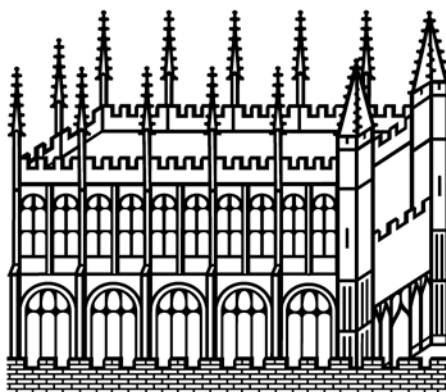




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T H E
L I F E
O F
THOMAS PARNELL, D.D.

ARCHDEACON of CLOGHER.

COMPILED FROM
ORIGINAL PAPERS and MEMOIRS:

IN WHICH ARE INCLUDED
SEVERAL LETTERS

Of Mr. POPE, Mr. GAY, Dr. ARBUTHNOT, &c. &c.

By Dr. GOLDSMITH.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. DAVIES, in *Russel-Street, Covent-Garden.*

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(6)



THE
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THOMAS PARNELL, D. D.

THE life of a scholar seldom abounds with adventure. His fame is acquired in solitude, and the historian who only views him at a distance, must be content with a dry detail of actions by which he is scarce distinguished from the rest of mankind. But we are fond of talking of those who have given us pleasure; not that we have any thing important to say, but because the subject is pleasing.

Thomas Parnell, D. D. was descended from an ancient family, that had for some centuries been settled at Congleton in Cheshire. His

B father

father, Thomas Parnell, who had been attached to the commonwealth party, upon the restoration went over to Ireland; thither he carried a large personal fortune, which he laid out in lands in that kingdom. The estates he purchased there, as also that of which he was possessed in Cheshire, descended to our poet, who was his eldest son, and still remain in the family. Thus want, which has compelled many of our greatest men into the service of the Muses, had no influence upon Parnell; he was a poet by inclination.

He was born in Dublin, in the year 1679, and received the first rudiments of his education at the school of Doctor Jones in that city. Surprising things are told us of the greatness of his memory at that early period, as of his being able to repeat by heart forty lines of any book at the first reading; of his getting the third book of the Iliad in one night's time, which was given in order to confine him for some days. These stories, which are told of almost

most every celebrated wit, may perhaps be true. But for my own part, I never found any of those prodigies of parts, although I have known enough that were desirous, among the ignorant, of being thought so,

There is one presumption, however, of the early maturity of his understanding. He was admitted a member of the college of Dublin at the age of thirteen, which is much sooner than usual, as at that university they are a great deal stricter in their examination for entrance, than either at Oxford or Cambridge. His progress through the college course of study was probably marked with but little splendour; his imagination might have been too warm to relish the cold logic of Burgerfidičius, or the dreary subtleties of Smigleſius; but it is certain, that as a classical scholar, few could equal him. His own compositions shew this, and the difference which the most eminent men of his time paid him upon that head, put it beyond a doubt. He took the degree of Master of

Arts the ninth of July, 1700, and in the same year, he was ordained a deacon, by William, bishop of Derry, having a dispensation from the primate, as being under twenty-three years of age. He was admitted into priest's orders about three years after, by William, archbishop of Dublin, and on the ninth of February, 1705, he was collated by Sir George Ashe, bishop of Clogher, to the archdeaconry of Clogher. About that time also he married Miss Anne Minchin, a young lady of great merit and beauty, by whom he had two sons, who died young, and one daughter, who is still living. His wife died some time before him, and her death is said to have made so great an impression on his spirits, that it served to hasten his own. On the thirty-first of May, 1716, he was presented, by his friend and patron archbishop King, to the vicarage of Finglafs, a benefice worth about four hundred pounds a year in the diocese of Dublin, but he lived to enjoy his preferment a very short time. He died at Chester, in July, 1717, on
his

his way to Ireland, and was buried in Trinity church in that town, without any monument to mark the place of his interment. As he died without male issue, his estate devolved to his only nephew, Sir John Parnell, baronet, whose father was younger brother to the arch-deacon, and one of the justices of the King's Bench in Ireland.

Such is the very unpoetical detail of the life of a poet. Some dates, and some few facts scarce more interesting than those that make the ornaments of a country tomb-stone, are all that remain of one whose labours now begin to excite universal curiosity. A poet, while living, is seldom an object sufficiently great to attract much attention; his real merits are known but to a few, and these are generally sparing in their praises. When his fame is increased by time, it is then too late to investigate the peculiarities of his disposition; the dews of the morning are past, and we vainly

try to continue the chace by the meridian splendour,

There is scarce any man but might be made the subject of a very interesting and amusing history, if the writer, besides a thorough acquaintance with the character he draws, were able to make those nice distinctions which separate it from all others. The strongest minds have usually the most striking peculiarities, and would consequently afford the richest materials : but in the present instance, from not knowing Doctor Parnell, his peculiarities are gone to the grave with him, and we are obliged to take his character from such as knew but little of him ; or who, perhaps, could have given very little information if they had known more.

PARNELL, by what I have been able to collect from my father and uncle, who knew him, was the most capable man in the world to make the happiness of those he conversed with,
and

and the least able to secure his own. He wanted that evenness of disposition which bears disappointment with phlegm, and joy with indifference. He was ever very much elated or depressed; and his whole life spent in agony or rapture. But the turbulence of these passions only affected himself, and never those about him; he knew the ridicule of his own character, and very effectually raised the mirth of his companions; as well at his vexations as at his triumphs.

