friend whose enchanting talents and kindness had proved so agreeably instrumental to the revival of his spirits, and to the exercise of his fancy.

“ In those very interesting conferences with which I was honoured by lady Austen, I was irresistibly led to express an anxious desire for the sight of a letter written by Cowper in a situation that must have called forth all the finest powers of his eloquence as a monitor and a friend. The lady confirmed me in my opinion that a more admirable letter could not be written; and had it existed at that time, I am persuaded from her noble frankness and zeal for the honour of the departed poet, she would have given me a copy; but she ingenuously confessed, that in a moment of natural mortification, she burnt this very tender, yet resolute letter. Had it been confided to my care, I am persuaded I should have thought it very proper for publication, as it displayed both the tenderness and the magnanimity of Cowper, nor could I have deemed it a want of delicacy towards the memory of lady Austen, to exhibit a proof, that animated by the warmest admiration of the great poet, whose fancy she could so successfully call forth, she was willing to devote her life and fortune to his service and protection. The sentiment is to be regarded as honourable to the lady: it is still more honourable to the poet, that with such feelings, as rendered him perfectly sensible of all lady Austen’s fascinating power, he could return her tenderness with innocent gallantry, and yet resolutely preclude himself from her society when he could no longer enjoy it without appearing deficient in gratitude towards the compassionate and generous guardian of his sequestered life. No person can justly blame Mrs. Unwin for feeling apprehensive that Cowper’s intimacy with a lady of such extraordinary talents, might lead him into perplexities of which he was by no means aware. This remark was suggested by a few elegant and tender verses, addressed by the poet to lady Austen, and shewn to me by that lady.

“ Those who were acquainted with the unsuspecting innocence, and sportive gaiety of Cowper, would readily allow, if they had seen the verses to which I allude, that they are such as he might have addressed to a real sister: but a lady only called by that endearing name, may be easily pardoned, if she was induced by them to hope that they might possibly be a prelude to a still dearer alliance. To me they appeared expressive of that peculiarity in his character, a gay and tender gallantry perfectly distinct from amorous attachment. If the lady who was the subject of the verses, had given them to me with a permission to print them, I should have thought the poet himself might have approved of their appearance, accompanied with such a commentary.”

Notwithstanding this interruption to his tranquillity, for such it certainly proved, although he was conscious that he had acted the part which was most honourable to him, he proceeded with the *Tirocinium*, and the other pieces which composed his second volume. These were published in 1785, and soon engaged the attention and admiration of the public in a way that left him no regret for the cool reception and slow progress of his first volume. Its success also obtained for him another female friend and associate, lady Hesketh, his cousin, who had long been separated from him. Their intercourse was first revived by a correspondence, of which Mr. Hayley has published many



interesting specimens, and says, with great truth, that Cowper's letters "are rivals to his poems in the rare excellence of representing life and nature with graceful and endearing fidelity." In explaining the nature of his situation to lady Hesketh, who came to reside at Olney in the month of June 1786, he informs her, that he had lived twenty years with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care it was owing that he lived at all, but that for thirteen of those years he had been in a state of mind which made all her care and attention necessary. He informs her at the same time that dejection of spirits, which may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made him one. He found employment necessary, and therefore took care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as he knew by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. It was his practice, therefore, to write generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening he transcribed. He read also, but less than he wrote, for bodily exercise was necessary, and he never passed a day without it. All this shows that Cowper understood his own case most exactly, and that he was not one of those melancholics who are said to give way to their disorder. No man could have discussed the subject with more perspicuity, or treated himself with more judgment. The returns of his malady, therefore, appear to have been wholly unavoidable, and wholly independent of his employment, whether of a religious or literary kind.

In October 1785, he had reached the twentieth book of his translation of Homer, although probably no part was finished as he could have wished. His stated number was forty lines each day, with transcription and revision. His immediate object was to publish the Homer by subscription, in order to add something to his income, which appears to have been always scanty, and in this resolution he persisted, notwithstanding offers from his liberal bookseller far more advantageous than a subscription was then likely to have produced. He seems to have felt a certain degree of pleasure, not wholly unmixed, in watching the progress of his subscription, and the gradual accession of names known to the learned world, or dear to himself by past recollections.

