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(1792, 1st ed., in B.)

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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
LIFE AND GENIUS
OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

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2. The second part is a list of dates.

3. The third part is a list of locations.

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5. The fifth part is a list of people.

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AN
E S S A Y

ON THE

L I F E A N D G E N I U S

OF



SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

By ARTHUR MURPHY, Esq.

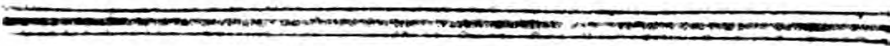
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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
L I F E A N D G E N I U S
O F
S A M U E L J O H N S O N, LL. D

WHEN the works of a great Writer, who has bequeathed to posterity a lasting legacy, are presented to the world, it is naturally expected, that some account of his life should accompany the edition. The Reader wishes to know as much as possible of the Author. The circumstances that attended him, the features of his private character, his conversation, and the means by which he rose to eminence, become the favourite

vourite objects of enquiry. Curiosity is excited; and the admirer of his works is eager to know his private opinions, his course of study, the particularities of his conduct, and, above all, whether he pursued the wisdom which he recommends, and practised the virtue which his writings inspire. A principle of gratitude is awakened in every generous mind. For the entertainment and instruction which genius and diligence have provided for the world, men of refined and sensible tempers are ready to pay their tribute of praise, and even to form a posthumous friendship with the author.

In reviewing the life of such a writer, there is, besides, a rule of justice to which the publick have an undoubted claim. Fond admiration and partial friendship should not be suffered to represent his virtues with exaggeration; nor should malignity be allowed, under a specious disguise, to magnify mere defects, the usual failings of human nature, into vice or gross deformity. The lights and shades of the character should be given; and, if this be done with a strict regard to truth, a just estimate of Dr. Johnson will afford a lesson perhaps

haps as valuable as the moral doctrine that speaks with energy in every page of his works.

The present writer enjoyed the conversation and friendship of that excellent man more than thirty years. He thought it an honour to be so connected, and to this hour he reflects on his loss with regret: but regret, he knows, has secret bribes, by which the judgement may be influenced, and partial affection may be carried beyond the bounds of truth. In the present case, however, nothing needs to be disguised, and exaggerated praise is unnecessary. It is an observation of the younger Pliny, in his Epistle to his Friend of Tacitus, that history ought never to magnify matters of fact, because worthy actions require nothing but the truth. *Nam nec historia debet egredi veritatem, et honeste factis veritas sufficit.* This rule the present biographer promises shall guide his pen throughout the following narrative.

It may be said, the death of Dr. Johnson kept the public mind in agitation beyond all former example. No literary character ever

excited so much attention; and, when the press has teemed with anecdotes, apophthegms, essays, and publications of every kind, what occasion now for a new tract on the same threadbare subject? the plain truth shall be the answer. The proprietors of Johnson's Works thought the life, which they prefixed to their former edition, too unwieldy for republication. The prodigious variety of foreign matter, introduced into that performance, seemed to overload the memory of Dr. Johnson, and in the account of his own life to leave him hardly visible. They wished to have a more concise, and, for that reason, perhaps a more satisfactory account, such as may exhibit a just picture of the man, and keep him the principal figure in the fore ground of his own picture. To comply with that request is the design of this essay, which the writer undertakes with a trembling hand. He has no discoveries, no secret anecdotes, no occasional controversy, no sudden flashes of wit and humour, no private conversation, and no new facts to embellish his work. Every thing has been gleaned. Dr. Johnson said of himself, "I am not uncandid, nor severe: I some-
times

“times say more than I mean, in jest, and
 “people are apt to think me serious*.” The
 exercise of that privilege, which is enjoyed by
 every man in society, has not been allowed to
 him. His fame has given importance even to
 trifles, and the zeal of his friends has brought
 every thing to light. What should be related,
 and what should not, has been published with-
 out distinction. *Dicenda tacenda locuti!* Every
 thing that fell from him has been caught with
 eagerness by his admirers, who, as he says in
 one of his letters, have acted with the dili-
 gence of spies upon his conduct. To some of
 them the following lines, in Mallet’s Poem on
 Verbal Criticism, are not inapplicable:

“Such that grave bird in Northern seas is found,
 “Whose name a Dutchman only knows to sound;
 “Where-e’er the king of fish moves on before,
 “This humble friend attends from shore to shore;
 “With eye still earnest, and with bill inclin’d,
 “He picks up what his patron drops behind,
 “With those choice cates his palate to regale,
 “And is the careful TIBBALD of A WHALE.”

* Boswell’s Life of Johnson. Vol. II. p. 465.

After so many essays and volumes of *Johnsoniana*, what remains for the present writer? Perhaps, what has not been attempted; a short, yet full, a faithful, yet temperate, history of Dr. Johnson.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, September 7, 1709, O. S*. His father, Michael Johnson, was a bookseller in that city; a man of large athletic make, and violent passions; wrong-headed, positive, and at times afflicted with a degree of melancholy, little short of madness. His mother was sister to Dr. Ford, a practising physician, and father of Cornelius Ford, generally known by the name of PARSON FORD, the same who is represented near the punch-bowl in Hogarth's *Midnight Modern Conversation*. In the *Life of Fenton*, Johnson says, that "his abilities, " instead of furnishing convivial merriment to " the voluptuous and dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the

* This appears in a note to Johnson's Diary, prefixed to the first of his prayers. After the alteration of the stile, he kept his birth-day on the 18th of September, and it is accordingly marked September 7^r.

" wife."

“wife.” Being chaplain to the Earl of Chesterfield, he wished to attend that nobleman on his embassy to the Hague. Colley Cibber has recorded the anecdote. “You should go,” said the witty peer, “if to your many vices you would add one more.” “Pray, my Lord, what is that?” “Hypocrisy, my dear Doctor.” Johnson had a younger brother named Nathaniel, who died at the age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight. Michael Johnson, the father, was chosen in the year 1718 Under Bailiff of Lichfield, and in the year 1725 he served the office of the Senior Bailiff. He had a brother of the name of Andrew, who, for some years, kept the ring at Smithfield, appropriated to wrestlers and boxers. Our author used to say, that he was never thrown or conquered. Michael, the father, died December 1731, at the age of seventy-six; his mother at eighty-nine, of a gradual decay, in the year 1759. Of the family nothing more can be related worthy of notice. Johnson did not delight in talking of his relations. “There is little pleasure,” he said to Mrs. Piozzi, “in relating the anecdotes of beggary.”

Johnson derived from his parents, or from an unwholesome nurse, the distemper called the King's Evil. The Jacobites at that time believed in the efficacy of the royal touch; and accordingly Mrs. Johnson presented her son, when two years old, before Queen Anne, who, for the first time, performed that office, and communicated to her young patient all the healing virtue in her power. He was afterwards cut for that scrophulous humour, and the under part of his face was seamed and disfigured by the operation. It is supposed, that this disease deprived him of the sight of his left eye, and also impaired his hearing. At eight years old, he was placed under Mr. Hawkins, at the Free-school at Lichfield, where he was not remarkable for diligence or regular application. Whatever he read, his tenacious memory made his own. In the fields with his school-fellows he talked more to himself than with his companions. In 1725, when he was about sixteen years old, he went on a visit to his cousin Cornelius Ford, who detained him for some months, and in the mean time assisted him in the classics. The
general

general direction for his studies, which he then received, he related to Mrs. Piozzi. “Ob-
 “tain,” says Ford, “some general principles
 “of every science: he who can talk only on
 “one subject, or act only in one department, is
 “seldom wanted, and, perhaps, never wished
 “for; while the man of general knowledge
 “can often benefit, and always please.” This
 advice Johnson seems to have pursued with a
 good inclination. His reading was always desul-
 tory, seldom resting on any particular author,
 but rambling from one book to another, and,
 by hasty snatches, hoarding up a variety of
 knowledge. It may be proper in this place to
 mention another general rule laid down by
 Ford for Johnson’s future conduct: “You will
 “make your way the more easily in the world,
 “as you are contented to dispute no man’s
 “claim to conversation-excellence: they will,
 “therefore, more willingly allow your preten-
 “sions as a writer.” “But,” says Mrs. Pi-
 ozzi, “the features of peculiarity, which mark
 “a character to all succeeding generations, are
 “slow in coming to their growth.” That
 ingenious lady adds, with her usual vivacity,
 “Can one, on such an occasion, forbear recol-
 “lecting

“lecting the predictions of Boileau’s father,
 “who said, stroking the head of the young
 “satirist, ‘this little man has too much wit,
 “but he will never speak ill of any one’?”

On Johnson’s return from Cornelius Ford, Mr. Hunter, then Master of the Free-school at Lichfield, refused to receive him again on that foundation. At this distance of time, what his reasons were, it is vain to enquire; but to refuse assistance to a lad of promising genius must be pronounced harsh and illiberal. It did not, however, stop the progress of the young student’s education. He was placed at another school, at Stourbridge in Worcestershire, under the care of Mr. Wentworth. Having gone through the rudiments of classic literature, he returned to his father’s house, and was probably intended for the trade of a bookseller. He has been heard to say that he could bind a book. At the end of two years, being then about nineteen, he went, to assist the studies of a young gentleman of the name of Corbet, to the University of Oxford; and on the 31st of October, 1728, both were entered of Pembroke College; Corbet as a gentleman-commoner,

commoner, and Johnson as a commoner. The college-tutor, Mr. Jordan, was a man of no genius; and Johnson, it seems, shewed an early contempt of mean abilities, in one or two instances behaving with insolence to that gentleman. Of his general conduct at the university there are no particulars that merit attention, except the translation of Pope's *Messiah*, which was a college-exercise imposed upon him as a task by Mr. Jordan. Corbet left the university in about two years, and Johnson's salary ceased. He was, by consequence, straitened in his circumstances; but he still remained at college. Mr. Jordan, the tutor, went off to a living; and was succeeded by Dr. Adams, who afterwards became head of the college, and was esteemed through life for his learning, his talents, and his amiable character. Johnson grew more regular in his attendance. Ethics, theology, and classic literature, were his favourite studies. He discovered, notwithstanding, early symptoms of that wandering disposition of mind which adhered to him to the end of his life. His reading was by fits and starts, undirected to any particular science. General philology, agree-

2

ably

ably to his cousin Ford's advice, was the object of his ambition. He received, at that time, an early impression of piety, and a taste for the best authors ancient and modern. It may, notwithstanding, be questioned whether, except his Bible, he ever read a book entirely through. Late in life, if any man praised a book in his presence, he was sure to ask, "Did you read it through?" If the answer was in the affirmative, he did not seem willing to believe it. He continued at the university till the want of pecuniary supplies obliged him to quit the place. He obtained, however, the assistance of a friend, and returning in a short time was able to complete a residence of three years. The history of his exploits at Oxford, he used to say, was best known to Dr. Taylor and Dr. Adams. Wonders are told of his memory, and, indeed, all who knew him late in life can witness that he retained that faculty in the greatest vigour.

From the university Johnson returned to Lichfield. His father died soon after, December, 1731; and the whole receipt out of his effects, as appeared by a memorandum in the
son's

fon's hand-writing, dated 15th June, 1732, was no more than twenty pounds*. In this exigence, determined that poverty should neither depress his spirit nor warp his integrity, he became under-master of a Grammar-school at Market Bosworth in Leicestershire. That resource, however, did not last long. Disgusted by the pride of Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of that little seminary, he left the place in discontent, and ever after spoke of it with abhorrence. In 1733 he went on a visit to Mr. Hector, who had been his school-fellow, and was then a surgeon at Birmingham, lodging at the house of Warren, a bookseller. At that place Johnson translated a Voyage to Abyssinia, written by Jerome Lobo, a Portugueze missionary. This was the first literary work from the pen of Dr. Johnson. His friend Hector was occasionally his

* The entry of this is remarkable for his early resolution to preserve through life a fair and upright character.
 " 1732, Junii 15. Undecim aureos deposui, quo die, quid-
 " quid ante matris funus (quod serum fit precor) de pa-
 " ternis bonis sperare licet, viginti scilicet libras, accepi.
 " Usque adeo mihi mea fortuna fingenda est interea, et ne
 " paupertate vires animi languescant, ne in flagitia egestas
 " adigat, cavendum."

amanuensis. The work was, probably, undertaken at the desire of Warren, the bookseller, and was printed at Birmingham; but it appears in the *Literary Magazine, or History of the Works of the Learned*, for March, 1735, that it was published by Bettsworth and Hitch, Pater-noster-row. It contains a narrative of the endeavours of a company of missionaries to convert the people of Abyssinia to the Church of Rome. In the preface to this work Johnson observes, “ that the Portuguese traveller, contrary to the general view
 “ of his countrymen, has amused his readers
 “ with no romantic absurdities or incredible
 “ fictions. He appears, by his modest and
 “ unaffected narration, to have described things
 “ as he saw them; to have copied nature from
 “ the life; and to have consulted his senses,
 “ not his imagination. He meets with no basilisks, that destroy with their eyes; his crocodiles devour their prey, without tears; and
 “ his cataracts fall from the rock, without
 “ deafening the neighbouring inhabitants. The
 “ reader will here find no regions cursed with
 “ irremediable barrenness, or blessed with spontaneous fecundity; no perpetual gloom, or
 “ unceasing

“ unceasing sun-shine ; nor are the nations, here
 “ described, either void of all sense of huma-
 “ nity, or consummate in all private and social
 “ virtues : here are no Hottentots without reli-
 “ gion, polity, or articulate language ; no Chi-
 “ nese perfectly polite, and completely skilled in
 “ all sciences : he will discover, what will always
 “ be discovered by a diligent and impartial en-
 “ quirer, that, wherever human nature is to be
 “ found, there is a mixture of vice and virtue,
 “ a contest of passion and reason ; and that the
 “ Creator doth not appear partial in his distri-
 “ butions, but has balanced, in most countries,
 “ their particular inconveniences by particular
 “ favours.” We have here an early specimen
 of Johnson’s manner : the vein of thinking
 and the frame of the sentences are manifestly
 his : we see the infant Hercules. The trans-
 lation of Lobo’s Narrative has been reprinted
 lately in a separate volume, with some other
 tracts of Dr. Johnson’s, and therefore forms
 no part of this edition ; but a compendious
 account of so interesting a work, as Father
 Lobo’s discovery of the head of the Nile,
 will not, it is imagined, be unacceptable to the
 reader.

Father

Father Lobo, the Portuguese Missionary, embarked in 1622, in the same fleet with the Count *Vidigueira*, who was appointed, by the King of Portugal, Viceroy of the Indies. They arrived at Goa; and in January 1624, Father Lobo set out on the mission to Abyssinia. Two of the Jesuits, sent on the same commission, were murdered in their attempt to penetrate into that empire. Lobo had better success: he surmounted all difficulties, and made his way into the heart of the country. Then follows a description of Abyssinia, formerly the largest empire of which we have an account in history. It extended from the Red Sea to the Indian Sea, containing no less than forty provinces. At the time of Lobo's mission, it was not much larger than Spain, consisting then but of five kingdoms, of which part was entirely subject to the Emperor, and part paid him a tribute, as an acknowledgement. The provinces were inhabited by Moors, Pagans, Jews, and Christians. The last was in Lobo's time the established and reigning religion. The diversity of people and religion is the reason
why

why the kingdom was under different forms of government, with laws and customs extremely various. Some of the people neither sowed their lands, nor improved them by any kind of culture, living upon milk and flesh, and, like the Arabs, encamping without any settled habitation. In some places they practised no rites of worship, though they believed that, in the regions above, there dwells a Being that governs the world. This Deity they call in their language *Oul*. The Christianity, professed by the people in some parts, is so corrupted with superstitions, errors, and heresies, and so mingled with ceremonies borrowed from the Jews, that little, besides the name of Christianity, is to be found among them. The Abyffins cannot properly be said to have either cities or houses; they live in tents or cottages made of straw or clay, very rarely building with stone. Their villages or towns consist of these huts; yet even of such villages they have but few, because the grandees, the viceroys, and the emperor himself, are always in camp, that they may be prepared, upon the most sudden alarm, to meet every emergence in a country which is engaged every year either

in foreign wars or intestine commotions. Ethiopia produces very near the same kinds of provision as Portugal, though, by the extreme laziness of the inhabitants, in a much less quantity. What the ancients imagined, of the torrid zone being a part of the world uninhabitable, is so far from being true, that the climate is very temperate. The blacks have better features than in other countries, and are not without wit and ingenuity. Their apprehension is quick, and their judgement sound. There are in this climate two harvests in the year; one in winter, which lasts through the months of July, August, and September; the other in the spring. They have, in the greatest plenty, raisins, peaches, pomegranates, sugar-canes, and some figs. Most of these are ripe about Lent, which the Abyssinians keep with great strictness. The animals of the country are the lion, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the unicorn, horses, mules, oxen, and cows without number. They have a very particular custom, which obliges every man, that has a thousand cows, to save every year one day's milk of all his herd, and make a bath with it for his relations. This they do so many days
in

in each year, as they have thousands of cattle ; so that, to express how rich a man is, they tell you, *he bathes so many times.*

“ Of the river Nile, which has furnished so much controversy, we have a full and clear description. It is called, by the natives, *ABAVI*, the Father of Water. It rises in *SACALA*, a province of the kingdom of *GOIAMA*, the most fertile and agreeable part of the Abyssinian dominions. On the Eastern side of the country, on the declivity of a mountain, whose descent is so easy, that it seems a beautiful plain, is that source of the Nile, which has been sought after at so much expence and labour. This spring, or rather these two springs, are two holes, each about two feet diameter, a stone's cast distant from each other. One of them is about five feet and a half in depth. Lobo was not able to sink his plummet lower, perhaps, because it was stopped by roots, the whole place being full of trees. A line of ten feet did not reach the bottom of the other. These springs are supposed by the Abyssins to be the vents of a great subterraneous lake. At a small distance

to the South, is a village called *Guix*, through which you ascend to the top of the mountain, where there is a little hill, which the idolatrous *Agaci* hold in great veneration. Their priest calls them together to this place once a year; and every one sacrifices a cow, or more, according to the different degrees of wealth and devotion. Hence we have sufficient proof, that these nations always paid adoration to the Deity of this famous river.