How much his company was desired, appears from the extensiveness of his connexions, and the number of his friends. Even before he made any figure in the literary world, his friendship was sought by persons of every rank and party. The wits at that time differed a good deal from those who are most eminent for their understanding at present. It would now be thought a very indifferent sign of a writer's good sense to disclaim his private friends for happening to be of a different party in politics; but

but it was then otherwise, the Whig wits held the Tory wits in great contempt, and these retaliated in their turn. At the head of one party were Addison, Steele, and Congreve; at that of the other, Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot. Parnell was a friend to both sides, and with a liberality becoming a scholar, scorned all those trifling distinctions, that are noisy for the time, and ridiculous to posterity. Nor did he emancipate himself from these without some opposition from home. Having been the son of a commonwealth's man, his Tory connexions on this side of the water, gave his friends in Ireland great offence; they were much enraged to see him keep company with Pope, and Swift, and Gay; they blamed his undistinguishing taste, and wondered what pleasure he could find in the conversation of men who approved the Treaty of Utrecht and disliked the duke of Marlborough.

His conversation is said to have been extremely pleasing, but in what its peculiar excellence

cellence consisted is now unknown. The letters which were written to him by his friends, are all full of compliments upon his talents as a companion, and his good nature as a man. I have several of them now before me. Pope was particularly fond of his company, and seems to regret his absence more than any of the rest. A letter from him follows thus :

Dear S I R,

London, July 29.

‘ I Wish it were not as ungenerous as vain
 ‘ to complain too much of a man that for-
 ‘ gets me, but I could expostulate with you a
 ‘ whole day upon your inhuman silence ; I call
 ‘ it inhuman ; nor would you think it less, if
 ‘ you were truly sensible of the uneasiness it
 ‘ gives me. Did I know you so ill as to think
 ‘ you proud, I would be much less concerned
 ‘ than I am able to be, when I know one of
 ‘ the best-natured men alive neglects me ; and
 ‘ if you know me so ill as to think amiss of
 ‘ me, with regard to my friendship for you,
 ‘ you

‘ you really do not deserve half the trouble you
 ‘ occasion me. I need not tell you, that both
 ‘ Mr. Gay and myself have written several let-
 ‘ ters in vain ; and that we are constantly en-
 ‘ quiring of all who have seen Ireland, if they
 ‘ saw you, and that (forgotten as we are) we
 ‘ are every day remembering you in our most
 ‘ agreeable hours. All this is true, as that
 ‘ we are sincerely lovers of you, and deplorers
 ‘ of your absence, and that we form no wish
 ‘ more ardently than that which brings you
 ‘ over to us, and places you in your old seat
 ‘ between us. We have lately had some dis-
 ‘ tant hopes of the Dean’s design to revisit
 ‘ England ; will not you accompany him ? or
 ‘ is England to lose every thing that has any
 ‘ charms for us, and must we pray for banish-
 ‘ ment as a benediction?—I have once been
 ‘ witness of some, I hope all of your splenetic
 ‘ hours, come and be a comforter in your turn
 ‘ to me, in mine. I am in such an unsettled
 ‘ state, that I can’t tell if I shall ever see you,
 ‘ unless it be this year ; whether I do or not ;
 ‘ be

' be ever assured, you have as large a share of
 ' my thoughts and good wishes as any man,
 ' and as great a portion of gratitude in my
 ' heart as would enrich a monarch, could he
 ' know where to find it. I shall not die with-
 ' out testifying something of this nature, and
 ' leaving to the world a memorial of the friend-
 ' ship that has been so great a pleasure and
 ' pride to me. It would be like writing my
 ' own epitaph, to acquaint you what I have
 ' lost since I saw you, what I have done, what
 ' I have thought, where I have lived, and
 ' where I now repose in obscurity. My friend
 ' Jervas, the bearer of this, will inform you
 ' of all particulars concerning me, and Mr.
 ' Ford is charged with a thousand loves, and a
 ' thousand commissions to you on my part.
 ' They will both tax you with the neglect of
 ' some promises which were too agreeable
 ' to us all to be forgot; if you care for any
 ' of us tell them so, and write so to me. I
 ' can say no more, but that I love you, and
 ' am

' am, in spite of the longest neglect of hap-
' piness,

' Dear Sir,

' Your most faithful affectionate friend

' And servant,

' A. P O P E.

' Gay is in Devonshire, and from thence
' goes to Bath; my father and mother never
' fail to commemorate you.'

Among the number of his most intimate
friends was Lord Oxford, whom Pope has so
finely complimented upon the delicacy of his
choice.

For him, thou oft hast bid the world at-
tend,

Fond to forget the statesman in the friend;
For Swift and him, despis'd the farce of
state,

' The sober follies of the wise and great;

Dextrous

Dextrous, the craving, fawning crowd to
quit,

And pleas'd to 'scape from flattery to wit.

Pope himself was not only excessively fond of his company, but under several literary obligations to him for his assistance in the translation of Homer. Gay was obliged to him upon another account; for being always poor, he was not above receiving from Parnell, the copy-money which the latter got for his writings. Several of their letters, now before me, are proofs of this, and as they have never appeared before, it is probable the reader will be much better pleased with their idle effusions, than with any thing I can hammer out for his amusement.