During the composition of this work, he at first declined what he had done before, *showing specimens to his friends*, and on this subject, indeed, his opinion seems to have undergone a complete change. To his friend Mr. Unwin, who informed him that a gentleman wanted a sample, he says with some humour, "When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse, never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me that his wife had longed." From this resolution he afterwards departed in a variety of instances. He first sent a specimen, with the proposals, to his relation general Cowper: it consisted of one hundred and seven lines, taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. This specimen fell into the hands of Mr. Fuseli, the celebrated painter, whose critical knowledge of Homer is universally acknowledged: and Cowper likewise agreed that if Mr. Maty, who then published a Review, wished to see a book of Homer, he should be welcome; and the first book and a part of the second were accordingly sent⁵. Mr. Fuseli afterwards was permitted

⁵ There is some confusion in the account of this matter in Cowper's Letters. It would appear that a specimen was printed before Maty saw this manuscript, and the severity of his remarks is insinuated to have arisen from this circumstance. Hayley's Cowper, vol. ii. p. 391.

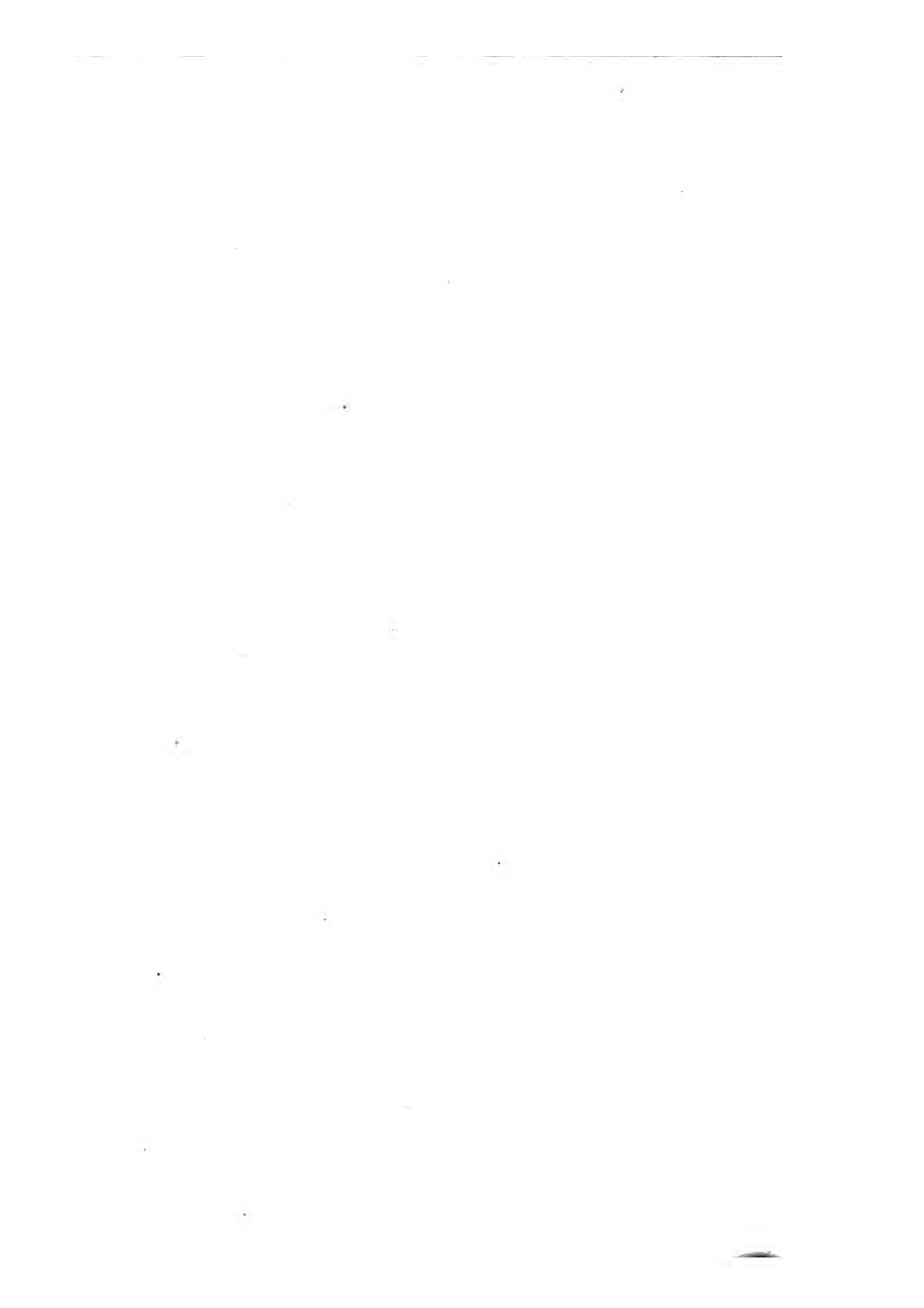
to revise the whole of the manuscript, and how well Cowper was satisfied in falling in with such a critic, appears (among other proofs of his high esteem) from the short character he gives of him in one of his letters. "For his knowledge of Homer, he has, I verily believe, no fellow." Colman, likewise, his old companion, with whom he had renewed an epistolary intimacy, revised some parts in a manner which afforded the author much satisfaction, and appears to have corrected the sheets for the press. With Maty he was less pleased, as his criticisms appeared "unjust and in part illiberal."