“ As to the course of the Nile, its waters, after their first rise, run towards the East, about the length of a musket-shot; then, turning Northward, continue hidden in the grass and weeds for about a quarter of a league, when they re-appear amongst a quantity of rocks. The Nile from its source proceeds with so inconsiderable a current, that it is in danger of being dried up by the hot season; but, soon receiving an increase from the *GEMMA*, the *KELTU*, the *BRANSA*, and the other smaller rivers, it expands to such a breadth in the plains of *BOAD*, which is not above three days journey from its source, that a musket-ball will scarcely fly from one bank to the other.

Here it begins to turn northward, winding, however, a little to the East, for the space of nine or ten leagues, and then enters the so-much-talked-of Lake of DAMBIA, flowing with such violent rapidity, that its waters may be distinguished through the whole passage, which is no less than six leagues. Here begins the greatness of the Nile. Fifteen miles farther, in the land of ALATA, it rushes precipitately from the top of a high rock, and forms one of the most beautiful water-falls in the world. Lobo says, he passed under it without being wet, and resting himself, for the sake of the coolness, was charmed with a thousand delightful rainbows, which the sun-beams painted on the water, in all their shining and lively colours *. The

* This Mr. Bruce, the late traveller, avers to be a downright falsehood. He says, a deep pool of water reaches to the very foot of the rock; and, allowing that there was a seat or bench (which there is not) in the middle of the pool, it is absolutely impossible, by any exertion of human strength, to have arrived at it. But it may be asked, can Mr. Bruce say what was the face of the country in the year 1622, when Lobo saw the magnificent sight which he has described? Mr. Bruce's pool of water may have been formed since; and Lobo, perhaps, was content to sit down without a bench.

fall of this mighty stream, from so great a height, makes a noise that may be heard at a considerable distance; but it was not found, that the neighbouring inhabitants were deaf. After the cataract, the Nile collects its scattered stream among the rocks, which are so near each other, that, in Lobo's time, a bridge of beams, on which the whole Imperial army passed, was laid over them. Sultan SEQUED has since built a stone bridge of one arch, in the same place, for which purpose he procured masons from India. Here the river alters its course, and passes through various kingdoms, such as AMHARA, OLACA, CHOAA, DAMOR, and the kingdom of GOIAMA, and, after various windings, returns within a short day's journey of its spring. To pursue it through all its mazes, and accompany it round the kingdom of GOIAMA, is a journey of twenty-nine days. From Abyssinia the river passes into the countries of FAZULO and OMBARCA, two vast regions little known, inhabited by nations entirely different from the Abyssins. Their hair, like that of the other blacks in those regions, is short and curled.

In the year 1615, RASSELA CHRISTOS, Lieutenant-

tenant-general to Sultan SEQUED, entered those kingdoms in a hostile manner; but, not being able to get intelligence, returned without attempting any thing. As the empire of Abyssinia terminates at these descents, Lobo followed the course of the Nile no farther, leaving it to range over barbarous kingdoms, and convey wealth and plenty into Ægypt, which owes to the annual inundations of this river its envied fertility*. Lobo knows nothing of the Nile in the rest of its passage, except that it receives great increase from many other rivers, has several cataraëts like that already described, and that few fish are to be found in it. That scarcity is to be attributed to the *river-horse* and the *crocodile*, which destroy the weaker inhabitants of the river. Something, likewise, must be imputed to the *cataraëts*, where fish cannot fall without being killed. Lobo adds, that neither he, nor any with whom he conversed about the *crocodile*, ever saw him weep; and therefore all that

* After comparing this description with that lately given by Mr. Bruce, the reader will judge whether Lobo is to lose the honour of having been at the head of the Nile near two centuries before any other European traveller.

hath been said about his tears must be ranked among the fables invented for the amusement of children.

“ As to the causes of the inundations of the Nile, Lobo observes, that many an idle hypothesis has been framed. Some theorists ascribe it to the high winds, that stop the current, and force the water above its banks. Others pretend a subterraneous communication between the Ocean and the Nile, and that the sea, when violently agitated, swells the river. Many are of opinion, that this mighty flood proceeds from the melting of the snow on the mountains of Æthiopia; but so much snow and such prodigious heat are never met with in the same region. Lobo never saw snow in Abyssinia, except on Mount SEMEN in the kingdom of TIGRE, very remote from the Nile; and on NAMARA, which is, indeed, not far distant, but where there never falls snow enough to wet, when dissolved, the foot of the mountain. To the immense labours of the *Portuguese* mankind is indebted for the knowledge of the real cause of these inundations, so great and so regular. By them we are informed, that
Abyf-

Abyssinia, where the Nile rises, is full of mountains, and, in its natural situation, is much higher than Ægypt; that in the winter, from June to September, no day is without rain; that the Nile receives, in its course, all the rivers, brooks, and torrents, that fall from those mountains, and, by necessary consequence, swelling above its banks, fills the plains of Ægypt with inundations, which come regularly about the month of July, or three weeks after the beginning of the rainy season in Æthiopia. The different degrees of this flood are such certain indications of the fruitfulness or sterility of the ensuing year, that it is publicly proclaimed at *Cairo* how much the water had gained during the night."

Such is the account of the Nile and its inundations, which, it is hoped, will not be deemed an improper or tedious digression, especially as the whole is an extract from Johnson's translation. He is all the time the actor in the scene, and in his own words relates the story. Having finished this work, he returned in February, 1734, to his native city, and, in the month of August following, published Pro-
posals

posals for printing, by subscription, the Latin poems of Politian, with the History of Latin Poetry, from the Æra of Petrarch to the time of Politian; and also the Life of Politian, to be added by the Editor, Samuel Johnson. The book to be printed in thirty octavo sheets, price five shillings. It is to be regretted that this project failed for want of encouragement. Johnson, it seems, differed from Boileau, Voltaire, and D'Alembert, who had taken upon them to proscribe all modern efforts to write with elegance in a dead language. For a decision, pronounced in so high a tone, no good reason can be assigned. The interests of learning require, that the diction of Greece and Rome should be cultivated with care; and he, who can write a language with correctness, will be most likely to understand its idiom, its grammar, and its peculiar graces of style. What man of taste would willingly forego the pleasure of reading *Vida*, *Fracaſtorius*, *Sannazaro*, *Strada*, and others, down to the late elegant productions of Bishop Lowth? The history which Johnson proposed to himself would, beyond all question, have been a valuable addition to the history of letters; but his

his project failed. His next expedient was to offer his assistance to Cave, the original projector of the Gentleman's Magazine. For this purpose he sent his proposals in a letter, offering, on reasonable terms, occasionally to fill some pages with poems and inscriptions never printed before; with fugitive pieces that deserved to be revived, and critical remarks on authors ancient and modern. Cave agreed to retain him as a correspondent and contributor to the Magazine. What the conditions were cannot now be known; but, certainly, they were not sufficient to hinder Johnson from casting his eyes about him in quest of other employment. Accordingly, in 1735, he made overtures to the reverend Mr. Budworth, Master of a Grammar-school at Brerewood, in Staffordshire, to become his assistant. This proposition did not succeed. Mr. Budworth apprehended, that the involuntary motions, to which Johnson's nerves were subject, might make him an object of ridicule with his scholars, and, by consequence, lessen their respect for their master. Another mode of advancing himself presented itself about this time. Mrs. Porter, the widow of a mercer in Birmingham, admired

admired his talents. It is said that she had about eight hundred pounds; and that sum to a person in Johnson's circumstances was an affluent fortune. A marriage took place; and, to turn his wife's money to the best advantage, he projected the scheme of an academy for education. Gilbert Walmfley, at that time Register of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Bishop of Lichfield, was distinguished by his erudition and the politeness of his manners. He was the friend of Johnson, and, by his weight and influence, endeavoured to promote his interest. The celebrated Garrick, whose father, Captain Garrick, lived at Lichfield, was placed in the new seminary of education by that gentleman's advice. Garrick was then about eighteen years old. An accession of seven or eight pupils was the most that could be obtained, though notice was given by a public advertisement*, that, at Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young Gentlemen are boarded, and taught the Latin and Greek Languages, by Samuel Johnson.

* See the Gentleman's Magazine for 1736, p. 418.

The undertaking proved abortive. Johnson, having now abandoned all hopes of promoting his fortune in the country, determined to become an adventurer in the world at large. His young pupil, Garrick, had formed the same resolution; and, accordingly, in March, 1737, they arrived in London together. Two such candidates for fame perhaps never, before that day, entered the metropolis together. Their stock of money was soon exhausted. In his visionary project of an academy Johnson had probably wasted his wife's substance; and Garrick's father had little more than his half-pay. The two fellow-travellers had the world before them, and each was to chuse his road to fortune and to fame. They brought with them genius, and powers of mind, peculiarly formed by nature for the different vocations to which each of them felt himself inclined. They acted from the impulse of young minds, even then meditating great things, and with courage anticipating success. Their friend, Mr. Walmley, by a letter to the Rev. Mr. Colson, who, it seems, was a great mathematician, exerted his good offices in their favour. He
gave

gave notice of their intended journey. “Davy
 “Garrick,” he said, “will be with you next
 “week; and Johnson, to try his fate with a
 “tragedy, and to get himself employed in some
 “translation either from the Latin or French.
 “Johnson is a very good scholar and a poet,
 “and, I have great hopes, will turn out a fine
 “tragedy-writer. If it should be in your
 “way, I doubt not but you will be ready to
 “recommend and assist your countrymen.”

Of Mr. Walmsley’s merit, and the excellence
 of his character, Johnson has left a beautiful
 testimonial at the end of the Life of Edward
 Smith. It is reasonable to conclude, that a
 mathematician, absorbed in abstract specula-
 tions, was not able to find a sphere of action
 for two men who were to be the architects of
 their own fortune. In three or four years after-
 wards, Garrick came forth with talents that
 astonished the publick. He began his career
 at Goodman’s-fields, and there, *monstratus fatis*
Vespasianus! he chose a lucrative profession,
 and consequently soon emerged from all his
 difficulties. Johnson was left to toil in the
 humble walks of literature. A tragedy, as
 appears by Walmsley’s letter, was the whole
 of

of his stock. This, most probably, was IRENE; but, if then finished, it was doomed to wait for a more happy period. It was offered to Fleetwood, and rejected. Johnson looked round him for employment. Having, while he remained in the country, corresponded with Cave under a feigned name, he now thought it time to make himself known to a man whom he considered as a patron of literature. Cave had announced, by public advertisement, a prize of fifty pounds for the best Poem on Life, Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell; and this circumstance diffused an idea of his liberality. Johnson became connected with him in business, and in a close and intimate acquaintance. Of Cave's character it is unnecessary to say any thing in this place, as Johnson was afterwards the biographer of his first and most useful patron. To be engaged in the translation of some important book was still the object which Johnson had in view. For this purpose he proposed to give the History of the Council of Trent, with copious notes then lately added to a French edition. Twelve sheets of this work were printed, for which Johnson received forty-nine

nine pounds, as appears by his receipt in the possession of Mr. Nichols, the compiler of that entertaining and useful work, the Gentleman's Magazine. Johnson's translation was never completed; a like design was offered to the publick, under the patronage of Dr. Zachary Pearce; and by that contention both attempts were frustrated. Johnson had been commended by Pope for the translation of the Messiah into Latin verse; but he knew no approach to so eminent a man. With one, however, who was connected with Pope, he became acquainted at St. John's Gate; and that person was no other than the well-known Richard Savage, whose life was afterwards written by Johnson with great elegance, and a depth of moral reflection. Savage was a man of considerable talents. His address, his various accomplishments, and, above all, the peculiarity of his misfortunes recommended him to Johnson's notice. They became united in the closest intimacy. Both had great parts, and they were equally under the pressure of want. Sympathy joined them in a league of friendship. Johnson had been often heard to relate that he and Savage walked round Grosve-
nor-

nor-square till four in the morning; in the course of their conversation reforming the world, dethroning princes, establishing new forms of government, and giving laws to the several states of Europe, till, fatigued at length with their legislative office, they began to feel the want of refreshment; but could not muster up more than four pence halfpenny. Savage, it is true, had many vices; but vice could never strike its roots in a mind like Johnson's, seasoned early with religion, and the principles of moral rectitude. His first prayer was composed in the year 1738. He had not at that time renounced the use of wine; and, no doubt, occasionally enjoyed his friend and his bottle. The love of late hours, which followed him through life, was, perhaps, originally contracted in company with Savage. However that may be, their connection was not of long duration. In the year 1738, Savage was reduced to the last distress. Mr. Pope, in a letter to him, expressed his concern for "the miserable withdrawing of his pension after the death of the Queen;" and gave him hopes, that, "in a short time, he should find himself supplied with a compe-

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" tence,

“ tence, without any dependance on those
 “ little creatures, whom we are pleas'd to call
 “ the Great.” The scheme propos'd to him
 was, that he should retire to Swansea in Wales,
 and receive an allowance of fifty pounds a
 year, to be rais'd by subscription ; Pope was
 to pay twenty pounds. This plan, though
 finally established, took more than a year be-
 fore it was carried into execution. In the mean
 time, the intended retreat of Savage call'd to
 Johnson's mind the third satire of Juvenal, in
 which that poet takes leave of a friend, who
 was withdrawing himself from all the vices of
 Rome. Struck with this idea, he wrote that
 well-known Poem, call'd London. The first
 lines manifestly point to Savage.

“ Though grief and fondness in my breast rebel,
 “ When injured Thales bids the town farewell ;
 “ Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice com-
 “ mend ;
 “ I praise the hermit, but regret the friend.
 “ Resolv'd at length, from Vice and London far,
 “ To breathe in distant fields a purer air ;
 “ And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
 “ Give to St. David one true Briton more.”

Johnson at that time lodged at Greenwich.
 He there fixes the scene, and takes leave of
 his

his friend ; who, he says in his Life, parted from him with tears in his eyes. The poem, when finished, was offered to Cave. It happened, however, that the late Mr. Doddsley was the purchaser, at the price of ten guineas. It was published in 1738; and Pope, we are told, said, “ The author, whoever he is, will “ not be long concealed ;” alluding to the passage in Terence, *Ubi, ubi est, diu celari non potest*. Notwithstanding that prediction, it does not appear that, besides the copy-money, any advantage accrued to the author of a poem, written with the elegance and energy of Pope. Johnson, in August 1738, went, with all the fame of his poetry, to offer himself a candidate for the mastership of the school at Appleby, in Leicestershire. The statutes of the place required, that the person chosen should be a master of arts. To remove this objection, the late Lord Gower was induced to write to a friend, in order to obtain for Johnson a master’s degree in the University of Dublin, by the recommendation of Dr. Swift. The letter was printed in one of the magazines, and is as follows :

“ S I R,

“ Mr. Samuel Johnson (author of London,
 “ a satire, and some other poetical pieces) is a
 “ native of this county, and much respected
 “ by some worthy gentlemen in the neigh-
 “ bourhood, who are trustees of a charity-
 “ school, now vacant; the certain salary of
 “ which is sixty pounds *per* year, of which
 “ they are desirous to make him master; but
 “ unfortunately he is not capable of receiving
 “ their bounty, which would make him happy
 “ for life, by not being a master of arts,
 “ which, by the statutes of the school, the
 “ master of it must be.

“ Now these gentlemen do me the honour to
 “ think, that I have interest enough in you,
 “ to prevail upon you to write to Dean Swift,
 “ to persuade the University of Dublin to send
 “ a diploma to me, constituting this poor man
 “ master of arts in their university. They
 “ highly extol the man’s learning and probity;
 “ and will not be persuaded, that the University
 “ will make any difficulty of conferring such
 “ a favour upon a stranger, if he is recom-
 “ mended by the Dean. They say, he is not
 “ afraid

“ afraid of the strictest examination, though
 “ he is of so long a journey ; and yet he will
 “ venture it, if the Dean thinks it necessary,
 “ chusing rather to die upon the road than to
 “ be starved to death in translating for book-
 “ sellers, which has been his only subsistence
 “ for some time past.

“ I fear there is more difficulty in this affair
 “ than these good-natured gentlemen appre-
 “ hend, especially as their election cannot
 “ be delayed longer than the 11th of next
 “ month. If you see this matter in the same
 “ light that it appears to me, I hope you will
 “ burn this, and pardon me for giving you so
 “ much trouble about an impracticable thing ;
 “ but, if you think there is a probability of
 “ obtaining the favour asked, I am sure your
 “ humanity and propensity to relieve merit in
 “ distress will incline you to serve the poor
 “ man, without my adding any more to the
 “ trouble I have already given you than affu-
 “ ring you, that I am, with great truth, Sir,

“ Your faithful humble servant,

“ GOWER.

“ Trentham, Aug. 1st.”

This scheme miscarried. There is reason to think, that Swift declined to meddle in the business; and to that circumstance Johnson's known dislike of Swift has been often imputed.

It is mortifying to pursue a man of merit through all his difficulties; and yet this narrative must be, through many following years, the history of Genius and Virtue struggling with Adversity. Having lost the school at Appleby, Johnson was thrown back on the metropolis. Bred to no profession, without relations, friends, or interest, he was condemned to drudgery in the service of Cave, his only patron. In November, 1738, was published a translation of Croufaz's Examen of Pope's Essay on Man; "containing a succinct
 "View of the System of the Fatalists, and a
 "Confutation of their Opinions, with an
 "Illustration of the Doctrine of Free Will;
 "and an Enquiry, what view Mr. Pope might
 "have in touching upon the Leibnitzian Phi-
 "losophy, and Fatalism. By Mr. Croufaz,
 "Professor of Philosophy and Mathematics at
 "Lausanne." This translation has been generally
 rally

rally thought a production of Johnson's pen; but it is now known, that Mrs. Elizabeth Carter has acknowledged it to be one of her early performances. It is certain, however, that Johnson was eager to promote the publication. He considered the foreign philosophy as a man zealous in the cause of religion; and with him he was willing to join against the system of the Fatalists and the doctrine of Leibnitz. It is well known that Warburton wrote a vindication of Mr. Pope; but there is reason to think, that Johnson conceived an early prejudice against the Essay on Man; and what once took root in a mind like his was not easily eradicated. His letter to Cave on this subject is still extant, and may well justify Sir John Hawkins, who inferred that Johnson was the translator of Croufaz. The conclusion of the letter is remarkable. "I am
 "yours, IMPRANSUS." If by that Latin word was meant that he had not dined, because he wanted the means, who can read it, even at this hour, without an aching heart?