Binfield, near Oakingham, Tuesday.

Dear S I R,

I Believe the hurry you were in hindered
your giving me a word by the last post,
so that I am yet to learn whether you got
well

' well to town or continue so there? I very
 ' much fear both for your health and your quiet;
 ' and no man living can be more truly con-
 ' cerned in any thing that touches either than
 ' myself. I would comfort myself, however,
 ' with hoping that your business may not be
 ' unsuccessful, for your sake; and that, at least
 ' it may soon be put into other proper hands.
 ' For my own, I beg earnestly of you to return
 ' to us as soon as possible. You know how
 ' very much I want you, and that however your
 ' business may depend upon any other, my bu-
 ' siness depends entirely upon you, and yet still
 ' I hope you will find your man, even though
 ' I lose you the mean while. At this time, the
 ' more I love you, the more I can spare you;
 ' which alone will, I dare say, be a reason to
 ' you to let me have you back the sooner. The
 ' minute I lost you, Eustathius with nine hun-
 ' dred pages, and nine thousand contractions of
 ' the Greek characters, arose to view! Spenda-
 ' nus, with all his auxiliaries, in number a
 ' thousand pages, (value three shillings) and
 ' Dacier's

† Dacier's three volumes, Barnes's two, Val-
 † terie's three, Cuperus, half in Greek, Leo
 † Allatius, three parts in Greek; Scaliger,
 † Macrobius, and (worfe than them all) Aulus
 † Gellius! All these rushed upon my foul at
 † once, and whelmed me under a fit of the head-
 † ach. I curfed them all religiously, damn'd
 † my beft friends among the reft, and even
 † blasphemed Homer himfelf. Dear Sir, not
 † only as you are a friend, and a good-natured
 † man; but as you are a chriftian and a divine,
 † come back fpeedily, and prevent the increafe
 † of my fins; for at the rate I have begun to
 † rave, I fhall not only damn all the poets and
 † commentators who have gone before me, but
 † be damn'd myfelf by all who come after me.
 † To be ferious, you have not only left me to
 † the laft degree impatient for your return, who
 † at all times fhould have been fo; (tho' never
 † fo much as fince I knew you in beft health
 † here) but you have wrought feveral miracles
 † upon our family; you have made old people
 † fond of a young and gay perfon, and inve-
 terate

' terate papists of a clergyman of the church
 ' of England ; even nurse herself is in danger
 ' of being in love in her old age, and (for all I
 ' know) would even marry Dennis for your
 ' sake, because he is your man, and loves his
 ' master. In short, come down forthwith, or
 ' give me good reasons for delaying, though
 ' but for a day or two, by the next post. If I
 ' find them just, I will come up to you, though
 ' you know how precious my time is at pre-
 ' sent ; my hours were never worth so much
 ' money before ; but perhaps you are not sensi-
 ' ble of this, who give away your own works.
 ' You are a generous author, I a hackney scrib-
 ' bler ; you a Grecian, and bred at an univer-
 ' sity ; I a poor Englishman, of my own edu-
 ' cating ; you are a reverend parson, I a wagg ;
 ' in short, you are Dr. Parnelle, (with an E at
 ' the end of your name) and I

' Your most obliged and

' Affectionate friend and

' Faithful Servant,

' A. P O P E.'

' My

‘ My hearty service to the Dean, Dr. Arbutnot, Mr. Ford, and the true genuine shepherd, J. Gay of Devon, I expect him down with you.’

We may easily perceive by this, that Parnell was not a little necessary to Pope in conducting his translation; however he has worded it so ambiguously, that it is impossible to bring the charge directly against him. But he is much more explicit, when he mentions his friend Gay's obligations in another letter, which he takes no pains to conceal.

Dear SIR,

‘ I Write to you with the same warmth, the
‘ same zeal of good will and friendship
‘ with which I used to converse with you two
‘ years ago, and can’t think myself absent,
‘ when I feel you so much at my heart; the
‘ picture of you, which Jervas brought me over,
‘ is infinitely less lively a representation, than
‘ that

‘ that I carry about with me, and which rises
 ‘ to my mind whenever I think of you; I have
 ‘ many an agreeable reverie, through those
 ‘ woods and downs, where we once rambled
 ‘ together; my head is sometimes at the Bath,
 ‘ and sometimes at Letcomb, where the Dean
 ‘ makes a great part of my imaginary enter-
 ‘ tainment, this being the cheapest way of
 ‘ treating me; I hope he will not be displeased,
 ‘ at this manner of paying my respects to him,
 ‘ instead of following my friend Jarvas’s exam-
 ‘ ple, which to say the truth, I have as much
 ‘ inclination to do as I want ability. I have
 ‘ been ever since December last in greater va-
 ‘ riety of business than any such men as you
 ‘ (that is, divines and philosophers,) can possi-
 ‘ bly imagine a reasonable creature capable of.
 ‘ Gay’s play, among the rest, has cost much
 ‘ time and long suffering, to stem a tide of
 ‘ malice and party, that certain authors have
 ‘ raised against it; the best revenge upon such
 ‘ fellows, is now in my hands, I mean your
 ‘ *Zoilus*, which really transcends the expecta-
 ‘ tion