While thus intent on his Homer, he was enabled, by the kindness of lady Hesketh, to remove in November 1796, from Olney to Weston, about two miles distant, where the house provided for him was more sequestered and commodious. Here too he had access to the society of Mr. Throckmorton, a gentleman of fortune in that neighbourhood, whose family had for some time studied to add to his comforts in a manner the most delicate and affectionate. It is, indeed, not easy to speak of the conduct of Cowper's friends in terms adequate to their merit, their kindness, sensibility and judgment. Their attentions exceeded much of what we read, and perhaps all that we commonly meet with under the name of friendship. In the midst of these fair prospects, however, he lost his steady and beloved friend Mr. Unwin, who died in December of this year.

The translation of Homer, after innumerable interruptions, was sent to press about November 1790, and published on the first of July 1791, in two quarto volumes, the *Iliad* being inscribed to earl Cowper, his young kinsman, and the *Odyssey* to the dowager lady Spencer. Such was its success with the subscribers and non-subscribers that the edition was nearly out of print in less than six months. Yet after all the labour he had employed, and all the anxiety he felt for this work, it fell so short of the expectation formed by the public, and of the perfection which he hoped he had attained, that instead of a second edition, he began, at no long distance of time, what may be termed a new translation. To himself, however, his first attempt had been of great advantage, nor were any number of his years spent in more general tranquillity, than the five which he had dedicated to Homer.

One of the greatest benefits he derived from his attention to this translation, was the renewed conviction that labour of this kind, although with intermissions sometimes of relaxation and sometimes of anxiety, was necessary to his health and happiness; and this conviction led him very soon to accede to a proposal made by his bookseller, to undertake a magnificent edition of Milton's poetical works, the beauties of which had engaged his wonder at a very early period of life. These he was now to illustrate by notes, original and selected, and to translate the Latin and Italian poems, while Mr. Fuseli was to paint a series of pictures to be engraven by the first artists. To this scheme, when yet in its infancy, the public is indebted for the friendship which Mr. Hayley contracted with Cowper, and one of its happiest consequences, such a specimen of biography, minute, elegant and highly instructive, as can seldom be expected.