With a mind naturally vigorous, and quickened by necessity, Johnson formed a multiplicity of projects; but most of them proved abortive. A number of small tracts issued

from his pen with wonderful rapidity; such as "MARMOR NORFOLCIENSE; or an Essay on an ancient prophetic Inscription, in Monkish Rhyme, discovered at Lynn in Norfolk. By *Probus Britannicus*." This was a pamphlet against Sir Robert Walpole. According to Sir John Hawkins, a warrant was issued to apprehend the Author, who retired with his wife to an obscure lodging near Lambeth-Marsh, and there eluded the search of the messengers. But this story has no foundation in truth. Johnson was never known to mention such an incident in his life; and Mr. Steele (late of the Treasury) caused diligent search to be made at the proper offices, and no trace of such a proceeding could be found. In the same year (1739) the Lord Chamberlain prohibited the representation of a tragedy, called *GUSTAVUS VASA*, by Henry Brooke. Under the mask of irony, Johnson published, "A Vindication of the Licencer from the malicious and scandalous Aspersions of Mr. Brooke." Of these two pieces Sir John Hawkins says, "they have neither learning nor wit; nor a single ray of that genius which has since blazed forth;" but as they have been lately re-printed, the reader,
 who

who wishes to gratify his curiosity, is referred to the fourteenth volume of Johnson's works, published by Stockdale. The lives of Boerhaave, Blake, Barratier, Father Paul, and others, were, about that time, printed in the Gentleman's Magazine. The subscription of fifty pounds a year for Savage was completed; and in July, 1739, Johnson parted with the companion of his midnight hours, never to see him more. The separation was, perhaps, an advantage to him, who wanted to make a right use of his time, and even then beheld, with self-reproach, the waste occasioned by dissipation. His abstinence from wine and strong liquors began soon after the departure of Savage. What habits he contracted in the course of that acquaintance cannot now be known. The ambition of excelling in conversation, and that pride of victory, which, at times, disgraced a man of Johnson's genius, were, perhaps, native blemishes. A fierce spirit of independence, even in the midst of poverty, may be seen in Savage, and, if not thence transfused by Johnson into his own manners, it may, at least, be supposed to have gained strength from the example before him. During that connection, there was, if we believe Sir
John

John Hawkins, a short separation between our author and his wife; but a reconciliation soon took place. Johnson loved her, and shewed his affection in various modes of gallantry, which Garrick used to render ridiculous by his mimicry. The affectation of soft and fashionable airs did not become an unwieldy figure; his admiration was received by the wife with the flutter of an antiquated coquette; and both, it is well known, furnished matter for the lively genius of Garrick.

It is a mortifying reflection, that Johnson, with a store of learning and extraordinary talents, was not able, at the age of thirty, to force his way to the favour of the publick. *Slow rises worth by poverty depress'd.* "He was still," as he says himself, "to provide for the day that was passing over him." He saw Cave involved in a state of warfare with the numerous competitors, at that time struggling with the Gentleman's Magazine; and gratitude, for such supplies as Johnson received, dictated a Latin Ode on the subject of that contention. The first lines,

"Urbane, nullis fesse laboribus,
"Urbane, nullis victæ calumniis,"

put

put one in mind of Casimir's Ode to Pope Urban :

“ Urbane, regum maxime, maxime

“ Urbane vatum.”—

The Polish poet was, probably, at that time in the hands of a man who had meditated the history of the Latin poets. Guthrie, the historian, had from July, 1736, composed the parliamentary speeches for the Magazines; but, from the beginning of the session which opened on the 19th of November, 1740, Johnson succeeded to that department, and continued it from that time to the debate on spirituous liquors, which happened in the House of Lords in February, 1742-3. The eloquence, the force of argument, and the splendor of language, displayed in the several speeches, are well known, and universally admired. The whole has been collected in two volumes by Mr. Stockdale, and may form a proper supplement to this edition. That Johnson was the author of the debates during that period was not generally known; but the secret transpired several years afterwards, and was avowed by himself on the following occasion. Mr. Wedderburne (now Lord Loughborough),

borough), Dr. Johnson, Dr. Francis (the translator of Horace), the present writer, and others, dined with the late Mr. Foote. An important debate towards the end of Sir Robert Walpole's administration being mentioned, Dr. Francis observed, "That Mr. Pitt's speech, " on that occasion, was the best he had ever " read." He added, " That he had employed " eight years of his life in the study of De- " mosthenes, and finished a translation of that " celebrated orator, with all the decorations " of style and language within the reach of " his capacity; but he had met with nothing " equal to the speech above-mentioned." Many of the company remembered the debate; and some passages were cited, with the approbation and applause of all present. During the ardour of conversation Johnson remained silent. As soon as the warmth of praise subsided, he opened with these words. " That speech I " wrote in a garret in Exeter-street." The company was struck with astonishment. After staring at each other with silent amaze, Dr. Francis asked, " How that speech could be written " by him?" " Sir," said Johnson, " I wrote it " in Exeter-street. I never had been in the " gallery

“ gallery of the House of Commons but once.
 “ Cave had interest with the door-keepers.
 “ He, and the persons employed under him,
 “ gained admittance: they brought away the
 “ subject of discussion, the names of the
 “ speakers, the side they took, and the order
 “ in which they rose, together with the notes of
 “ the arguments advanced in the course of the
 “ debate. The whole was afterwards commu-
 “ nicated to me, and I composed the speeches
 “ in the form which they now have in the Par-
 “ liamentary Debates.” To this discovery Dr.
 Francis made answer: “ Then, Sir, you have
 “ exceeded Demosthenes himself; for, to say
 “ that you have exceeded Francis’s Demos-
 “ thenes would be saying nothing.” The rest
 of the company bestowed lavish encomiums on
 Johnson: one, in particular, praised his im-
 partiality; observing, that he dealt out reason
 and eloquence with an equal hand to both
 parties. “ That is not quite true,” said John-
 son; “ I faved appearances tolerably well;
 “ but I took care that the WHIG DOGS should
 “ not have the best of it.” The sale of the
 Magazine was greatly increased by the Parlia-
 mentary Debates, which were continued by
 John-

Johnson till the month of March, 1742-3. From that time the Magazine was conducted by Dr. Hawkefworth.

In 1743-4, Osborne, the bookfeller, who kept a fhop in Gray's-Inn, purchafed the Earl of Oxford's library, at the price of thirteen thoufand pounds. He projected a catalogue in five octavo volumes, at five fhillings each. Johnson was employed in that painful drudgery. He was likewise to collect all fuch fmall tracts as were in any degree worth preferving, in order to reprint and publish the whole in a collection, called "The Harleian Miscellany." The catalogue was completed; and the Miscellany, in 1749, was published in eight quarto volumes. In this bufinefs Johnson was a day-labourer for immediate fubfiftence, not unlike Guftavus Vafa working in the mines of Dalicaria. What Wilcox, a bookfeller of eminence in the Strand, faid to Johnson, on his firft arrival in town, was now almoft confirmed. He lent our author five guineas, and then asked him, "How do you mean to earn your livelihood in "this town?" "By my literary labours," was the anfwer. Wilcox, ftaring at him, fhook
his

his head: "By your literary labours!—You had better buy a porter's knot." Johnson used to tell this anecdote to Mr. Nichols; but he said, "Wilcox was one of my best friends, and he meant well." In fact, Johnson, while employed in Gray's Inn, may be said to have carried a porter's knot. He paused occasionally, to peruse the book that came to his hand. Osborne thought that such curiosity tended to nothing but delay, and objected to it with all the pride and insolence of a man, who knew that he paid daily wages. In the dispute, that of course ensued, Osborne, with that roughness which was natural to him, enforced his argument by giving the lie. Johnson seized a folio, and knocked the bookfeller down. This story has been related as an instance of Johnson's ferocity; but merit cannot always take the spurns of the unworthy with a patient spirit.

That the history of an author must be found in his works is, in general, a true observation; and was never more apparent than in the present narrative. Every æra of Johnson's life is fixed by his writings. In 1744, he published the *Life of Savage*; and then projected a new edition

edition of Shakspeare. As a prelude to that design, he published, in 1745, *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir Thomas Hanmer's Edition: to which were prefixed, Proposals for a new Edition of Shakspeare, with a Specimen.* Of this pamphlet, Warburton, in the Preface to Shakspeare, has given his opinion: "As to all
 " those things, which have been published
 " under the title of Essays, Remarks, Ob-
 " servations, &c. on Shakspeare, if you
 " except some critical notes on *Macbeth*,
 " given as a specimen of a projected edition,
 " and written, as appears, by a man of parts
 " and genius, the rest are absolutely below a
 " serious notice." But the attention of the publick was not excited; there was no friend to promote a subscription; and the project died to revive at a future day. A new undertaking, however, was soon after proposed; namely, an English Dictionary, upon an enlarged plan. Several of the most opulent booksellers had meditated a work of this kind; and the agreement was soon adjusted between the parties. Emboldened by this connection, Johnson thought of a better habitation than he had hitherto known.

known. He had lodged with his wife in courts and alleys about the Strand; but now, for the purpose of carrying on his arduous undertaking, and to be near his printer and friend, Mr. Strahan, he ventured to take a house in Gough-square, Fleet-street. He was told that the Earl of Chesterfield was a friend to his undertaking; and, in consequence of that intelligence, he published, in 1747, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language, addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State.* Mr. Whitehead, afterwards Poet Laureat, undertook to convey the manuscript to his Lordship: the consequence was an invitation from Lord Chesterfield to the author. A stronger contrast of characters could not be brought together; the Nobleman, celebrated for his wit, and all the graces of polite behaviour; the Author, conscious of his own merit, towering in idea above all competition, versed in scholastic logic, but a stranger to the arts of polite conversation, uncouth, vehement, and vociferous. The coalition was too unnatural. Johnson expected a Mæcenas, and was disappointed. No patronage, no assistance followed. Visits

were repeated ; but the reception was not cordial. Johnson one day was left a full hour, waiting in an anti-chamber, till a gentleman should retire, and leave his Lordship at leisure. This was the famous Colley Cibber. Johnson saw him go, and, fired with indignation, rushed out of the house. What Lord Chesterfield thought of his visitor may be seen in a passage in one of that Nobleman's letters to his son*. “ There
 “ is a man, whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts, I acknowledge, admire, and respect ; but whom it is so impossible for me to love, that I am almost in
 “ a fever whenever I am in his company. His figure (without being deformed) seems made
 “ to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms
 “ are never in the position which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to
 “ be in, but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the Graces. He
 “ throws any where, but down his throat, whatever he means to drink ; and mangles
 “ what he means to carve. Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mistimes and

* Letter CCXII.

“ misplaces every thing. He disputes with heat
 “ indiscriminately, mindless of the rank, cha-
 “ racter, and situation, of those with whom he
 “ disputes. Absolutely ignorant of the several
 “ gradations of familiarity and respect, he is
 “ exactly the same to his superiors, his equals,
 “ and his inferiors; and therefore, by a ne-
 “ cessary consequence, is absurd to two of the
 “ three. Is it possible to love such a man?
 “ No. The utmost I can do for him is, to
 “ consider him a respectable Hottentot.” Such
 was the idea entertained by Lord Chesterfield.
 After the incident of Colley Cibber, Johnson
 never repeated his visits. In his high and de-
 cisive tone, he has been often heard to say,
 “ Lord Chesterfield is a Wit among Lords,
 “ and a Lord among Wits.”

In the course of the year 1747, Garrick,
 in conjunction with Lacy, became patentee of
 Drury-lane Playhouse. For the opening of
 the theatre, at the usual time, Johnson wrote
 for his friend the well-known prologue, which,
 to say no more of it, may at least be placed on
 a level with Pope's to the tragedy of Cato.
 The play-house being now under Garrick's

direction, Johnson thought the opportunity fair to think of his tragedy of *Irene*, which was his whole stock on his first arrival in town in the year 1737. That play was accordingly put into rehearsal in January 1749. As a precursor to prepare the way, and awaken the public attention, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, a Poem in Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, by the Author of *London*, was published in the same month. In the Gentleman's Magazine, for February, 1749, we find that the tragedy of *Irene* was acted at Drury-lane, on Monday, February the 6th, and from that time, without interruption, to Monday, February the 20th, being in all thirteen nights. Since that time it has not been exhibited on any stage. *Irene* may be added to some other plays in our language, which have lost their place in the theatre, but continue to please in the closet. During the representation of this piece, Johnson attended every night behind the scenes. Conceiving that his character, as an author, required some ornament for his person, he chose, upon that occasion, to decorate himself with a handsome waistcoat, and a gold-laced hat. The late Mr. Topham Beauclerc,

clerc, who had had a great deal of that humour which pleases the more for seeming undesigned, used to give a pleasant description of this Green-room finery, as related by the author himself; "But," said Johnson with great gravity, "I soon laid aside my gold-laced hat, lest it should make me proud." The amount of the three benefit-nights for the tragedy of *Irene*, it is to be feared, was not very considerable, as the profit, that stimulating motive, never invited the author to another dramatic attempt. Some years afterwards, when the present writer was intimate with Garrick, and knew Johnson to be in distress, he asked the manager why he did not produce another tragedy for his Lichfield friend? Garrick's answer was remarkable: "When Johnson writes *tragedy, declamation roars, and passion sleeps*: when Shakspeare wrote, he dipped his pen "in his own heart."

There may, perhaps, be a degree of fane-ness in this regular way of tracing an author from one work to another, and the reader may feel the effect of a tedious monotony; but in the life of Johnson there are no other land-

marks. He was now forty years old, and had mixed but little with the world. He followed no profession, transacted no business, and was a stranger to what is called a town-life. We are now arrived at the brightest period he had hitherto known. His name broke out upon mankind with a degree of lustre that promised a triumph over all his difficulties. The *Life of Savage* was admired as a beautiful and instructive piece of biography. The two *Imitations of Juvenal* were thought to rival even the excellence of *Pope*; and the tragedy of *Irene*, though uninteresting on the stage, was universally admired in the closet, for the propriety of the sentiments, the richness of the language, and the general harmony of the whole composition. His fame was widely diffused; and he had made his agreement with the booksellers for his *English Dictionary* at the sum of fifteen hundred guineas; part of which was to be, from time to time, advanced in proportion to the progress of the work. This was a certain fund for his support, without being obliged to write fugitive pieces for the petty supplies of the day. Accordingly, we find that, in 1749, he established a club, consisting of ten in number,

ber, at Horseman's, in Ivy-lane, on every Tuesday evening. This is the first scene of social life to which Johnson can be traced out of his own house. The members of this little society were, Samuel Johnson; Dr. Salter (father of the late Master of the Charter-house); Dr. Hawkesworth; Mr. Ryland, a merchant; Mr. Payne, a bookseller, in Paternoster-row; Mr. Samuel Dyer, a learned young man; Dr. William M'Ghie, a Scotch physician; Dr. Edmund Barker, a young physician; Dr. Bathurst, another young physician; and Sir John Hawkins. This list is given by Sir John, as it should seem, with no other view than to draw a spiteful and malevolent character of almost every one of them. Mr. Dyer, whom Sir John says he loved with the affection of a brother, meets with the harshest treatment, because it was his maxim, that *to live in peace with mankind, and in a temper to do good offices, was the most essential part of our duty*. That notion of moral goodness gave umbrage to Sir John Hawkins, and drew down upon the memory of his friend the bitterest imputations. Mr. Dyer, however, was admired and loved through life. He was a

man of literature. Johnson loved to enter with him into a discussion of metaphysical, moral, and critical, subjects; in those conflicts, exercising his talents, and, according to his custom, always contending for victory. Dr. Bathurst was the person on whom Johnson fixed his affection. He hardly ever spoke of him without tears in his eyes. It was from him, who was a native of Jamaica, that Johnson received into his service Frank, the black servant, whom, on account of his master, he valued to the end of his life. At the time of instituting the club in Ivy-lane, Johnson had projected the *Rambler*. The title was most probably suggested by the *Wanderer*; a poem which he mentions, with the warmest praise, in the Life of Savage. With the same spirit of independence with which he wished to live, it was now his pride to write. He communicated his plan to none of his friends: he desired no assistance, relying entirely on his own fund, and the protection of the Divine Being, which he employed in a solemn form of prayer, composed by himself for the occasion. Having formed a resolution to undertake a work that might be of use and honour to his country,
he

he thought, with Milton, that this was not to
 “ be obtained “ but by devout prayer to that
 “ Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all ut-
 “ terance and knowledge, and send out his
 “ seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar,
 “ to touch and purify the lips of whom he
 “ pleases.”