' tion I had conceived of it. I have put it into
 ' the press, beginning with the poem *Batrachom:*
 ' for you seem by the first paragraph of the de-
 ' dication to it, to design to prefix the name of
 ' some particular person. I beg therefore to
 ' know for whom you intend it, that the pub-
 ' lication may not be delayed on this account,
 ' and this as soon as is possible. Inform me
 ' also upon what terms I am to deal with the
 ' bookfeller, and whether you design the copy-
 ' money for Gay, as you formerly talk'd, what
 ' number of books you would have yourself,
 ' &c. I scarce see any thing to be altered in this
 ' whole piece; in the poems you sent I will
 ' take the liberty you allow me; the story of
 ' Pandora, and the Eclogue upon Health, are
 ' two of the most beautiful things I ever read.
 ' I don't say this to the prejudice of the rest,
 ' but as I have read these oftner. Let me
 ' know how far my commission is to extend,
 ' and be confident of my punctual performance
 ' of whatever you enjoin. I must add a para-
 ' graph on this occasion, in regard to Mr.

‘ Ward, whose verses have been a great pleasure
‘ to me ; I will contrive they shall be so to the
‘ world, whenever I can find a proper oppor-
‘ tunity of publishing them.

‘ I shall very soon print an entire collection
‘ of my own madrigals, which I look upon as
‘ making my last will and testament, since in it
‘ I shall give all I ever intend to give, (which
‘ I’ll beg your’s and the Dean’s acceptance of)
‘ you must look on me no more a poet, but a
‘ plain commoner, who lives upon his own,
‘ and fears and flatters no man. I hope before
‘ I die to discharge the debt I owe to Homer,
‘ and get upon the whole just fame enough to
‘ serve for an annuity for my own time, though
‘ I leave nothing to posterity.

‘ I beg our correspondence may be more fre-
‘ quent than it has been of late. I am sure my
‘ esteem and love for you never more deserved it
‘ from you, or more prompted it from you. I
‘ desired our friend Jervas, (in the greatest hurry
‘ of

‘ of my business) to say a great deal in my name,
‘ both to yourself and the Dean, and must once
‘ more repeat the assurances to you both, of
‘ an unchangeing friendship and unalterable
‘ esteem. I am, dear Sir, most entirely,

‘ Your affectionate,

‘ Faithful, obliged friend and servant,

‘ A. POPE.’

From these letters to Parnell, we may conclude, as far as their testimony can go, that he was an agreeable, a generous, and a sincere man. Indeed he took care that his friends should always see him to the best advantage; for when he found his fits of spleen and uneasiness, which sometimes lasted for weeks together, returning, he returned with all expedition to the remote parts of Ireland, and there made out a gloomy kind of satisfaction, in giving hideous descriptions of the solitude to
which

which he retired. It is said of a famous painter, that being confined in prison for debt, his whole delight consisted in drawing the faces of his creditors in caricatura. It was just so with Parnell. From many of his unpublished pieces which I have seen, and from others that have appeared, it would seem, that scarce a bog in his neighbourhood, was left without reproach, *and scarce a mountain rear'd its head unsung.* "I can easily," says Pope, in one of his letters, in answer to a dreary description of Parnell's. "I can easily image to my thoughts the solitary hours of your eremitical life in the mountains, from something parallel to it in my own retirement at Binfield;" and in another place; "We are both miserably enough situated, God knows; but of the two evils, I think the solitudes of the South are to be preferred to the desarts of the West." In this manner Pope answered him in the tone of his own complaints; and these descriptions of the imagined distresses of his situation, served to give him a temporary relief: they threw off
the

the blame from himself, and laid upon fortune and accident, a wretchedness of his own creating.

But though this method of quarrelling in his poems with his situation served to relieve himself, yet it was not so easily endured by the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who did not care to confess themselves his fellow sufferers. He received many mortifications upon that account among them ; for being naturally fond of company, he could not endure to be without even theirs, which however, among his English friends, he pretended to despise. In fact, his conduct, in this particular, was rather splendid than wise ; he had either lost the art to engage, or did not employ his skill, in securing those more permanent, tho' more humble connexions, and sacrificed for a month or two in England a whole year's happiness by his country fire-side at home.

However,

However, what he permitted the world to see of his life, was elegant and splendid; his fortune (for a poet) was very considerable, and it may easily be supposed he lived to the very extent of it. The fact is, his expences were greater than his income, and his successor found the estate somewhat impaired at his decease. As soon as ever he had collected in his annual revenues, he immediately set out for England, to enjoy the company of his dearest friends, and laugh at the more prudent world that were minding business and gaining money. The friends, to whom, during the latter part of his life, he was chiefly attached, were Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, Jervas, and Gay. Among these he was particularly happy, his mind was entirely at ease, and gave a loose to every harmless folly that came uppermost. Indeed it was a society, in which, of all others, a wise man might be most foolish without incurring any danger or contempt. Perhaps the reader will be pleased to see a letter to him from a part of this junto, as there is something striking

striking even in the levities of genius. It comes from Gay, Jervas, Arbuthnot, and Pope, assembled at a chop-house near the Exchange, and is as follows ;