Mr. Hayley about this time had written a life of Milton to accompany the splendid edition published by Messrs. Boydells: and having been represented, in a newspaper, as the rival of Cowper, he immediately wrote to him on the subject. Cowper answered him in such a manner as drew on a closer correspondence, which soon terminated in mutual esteem and cordial friendship. Personal interviews followed, and Mr. Hayley has gratified his readers with a very interesting account of his first visit to Wes-



ton, and of the return by Cowper and Mrs. Unwin at his seat Eartham, in Sussex, but in a style so peculiarly affectionate as to be wholly incapable of abridgment. On Cowper's journey to Eartham, he passed through London, but without stopping, the only time he had seen it for nearly thirty years; thirty such years! What his feelings were on this occasion, who would not wish to be informed?

The edition of Milton went on but slowly. A revisal of Homer presented itself in the mean time, as a more urgent as well as pleasing undertaking, and from 1792 we find our author employed in correcting, re-writing and adding notes. In 1793 he appears to have been solely occupied in these labours, and wished to engage Mr. Hayley with him in a regular and complete revisal of his Homer. Mr. Hayley, with every inclination for an office so agreeable, and a partnership so honourable, still imagined that at this time he might render more essential service to the poet by an application to his more powerful friends. This delicate office was undertaken in consequence of what he had observed in Cowper on a late visit to Weston. "He possessed completely at this period," says his biographer, "all the admirable faculties of his mind, and all the native tenderness of his heart; but there was something indescribable in his appearance, which led me to apprehend, that without some signal event in his favour, to re-animate his spirits, they would gradually sink into hopeless dejection. The state of his aged and infirm companion (Mrs. Unwin) afforded additional ground for increasing solicitude. Her cheerful and beneficent spirit could hardly resist her own accumulated maladies, so far as to preserve ability sufficient to watch over the tender health of him, whom she had watched and guarded so long. Imbecility of body and mind must gradually render this tender and heroic woman unfit for the charge which she had so laudably sustained. The signs of such imbecility were beginning to be painfully visible: nor can nature present a spectacle more truly pitiable than imbecility in such a shape eagerly grasping for dominion, which it knows neither how to retain, or how to relinquish."

For some time, however, the fears of Mr. Cowper's affectionate friend, appeared to be groundless. His correspondence after the departure of Mr. Hayley, in November 1793, bespoke a mind considerably at ease, and even cheerful and active. From various circumstances, the scheme of publishing an edition of Milton appears to have been totally relinquished, and as his enthusiasm for this undertaking had abated, he expresses considerable satisfaction that he could devote the whole of his time to the improvement of his translation of Homer. A new scheme, more suitable to his original talents, had been suggested in 1791, by the rev. Mr. Buchanan, curate of Ravenstone, a man of worth and genius. This was a poem to be entitled *The Four Ages*, or the four distinct periods of Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age. For some time our poet meditated with great satisfaction on this design, and probably revolved many of the subordinate subjects in his mind. It seems to have been particularly calculated for his powers of reflection, his knowledge of the human heart, and his exquisite talent for depicting life and manners, and it was intended likewise to unite the fascinations of the graphic art. Mr. Hayley has published a fragment of this work, imperfect as the author left it, but more than enough to make us regret that his situation and the situation of his aged companion soon forbade all hopes of its being executed ⁶.

⁶ Mr. Hayley mentions two modern poems on *The Four Ages of Man*, the one by M. Warthmüller, a citizen of Zurich, and another by M. Zacharie, professor of poetry at Brunswick. To these I may

In January 1794, he informed his friend Mr. Rose ⁷, that he had just ability enough to transcribe, and that he wrote at that moment under the pressure of sadness not to be described. In the expressive language of his biographer, "his health, his comfort, and his little fortune, were perishing most deplorably." Mrs. Unwin had passed into a state of second childhood, and something seemed wanting to cheer the mind of Cowper, if possible, against the prospect of decaying comforts and competence. Application was accordingly made to those who had it in their power to procure, what so much merit must have dignified, a pension; but many months elapsed before effectual attention could be obtained. What power refused, however, was in some degree performed by friendship; lady Hesketh, with her accustomed benevolence of character, and with an affection of which the instances are very rare, removed to Weston, and became the tender nurse of the two drooping invalids, of Mrs. Unwin, who was declining by years and infirmities, and of Cowper, who, in April 1794, had relapsed into his worst state of mental inquietude.