Having invoked the special protection of Heaven, and by that act of piety fortified his mind, he began the great work of the *Rambler*. The first number was published on Tuesday, March the 20th, 1750; and from that time was continued regularly every Tuesday and Saturday for the space of two years, when it finally closed on Saturday, March 14, 1752. As it began with motives of piety, so it appears, that the same religious spirit glowed with unabating ardour to the last. His conclusion is: “ The Essays, professedly serious, if
 “ I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to
 “ the precepts of Christianity, without any
 “ accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look
 “ back on this part of my work with pleasure,
 I “ which

“ which no man shall diminish or augment.
 “ I shall never envy the honours which wit and
 “ learning obtain in any other cause, if I can
 “ be numbered among the writers who have
 “ given ardour to virtue, and confidence to
 “ truth.” The whole number of Essays
 amounted to two hundred and eight. Addison’s, in the Spectator, are more in number, but not half in point of quantity : Addison was not bound to publish on stated days ; he could watch the ebb and flow of his genius, and send his paper to the press when his own taste was satisfied. Johnson’s case was very different. He wrote singly and alone. In the whole progress of the work he did not receive more than ten essays. This was a scanty contribution. For the rest, the author has described his situation :
 “ He that condemns himself to compose on a
 “ stated day, will often bring to his task an at-
 “ tention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an
 “ imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted
 “ with anxieties, a body languishing with dis-
 “ ease : he will labour on a barren topic, till it
 “ is too late to change it ; or, in the ardour of
 “ invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild ex-
 “ berance, which the pressing hour of publi-
 “ cation

“ cation cannot suffer judgement to examine or “ reduce.” Of this excellent production the number sold on each day did not amount to five hundred: of course the bookseller, who paid the author four guineas a week, did not carry on a successful trade. His generosity and perseverance deserve to be commended; and happily, when the collection appeared in volumes, were amply rewarded. Johnson lived to see his labours flourish in a tenth edition. His posterity, as an ingenious French writer has said on a similar occasion, began in his lifetime.

In the beginning of 1750, soon after the *Rambler* was set on foot, Johnson was induced, by the arts of a vile impostor, to lend his assistance, during a temporary delusion, to a fraud not to be paralleled in the annals of literature. One LAUDER, a native of Scotland, who had been a teacher in the University of EDINBURGH, had conceived a mortal antipathy to the name and character of Milton. His reason was, because the prayer of Pamela, in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, was, as he supposed, maliciously inserted by the great poet in
an

an edition of the Eikon Basilike, in order to fix an imputation of impiety on the memory of the murdered king. Fired with resentment, and willing to reap the profits of a gross imposition, this man collected from several Latin poets, such as Masenius the Jesuit, Staphorstius a Dutch divine, Beza, and others, all such passages as bore any kind of resemblance to different places in the Paradise Lost; and these he published, from time to time, in the Gentleman's Magazine, with occasional interpolations of lines, which he himself translated from Milton. The public credulity swallowed all with eagerness; and Milton was supposed to be guilty of plagiarism from inferior modern writers. The fraud succeeded so well, that Lauder collected the whole into a volume, and advertised it under the title of "*An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns, in his Paradise Lost; dedicated to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.*" While the book was in the press, the proof-sheets were shewn to Johnson at the Ivy-lane Club, by Payne, the bookseller, who was one of the members. No man in that society was in possession of the authors from whom Lauder
 professed

professed to make his extracts. The charge was believed, and the contriver of it found his way to Johnson, who is represented by Sir John Hawkins, not indeed as an accomplice in the fraud, but, through motives of malignity to Milton, delighting in the detection, and exulting that the poet's reputation would suffer by the discovery. More malice to a deceased friend cannot well be imagined. Hawkins adds, "*that he wished well to the argument must be inferred from the preface, which indubitably was written by him.*" The preface, it is well known, was written by Johnson, and for that reason is inserted in this edition. But, if Johnson approved of the argument, it was no longer than while he believed it founded in truth. Let us advert to his own words in that very preface. "Among the enquiries to which the ardour of criticism has naturally given occasion, none is more obscure in itself, or more worthy of rational curiosity, than a retrospection of the progress of this mighty genius in the construction of his work; a view of the fabric gradually rising, perhaps from small beginnings, till its foundation rests in the centre, and its turrets
 " sparkle

“ sparkle in the skies ; to trace back the struc-
 “ ture, through all its varieties, to the simpli-
 “ city of the first plan ; to find what was pro-
 “ jected, whence the scheme was taken, how
 “ it was improved, by what assistance it was
 “ executed, and from what stores the mate-
 “ rials were collected ; whether its founder
 “ dug them from the quarries of nature, or
 “ demolished other buildings to embellish his
 “ own.” These were the motives that induced
 Johnson to assist Lauder with a preface : and
 are not these the motives of a critic and a
 scholar ? What reader of taste, what man of
 real knowledge, would not think his time well
 employed in an enquiry so curious, so interest-
 ing, and instructive ? If Lauder’s facts were
 really true, who would not be glad, without
 the smallest tincture of malevolence, to receive
 real information ? It is painful to be thus
 obliged to vindicate a man who, in his heart,
 towered above the petty arts of fraud and im-
 position, against an injudicious biographer, who
 undertook to be his editor, and the protector
 of his memory. Another writer, Dr. Towers,
 in an Essay on the Life and Character of Dr.
 Johnson, seems to countenance this calumny.

He

He says, *It can hardly be doubted, but that Johnson's aversion to Milton's politics was the cause of that alacrity with which he joined with Lauder in his infamous attack on our great epic poet, and which induced him to assist in that transaction.* These words would seem to describe an accomplice, were they not immediately followed by an express declaration, that Johnson was *unacquainted with the imposture.* Dr. Towers adds, *It seems to have been by way of making some compensation to the memory of Milton, for the share he had in the attack of Lauder, that Johnson wrote the prologue, spoken by Garrick, at Drury-lane Theatre, 1750, on the performance of the Masque of Comus, for the benefit of Milton's grand-daughter.* Dr. Towers is not free from prejudice; but, as Shakspeare has it, "he begets a temperance, to give "it smoothness." He is, therefore, entitled to a dispassionate answer. When Johnson wrote the prologue, it does not appear that he was aware of the malignant artifices practised by Lauder. In the postscript to Johnson's preface, a subscription is proposed, for relieving the grand-daughter of the author of *Paradise Lost.* Dr. Towers will agree that this shews
John-

Johnson's alacrity in doing good. That alacrity shewed itself again in the letter printed in the European Magazine, January, 1785, and there said to have appeared originally in the General Advertiser, 4th April, 1750, by which the publick were invited to embrace the opportunity of paying a just regard to the illustrious dead, united with the pleasure of doing good to the living. The letter adds, " To assist industrious indigence, struggling with distress, and debilitated by age, is a display of virtue, and an acquisition of happiness and honour. Whoever, therefore, would be thought capable of pleasure in reading the works of our incomparable Milton, and not so destitute of gratitude as to refuse to lay out a trifle, in a rational and elegant entertainment, for the benefit of his living remains, for the exercise of their own virtue, the increase of their reputation, and the consciousness of doing good, should appear at Drury-lane Theatre, to-morrow, April 5, when COMUS will be performed for the benefit of Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, grand-daughter to the author, and the only surviving branch of his family. *Nota bene*, there will be a
 " new

“ new prologue on the occasion, written by
 “ the author of Irene, and spoken by Mr.
 “ Garrick.” The man, who had thus exerted
 himself to serve the grand-daughter, cannot be
 supposed to have entertained personal malice
 to the grand-father. It is true, that the ma-
 levolence of Lauder, as well as the impostures
 of Archibald Bower, were fully detected by
 the labours, in the cause of truth, of the Rev.
 Dr. Douglas, now Lord Bishop of Salisbury.

—— “ Diram qui contudit Hydram,
 “ Notaque fatali portenta labore subegit.”

But the pamphlet, entituled, *Milton vindicated
 from the Charge of Plagiarism brought against
 him by Mr. Lauder, and Lauder himself con-
 victed of several Forgeries and gross Impositions on
 the Publick, by John Douglas, M. A. Rector
 of Eaton Constantine, Salop*, was not pub-
 lished till the year 1751. In that work, p. 77.
 Dr. Douglas says: “ It is to be hoped, nay,
 “ it is *expected*, that the elegant and nervous
 “ writer, whose judicious sentiments and in-
 “ imitable style point out the author of Lau-
 “ der’s preface and postscript, will no longer
 “ allow A MAN to *plume himself with his fea-*
 “ *thers*, who appears so little to have deserved

“ his assistance ; an assistance which I am per-
 “ suaded would never have been communi-
 “ cated, had there been the least suspicion of
 “ those facts, which I have been the instru-
 “ ment of conveying to the world.” We
 have here a contemporary testimony to the in-
 tegrity of Dr. Johnson throughout the whole
 of that vile transaction. What was the con-
 sequence of the requisition made by Dr. Dou-
 glas ? Johnson, whose ruling passion may be
 said to be the love of truth, convinced Lauder,
 that it would be more for his interest to make
 a full confession of his guilt than to stand
 forth the convicted champion of a lie ; and for
 this purpose he drew up, in the strongest terms,
 a recantation in a Letter to the Rev. Mr.
 Douglas, which Lauder signed, and published
 in the year 1751. That piece will remain a
 lasting memorial of the abhorrence with which
 Johnson beheld a violation of truth. Mr. Ni-
 chols, whose attachment to his illustrious friend
 was unwearied, shewed him in 1780 a book,
 called *Remarks on Johnson's Life of Milton*,
 in which the affair of Lauder was renewed
 with virulence, and a *poetical scale* in the *Lite-
 rary Magazine* 1758 (when Johnson had ceased
 to write in that collection) was urged as an
 additional

additional proof of deliberate malice. He read the libellous passage with attention, and instantly wrote on the margin: "In the business of Lau-
 " der I was deceived, partly by thinking the man
 " too frantic to be fraudulent. Of the *poetical*
 " *scale*, quoted from the Magazine, I am not the
 " author. I fancy it was put in after I had
 " quitted that work: for, I not only did not
 " write it, but I do not remember it." As a critic and a scholar, Johnson was willing to receive what numbers, at the time, believed to be true information: when he found that the whole was a forgery, he renounced all connection with the author.

In March 1752, he felt a severe stroke of affliction in the death of his wife. The last number of the Rambler, as already mentioned, was on the 14th of that month. The loss of Mrs. Johnson was then approaching, and, probably, was the cause that put an end to those admirable periodical essays. It appears that she died on the 28th of March: in a memorandum, at the foot of the Prayers and Meditations, that is called her Dying Day. She was buried at Bromley, under the care of Dr. Hawkesworth. Johnson placed a Latin inscription on

her tomb, in which he celebrated her beauty. With the singularity of his prayers for his deceased wife, from that time to the end of his days, the world is sufficiently acquainted. On Easter-day, 22d April, 1764, his memorandum says: “Thought on Tetty, poor dear Tetty! with
 “ my eyes full. Went to Church. After
 “ sermon I recommended Tetty in a prayer by
 “ herself; and my father, mother, brother,
 “ and Bathurst, in another. I did it only
 “ once, so far as it might be lawful for me.” In a prayer, January 23, 1759, the day on which his mother was buried, he commends, as far as may be lawful, her soul to God, imploring for her whatever is most beneficial to her in her present state. In this habit he persevered to the end of his days. The Rev. Mr. Strahan, the editor of the Prayers and Meditations, observes, “That Johnson, on
 “ some occasions, prays that the Almighty
 “ *may have had mercy* on his wife and Mr.
 “ Thrale: evidently supposing their sentence
 “ to have been already passed in the Divine
 “ Mind; and, by consequence, proving, that
 “ he had no belief in a state of purgatory, and
 “ no reason for praying for the dead that could
 “ impeach the sincerity of his profession as a

“Protestant.” Mr. Strahan adds, “That, in
 “praying for the regretted tenants of the
 “grave, Johnson conformed to a practice
 “which has been retained by many learned
 “members of the Established Church, though
 “the Liturgy no longer admits it. *If, where*
 “*the tree falleth, there it shall be*; if our state,
 “at the close of life, is to be the measure of
 “our final sentence; then prayers for the
 “dead, being visibly fruitless, can be regarded
 “only as the vain oblations of superstition.
 “But, of all superstitions, this, perhaps, is one
 “of the least unamiable, and most incident to
 “a good mind. If our sensations of kindness
 “be intense, those, whom we have revered and
 “loved, death cannot wholly exclude from our
 “concern. It is true, for the reason just men-
 “tioned, such evidences of our surviving af-
 “fection may be thought ill-judged; but
 “surely they are generous, and some natural
 “tenderness is due even to a superstition, which
 “thus originates in piety and benevolence.”
 These sentences, extracted from the Rev.
 Mr. Strahan’s preface, if they are not a full
 justification, are, at least, a beautiful apolo-
 gy. It will not be improper to add what
 Johnson himself has said on the subject. Being

asked by Mr. Boswell*, what he thought of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics? his answer was, “ It is a very harmless doctrine. They are of opinion, that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment; nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and, therefore, that God is graciously pleased to allow a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see there is nothing unreasonable in this; and, if it be once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for them, as for our brethren of mankind, who are yet in this life.” This was Dr. Johnson’s guess into futurity; and to guess is the utmost that man can do. *Shadows, clouds, and darkness, rest upon it.*

Mrs. Johnson left a daughter, Lucy Porter, by her first husband. She had contracted a friendship with Mrs. Anne Williams, the daughter of Zachary Williams, a physician of eminence in South Wales, who had devoted more than thirty years of a long life to the study of

* Life of Johnson, Vol. I. p. 328.

the longitude, and was thought to have made great advances towards that important discovery. His letters to Lord Halifax, and the Lords of the Admiralty, partly corrected and partly written by Dr. Johnson, are still extant in the hands of Mr. Nichols*. We there find Dr. Williams, in the eighty-third year of his age, stating, that he had prepared an instrument, which might be called an epitome or miniature of the terraqueous globe, shewing, with the assistance of tables constructed by himself, the variations of the magnetic needle, and ascertaining the longitude for the safety of navigation. It appears that this scheme had been referred to Sir Isaac Newton; but that great philosopher excusing himself on account of his advanced age, all applications were useless till 1751, when the subject was referred, by order of Lord Anson, to Dr. Bradley, the celebrated professor of astronomy. His report was unfavourable †, though it allows that a considerable progress had been made. Dr. Williams, after all his labour and expence, died in a short time after, a melancholy instance of unrewarded merit.

* See Gentleman's Magazine for Nov. and Dec. 1787.

† Ibid. for Dec. 1787, p. 1042.

His daughter possessed uncommon talents, and, though blind, had an alacrity of mind that made her conversation agreeable, and even desirable. To relieve and appease melancholy reflections, Johnson took her home to his house in Gough-square. In 1755, Garrick gave her a benefit-play, which produced two hundred pounds. In 1766, she published, by subscription, a quarto volume of Miscellanies, and increased her little stock to three hundred pounds. That fund, with Johnson's protection, supported her through the remainder of her life.

During the two years in which the Rambler was carried on, the Dictionary proceeded by slow degrees. In May 1752, having composed a prayer preparatory to his return from tears and sorrow to the duties of life, he resumed his grand design, and went on with vigour, giving, however, occasional assistance to his friend Dr. Hawkeforth in the Adventurer, which began soon after the Rambler was laid aside. Some of the most valuable essays in that collection were from the pen of Johnson. The Dictionary was completed towards the end of 1754; and, Cave being then no more, it was a mortification to the author of that noble addition to our lan-

language, that his old friend did not live to see the triumph of his labours. In May 1755, that great work was published. Johnson was desirous that it should come from one who had obtained academical honours; and for that purpose, his friend the Rev. Thomas Warton obtained for him, in the preceding month of February, a diploma for a master's degree from the University of Oxford. Garrick, on the publication of the Dictionary, wrote the following lines :

- “ Talk of war with a Briton, he ’ll boldly advance,
 “ That one English soldier can beat ten of France.
 “ Would we alter the boast from the sword to the
 “ pen,
 “ Our odds are still greater, still greater our men.
 “ In the deep mines of science though Frenchmen
 “ may toil,
 “ Can their strength be compar’d to Locke, New-
 “ ton, or Boyle?
 “ Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their
 “ pow’rs.
 “ Their versemen and profemen, then match them
 “ with ours.
 “ First Shakspeare and Milton, like Gods in the fight,
 “ Have put their whole drama and epic to flight.
 “ In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope?
 “ Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope.
 “ And

“ And Johnson well arm'd, like a hero of yore,
 “ Has beat Forty French, and will beat Forty more.”

It is, perhaps, needless to mention, that Forty was the number of the French Academy, at the time when their Dictionary was published to settle their language.

In the course of the winter preceding this grand publication, the late Earl of Chesterfield gave two essays in the periodical Paper, called *THE WORLD*, dated November 28, and December 5, 1754, to prepare the publick for so important a work. The original plan, addressed to his Lordship in the year 1747, is there mentioned in terms of the highest praise; and this was understood, at the time, to be a courtly way of soliciting a dedication of the Dictionary to himself. Johnson treated this civility with disdain. He said to Garrick and others, “ I have sailed a long and painful
 “ voyage round the world of the English lan-
 “ guage; and does he now send out two cock-
 “ boats to tow me into harbour?” He had said, in the last number of the *Rambler*,
 “ that, having laboured to maintain the dignity
 “ of virtue, I will not now degrade it by the
 “ meanness of dedication.” Such a man, when
 he

he had finished his "Dictionary, not," as he says himself, "in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow, and without the patronage of the great," was not likely to be caught by the lure thrown out by Lord Chesterfield. He had in vain sought the patronage of that nobleman; and his pride, exasperated by disappointment, drew from him the following letter, dated in the month of February, 1755.

"To the Right Honourable the Earl of
"CHESTERFIELD,

"MY LORD,

"I have been lately informed, by the proprietors of the World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment
"chantment

“chantment of your address, and could not
 “forbear to wish, that I might boast myself
 “*le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; that I
 “might obtain that regard for which I saw
 “the world contending. But I found my
 “attendance so little encouraged, that neither
 “pride, nor modesty, would suffer me to con-
 “tinue it. When I had once addressed your
 “Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the
 “art of pleasing, which a retired and un-
 “courtly scholar can possess. I had done all
 “that I could; and no man is well pleased to
 “have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

“Seven years, my Lord, have now passed
 “since I waited in your outward room, or was
 “repulsed from your door; during which
 “time I have been pushing on my work
 “through difficulties, of which it is useless to
 “complain, and have brought it at last to the
 “verge of publication, without one act of
 “assistance, one word of encouragement, or
 “one smile of favour. Such treatment I did
 “not expect; for, I never had a patron before.