My dear S I R,

‘ I Was last summer in Devonshire, and am
 ‘ this winter at Mrs. Bonyer’s. In the
 ‘ summer I wrote a poem, and in the winter I
 ‘ have published it; which I have sent to you
 ‘ by Dr. Elwood. In the summer I eat two
 ‘ dishes of toad-stools of my own gathering,
 ‘ instead of mushrooms; and in the winter I
 ‘ have been sick with wine, as I am at this
 ‘ time, blessed be God for it, as I must bless
 ‘ God for all things. In the summer I spoke
 ‘ truth to damsels; in the winter I told lyes to
 ‘ ladies: Now you know where I have been,
 ‘ and what I have done. I shall tell you what
 ‘ I intend to do the ensuing summer; I pro-
 ‘ pose to do the same thing I did last, which
 ‘ was to meet you in any part of England, you
 ‘ would

‘ would appoint ; don’t let me have two disap-
‘ pointments. I have longed to hear from
‘ you, and to that intent teased you with three
‘ or four letters, but having no answer, I feared
‘ both yours and my letters might have mis-
‘ carried. I hope my performance will please
‘ the Dean, whom I often wish for, and to
‘ whom I would have often wrote ; but for
‘ the same reasons I neglected writing to you.
‘ I hope I need not tell you how I love you,
‘ and how glad I shall be to hear from you ;
‘ which next to seeing you, would be the
‘ greatest satisfaction to

‘ Your most affectionate friend and

‘ Humble servant,

‘ J. G.’

Dear

Dear Mr. ARCHDEACON,

‘ **T**HOUGH my proportion of this epistle
 ‘ should be but a sketch in miniature,
 ‘ yet I take up half this page, having paid my
 ‘ club with the good company both for our
 ‘ dinner of chops and for this paper. The
 ‘ poets will give you lively descriptions in their
 ‘ way; I shall only acquaint you with that,
 ‘ which is directly my province. I have just
 ‘ set the last hand to a couplet, for so I may
 ‘ call two nymphs in one piece. They are
 ‘ Pope’s favourites, and though few, you will
 ‘ guess must have cost me more pains than any
 ‘ nymphs can be worth. He has been so un-
 ‘ reasonable to expect that I should have made
 ‘ them as beautiful upon canvas as he has
 ‘ done upon paper. If this same Mr. P——
 ‘ should omit to write for the dear Frogs, and
 ‘ the *Pervigilium*, I must intreat you not to
 ‘ let me languish for them, as I have done ever
 ‘ since they cross’d the seas; Remember by
 ‘ what

' what neglects, &c. we miss'd them when we
 ' lost you, and therefore I have not yet for-
 ' given any of those triflers that let them escape
 ' and run those hazards. I am going on at
 ' the old rate, and want you and the Dean
 ' prodigiously, and am in hopes of making you
 ' a visit this summer, and of hearing from you
 ' both now you are together. Fortescue, I am
 ' sure, will be concerned that he is not in
 ' Cornhill, to set his hand to these presents,
 ' not only as a witness, but as a

' *Serviteur tres humble*

' C. JERVAS.

' It is so great an honour to a poor Scotch-
 ' man to be remembered at this time a-day, espe-
 ' cially by an inhabitant of the *Glacialis Ierne*,
 ' that I take it very thankfully, and have with
 ' my good friends, remembered you at our
 ' table in the chop-house in Exchange-Alley.
 ' There wanted nothing to compleat our hap-
 ' piness but your company, and our dear friend
 ' the

' the Dean's. I am sure the whole entertain-
 ' ment would have been to his relish. Gay has
 ' got so much money by his *Art of Walking the*
 ' *Streets*, that he is ready to set up to his equi-
 ' page: he is just going to the Bank to nego-
 ' ciate some exchange bills. Mr. Pope delays
 ' his second volume of his Homer till the mar-
 ' tial spirit of the rebels is quite quelled, it
 ' being judged that the first part did some harm
 ' that way. Our love again and again to the
 ' dear Dean, *fuimus Torys*, I can say no more.

‘ ARBUTHNOT.’

' When a man is conscious that he does no
 ' good himself, the next thing is to cause others
 ' to do some. I may claim some merit this
 ' way, in hastening this testimonial from your
 ' friends above-writing: their love to you in-
 ' deed wants no spur, their ink wants no pen,
 ' their pen wants no hand, their hand wants
 ' no heart, and so forth, (after the manner of
 ' *Rabelais*; which is betwixt some meaning
 ' and

‘ and no meaning;) and yet it may be said,
 ‘ when present thought and opportunity is
 ‘ wanting, their pens want ink, their hands
 ‘ want pens, their hearts want hands, &c. till
 ‘ time, place and conveniency, concur to set
 ‘ them a writing, as at present, a sociable
 ‘ meeting, a good dinner, warm fire, and an
 ‘ easy situation do, to the joint labour and plea-
 ‘ sure of this epistle.

‘ Wherein if I should say nothing I should
 ‘ say much, (much being included in my love)
 ‘ though my love be such, that if I should say
 ‘ much, I should yet say nothing, it being (as
 ‘ Cowley says) equally impossible either to
 ‘ conceal or to express it.