At this time, in consequence of a humane and judicious letter from the rev. Mr. Greathead of Newport Pagnell, Mr. Hayley paid a visit to this house of mourning, but found his poor friend, "too much overwhelmed by his oppressive malady to shew even the least glimmering of satisfaction at the appearance of a guest, whom he used to receive with the most lively expressions of affectionate delight." In this deplorable state he continued during Mr. Hayley's visit of some weeks, and the only circumstance which contributed in any degree to cheer the hearts of the friends who were now watching over him, was the intelligence that his majesty had been pleased to confer upon him such a pension as would insure an honourable competence for his life. Earl Spencer was the immediate agent in procuring this favour, and it would no doubt have added to its value, had the object of it known that he was indebted to one, who of all his noble friends, stood the highest in his esteem. But he was now, and for the remainder of his unhappy life, beyond the power of knowing or acknowledging the benevolence in which his heart delighted. Mr. Hayley left him for the last time, in the spring of 1794, and from that period till the latter end of July 1795, Cowper remained in a state of the deepest melancholy.

His removal from Weston now appeared to his friends a necessary experiment, to try what change of air and of objects might produce: and his young kinsman, the rev. Mr. Johnson, undertook to convey him and Mrs. Unwin from that place to North Tuddenham in Norfolk, where they arrived in the beginning of August 1795, and resided till the nineteenth. Of Cowper's state during this time, all that we are told is, that he exhibited some regret on leaving Weston, and some composure of mind during a conversation of which the poet Thomson was the subject. He was able also to bear considerable exercise, and on one occasion walked with Mr. Johnson to

add a third by my venerable friend the rev. Dr. John Ogilvie, entitled *Human Life*, published, without his name, in 1806. C.

⁷ Another of those friends whom Providence raised up to reconcile Cowper with the world, which has since had to lament his loss. Mr. Hayley has given a very interesting account of this amiable young man, who promised to be an ornament to his profession and to the republic of letters. He was honoured with Cowper's esteem and confidence for some years. After this, it is poor praise to add that I never knew a man more justly endeared to a numerous circle of friends, by the most valuable qualities of head or heart, or one whom, among the many whom I have survived, I more frequently miss. C.



the neighbouring village of Mattishall, on a visit to his cousin Mrs. Bodham. "On surveying his own portrait by Abbot, in the house of that lady, he clasped his hands in a paroxysm of pain, and uttered a vehement wish, that his present sensations might be such as they were when that picture was painted."

After this short residence at Tuddenham, Mr. Johnson conducted his two invalids to Mundsley, a village on the Norfolk coast, where they continued till October, but without deriving any apparent benefit from the sea air. Some calm recollection of past scenes, however, returned, enough to prompt him to write a letter to Mr. Buchanan, enquiring after matters at Weston. But this was almost the last of his correspondence. In October, Mr. Johnson removed him and Mrs. Unwin to Dereham, which they left in November for Dunham Lodge, a house situated on high ground in a park about four miles from Swaffam.

Here his affectionate kinsman endeavoured by various means to rouse in him an attention to literary or common subjects, such as might prevent his mind from preying on itself, and on some occasions he appears to have succeeded in a small degree; but the recurrence of fixed melancholy was so frequent as to destroy the transient hopes which these promising appearances excited. In the following year, change of scene was again adopted, and not without such effect as justified the measure, even when all prospect of permanent advantage had vanished. In December 1796, death removed Mrs. Unwin by a change as tranquil as her decayed body and mind promised. Cowper, about an hour after her departure, looked at the corpse, but started suddenly away with a broken sentence of passionate sorrow, and spoke of her no more. He was now in that state and at that age, when grief is neither exasperated by memory, nor relieved by consolation, and was mercifully relieved from feelings which neither religion nor reason could any longer regulate.