“The Shepherd in Virgil grew acquainted
 “with Love, and found him a native of the
 “rocks.

“Is

“ Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks
 “ with unconcern on a man struggling for life in
 “ the water, and, when he has reached ground,
 “ encumbers him with help? 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; till I am solitary, and
 “ cannot impart it; till I am known, and do
 “ not want it. I hope it is no very cynical aspe-
 “ rity not to confess obligations where no be-
 “ nefit has been received; or to be unwilling
 “ that the publick should consider me as owing
 “ that to a patron, which Providence has ena-
 “ bled me to do for myself.

“ Having carried on my work thus far with
 “ so little obligation to any favourer of learn-
 “ ing, I shall not be disappointed, though I
 “ should conclude it, if less be possible, with
 “ less; for, I have been long wakened from
 “ that dream of hope, in which I once boasted
 “ myself with so much exultation.

“ MY LORD,

“ Your Lordship’s most humble
 “ and most obedient servant,

“ SAMUEL JOHNSON.”

It

It is said, upon good authority, that Johnson once received from Lord Chesterfield the sum of ten pounds. It were to be wished that the secret had never transpired. It was mean to receive it, and meaner to give it. It may be imagined, that, for Johnson's ferocity, as it has been called, there was some foundation in his finances; and, as his Dictionary was brought to a conclusion, that money was now to flow in upon him. The reverse was the case. For his subsistence, during the progress of the work, he had received at different times the amount of his contract; and, when his receipts were produced to him at a tavern-dinner given by the booksellers, it appeared, that he had been paid a hundred pounds and upwards more than his due. The author of a book, called *Lexiphanes*, written by a Mr. Campbell, a Scotchman, and purser of a man of war, endeavoured to blast his laurels, but in vain. The world applauded, and Johnson never replied. "Abuse," he said, "is often of service: there is nothing so dangerous to an author as silence; his name, like a shuttlecock, must be beat backward and forward, or it falls to the ground." *Lexiphanes* professed

fessed to be an imitation of the pleasant manner of Lucian; but humour was not the talent of the writer of *Lexiphanes*. As Dryden says, “He had too much horse-play in his raillery.”

It was in the summer 1754, that the present writer became acquainted with Dr. Johnson. The cause of his first visit is related by Mrs. Piozzi nearly in the following manner. “Mr. Murphy being engaged in a periodical paper, the *Gray’s-Inn Journal*, was at a friend’s house in the country, and, not being disposed to lose pleasure for business, wished to content his bookseller by some unstudied essay. He therefore took up a French *Journal Littéraire*, and, translating something he liked, sent it away to town. Time, however, discovered that he translated from the French a *Rambler*, which had been taken from the English without acknowledgement. Upon this discovery, Mr. Murphy thought it right to make his excuses to Dr. Johnson. He went next day, and found him covered with soot, like a chimney-sweeper, in a little room, as if he had been acting Lungs in the Alchymist, *making æther*. This being told by Mr. Murphy in company, ‘Come, come,’

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“said

“said Dr. Johnson, ‘the story is black
 “enough; but it was a happy day that brought
 “you first to my house’.” After this first visit,
 the author of this narrative by degrees grew
 intimate with Dr. Johnson. The first striking
 sentence, that he heard from him, was in a
 few days after the publication of Lord Boling-
 broke’s posthumous works. Mr. Garrick asked
 him, “If he had seen them?” “Yes, I have
 “seen them.” “What do you think of
 “them?” “Think of them!” He made a
 long pause, and then replied: “Think of
 “them! A scoundrel and a coward! A scoun-
 “drel, who spent his life in charging a gun
 “against Christianity; and a coward, who
 “was afraid of hearing the report of his own
 “gun; but left half a crown to a hungry
 “Scotchman to draw the trigger after his
 “death.” His mind, at this time strained
 and over-laboured by constant exertion, called
 for an interval of repose and indolence. But
 indolence was the time of danger: it was then
 that his spirits, not employed abroad, turned
 with inward hostility against himself. His
 reflections on his own life and conduct were
 always severe; and, wishing to be immaculate,
 he

he destroyed his own peace by unnecessary scruples. He tells us, that, when he surveyed his past life, he discovered nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of mind, very near to madness. His life, he says, from his earliest youth, was wasted in a morning bed; and his reigning sin was a general sluggishness, to which he was always inclined, and, in part of his life, almost compelled, by morbid melancholy and weariness of mind. This was his constitutional malady, derived, perhaps, from his father, who was, at times, overcast with a gloom that bordered on insanity. When to this it is added, that Johnson, about the age of twenty, drew up a description of his infirmities for Dr. Swinfen, at that time an eminent physician in Staffordshire; and received an answer to his letter, importing, that the symptoms indicated a future privation of reason; who can wonder that he was troubled with melancholy and dejection of spirit? An apprehension of the worst calamity that can befall human nature hung over him all the rest of his life, like the sword of the tyrant suspended over his guest. In his sixtieth year he had a mind to write the history of his melancholy; but he desisted, not know-

ing whether it would not too much disturb him. In a Latin poem, however, to which he has prefixed as a title, ΕΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ, he has left a picture of himself, drawn with as much truth, and as firm a hand, as can be seen in the portraits of Hogarth or Sir Joshua Reynolds. The learned reader will find the original poem in this volume, p. 178; and it is hoped, that a translation, or rather imitation, of so curious a piece will not be improper in this place.

K N O W Y O U R S E L F.

(AFTER REVISING AND ENLARGING THE ENGLISH
LEXICON, OR DICTIONARY.)

When Scaliger, whole years of labour past,
Beheld his Lexicon complete at last,
And weary of his task, with wond'ring eyes,
Saw from words pil'd on words a fabric rise,
He curs'd the industry, inertly strong,
In creeping toil that could persist so long,
And if, enrag'd he cried, Heav'n meant to shed
Its keenest vengeance on the guilty head,
The drudgery of words the damn'd would know,
Doom'd to write Lexicons in endless woe*.

* See Scaliger's Epigram on this subject, communicated without doubt by Dr. Johnson, Gent. Mag. 1748, p. 8.

Yes,

Yes, you had cause, great Genius! to repent;
 "You lost good days, that might be better spent;"
 You well might grudge the hours of ling'ring pain,
 And view your learned labours with disdain.
 To you were giv'n the large expanded mind,
 The flame of genius, and the taste refin'd.
 'Twas yours on eagle wings aloft to soar,
 And amidst rolling worlds the Great First Cause
 explore!

To fix the æras of recorded time,
 And live in ev'ry age and ev'ry clime;
 Record the Chiefs, who propt their Country's cause;
 Who founded Empires, and establish'd Laws;
 To learn what'er the Sage with virtue fraught,
 What'er the Muse of moral wisdom taught.
 These were your quarry; these to you were known;
 And the world's ample volume was your own.

Yet warn'd by me, ye pigmy Wits, beware,
 Nor with immortal Scaliger compare.
 For me, though his example strike my view,
 Oh! not for me his footsteps to pursue.
 Whether first Nature, unpropitious, cold,
 This clay compounded in a ruder mould;
 Or the slow current, loit'ring at my heart,
 No gleam of wit or fancy can impart;
 What'er the cause, from me no numbers flow,
 No visions warm me, and no raptures glow.

A mind like Scaliger's, superior still,
 No grief could conquer, no misfortune chill.
 Though for the maze of words his native skies
 He seem'd to quit, 'twas but again to rise ;
 To mount once more to the bright source of day,
 And view the wonders of th' ætherial way.
 The love of Fame his gen'rous bosom fir'd ;
 Each Science hail'd him, and each Muse inspir'd.
 For him the Sons of Learning trimm'd the bays,
 And Nations grew harmonious in his praise.

My task perform'd, and all my labours o'er,
 For me what lot has Fortune now in store ?
 The listless will succeeds, that worst disease,
 The rack of indolence, the sluggish ease.
 Care grows on care, and o'er my aching brain
 Black Melancholy pours her morbid train.
 No kind relief, no lenitive at hand,
 I seek at midnight clubs the social Band ;
 But midnight clubs, where wit with noise conspires,
 Where Comus revels, and where wine inspires,
 Delight no more : I seek my lonely bed,
 And call on Sleep to sooth my languid head.
 But Sleep from these sad lids flies far away ;
 I mourn all night, and dread the coming day.
 Exhausted, tir'd, I throw my eyes around,
 To find some vacant spot on classic ground ;
 And soon, vain hope ! I form a grand design ;
 Languor succeeds, and all my pow'rs decline.

If

If Science open not her richest vein,
Without materials all our toil is vain.
A form to ruggid stone when Phidias gives,
Beneath his touch a new creation lives.
Remove his marble, and his genius dies;
With Nature then no breathing statue vies.

Whate'er I plan, I feel my pow'rs confin'd
By Fortune's frown and penury of mind.
I boast no knowledge glean'd with toil and strife,
That bright reward of a well-acted life.
I view myself, while Reason's feeble light
Shoots a pale glimmer through the gloom of night,
While passions, error, phantoms of the brain,
And vain opinions, fill the dark domain;
A dreary void, where fears with grief combin'd
Waste all within, and desolate the mind.

What then remains? Must I in slow decline
To mute inglorious ease old age resign?
Or, bold ambition kindling in my breast,
Attempt some arduous task? Or, were it best
Brooding o'er Lexicons to pass the day,
And in that labour drudge my life away?

Such is the picture for which Dr. Johnson
sat to himself. He gives the prominent fea-
tures of his character; his lassitude, his mor-

bid melancholy, his love of fame, his dejection, his tavern-parties, and his wandering reveries, *Vacua mala samnia mentis*, about which so much has been written; all are painted in miniature, but in vivid colours, by his own hand. His idea of writing more Dictionaries was not merely said in verse. Mr. Hamilton, who was at that time an eminent printer, and well acquainted with Dr. Johnson, remembers that he engaged in a Commercial Dictionary, and, as appears by the receipts in his possession, was paid his price for several sheets; but he soon relinquished the undertaking. It is probable, that he found himself not sufficiently versed in that branch of knowledge.

He was again reduced to the expedient of short compositions for the supply of the day. The writer of this narrative has now before him a letter in Dr. Johnson's hand-writing, which shows the distress and melancholy situation of the man, who had written the Rambler, and finished the great work of his Dictionary. The letter is directed to Mr. Richardson (the author of *Clarissa*), and is as follows:

“ S I R,

“ SIR,

“ I am obliged to entreat your assistance. I
 “ am now under an arrest for five pounds
 “ eighteen shillings. Mr. Strahan, from whom
 “ I should have received the necessary help in
 “ this case, is not at home; and I am afraid
 “ of not finding Mr. Millar. If you will be
 “ so good as to send me this sum, I will very
 “ gratefully repay you, and add it to all for-
 “ mer obligations. I am, Sir,

“ Your most obedient

“ and most humble servant,

“ SAMUEL JOHNSON.

“ Gough-square, 16 March.”

In the margin of this letter there is a memorandum in these words: “ March 16, 1756. Sent six guineas. Witness, Wm. Richardson.” For the honour of an admired writer it is to be regretted, that we do not find a more liberal entry. To his friend in distress he sent eight shillings more than was wanted. Had an incident of this kind occurred in one of his Romances, Richardson would have known how to grace his hero; but in fictitious scenes generosity costs the writer nothing.

About this time Johnson contributed several papers to a periodical Miscellany, called *The VISITOR*, from motives which are highly honourable to him, a compassionate regard for the late Mr. Christopher Smart. The criticism on Pope's Epitaphs appeared in that work. In a short time after, he became a reviewer in the *Literary Magazine*, under the auspices of the late Mr. Newbery, a man of a projecting head, good taste, and great industry. This employment engrossed but little of Johnson's time. He resigned himself to indolence, took no exercise, rose about two, and then received the visits of his friends. Authors, long since forgotten, waited on him as their oracle, and he gave responses in the chair of criticism. He listened to the complaints, the schemes, and the hopes and fears, of a crowd of inferior writers, "who," he said, in the words of Roger Ascham, "*lived, men knew not how, and died obscure, men marked not when.*" He believed, that he could give a better history of Grub-street than any man living. His house was filled with a succession of visitors till four or five in the evening. During the whole time he presided at his tea-table.

table. Tea was his favourite beverage; and when the late Jonas Hanway pronounced his anathema against the use of tea, Johnson rose in defence of his habitual practice, declaring himself “in that article a hardened sinner, “who had for years diluted his meals with “the infusion of that fascinating plant; whose “tea-kettle had no time to cool; who with “tea solaced the midnight hour, and with tea “welcomed the morning.”

The proposal for a new edition of Shakspeare, which had formerly miscarried, was resumed in the year 1756. The book-fellers readily agreed to his terms, and subscription-tickets were issued out. For undertaking this work, money, he confessed, was the inciting motive. His friends exerted themselves to promote his interest; and, in the mean time, he engaged in a new periodical production called *THE IDLER*. The first number appeared on Saturday, April 14, 1758; and the last, April 5, 1760. The profits of this work, and the subscriptions for the new edition of Shakspeare, were the means by which he supported himself for four or five years.

years. In 1759 was published *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. His translation of Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* seems to have pointed out that country for the scene of action; and *Rassila Cbristos*, the General of *Sultan Segued*, mentioned in that work, most probably suggested the name of the prince. The author wanted to set out on a journey to Lichfield, in order to pay the last offices of filial piety to his mother, who, at the age of ninety, was then near her dissolution; but money was necessary. Mr. Johnston, a bookseller, who has long since left off business, gave one hundred pounds for the copy. With this supply Johnson set out for Lichfield; but did not arrive in time to close the eyes of a parent whom he loved. He attended the funeral, which, as appears among his memorandums, was on the 23d of January 1759.

Johnson now found it necessary to retrench his expences. He gave up his house in Gough-square. Mr. Williams went into lodgings. He retired to Gray's-Inn, and soon removed to chambers in the Inner Temple-lane, where he lived in poverty, total idleness, and the pride of literature.

literature. *Magni stat nominis umbrá.* Mr. Fitzherbert (the father of Lord St. Helen's, the present minister at Madrid) a man distinguished through life for his benevolence and other amiable qualities, used to say, that he paid a morning visit to Johnson, intending from his chambers to send a letter into the city; but, to his great surprise, he found an author by profession without pen, ink, or paper. The present Bishop of Salisbury was also among those who endeavoured, by constant attention, to sooth the cares of a mind which he knew to be afflicted with gloomy apprehensions. At one of the parties made at his house, Boscovich, the Jesuit, who had then lately introduced the Newtonian philosophy at Rome, and, after publishing an elegant Latin poem on the subject, was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, was one of the company invited to meet Dr. Johnson. The conversation at first was mostly in French. Johnson, though thoroughly versed in that language, and a professed admirer of Boileau and La Bruyere, did not understand its pronunciation, nor could he speak it himself with propriety. For the rest of the evening the talk was in Latin. Boscovich had a
 ready

ready current flow of that flimsy phraseology with which a priest may travel through Italy, Spain, and Germany. Johnson scorned what he called colloquial barbarisms. It was his pride to speak his best. He went on, after a little practice, with as much facility as if it was his native tongue. One sentence this writer well remembers. Observing that Fontinelle at first opposed the Newtonian philosophy, and embraced it afterwards, his words were : *Fontinellus, ni fallor, in extremâ senectute, fuit transfuga ad castra Newtoniana.*

We have now traveled through that part of Dr. Johnson's life which was a perpetual struggle with difficulties. Halcyon days are now to open upon him. In the month of May, 1762, his Majesty, to reward literary merit, signified his pleasure to grant to Johnson a pension of three hundred pounds a year. The Earl of Bute was minister. Lord Loughborough, who, perhaps, was originally a mover in the business, had authority to mention it. He was well acquainted with Johnson ; but, having heard much of his independent spirit, and of the downfall of Osborne the bookseller, he did not

not know but his benevolence might be rewarded with a folio on his head. He desired the author of these memoirs to undertake the task. This writer thought the opportunity of doing so much good the most happy incident in his life. He went, without delay, to the chambers in the Inner Temple-lane, which, in fact, were the abode of wretchedness. By slow and studied approaches the message was disclosed. Johnson made a long pause: he asked if it was seriously intended? He fell into a profound meditation, and his own definition of a pensioner occurred to him. He was told, "That he, at least, did not come within the definition." He desired to meet next day, and dine at the Mitre Tavern. At that meeting he gave up all his scruples. On the following day Lord Loughborough conducted him to the Earl of Bute. The conversation that passed was in the evening related to this writer by Dr. Johnson. He expressed his sense of his Majesty's bounty, and thought himself the more highly honoured, as the favour was not bestowed on him for having dipped his pen in faction. "No, Sir," said Lord Bute, "it is not offered
" to

“to you for having dipped your pen in faction,
 “nor with a design that you ever should.”
 Sir John Hawkins will have it, that, after this
 interview, Johnson was often pressed to wait on
 Lord Bute, but with a fullen spirit refused to
 comply. However that be, Johnson was ne-
 ver heard to utter a disrespectful word of that
 nobleman. The writer of this essay remem-
 bers a circumstance which may throw some
 light on this subject. The late Dr. Rose, of
 Chiswick, whom Johnson loved and respected,
 contended for the pre-eminence of the Scotch
 writers; and Ferguson’s book on Civil Society,
 then on the eve of publication, he said, would
 give the laurel to North Britain. “Alas!
 “what can he do upon that subject?” said John-
 son: “Aristotle, Polybius, Grotius, Puffen-
 “dorf, and Burlemaqui, have reaped in that
 “field before him.” “He will treat it,” said
 Dr. Rose, “in a new manner.” “A new
 “manner! Buckinger had no hands, and he
 “wrote his name with his toes at Charing-
 “cross, for half a crown apiece; that was a
 “new manner of writing!” Dr. Rose re-
 plied, “If that will not satisfy you, I will
 “name a writer, whom you must allow to be
 “the

“ the best in the kingdom.” “ Who is that?”
 “ The Earl of Bute, when he wrote an order
 “ for your pension.” “ There, Sir,” said John-
 son, “ you have me in the toil : to Lord Bute
 “ I must allow whatever praise you may claim
 “ for him.” Ingratitude was no part of John-
 son’s character.