‘ If I were to tell you the thing I wish above
 ‘ all things, it is to see you again; the next is
 ‘ to see here your treatise of *Zoilus*, with the
 ‘ *Batrachomyomachia*, and the *Pervigilium Ve-*
 ‘ *neris*, both which poems are masterpieces in
 ‘ several kinds; and I question not the prose is
 ‘ as

‘ as excellent in its sort, as the *Essay on*
 ‘ *Homer*. Nothing can be more glorious to
 ‘ that great author, than that the same hand
 ‘ that raised his best statue, and decked it with
 ‘ its old laurels, should also hang up the scare-
 ‘ crow of his miserable critick, and gibbet up
 ‘ the carcase of *Zoilus*, to the terror of the
 ‘ witlings of posterity. More, and much
 ‘ more, upon this and a thousand other sub-
 ‘ jects, will be the matter of my next letter,
 ‘ wherein I must open all the friend to you.
 ‘ At this time I must be content with telling
 ‘ you, I am faithfully your most affectionate
 ‘ and

‘ Humble servant,

‘ A. POPE.’

If we regard this letter with a critical eye,
 we shall find it indifferent enough; if we con-
 sider it as mere effusion of friendship, in which
 every writer contended in affection, it will ap-
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pear much to the honour of those who wrote it. To be mindful of an absent friend in the hours of mirth and feasting, when his company is least wanted, shews no slight degree of sincerity. Yet probably there was still another motive for writing thus to him in conjunction. The above-named; together with Swift and Parnell, had sometime before formed themselves into a society, called the Scribblerus Club, and I should suppose they commemorated him thus, as being an absent member.

It is past a doubt that they wrote many things in conjunction, and Gay usually held the pen. And yet I don't remember any productions which were the joint effort of this society, as doing it honour. There is something feeble and quaint in all their attempts; as if company repressed thought, and genius wanted solitude for its boldest and happiest exertions. Of those productions in which Parnell had a principal share, that of the Origin of the Sciences from the Monkies in Ethiopia, is particularly

ticularly mentioned by Pope himself, in some manuscript anecdotes which he left behind him. The Life of Homer also, prefixed to the translation of the Iliad, is written by Parnell and corrected by Pope; and as that great poet assures us in the same place, this correction was not effected without great labour. *It is still stiff, says he, and was written still stiffer, as it is, I verily think it cost me more pains in the correcting, than the writing it would have done.* All this may be easily credited; for every thing of Parnell's, that has appeared in prose, is written in a very awkward inelegant manner. It is true, his productions teem with imagination, and shew great learning, but they want that ease and sweetness for which his poetry is so much admired, and the language is also most shamefully incorrect. Yet, tho' all this must be allowed, Pope should have taken care not to leave his errors upon record against him, or put it in the power of envy to tax his friend with faults that do not appear in what he has left to the world. A poet has a right to ex-

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pect

pect the same secrecy in his friend as in his confessor; the sins he discovers are not divulged for punishment but pardon. Indeed Pope is almost inexcusable in this instance, as what he seems to condemn in one place, he very much applauds in another. In one of the letters from him to Parnell, abovementioned, he treats the *Life of Homer* with much greater respect, and seems to say, that the prose is excellent in its kind. It must be confessed however, that he is by no means inconsistent; what he says in both places may very easily be reconciled to truth, but who can defend his candour and his sincerity.

It would be hard, however, to suppose that there was no real friendship between these great men. The benevolence of Parnell's disposition remains unimpeached; and Pope, tho' subject to starts of passion and envy, yet never missed an opportunity of being truly serviceable to him. The commerce between them was carried on to the common interest of both.

When

When Pope had a miscellany to publish, he applied to Parnell for poetical assistance, and the latter as implicitly submitted to him for correction. Thus they mutually advanced each other's interest or fame, and grew stronger by conjunction. Nor was Pope the only person to whom Parnell had recourse for assistance. We learn from Swift's letters to Stella, that he submitted his pieces to all his friends, and readily adopted their alterations. Swift, among the number, was very useful to him in that particular; and care has been taken that the world should not remain ignorant of the obligation.

But in the connexion of wits, interest has generally very little share; they have only pleasure in view, and can seldom find it but among each other. The Scribblerus club, when the members were in town, were seldom asunder, and they often made excursions together into the country, and generally on foot. Swift was usually the butt of the company, and if a

trick was played, he was always the sufferer. The whole party once agreed to walk down to the house of Lord B—, who is still living, and whose seat is about twelve miles from town. As every one agreed to make the best of his way, Swift, who was remarkable for walking, soon left all the rest behind him, fully resolved, upon his arrival, to chuse the very best bed for himself, for that was his custom. In the mean time Parnell was determined to prevent his intentions, and taking horse, arrived at Lord B—'s, by another way, long before him. Having apprized his lordship of Swift's design, it was resolved at any rate to keep him out of the house, but how to effect this was the question. Swift never had the small-pox, and was very much afraid of catching it: as soon therefore as he appeared striding along at some distance from the house, one of his lordship's servants was dispatched, to inform him, that the small-pox was then making great ravages in the family, but that there was a summer-house with a field-

field-bed at his service, at the end of the garden. There the disappointed Dean was obliged to retire, and take a cold supper that was sent out to him, while the rest were feasting within. However, at last, they took compassion on him ; and upon his promising never to chuse the best bed again, they permitted him to make one of the company,