His subsequent intervals of bodily health, few as they were, appear to have been attended with some return of attention to his favourite pursuits. His anxious and tender friend Mr. Johnson embraced such opportunities to lead him to take delight in the revision of his Homer, and from September 1797, to March 1799, he completed, by snatches, the revisal of the *Odyssey*. Of the returns of his disorder, he appears to have been sensible, and could describe it on its commencement, and before it totally overpowered his faculties. In a letter to lady Hesketh, dated Oct. 13, 1798, which Mr. Hayley has preserved, he describes himself as one to whom nature "in one day, in one minute, became an universal blank." On this his biographer notices the opinion of some of his friends, that his disorder arose from a scorbutic habit, which, when perspiration was obstructed, occasioned an unsearchable obstruction in the fine parts of his frame.

At intervals he still wrote a few original verses, of which *The Cast-away*, his too favourite subject, was the last that came from his pen, but he amused himself occasionally with translations from Latin and Greek epigrams. His last effort of the literary kind, was an improved version of a passage in Homer, which he wrote at Mr. Hayley's suggestion, and which that gentleman received on the thirty-first of January 1800. In the following month he exhibited all the symptoms of dropsy, which soon made a rapid progress. On April 25, about five in the afternoon, he expired so quietly that

not one of his friends who were present perceived his departure, but from the awful stillness which succeeded.

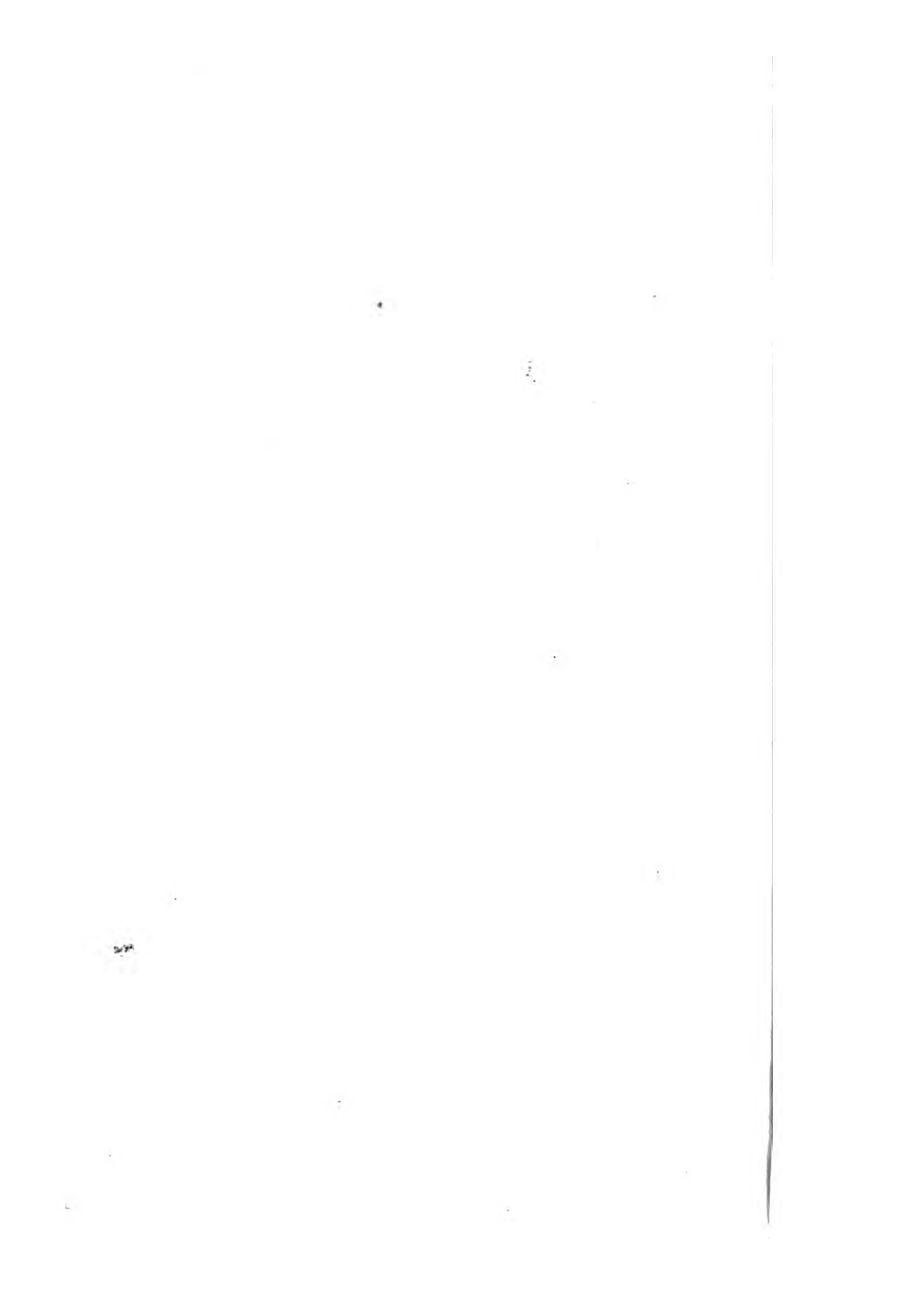
On Saturday, May 3, he was buried in St. Edmund's chapel in Dereham church, where lady Hesketh caused a marble tablet to be erected, with the following inscription :