Being now in the possession of a regular in-
 come, Johnson left his chambers in the Tem-
 ple, and once more became master of a house
 in Johnson’s court, Fleet-street. Dr. Levet,
 his friend and physician in ordinary, paid his
 daily visits with assiduity ; made tea all the
 morning, talked what he had to say, and did
 not expect an answer. Mrs. Williams had her
 apartment in the house, and entertained her
 benefactor with more enlarged conversation.
 Chemistry was part of Johnson’s amusement.
 For this love of experimental philosophy Sir
 John Hawkins thinks an apology necessary.
 He tells us, with great gravity, that curiosity
 was the only object in view ; not an intention
 to grow suddenly rich by the philosopher’s
 stone, or the transmutation of metals. To en-
 large his circle, Johnson once more had re-
 course

course to a literary club. This was at the Turk's Head, in Gerrard-street, Soho, on every Tuesday evening through the year. The members were, besides himself, the right honourable Edmund Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Nugent, Dr. Goldsmith, the late Mr. Topham Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Mr. Chamier, Sir John Hawkins, and some others. Johnson's affection for Sir Joshua was founded on a long acquaintance, and a thorough knowledge of the virtues and amiable qualities of that excellent artist. He delighted in the conversation of Mr. Burke. He met him for the first time at Mr. Garrick's several years ago. On the next day he said, "I suppose, Murphy, you are proud of your countryman. CUM TALIS SIT UTINAM NOSTER ESSET!" From that time his constant observation was, "That a man of sense could not meet Mr. Burke by accident, under a gateway to avoid a shower, without being convinced that he was the first man in England." Johnson felt not only kindness, but zeal and ardour for his friends. He did every thing in his power to advance the reputation of Dr. Goldsmith. He loved him, though he
knew

knew his failings, and particularly the leaven of envy which corroded the mind of that elegant writer, and made him impatient, without disguise, of the praises bestowed on any person whatever. Of this infirmity, which marked Goldsmith's character, Johnson gave a remarkable instance. It happened that he went with Sir Joshua Reynolds and Goldsmith to see the Fantoccini, which were exhibited some years ago in or near the Haymarket. They admired the curious mechanism by which the puppets were made to walk the stage, draw a chair to the table, sit down, write a letter, and perform a variety of other actions with such dexterity, that *though Nature's journeymen made the men, they imitated humanity* to the astonishment of the spectator. The entertainment being over, the three friends retired to a tavern. Johnson and Sir Joshua talked with pleasure of what they had seen; and says Johnson, in a tone of admiration, "How the little fellow brandished his spontoon!" "There is nothing in it," replied Goldsmith, starting up with impatience; "give me a spontoon; I can do it as well myself."

Enjoying his amusements at his weekly club, and happy in a state of independence, Johnson gained in the year 1765 another resource, which contributed more than any thing else to exempt him from the solitudes of life. He was introduced to the late Mr. Thrale and his family. Mrs. Piozzi has related the fact, and it is therefore needless to repeat it in this place. The author of this narrative looks back to the share he had in that business with self-congratulation, since he knows the tenderness which from that time soothed Johnson's cares at Streatham, and prolonged a valuable life. The subscribers to Shakspeare began to despair of ever seeing the promised edition. To acquit himself of this obligation, he went to work unwillingly, but proceeded with vigour. In the month of October, 1765, Shakspeare was published; and, in a short time after, the University of Dublin sent over a diploma, in honourable terms, creating him a Doctor of Laws. Oxford in eight or ten years afterwards followed the example; and till then Johnson never assumed the title of Doctor. In 1766, his constitution seemed to be in a rapid decline,
and

and that morbid melancholy, which often clouded his understanding, came upon him with a deeper gloom than ever. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale paid him a visit in this situation, and found him on his knees, with Dr. Delap, the rector of Lewes, in Suffex, beseeching God to continue to him the use of his understanding. Mr. Thrale took him to his house at Streatham; and Johnson from that time became a constant resident in the family. He went occasionally to the club in Gerard-street; but his head quarters were fixed at Streatham. An apartment was fitted up for him, and the library was greatly enlarged. Parties were constantly invited from town; and Johnson was every day at an elegant table, with select and polished company. Whatever could be devised by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale to promote the happiness, and establish the health, of their guest, was studiously performed from that time to the end of Mr. Thrale's life. Johnson accompanied the family in all their summer excursions, to Brighthelmstone, to Wales, and to Paris. It is but justice to Mr. Thrale to say, that a more ingenuous frame of mind no man possessed. His education at Oxford gave him the

habits of a gentleman ; his amiable temper recommended his conversation ; and the goodness of his heart made him a sincere friend. That he was the patron of Johnson is an honour to his memory.

In petty disputes with contemporary writers, or the wits of the age, Johnson was seldom entangled. A single incident of that kind may not be unworthy of notice, since it happened with a man of great celebrity in his time. A number of friends dined with Garrick on a Christmas-day. Foote was then in Ireland. It was said at table, that the modern Aristophanes (so Foote was called) had been horse-whipped by a Dublin apothecary, for mimicking him on the stage. "I wonder," said Garrick, "that any man should shew so much resentment to Foote; he has a patent for such liberties; nobody ever thought it *worth his while* to quarrel with him in London." "I am glad," said Johnson, "to find that the *man is rising in the world.*" The expression was afterwards reported to Foote; who, in return, gave out, that he would produce

duce the *Caliban of literature* on the stage. Being informed of this design, Johnson sent word to Foote, "That, the theatre being intended for the reformation of vice, he would step from the boxes on the stage, and correct him before the audience." Foote knew the intrepidity of his antagonist, and abandoned the design. No ill-will ensued. Johnson used to say, "That, for broad-faced mirth, Foote had not his equal."

Dr. Johnson's fame excited the curiosity of the King. His Majesty expressed a desire to see a man of whom extraordinary things were said. Accordingly, the librarian at Buckinghamhouse invited Johnson to see that elegant collection of books, at the same time giving a hint of what was intended. His Majesty entered the room; and, among other things, asked the author, "If he meant to give the world any more of his compositions?" Johnson answered, "That he thought he had written enough." "And I should think so too," replied his Majesty, "if you had not written so well."

Though Johnson thought he had written enough, his genius, even in spite of bodily sluggishness, could not lie still. In 1770, we find him entering the lists as a political writer. The flame of discord that blazed throughout the nation on the expulsion of Mr. Wilkes, and the final determination of the House of Commons, that Mr. Luttrell was duly elected by 206 votes against 1143, spread a general spirit of discontent. To allay the tumult, Dr. Johnson published *The False Alarm*. Mrs. Piozzi informs us, "That this pamphlet was written at her house, between eight o'clock on Wednesday night and twelve on Thursday night." This celerity has appeared wonderful to many, and some have doubted the truth. It may, however, be placed within the bounds of probability. Johnson has observed that there are different methods of composition. Virgil was used to pour out a great number of verses in the morning, and pass the day in retrenching the exuberances, and correcting inaccuracies; and it was Pope's custom to write his first thoughts in his first words, and gradually to amplify, decorate, rectify, and refine,

refine, them. Others employ at once memory and invention, and, with little intermediate use of the pen, form and polish large masses by continued meditation, and write their productions only when, in their opinion, they have completed them. This last was Johnson's method. He never took his pen in hand till he had well weighed his subject, and grasped in his mind the sentiments, the train of argument, and the arrangement, of the whole. As he often thought aloud, he had, perhaps, talked it over to himself. This may account for that rapidity with which, in general, he dispatched his sheets to the press, without being at the trouble of a fair copy. Whatever may be the logic or eloquence of *The False Alarm*, the House of Commons have since erased the resolution from the Journals. But whether they have not left materials for a future controversy may be made a question.

In 1771, he published another tract, on the subject of FALKLAND ISLANDS. The design was to shew the impropriety of going to war with Spain for an island thrown aside from human use, stormy in winter, and barren in

summer. For this work it is apparent that materials were furnished by direction of the minister.

At the approach of the general election in 1774, he wrote a short discourse, called **THE PATRIOT**, not with any visible application to Mr. Wilkes, but to teach the people to reject the leaders of opposition, who called themselves patriots. In 1775, he undertook a pamphlet of more importance, namely, *Taxation no Tyranny*, in answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress. The scope of the argument was, 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 neither peers in one house nor representatives in the other. He was of opinion, that this country was strong enough to enforce obedience. "When an Englishman," he says, "is told that the Americans shoot up like the hydra, he naturally considers how the hydra was destroyed." The event has shewn how much he and the minister of that day were mistaken.

The

The Account of the Tour to the Western Islands of Scotland, which was undertaken in the autumn of 1773, in company with Mr. Boswell, was not published till some time in the year 1775. This book has been variously received; by some extolled for the elegance of the narrative, and the depth of observation on life and manners; by others as much condemned, as a work of avowed hostility to the Scotch nation. The praise was, beyond all question, fairly deserved; and the censure, on due examination, will appear hasty and ill-founded. That Johnson entertained some prejudices against the Scotch must not be dissembled. It is true, as Mr. Boswell says, "*that he thought their success in England exceeded their proportion of real merit; and he could not but see in them that nationality which no liberal-minded Scotsman will deny.*" The author of these memoirs well remembers, that Johnson one day asked him, "Have you observed the difference between your own country impudence and Scotch impudence?" The answer being in the negative: "Then I will tell you," said Johnson. "The impudence of
 " an

“ an Irishman is the impudence of a fly, that
 “ buzzes about you, and you put it away; but
 “ it returns again, and flutters and teazes you.
 “ The impudence of a Scotsman is the impu-
 “ dence of a leech, that fixes and sucks your
 “ blood.” Upon another occasion, this writer
 went with him into the shop of Davies, the
 bookseller, in Russell-street, Covent-garden. Da-
 vies came running to him almost out of breath
 with joy: “ The Scots gentleman is come,
 “ Sir; his principal wish is to see you; he is
 “ now in the back-parlour.” “ Well, well,
 “ I’ll see the gentleman,” said Johnson. He
 walked towards the room. Mr. Boswell was
 the person. This writer followed with no
 small curiosity. “ I find,” said Mr. Boswell,
 “ that I am come to London at a bad time,
 “ when great popular prejudice has gone forth
 “ against us North Britons; but, when I am
 “ talking to you, I am talking to a large and
 “ liberal mind, and you know that I cannot
 “ *help coming from Scotland.*” “ Sir,” said
 Johnson, “ no more can the rest of your coun-
 “ trymen.”

He

He had other reasons that helped to alienate him from the natives of Scotland. Being a cordial well-wisher to the constitution in Church and State, he did not think that Calvin and John Knox were proper founders of a national religion. He made, however, a wide distinction between the Dissenters of Scotland and the Separatists of England. To the former he imputed no disaffection, no want of loyalty. Their soldiers and their officers had shed their blood with zeal and courage in the service of Great Britain; and the people, he used to say, were content with their own established modes of worship, without wishing, in the present age, to give any disturbance to the Church of England. This he was at all times ready to admit; and therefore declared, that, whenever he found a Scotchman to whom an Englishman was as a Scotchman, that Scotchman should be as an Englishman to him. In this, surely, there was no rancour, no malevolence. The Dissenters on this side the Tweed appeared to him in a different light. Their religion, he frequently said, was too worldly, too political, too restless and ambitious. The doctrine of

cashiering

cashiering kings, and erecting on the ruins of the constitution a new form of government, which lately issued from their pulpits, he always thought was, under a calm disguise, the principle that lay lurking in their hearts. He knew that a wild democracy had overturned King, Lords, and Commons; and that a set of Republican Fanatics, who would not bow at the name of Jesus, had taken possession of all the livings and all the parishes in the kingdom. That those scenes of horror might never be renewed was the ardent wish of Dr. Johnson; and, though he apprehended no danger from Scotland, it is probable that his dislike of Calvinism mingled sometimes with his reflections on the natives of that country. The association of ideas could not be easily broken; but it is well known that he loved and respected many gentlemen from that part of the island. Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland, and Dr. Beattie's Essays, were subjects of his constant praise. Mr. Boswell, Dr. Rose of Chiswick, Andrew Millar, Mr. Hamilton the printer, and the late Mr. Strahan, were among his most intimate friends. Many others might be added to the list. He scorned to enter Scotland as a spy;

spy; though Hawkins, his biographer, and the professing defender of his fame, allowed himself leave to represent him in that ignoble character. He went into Scotland to survey men and manners. Antiquities, fossils, and minerals, were not within his province. He did not visit that country to settle the station of Roman camps, or the spot where Galgacus fought the last battle for public liberty. The people, their customs, and the progress of literature, were his objects. The civilities which he received in the course of his tour have been repaid with grateful acknowledgment, and, generally, with great elegance of expression. His crime is, that he found the country bare of trees, and he has stated the fact. This, Mr. Boswell, in his Tour to the Hebrides, has told us, was resented by his countrymen with anger inflamed to rancour; but he admits that there are few trees on the east side of Scotland. Mr. Pennant, in his Tour, says, that, in some parts of the eastern side of the country, he saw several large plantations of pine planted by gentlemen near their seats; and in this respect such a laudable spirit prevails, that, *in another half-century*, it never shall

shall be said, “*To spy the nakedness of the land
“ are you come.*” Johnson could not wait for
that half-century, and therefore mentioned
things as he found them. If in any thing he
has been mistaken, he has made a fair apology
in the last paragraph of his book, avowing
with candour, “That he may have been sur-
“ prized by modes of life, and appearances of
“ nature, that are familiar to men of wider
“ survey, and more varied conversation. No-
“ velty and ignorance must always be recipro-
“ cal; and he is conscious that his thoughts
“ on national manners are the thoughts of one
“ who has seen but little.”

The Poems of Ossian made a part of Johnson's enquiry during his residence in Scotland and the Hebrides. On his return to England, November, 1773, a storm seemed to be gathering over his head; but the cloud never burst, and the thunder never fell. Ossian, it is well known, was presented to the publick as a translation from the *Earse*: but that this was a fraud, Johnson declared without hesitation. “The *Earse*,” he says, “was always oral
“ only, and never a written language. The
“ Welch

“ Welch and the Irish were more cultivated.
 “ In *Earse* there was not in the world a single
 “ manuscript a hundred years old. Martin,
 “ who in the last century published an Ac-
 “ count of the Western Islands, mentions
 “ *Irish*, but never *Earse* manuscripts, to be
 “ found in the islands in his time. The bards
 “ could not read; if they could, they might
 “ probably have written. But the bard was a
 “ barbarian among barbarians, and, knowing
 “ nothing himself, lived with others that knew
 “ no more. If there is a manuscript from
 “ which the translation was made, in what
 “ age was it written, and where is it? If it
 “ was collected from oral recitation, it could
 “ only be in detached parts and scattered frag-
 “ ments: the whole is too long to be remem-
 “ bered.” Who put it together in its present
 form? For these, and such like reasons,
 “ Johnson calls the whole an imposture. He adds,
 “ The editor, or author, never could shew the
 “ original, nor can it be shewn by any other.
 “ To revenge reasonable incredulity, by re-
 “ fusing evidence, is a degree of insolence
 “ with which the world is not yet acquainted;

“and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of
“guilt.” This reasoning carries with it great
weight. It roused the resentment of Mr.
Macpherson. He sent a threatening letter to
the author; and Johnson answered him in the
rough phrase of stern defiance. The two he-
roes frowned at a distance, but never came to
action.

In the year 1777, the misfortunes of Dr.
Dodd excited his compassion. He wrote a
speech for that unhappy man, when called up
to receive judgement of death; besides two pe-
titions, one to the King, and another to the
Queen; and a sermon to be preached by Dodd
to the convicts in Newgate. It may appear
trifling to add, that about the same time he
wrote a prologue to the comedy of *A Word
to the Wife*, written by *Hugh Kelly*. The
play, some years before, had been damned by
a party on the first night. It was revived for
the benefit of the author's widow. Mrs.
Piozzi relates, that when Johnson was rallied
for these exertions, so close to one another, his
answer was, *When they come to me with a dying
Parson*.

Parson, and a dead Stay-maker, what can a man do? We come now to the last of his literary labours. At the request of the Bookfellers he undertook the Lives of the Poets. The first publication was in 1779, and the whole was completed in 1781. In a memorandum of that year he says, some time in March he finished the Lives of the Poets, which he wrote in his usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, yet working with vigour and haste. In another place, he hopes they are written in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety. That the history of so many men, who, in their different degrees, made themselves conspicuous in their time, was not written recently after their deaths, seems to be an omission that does no honour to the Republic of Letters. Their contemporaries in general looked on with calm indifference, and suffered Wit and Genius to vanish out of the world in total silence, unregarded, and unlamented. Was there no friend to pay the tribute of a tear? No just observer of life, to record the virtues of the deceased? Was even Envy silent? It seemed to have been agreed, that, if an author's works survived, the history of the man was to give no

moral lesson to after-ages. If tradition told us that BEN JONSON went to the Devil Tavern; that SHAKSPEARE stole deer, and held the stirrup at playhouse doors; that DRYDEN frequented Button's Coffee-house; curiosity was lulled asleep, and Biography forgot the best part of her function, which is to instruct mankind by examples taken from the school of life. This task remained for Dr. Johnson, when years had rolled away; when the channels of information were, for the most part, choaked up, and little remained besides doubtful anecdote, uncertain tradition, and vague report.

“Nunc situs informis premit et deserta Vetustas.”