There is something satisfactory in these accounts of the follies of the wife, they give a natural air to the picture, and reconcile us to our own. There have been few poetical societies, more talked of, or productive of a greater variety of whimsical conceits than this of the Scriblerus club, but how long it lasted I cannot exactly determine. The whole of Parnell's poetical existence was not of more than eight or ten years continuance ; his first excursions to England began about the year 1706, and he died in the year 1718, so that it is probable the club began with him, and his death ended the connexion. Indeed the festivity of

his conversation, the benevolence of his heart, and the generosity of his temper, were qualities that might serve to cement any society, and that could hardly be replaced when he was taken away. During the two or three last years of his life, he was more fond of company than ever, and could scarce bear to be alone. The death of his wife, it is said, was a loss to him that he was unable to support or recover. From that time he could never venture to court the muse in solitude, where he was sure to find the image of her who first inspired his attempts. He began therefore to throw himself into every company, and to seek from wine, if not relief, at least insensibility. Those helps that sorrow first called in for assistance, habit soon rendered necessary, and he died before his fortieth year, in some measure a martyr to conjugal fidelity.

Thus in the space of a very few years, Parnell attained a share of fame, equal to what most of his contemporaries were a long life in acquiring.

acquiring. He is only to be considered as a poet, and the universal esteem in which his poems are held, and the reiterated pleasure they give in the perusal, are a sufficient test of their merit. He appears to me to be the last of that great school that had modelled itself upon the ancients, and taught English poetry to resemble what the generality of mankind have allowed to excel. A studious and correct observer of antiquity, he set himself to consider nature with the lights it lent him, and he found that the more aid he borrowed from the one, the more delightfully he resembled the other. To copy nature is a task the most bungling workman is able to execute; to select such parts as contribute to delight, is reserved only for those whom accident has blest with uncommon talents, or such as have read the ancients with indefatigable industry. Parnell is ever happy in the selection of his images, and scrupulously careful in the choice of his subjects. His productions bear no resemblance to those tawdry things, which it has for some
time

time been the fashion to admire ; in writing which the poet sits down without any plan, and heaps up splendid images without any selection ; where the reader grows dizzy with praise and admiration, and yet soon grows weary, he can scarce tell why. Our poet, on the contrary, gives out his beauties with a more sparing hand ; he is still carrying his reader forward, and just gives him refreshment sufficient to support him to his journey's end. At the end of his course the reader regrets that his way has been so short, he wonders that it gave him so little trouble, and so resolves to go the journey over again.

His poetical language is not less correct than his subjects are pleasing. He found it at that period, in which it was brought to its highest pitch of refinement ; and ever since his time it has been gradually debasing. It is indeed amazing, after what has been done by Dryden, Addison, and Pope, to improve and harmonize our native tongue, that their successors should
have

have taken so much pains to involve it in pristine barbarity. These misguided innovators have not been content with restoring antiquated words and phrases, but have indulged themselves in the most licentious transpositions, and the harshest constructions, vainly imagining, that the more their writings are unlike prose, the more they resemble poetry. They have adopted a language of their own, and call upon mankind for admiration. All those who do not understand them are silent, and those who make out their meaning, are willing to praise, to shew they understand. From these follies and affectations, the poems of Parnell are entirely free; he has considered the language of poetry as the language of life, and conveys the warmest thoughts in the simplest expression.

Parnell has written several poems besides these published by Pope, and some of them have been made public with very little credit to his reputation. There are still many more
that

that have not yet seen the light, in the possession of Sir John Parnell his nephew, who from that laudable zeal which he has for his Uncle's reputation, will probably be slow in publishing what he may even suspect will do it injury. Of those in the following collection, some are indifferent, and some moderately good, but the greater part are excellent. A slight stricture on the most striking, shall conclude this account, which I have already drawn out to a disproportioned length.

Hesiod, or the Rise of Woman, is a very fine illustration of an hint from Hesiod. It was one of his earliest productions, and first appeared in a miscellany, published by Tonson.

Of the three songs that follow, two of them were written upon the lady he afterwards married; they were the genuine dictates of his passion, but are not excellent in their kind.

The

The Anacreontic, beginning with, *When Spring came on with fresh delight*, is taken from a French poet, whose name I forget, and, as far as I am able to judge of the French language, is better than the original. The Anacreontic that follows, *Gay Bacchus, &c.* is also a translation of a Latin poem, by Aurelius Augurellus, an Italian poet, beginning with

*Invitat olim Bacchus ad cœnam suos
Comum, Jocum, Cupidinem.*

Parnell, when he translated it, applied the characters to some of his friends, and as it was written for their entertainment, it probably gave them more pleasure than it has given the public in the perusal. It seems to have more spirit than the original; but it is extraordinary that it was published by an original and not as a translation. Pope should have acknowledged it, as he knew.

The

The *Fairy Tale* is incontestably one of the finest pieces in any language. The old dialect is not perfectly well preserved, but that is a very slight defect where all the rest is so excellent.

The *Pervigilium Veneris*, (which, by the bye, does not belong to Catullus) is very well versified, and in general all Parnell's translations are excellent. *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, which follows, is done as well as the subject would admit; but there is a defect in the translation, which sinks it below the original, and which it was impossible to remedy. I mean the names of the combatants, which in the Greek bear a ridiculous allusion to their natures, have no force to the English reader. A Bacon Eater was a good name for a Mouse, and Pternotracas in Greek, was a very good founding word, that conveyed that meaning. Puff-cheek would sound odiously as a name for a Frog, and yet Phylagnathos does admirably well in the original.