In Memory
of
WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.
Born in Hertfordshire
1731,
Buried in this church
1800.

YE who with warmth the public triumph feel
Of talents, dignified by sacred zeal,
Here to devotion's bard devoutly just,
Pay your fond tribute due to Cowper's dust !
England, exulting in his spotless fame,
Ranks with her dearest sons his favourite name :
Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
So clear a title to affection's praise :
His highest honours to the heart belong ;
His virtues form'd the magic of his song.

That such a man should have been doomed to endure a life of mental distraction, relieved by few intervals, will probably ever be the subject of wonder ; but that wonder will not be removed by curious inquiries into the state of Cowper's mind, as displaying circumstances that have never occurred before. Awful as his case was, and most deeply as it ever must be deplored, there was nothing singular in the dispensation, unless that it befel one of more than common powers of genius, and consequently excited more general sympathy. Mr. Hayley, who has often endeavoured to reason on the subject, seems to resolve it at last into a bodily disorder, a sort of scorbutic affection which, when repelled, brought on derangement of more or less duration. It appears to the present writer, from a careful perusal of that instructive piece of biography published by Mr. Hayley, that Cowper, from his infancy, had a tendency to errations of mind ; and without admitting this fact in some degree, it must seem extremely improbable that the mere dread of appearing as a reader in the house of lords should have brought on his first settled fit of lunacy. Much, indeed, has been said of his uncommon shyness and diffidence, and more, perhaps, than the history of his early life will justify. Shyness and diffidence are common to all young persons who have not been early introduced into company, and Cowper, who had not, perhaps, that advantage at home, might have continued to be shy when other boys are forward. But had his mind been, even in this early period, in a healthful state, he must have gradually assumed the free manners of an ingenuous youth, conscious of no unusual imperfection that should keep him back. At school, we are told, he was trampled upon by ruder boys who took advantage of his weakness, yet we find that he mixed in their amusements, which must in some degree have advanced him on a level with them : and what is yet more extraordinary, we find him for some years associating with men of more gaiety than pure





morality admits, and sporting with the utmost vivacity and wildness with Thurlow and others, when it was natural to expect that he would have been glad to court solitude for the purposes of study, as well as for the indulgence of his habitual shyness, if, indeed, at this period it was so habitual as we are taught to believe.