The value of Biography has been better understood in other ages, and in other countries. Tacitus informs us, that to record the lives and characters of illustrious men was the practice of the Roman authors, in the early periods of the Republic. In France the example has been followed. *Fontinelle*, *D'Alembert*, and *Monsieur Thomas*, have left models in this kind of composition. They have *embalmed* the dead. But it is true, that they had incitements and advantages,

vantages, even at a distant day, which could not, by any diligence, be obtained by Dr. Johnson. The wits of France had ample materials. They lived in a nation of critics, who had at heart the honour done to their country by their Poets, their Heroes, and their Philosophers. They had, besides, an *Academy of Belles Lettres*, where Genius was cultivated, refined, and encouraged. They had the tracts, the essays, and dissertations, which remain in the memories of the Academy, and they had the speeches of the several members, delivered at their first admission to a seat in that learned Assembly. In those speeches the new Academician did ample justice to the memory of his predecessor; and though his harangue was decorated with the colours of eloquence, and was, for that reason, called panegyric, yet being pronounced before qualified judges, who knew the talents, the conduct, and morals of the deceased, the speaker could not, with propriety, wander into the regions of fiction. The truth was known, before it was adorned. The Academy saw the marble, before the artist polished it. But this country has had no Academy of Literature. The public mind, for cen-

turies, has been engrossed by party and faction; by *the madness of many for the gain of a few*; by civil wars, religious dissentions, trade and commerce, and the arts of accumulating wealth. Amidst such attentions, who can wonder that cold praise has been often the only reward of merit? In this country Doctor Nathaniel Hodges, who, like the good bishop of Marseilles, *drew purer breath* amidst the contagion of the plague in London, and, during the whole time, continued in the city, administering medical assistance, was suffered, as Johnson used to relate, with tears in his eyes, to die for debt in a gaol. In this country, the man who brought the New River to London was ruined by that noble project; and, in this country, Otway died for want on Tower-Hill; Butler, the great author of Hudibras, whose name can only die with the English language, was left to languish in poverty, the particulars of his life almost unknown, and scarce a vestige of him left except his immortal poem. Had there been an Academy of Literature, the lives, at least, of those celebrated persons would have been written for the benefit of posterity. Swift, it seems, had the idea of such an institution, and proposed

posed it to Lord Oxford; but Whig and Tory were more important objects. It is needless to dissemble, that Dr. Johnson, in the Life of Roscommon, talks of the inutility of such a project. "In this country," he says, "an Academy could be expected to do but little. If an academicians place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly." To this it may be sufficient to answer, that the Royal Society has not been dissolved by fullen disgust; and the modern Academy at Somerset-house has already performed much, and promises more. Unanimity is not necessary to such an assembly. On the contrary, by difference of opinion and collision of sentiment, the cause of Literature would thrive and flourish. The true principles of criticism, the secret of fine writing, the investigation of antiquities, and other interesting subjects, might occasion a clash of opinions; but in that contention truth would receive illustration, and the essays of the several members would supply the Memoirs of the Academy.

But, says Dr. Johnson, “suppose the philo-
 “logical decree made and promulgated, what
 “would be its authority? In absolute govern-
 “ment there is sometimes a general reverence
 “paid to all that has the sanction of power,
 “the countenance of greatness. How little
 “this is the state of our country needs not to
 “be told. The edicts of an English academy
 “would probably be read by many, only that
 “they may be sure to disobey them. The pre-
 “sent manners of the nation would deride au-
 “thority, and therefore nothing is left, but that
 “every writer should criticize himself.” This
 surely is not conclusive. It is by the standard of
 the best writers that every man settles for himself
 his plan of legitimate composition; and since
 the authority of superior genius is acknow-
 ledged, that authority, which the individual
 obtains, would not be lessened by an association
 with others of distinguished ability. It may,
 therefore, be inferred, that an Academy of Li-
 terature would be an establishment highly use-
 ful, and an honour to Literature. In such an
 institution profitable places would not be wanted,
Vatis avarus haud facile est animus; and the
 minister, who shall find leisure from party
 and

and faction to carry such a scheme into execution, will, in all probability, be respected by posterity as the Mæcenas of letters.

We now take leave of Dr. Johnson as an author. Four volumes of his lives of the Poets were published in 1778, and the work was completed in 1781. Should Biography fall again into disuse, there will not always be a Johnson to look back through a century, and give a body of critical and moral instruction. In April 1781, he lost his friend Mr. Thrale. His own words, in his Diary, will best tell that melancholy event. “ On Wednesday the 11th
 “ of April, was buried my dear friend Mr.
 “ Thrale, who died on Wednesday the 4th,
 “ and with him were buried many of my hopes
 “ and pleasures. About five, I think, on Wed-
 “ nesday morning he expired. I felt almost
 “ the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for
 “ the last time upon the face, that, for fifteen
 “ years before, had never been turned upon me
 “ but with respect and benignity. Farewel:
 “ may God, that delighteth in mercy, have
 “ *had* mercy on thee. I had constantly prayed
 “ for him before his death. The decease of him,

“ from whose friendship I had obtained many
 “ opportunities of amusement, and to whom I
 “ turned my thoughts as to a refuge from mis-
 “ fortunes, has left me heavy. But my busi-
 “ ness is with myself.” From the close of his
 last work, the malady, that persecuted him
 through life, came upon him with alarming
 severity, and his constitution declined apace.
 In 1782, his old friend *Levet* expired without
 warning, and without a groan. Events like
 these reminded Johnson of his own mortality.
 He continued his visits to Mrs. Thrale at
 Streatham, to the 7th day of October, 1782,
 when, having first composed a prayer for the
 happiness of a family, with whom he had for
 many years enjoyed the pleasures and comforts
 of life, he removed to his own house in town.
 He says he was up early in the morning, and
 read fortuitously in the Gospel, *which was his*
parting use of the library. The merit of the fa-
 mily is manifested by the sense he had of it,
 and we see his heart overflowing with grati-
 tude. He leaves the place with regret, and
casts a lingering look behind.

The

The few remaining occurrences may be soon dispatched. In the month of June, 1783, Johnson had a paralytic stroke, which affected his speech only. He wrote to Dr. Taylor of Westminster; and to his friend Mr. Allen, the printer, who lived at the next door. Dr. Brocklesby arrived in a short time; and by his care, and that of Dr. Heberden, Johnson soon recovered. During his illness the writer of this narrative visited him, and found him reading Dr. Watson's Chemistry. Articulating with difficulty, he said, "From this book, he who knows
 " nothing may learn a great deal; and he
 " who knows will be pleased to find his know-
 " ledge recalled to his mind in a manner highly
 " pleasing." In the month of August he set out for Lichfield, on a visit to Mrs. Lucy Porter, the daughter of his wife by her first husband; and in his way back paid his respects to Dr. Adams at Oxford. Mrs. Williams died at his house in Bolt-court in the month of September, during his absence. This was another shock to a mind like his, ever agitated by the thoughts of futurity. The contemplation of his now-approaching end was constantly before his eyes; and the prospect of death, he declared,
 was

was terrible. For many years, when he was not disposed to enter into the conversation going forward, whoever sat near his chair, might hear him repeating, from Shakspeare,

Ay, but to die and go we know not where ;
 To lie in cold obstruction and to rot ;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods.—

And from Milton,

Who would lose,
 For fear of pain, this intellectual being !

By the death of Mr. Williams he was left in a state of destitution, with nobody but Frank, his black servant, to sooth his anxious moments. In November, 1783, he was swelled from head to foot with a dropsy. Dr. Brocklesby, with that benevolence with which he always assists his friends, paid his visits with assiduity. The medicines prescribed were so efficacious, that, in a few days, Johnson, while he was offering up his prayers, was suddenly obliged to rise, and, in the course of the day, discharged twenty pints of water.

Johnson,

Johnson, being eased of his dropsy, began to entertain hopes that the vigour of his constitution was not entirely broken. For the sake of conversing with his friends, he established a conversation-club, to meet on every Wednesday evening; and, to serve a man whom he had known in Mr. Thrale's household for many years, the place was fixed at his house in Essex-street near the Temple. To answer the malignant remarks of Sir John Hawkins, on this subject, were a wretched waste of time. Professing to be Johnson's friend, that biographer has raised more objections to his character than all the enemies to that excellent man. Sir John had a root of bitterness that *put rancours in the vessel of his peace*. Fielding, he says, was the inventor of a cant-phrase, *Goodness of heart, which means little more than the virtue of a horse or a dog*. He should have known that kind affections are the essence of virtue; they are the will of God implanted in our nature, to aid and strengthen moral obligation; they incite to action; a sense of benevolence is no less necessary than a sense of duty. Good affections are an ornament not only to an author but to his writings. He who shews
him-

himself upon a cold scent for opportunities to bark and snarl throughout a volume of six hundred pages, may, if he will, pretend to moralize; but GOODNESS OF HEART, or, to use that politer phrase, the *virtue of a horse or a dog*, would redound more to his honour. But Sir John is no more: our business is with Johnson. The members of his club were respectable for their rank, their talents, and their literature. They attended with punctuality till about Midsummer, 1784, when, with some appearance of health, Johnson went into Derbyshire, and thence to Lichfield. While he was in that part of the world, his friends in town were labouring for his benefit. The air of a more southern climate they thought might prolong a valuable life. But a pension of £.300 a year was a slender fund for a traveling valetudinarian, and it was not then known that he had saved a moderate sum of money. Mr. Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds undertook to solicit the patronage of the Chancellor. With Lord Thurlow, while he was at the bar, Johnson was well acquainted. He was often heard to say, "Thurlow is a man of such
 "vigour of mind, that I never knew I was to
 "meet

“ meet him but—I was going to say, I was
 “ afraid; but that would not be true; for, I
 “ never was afraid of any man; but I never
 “ knew that I was to meet Thurlow, but I
 “ knew I had something to encounter.” The
 Chancellor undertook to recommend Johnson’s
 case, but without success. To protract if pos-
 sible the days of a man, whom he respected,
 he offered to advance the sum of five hundred
 pounds. Being informed of this at Lichfield,
 Johnson wrote the following letter.

“ My Lord,

“ After a long and not inattentive observa-
 “ tion of mankind, the generosity of your
 “ Lordship’s offer raises in me not less wonder
 “ than gratitude. Bounty, so liberally bestow-
 “ ed, I should gladly receive if my condition
 “ made it necessary; for, to such a mind who
 “ would not be proud to own his obligations?
 “ But it has pleased God to restore me to so
 “ great a measure of health, that, if I should
 “ now appropriate so much of a fortune destined
 “ to do good, I could not escape from myself
 “ the charge of advancing a false claim. My
 “ journey to the continent, though I once
 “ thought

“ thought it necessary, was never much en-
 “ couraged by my physicians ; and I was very
 “ desirous that your Lordship should be told it
 “ by Sir Joshua Reynolds as an event very un-
 “ certain ; for, if I grew much better, I should
 “ not be willing, if much worse, I should not
 “ be able, to migrate. Your Lordship was first
 “ solicited without my knowledge ; but, when
 “ I was told that you were pleased to honour
 “ me with your patronage, I did not expect to
 “ hear of a refusal ; yet, as I have had no long
 “ time to brood hopes, and have not rioted in
 “ imaginary opulence, this cold reception has
 “ been scarce a disappointment ; and from your
 “ Lordship’s kindness I have received a benefit
 “ which only men like you are able to bestow.
 “ I shall now live *mibi carior*, with a higher
 “ opinion of my own merit.

“ I am, my Lord,

“ your Lordship’s most obliged,

“ most grateful,

“ and most humble, servant,

“ SAMUEL JOHNSON.”

“ September, 1784.”

We

We have in this instance the exertion of two congenial minds; one, with a generous impulse relieving merit in distress; and the other, by gratitude and dignity of sentiment, rising to an equal elevation.

It seems, however, that greatness of mind is not confined to greatness of rank. Dr. Brocklesby was not content to assist with his medical art; he resolved to *minister* to his patient's *mind*, and *pluck from his memory the sorrow* which the late refusal from a high quarter might occasion. To enable him to visit the south of France in pursuit of health, he offered from his own funds an annuity of one hundred pounds, payable quarterly. This was a *sweet oblivious antidote*; but it was not accepted, for the reasons assigned to the Chancellor. The proposal, however, will do honour to Dr. Brocklesby, as long as liberal sentiment shall be ranked among the social virtues.

In the month of October, 1784, we find Dr. Johnson corresponding with Mr. Nichols, the intelligent compiler of the Gentleman's Magazine, and, in the languor of sickness, still
 desirous

desirous to contribute all in his power to the advancement of science and useful knowledge, He says, in a letter to that gentleman, dated Lichfield, October 20, that he should be glad to give so skilful a lover of Antiquities any information. He adds, " At Ashburne, where I
 " had very little company, I had the luck to
 " borrow Mr. Bowyer's Life, a book so full of
 " contemporary history, that a literary man
 " must find some of his old friends. I thought
 " that I could now and then have told you
 " some hints worth your notice: We perhaps
 " may talk a life over. I hope we shall be
 " much together. You must now be to me
 " what you were before, and what dear Mr.
 " Allen was besides. He was taken unexpect-
 " edly away, but I think he was a very good
 " man. I have made very little progress in re-
 " covery. I am very weak, and very sleeplefs;
 " but I live on and hope."

In that languid condition, he arrived, on the 16th of November, at his house in Bolt-court, there to end his days. He laboured with the dropsy and an asthma. He was attended by Dr. Heberden, Dr. Warren, Dr. Brocklesby,

Dr. Butter, and Mr. Cruikshank, the eminent surgeon. Eternity presented to his mind an awful prospect, and, with as much virtue as perhaps ever is the lot of man, he shuddered at the thought of his dissolution. His friends awakened the comfortable reflection of a well-spent life; and, as his end drew near, they had the satisfaction of seeing him composed, and even chearful, insomuch that he was able, in the course of his restless nights, to make translations of Greek epigrams from the Anthologia; and to compose a Latin epitaph for his father, his mother, and his brother Nathaniel. He meditated, at the same time, a Latin inscription to the memory of Garrick, but his vigour was exhausted.

His love of Literature was a passion that stuck to his last sand. Seven days before his death he wrote the following letter to his friend Mr. Nichols.

“SIR,

“The late learned Mr. Swinton of Oxford having one day remarked that one man, meaning, I suppose, no man but himself, could assign all the parts of the Ancient Universal

History to their proper authors, at the request of Sir Robert Chambers, or myself, gave the account which I now transmit to you in his own hand, being willing that of so great a work the history should be known, and that each writer should receive his due proportion of praise from posterity.

“I recommend to you to preserve this scrap of literary intelligence in Mr. Swinton’s own hand, or to deposit it in the Museum *, that the veracity of this account may never be doubted.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your most humble servant,

Dec. 6, 1684.

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

Mr. Swinton.

The History of the Carthaginians.

————— Numidians.

————— Mauritanians.

————— Gætulians.

————— Garamantes.

————— Melano Gætulians.

————— Nigritæ.

————— Cyrenaica.

————— Marmarica.

* It is there deposited. J. N.

The History of the Regio Syrtica.

————— Turks, Tartars, and Moguls.

————— Indians.

————— Chinese.

————— Dissertation on the peopling
of America.

The History of the Dissertation on the Inde-
pendency of the Arabs.

The Cosmogony, and a small part of the history
immediately following. By Mr. Sale.

To the Birth of Abraham. Chiefly by Mr.
Shelvock.

History of the Jews, Gauls, and Spaniards. By
Mr. Pfalmanazar.

Xenophon's Retreat. By the same.

History of the Persians, and the Constantino-
politan Empire. By Dr. Campbell.

History of the Romans. By Mr. Bower*.

On

* Before this authentic communication, Mr. Nichols had given, in the volume of the Magazine for 1781, p. 370, the following account of the Universal History. The proposals were published October 6, 1729; and the authors of the first seven volumes were,

Vol. I. Mr. Sale, translator of the Koran.

II. George Pfalmanazar.

III. George Pfalmanazar.

On the morning of Dec. 7, Dr. Johnson requested to see Mr. Nichols. A few days before, he had borrowed some of the early volumes of the Magazine, with a professed intention to point out the pieces which he had written in that collection. The books lay on the table, with many leaves doubled down, and in particular those which contained his share in the Parliamentary Debates. Such was the goodness of Johnson's heart, that he then declared, that "those debates were the only parts
 " of his writings which gave him any com-
 " punction; but that at the time he wrote them
 " he had no conception that he was imposing
 " upon the world, though they were frequently
 " written from very slender materials, and often
 " from none at all, the mere coinage of his

III. Archibald Bower.

Captain Shelvock.

Dr. Campbell.

IV. The same as vol. III.

V. Mr. Bower.

VI. Mr. Bower.

Rev. John Swinton.

VII. Mr. Swinton.

Mr. Bower.

" own

“ own imagination.” He added, “ that he never
 “ wrote any part of his work with equal velo-
 “ city. Three columns of the Magazine in an
 “ hour,” he said, “ was no uncommon effort ;
 “ which was faster than most persons could
 “ have transcribed that quantity. In one day
 “ in particular, and that not a very long one,
 “ he wrote twelve pages, more in quantity than
 “ ever he wrote at any other time, except in
 “ the Life of Savage, of which forty-eight
 “ pages in octavo were the production of one
 “ long day, including a part of the night.”

In the course of the conversation, he asked, whether any of the family of Faden the printer were living. Being told that the geographer near Charing-cross was Faden's son, he said, after a short pause, “ I borrowed a guinea of
 “ his father near thirty years ago ; he so good
 “ as to take this, and pay it for me.”

Wishing to discharge every duty, and every obligation, Johnson recollected another debt of ten pounds, which he had borrowed from his friend Mr. Hamilton the printer, about twenty years before. He sent the money to Mr. Ha-

milton at his house in Bedford Row, with an apology for the length of time. The Reverend Mr. Strahan was the bearer of the message, about four or five days before Johnson breathed his last.