The

The letter to Mr. Pope is one of the finest compliments that ever was paid to any poet; the description of his situation at the end of it is very fine, but far from being true. That part of it where he deplores his being far from wit and learning, as being far from Pope, gave particular offence to his friends at home. Mr. Coote, a gentleman in his neighbourhood, who thought that he himself had wit, was very much displeased with Parnell for casting his eyes so far off for a learned friend, when he could so conveniently be supplied at home.

The translation of a part of the Rape of the Lock into monkish verse, serves to shew what a master Parnell was of the Latin; a copy of verses made in this manner, is one of the most difficult trifles that can possibly be imagined. I am assured that it was written upon the following occasion. Before the Rape of the Lock was yet completed, Pope was reading it to his friend Swift, who sat very attentively,
while

while Parnell, who happened to be in the house, went in and out without seeming to take any notice. However he was very diligently employed in listening, and was able, from the strength of his memory to bring away the whole description of the toilet pretty exactly. This he verified in the manner now published in his works, and the next day when Pope was reading his poem to some friends, Parnell insisted that he had stolen that part of the description from an old monkish manuscript. An old paper with the Latin verses was soon brought forth, and it was not till after some time that Pope was delivered from the confusion which it at first produced.

The *Book-Worm* is another unacknowledged translation from a Latin poem by Beza. It was the fashion with the wits of the last age, to conceal the places from whence they took their hints or their subjects. A trifling acknowledgment would have made that lawful prize, which may now be considered as plunder.

The

The *Night Piece on Death*, deserves every praise, and I should suppose, with very little amendment, might be made to surpass all those night pieces and church-yard scenes that have since appeared. But the poem of Parnell's, best known, and on which his best reputation is grounded, is the *Hermit*. Pope, speaking of this, in those manuscript anecdotes already quoted, says, *that the poem is very good. The story, continues he, was written originally in Spanish, whence probably Howel had translated it into prose, and inserted it in one of his letters. Addison liked the scheme, and was not disinclined to come into it.* However this may be, Dr. Henry More, in his *Dialogues*, has the very same story; and I have been informed by some, that it is originally of Arabian invention.

With respect to the prose works of Parnell, I have mentioned them already; his fame is too well grounded for any defects in them to shake it. I will only add, that the *Life of Zoilus*,

Zoilus, was written at the request of his friends, and designed as a satire upon Dennis and Theobald, with whom his club had long been at variance. I shall end this account with a letter to him from Pope and Gay, in which they endeavour to hasten him to finish that production.

London, March 18.

Dear S I R,

‘ I Must own I have long owed you a letter,
 ‘ but you must own, you have owed me
 ‘ one a good deal longer. Besides, I have but
 ‘ two people in the whole kingdom of Ireland
 ‘ to take care of; the Dean and you: but you
 ‘ have several who complain of your neglect
 ‘ in England. Mr. Gay complains, Mr. Har-
 ‘ court complains, Mr. Jarvas complains, Dr.
 ‘ Arbuthnot complains, my Lord complains;
 ‘ I complain. (Take notice of this figure of
 ‘ iteration, when you make your next sermon)
 ‘ some say, you are in deep discontent at the
 new

' new turn of affairs ; others, that you are so
 ' much in the Archbishop's good graces, that
 ' you will not correspond with any that have
 ' seen the last ministry. Some affirm, you have
 ' quarrel'd with Pope, (whose friends they ob-
 ' serve daily fall from him on account of his
 ' satyrical and comical disposition) others, that
 ' you are insinuating yourself into the opinion
 ' of the ingenious Mr. What-dø-ye-call-him.
 ' Some think you are preparing your sermons
 ' for the press, and others that you will trans-
 ' form them into essays and moral discourses.
 ' But the only excuse, that I will allow, is, your
 ' attention to the Life of *Zoilus*, the Frogs
 ' already seem to croak for their transportation
 ' to England, and are sensible how much that
 ' Doctor is cursed and hated, who introduced
 ' their species into your nation ; therefore, as
 ' you dread the wrath of St. Patrick, send them
 ' hither, and rid your kingdom of those pernicious and loquacious Animals.

' I have at length received your poem out of
 ' Mr. Addison's hands, which shall be sent as
 ' soon as you order it, and in what manner you
 ' shall appoint. I shall in the mean time give
 ' Mr. Tooke a packet for you, consisting of
 ' divers merry pieces. Mr. Gay's new Farce,
 ' Mr. Burnet's Letter to Mr. Pope, Mr. Pope's
 ' Temple of Fame, Mr. Thomas Burnet's
 ' Grumbler on Mr. Gay, and the Bishop of
 ' Ailbury's Elegy, written either by Mr. Cary
 ' or some other hand.

' *Mr. Pope is reading a letter, and in the mean*
 ' *time, I make use of the pen to testify my unea-*
 ' *siness in not hearing from you. I find suc-*
 ' *cess, even in the most trivial things, raises the*
 ' *indignation of scribblers: for I, for my What-*
 ' *d'-ye-call-it, could neither escape the fury of*
 ' *Mr. Burnet, or the German Doctor; then*
 ' *where will rage end, when Homer is to be*
 ' *translated? Let Zoilus hasten to your friend's*
 ' *assistance, and envious criticism shall be no*
 ' *more. I am in hopes that we may order our*
 ' *affairs*