Although, therefore, it be inconsistent with the common theories of mania, to ascribe his first attack to his aversion to the situation which was provided for him, or to the operation of delicacy or sensibility on a healthy mind, it is certain that at that time, and when, by his own account, he was an entire stranger to the religious system which he afterwards adopted, he was visited by the first attack of his disorder, which was so violent and of such a length as to put an end to all prospect of advancement in his profession. It is particularly incumbent on all who venerate the sound and amiable mind of Cowper, the clearness of his understanding, and his powers of reasoning, to notice the date and circumstances of this first attack, because it has been the practice with superficial observers, and professed infidels, who are now running down all the important doctrines of revealed religion under the name of methodism, to ascribe Cowper's malady to his religious principles, and his religious principles to the company he kept. But important as it may be to repel insinuations of this kind, it is become less necessary since the publication of Mr. Hayley's Life, which affords the most complete vindication of Mr. Cowper's friends, and decidedly proves that his religious system was no more connected with his malady than with his literary pursuits; that his malady continued to return without any impulse from either, and that no means of the most judicious kind were omitted by himself or his friends to have prevented the attack, if human means could have availed. With respect to his friends, there can be nothing conceived more consolatory to him who wishes to cherish a good opinion of mankind, than to contemplate Cowper in the midst of those friends, men and women exquisitely tender, kind, and disinterested, animated by the most pure benevolence towards the helpless and interesting sufferer, enduring cheerfully every species of fatigue and privation, to administer the least comfort to him, and sensible of no gratification but what arose from their success in prolonging and gladdening the life on which they set so high a value.

To add much to this sketch, respecting the merit of Cowper as a poet, would be superfluous. After passing through the many trials which criticism has instituted, he remains, by universal acknowledgment, one of the first poets of the eighteenth century. Even without awaiting the issue of such trials, he attained a degree of popularity which is almost without a precedent, while the species of popularity which he has acquired is yet more honourable than the extent of it. No man's works ever appeared with less of artificial preparation; no venal heralds proclaimed the approach of a new poet, nor told the world what it was to admire. He emerged from obscurity, the object of no patronage, and the adherent of no party. His fame, great and extensive as it is, arose from gradual conviction, and gratitude for pleasure received. The genius, the scholar, the critic, the man of the world, and the man of piety, each found in Cowper's works something to excite their surprize and their admiration, something congenial with their habits and feelings, something which taste readily selected, and judgment decidedly confirmed. Cowper was found to possess that combination of energies which marks the comprehensive mind of a great and inventive genius, and to furnish examples of

the sublime, the pathetic, the descriptive, the moral, and the satirical, so numerous, that nothing seemed beyond his grasp, and so original, that nothing reminds us of any former poet.

If this praise be admitted, it will be needless to inquire in what peculiar charms Cowper's poems consist, or why he, above all poets of recent times, has become the universal favourite of his nation. Yet as he appears to have been formed not only to be an ornament but a model to his brethren, it may not be useless to remind them, that in him the virtues of the man and the genius of the poet were inseparable, that in every thing he respected the highest interests of human kind, the promotion of religion, morality, and benevolence, and that while he enchants the imagination by the decorations of genuine poetry, and even condescends to trifle with innocent gaiety, his serious purposes are all of the nobler kind. He secures the judgment by depth of reflection on morals and manners, and by a vigour of sentiment, and a knowledge of human nature, such as every man's taste and every man's experience must confirm. In description, whether of objects of nature, or of artificial society, he has few equals, and whether he passes from description to reasoning, or illustrates the one by the other, he has found the happy art of administering to the pleasures of the senses, and those of the intellect with equal success. But what adds a peculiar charm to Cowper is, that his language is every where the language of the heart. The pathetic, in which he excels, is exclusively consecrated to subjects worthy of it. He obtrudes none of those assumed feelings by which some have obtained the character of moral, tender, and sympathetic, who in private life are known to be gross, selfish, and unfeeling. In Cowper we have every where the happiness to contemplate not only the most favourite of poets, but the best of men.



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born 1731. died 1800.