Mr. Sastres (whom Dr. Johnson esteemed and mentioned in his will) entered the room during his illness. Dr. Johnson, as soon as he saw him, stretched forth his hand, and, in a tone of lamentation, called out, *JAM MORITURUS!* But the love of life was still an active principle. Feeling himself swelled with the dropsy, he conceived that, by incisions in his legs, the water might be discharged. Mr. Cruikshank apprehended that a mortification might be the consequence; but, to appease a distempered fancy, he gently lanced the surface. Johnson cried out, "Deeper, deeper; I want length of life, and you are afraid of giving me pain, which I do not value."

On the 8th of December, the Reverend Mr. Strahan drew his will, by which, after a few legacies, the residue, amounting to about fifteen hundred pounds, was bequeathed to Frank, the
Black

Black servant, formerly consigned to the testator by his friend Dr. Bathurst.

The history of a death-bed is painful. Mr. Strahan informs us, that the strength of religion prevailed against the infirmity of nature; and his foreboding dread of the Divine Justice subsided into a pious trust and humble hope of mercy at the Throne of Grace. On Monday the 13th day of December (the last of his existence on this side the grave), the desire of life returned with all its former vehemence. He still imagined, that, by puncturing his legs, relief might be obtained. At eight in the morning he tried the experiment, but no water followed. In an hour or two after, he fell into a doze, and about seven in the evening expired without a groan.

On the 20th of the month his remains, with due solemnities, and a numerous attendance of his friends, were buried in Westminster Abbey, near the foot of Shakspeare's monument, and close to the grave of the late Mr. Garrick. The funeral service was read by his friend Dr. Taylor.

A black marble over his grave has the following inscription ·

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

obiit XIII die Decembris,

Anno Domini

MDCCLXXXIV.

Ætatis suæ LXXV.

If we now look back, as from an eminence, to view the scenes of life, and the literary labours in which Dr. Johnson was engaged, we may be able to delineate the features of the man, and to form an estimate of his genius.

As a man, Dr. Johnson stands displayed in open day-light. Nothing remains undiscovered. Whatever he said is known; and without allowing him the usual privilege of hazarding sentiments, and advancing positions, for mere amusement, or the pleasure of discussion, Criticism has endeavoured to make him answerable for what, perhaps, he never seriously thought. His diary, which has been printed, discovers still more. We have before us the very heart of the man, with all his inward consciousness. And yet neither in the open paths of life, nor in his secret recesses, has any one vice been discovered. We see him reviewing every year of his life, and severely censuring himself, for not keeping resolutions, which morbid melancholy, and

and other bodily infirmities, rendered impracticable. We see him for every little defect imposing on himself voluntary penance, going through the day with only one cup of tea without milk, and to the last, amidst paroxysms and remissions of illness, forming plans of study and resolutions to amend his life *. Many of his scruples may be called weaknesses; but they are the weaknesses of a good, a pious, and most excellent man.

His person, it is well known, was large and unwieldy. His nerves were affected by that disorder, for which, at two years of age, he was presented to the royal touch. His head shook, and involuntary motions made it uncertain that his legs and arms would, even at a tea-table, remain in their proper place. A person of Lord Chesterfield's delicacy might in his company be in a fever. He would sometimes of his own accord do things inconsistent with the established modes of behaviour. Sitting at table with the celebrated Mrs. Cholmondeley, who exerted herself to circulate the

* On the subject of voluntary penance see the Rambler, N° CX.

subscription for Shakspeare, he took hold of her hand in the middle of dinner, and held it close to his eye, wondering at the delicacy and the whiteness, till with a smile she asked, *Will he give it to me again when he has done with it?* The exteriors of politeness did not belong to Johnson. Even that civility which proceeds, or ought to proceed, from the mind, was sometimes violated. His morbid melancholy had an effect on his temper; his passions were irritable; and the pride of science, as well as of a fierce independent spirit, inflamed him on some occasions above all bounds of moderation. Though not in the shade of academic bowers, he led a scholastic life; and the habit of pronouncing decisions to his friends and visitors gave him a dictatorial manner, which was much enforced by a voice naturally loud, and often overstretched. Metaphysical discussion, moral theory, systems of religion, and anecdotes of literature, were his favourite topics. General history had little of his regard. Biography was his delight. *The proper study of mankind is man.* Sooner than hear of the Punic war, he would be rude to the person that introduced the subject.

John-

Johnson was born a logician ; one of those, to whom only books of logic are said to be of use. In consequence of his skill in that art, he loved argumentation. No man thought more profoundly, nor with such acute discernment. A fallacy could not stand before him : it was sure to be refuted by strength of reasoning, and a precision both in idea and expression almost unequalled. When he chose by apt illustration to place the argument of his adversary in a ludicrous light, one was almost inclined to think *ridicule the test of truth*. He was surprized to be told, but it is certainly true, that, with great powers of mind, wit and humour were his shining talents. That he often argued for the sake of triumph over his adversary, cannot be dissembled. Dr. Rose, of Chiswick, has been heard to tell a friend of his, who thanked him for introducing him to Dr. Johnson, as he had been convinced, in the course of a long dispute, that an opinion, which he had embraced as a settled truth, was no better than a vulgar error. This being reported to Johnson, "Nay," said he, "do not let him be thankful, for he was "right, and I was wrong." Like his uncle Andrew, in the ring at Smithfield, Johnson,

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in a circle of disputants, was determined *neither to be thrown nor conquered*. Notwithstanding all his piety, self-government, or the command of his passions in conversation, does not seem to have been among his attainments. Whenever he thought the contention was for superiority, he has been known to break out with violence, and even ferocity. When the fray was over, he generally softened into repentance, and, by conciliating measures, took care that no animosity should be left rankling in the breast of his antagonist. Of this defect he seems to have been conscious. In a letter to Mrs. Thrale, he says, "Poor Baretto! do not quarrel with him; to neglect him a little will be sufficient. He means only to be frank and manly, and independent, and, perhaps, as you say, a little wise. To be frank, he thinks, is to be cynical; and to be independent, is to be rude. Forgive him, dearest lady, the rather, because of his misbehaviour. I am afraid he learned part of me. I hope to set him hereafter a better example." For his own intolerant and overbearing spirit he apologized by observing, that it had done some good; obscenity and impiety were repressed in his company.

It

It was late in life before he had the habit of mixing, otherwise than occasionally, with polite company. At Mr. Thrale's he saw a constant succession of well-accomplished visitors. In that society he began to wear off the rugged points of his own character. He saw the advantages of mutual civility, and endeavoured to profit by the models before him. He aimed at what has been called by Swift the *lesser morals*, and by Cicero *minores virtutes*. His endeavour, though new and late, gave pleasure to all his acquaintance. Men were glad to see that he was willing to be communicative on equal terms and reciprocal complacence. The time was then expected when he was to cease being what George Garrick, brother to the celebrated actor, called him the first time he heard him converse, "A TREMENDOUS COMPANION." He certainly wished to be polite, and even thought himself so; but his civility still retained something uncouth and harsh. His manners took a milder tone, but the endeavour was too palpably seen. He laboured even in trifles. He was a giant gaining a *purchase* to lift a feather.

It

It is observed by the younger Pliny, that in the confines of virtue and great qualities there are generally vices of an opposite nature. In Dr. Johnson not one ingredient can take the name of vice. From his attainments in literature grew the pride of knowledge; and, from his powers of reasoning, the love of disputation and the vain-glory of superior vigour. His piety, in some instances, bordered on superstition. He was willing to believe in preternatural agency, and thought it not more strange that there should be evil spirits than evil men. Even the question about second sight held him in suspense. "Second sight," Mr. Pennant tells us, "is a power of seeing
 " images impressed on the organs of sight by
 " the power of fancy, or on the fancy by the
 " disordered spirits operating on the mind. It
 " is the faculty of seeing spectres, or visions,
 " which represent an event actually passing at
 " a distance, or likely to happen at a future
 " day. In 1771, a gentleman, the last who
 " was supposed to be possessed of this faculty,
 " had a boat at sea in a tempestuous night,
 " and, being anxious for his freight, suddenly
 " started up, and said his men would be
 " drowned, for he had seen them pass before
 " him

“ him with wet garments and dropping locks.
 “ The event corresponded with his disordered
 “ fancy. And thus,” continues Mr. Pennant,
 “ a distempered imagination, clouded with
 “ anxiety, may make an impression on the
 “ spirits; as persons, restless and troubled with
 “ indignation, see various forms and figures
 “ while they lie awake in bed.” This is what
 Dr. Johnson was not willing to reject. He
 wished for some positive proof of communi-
 cations with another world. His benevolence
 embraced the whole race of man, and yet was
 tinged with particular prejudices. He was
 pleased with the minister in the Isle of Sky,
 and loved him so much that he began to wish
 him not a Presbyterian. To that body of Dis-
 senters his zeal for the Established Church made
 him in some degree an adversary; and his at-
 tachment to a mixed and limited Monarchy led
 him to declare open war against what he called
 a sullen Republican. He would rather praise a
 man of Oxford than of Cambridge. He dis-
 liked a Whig, and loved a Tory. These were
 the shades of his character, which it has been
 the business of certain party-writers to repre-
 sent in the darkest colours.

Since

Since virtue, or moral goodness, consists in a just conformity of our actions to the relations in which we stand to the Supreme Being and to our fellow-creatures, where shall we find a man who has been, or endeavoured to be, more diligent in the discharge of those essential duties? His first prayer was composed in 1738; he continued those fervent ejaculations of piety to the end of his life. In his meditations we see him scrutinizing himself with severity, and aiming at perfection unattainable by man. His duty to his neighbour consisted in universal benevolence, and a constant aim at the production of happiness. Who was more sincere and steady in his friendships? It has been said that there was no real affection between him and Garrick. On the part of the latter, there might be some corrosions of jealousy. The character of PROSPERO, in the Rambler, N°. 200, was, beyond all question, occasioned by Garrick's ostentatious display of furniture and Dresden china. It was surely fair to take from this incident a hint for a moral essay; and, though no more was intended, Garrick, we are told, remembered it with uneasiness. He was also hurt that his

Lichfield

Lichfield friend did not think so highly of his dramatic art as the rest of the world. The fact was, Johnson could not see passions as they rose and chased one another in the varied features of that expressive face; and by his own manner of reciting verses, which was wonderfully impressive, he plainly shewed that he thought there was too much of artificial tone and measured cadence in the declamation of the theatre. The present writer well remembers being in conversation with Dr. Johnson near the side of the scenes during the tragedy of King Lear: when Garrick came off the stage, he said, "You two talk so loud you destroy all my feelings." "Prithee," replied Johnson, "do not talk of feelings, Punch has no feelings." This seems to have been his settled opinion; admirable as Garrick's imitation of nature always was, Johnson thought it no better than mere mimicry. Yet it is certain that he esteemed and loved Garrick; that he dwelt with pleasure on his praise; and used to declare, that he deserved his great success, because on all applications for charity he gave more than was asked. After Garrick's death, he never talked

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of

of him without a tear in his eye. He offered, if Mrs. Garrick would desire it of him, to be the editor of his works, and the historian of his life. It has been mentioned, that on his death-bed he thought of writing a Latin inscription to the memory of his friend. Numbers are still living who know these facts, and still remember with gratitude the friendship which he shewed to them with unaltered affection for a number of years. His humanity and generosity, in proportion to his slender income, were unbounded. It has been truly said, that the lame, the blind, and the sorrowful, found in his house a sure retreat. A strict adherence to truth he considered as a sacred obligation, insomuch that, in relating the most minute anecdote, he would not allow himself the smallest addition to embellish his story. The late Mr. Tyers, who knew Dr. Johnson intimately, observed, "that he always talked as if he was "talking upon oath." After a long acquaintance with this excellent man, and an attentive retrospect to his whole conduct, such is the light in which he appears to the writer of this essay. The following lines of Horace may be deemed his picture in miniature :

Iracundior

Iracundior est paulo, minus aptus acutis
 Naribus horum hominum, rideri possit, eo quod
 Rusticius tonso toga defluit, & male laxus
 In pede calceus hæret; at est bonus, ut melior vir
 Non alius quisquam; at tibi amicus, at ingenium
 ingens,
 Inculto latet hoc sub corpore*.

It remains to give a review of Johnson's works; and this, it is imagined, will not be unwelcome to the reader.

Like Milton and Addison, he seems to have been fond of his Latin poetry. Those compositions shew that he was an early scholar; but his verses have not the graceful ease that gave so much suavity to the poems of Addison. The translation of the Messiah labours under

* Your friend is passionate, perhaps unfit
 For the brisk petulance of modern wit.
 His hair ill-cut, his robe that aukward flows,
 Or his large shoes to raillery expose
 The man you love; yet is he not possess'd
 Of virtues, with which very few are blest?
 While underneath this rude uncouth disguise
 A genius of extensive knowledge lies.

Francis's Hor. Book i. Sat. 3.

two disadvantages; it is first to be compared with Pope's inimitable performance, and afterwards with the *Pollio* of Virgil. It may appear trifling to remark, that he has made the letter *o*, in the word *Virgo*, long and short in the same line; VIRGO, VIRGO PARIT. But the translation has great merit, and some admirable lines. In the odes, there is a sweet flexibility, particularly, To his worthy friend Dr. Lawrence; on himself at the theatre, March 8, 1771; the Ode in the Isle of Sky; and that to Mrs Thrale from the same place.

His English poetry is such as leaves room to think, if he had devoted himself to the Muses, that he would have been the rival of Pope. His first production in this kind was LONDON, a poem in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal. The vices of the metropolis are placed in the room of ancient manners. The author had heated his mind with the ardour of Juvenal; and, having the skill to polish his numbers, he became a sharp accuser of the times. The VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES is an imitation of the tenth satire of the same author. Though it is translated
by

by Dryden, Johnson's imitation approaches nearest to the spirit of the original. The subject is taken from the *ALCIBIADES OF PLATO*, and has an intermixture of the sentiments of *SOCRATES* concerning the object of prayers offered up to the Deity. The general proposition is, that good and evil are so little understood by mankind, that their wishes when granted are always destructive. This is exemplified in a variety of instances, such as riches, state-preferment, eloquence, military glory, long life, and the advantages of form and beauty. Juvenal's conclusion is worthy of a Christian poet, and such a pen as Johnson's. "Let us," he says, "leave it to the Gods to judge what is fittest for us. Man is dearer to his Creator than to himself. If we must pray for special favour, let it be for a sound mind in a sound body. Let us pray for fortitude, that we may think the labours of Hercules and all his sufferings preferable to a life of luxury and the soft repose of *SARDANAPALUS*. This is a blessing within the reach of every man; this we can give ourselves. It is virtue, and virtue only, that can make us happy." In the translation,

tion, the zeal of the Christian conspired with the warmth and energy of the poet; but Juvenal is not eclipsed. For the various characters in the original the reader is pleased, in the English poem, to meet with Cardinal Wolsey, Buckingham stabbed by Felton, Lord Strafford, Clarendon, Charles XII. of Sweden; and for Tully and Demosthenes, Lydiat, Galileo, and Archbishop Laud. It is owing to Johnson's delight in biography that the name of LYDIAT is called forth from obscurity. It may, therefore, not be useless to tell, that LYDIAT was a learned divine and mathematician in the beginning of the last century. He attacked the doctrine of Aristotle and Scaliger, and wrote a number of sermons on the harmony of the Evangelists. With all his merit, he lay in the prison of *Bocardo* at Oxford, till bishop Usher, Laud, and others, paid his debts. He petitioned Charles I. to be sent to Ethiopia to procure manuscripts. Having spoken in favour of monarchy and bishops, he was plundered by the Puritans, and twice carried away a prisoner from his rectory. He died very poor in 1646.

The

The Tragedy of Irene is founded on a passage in KNOLLES's History of the Turks; an author highly commended in the Rambler, N^o 122. An incident in the Life of Mahomet the Great, first emperor of the Turks, is the hinge on which the fable is made to move. The substance of the story is shortly this. In 1453, Mahomet laid Siege to Constantinople, and, having reduced the place, became enamoured of a fair Greek, whose name was IRENE. The sultan invited her to embrace the law of the Prophet, and to grace his throne. Enraged at this intended marriage, the Janizaries formed a conspiracy to dethrone the emperor. To avert the impending danger, Mahomet, in a full assembly of the grandees, "Catching
 " with one hand," as Knolles relates it, " the
 " fair Greek by the hair of her head, and
 " drawing his falchion with the other, he, at
 " one blow, struck off her head, to the great
 " terror of them all; and, having so done,
 " said unto them, Now, by this, judge whether
 " your emperor is able to bridle his affections
 " or not." The story is simple, and it remained for the author to amplify it with pro-

per episodes, and give it complication and variety. The catastrophe is changed, and horror gives place to terror and pity. But, after all, the fable is cold and languid. There is not, throughout the piece, a single situation to excite curiosity, and raise a conflict of passions. The diction is nervous, rich, and elegant; but splendid language, and melodious numbers, will make a fine poem, not a tragedy. The sentiments are beautiful, always happily expressed, but seldom appropriated to the character, and generally too philosophic. What Johnson has said of the Tragedy of *Cato* may be applied to Irene: "it is rather a poem in
 " dialogue than a drama; rather a succession
 " of just sentiments, in elegant language, than
 " a representation of natural affections. Nothing
 " excites or assuages emotion. The events are
 " expected without solit^ude, and are remem-
 " bered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents
 " we have no care; we consider not what
 " they are doing, nor what they are suffering;
 " we wish only to know what they have to
 " say. It is unaffecting elegance, and chill
 " philosophy." The following speech, in the
 mouth of a Turk, who is supposed to have
 heard

heard of the British constitution, has been often selected from the numberless beauties with which IRENE abounds :

“ If there be any land, as fame reports,
Where common laws restrain the prince and subject;
A happy land, where circulating pow'r
Flows through each member of th' embodied state;
Sure, not unconscious of the mighty blessing,
Her grateful sons shine bright with ev'ry virtue;
Untainted with the LUST OF INNOVATION;
Sure all unite to hold her league of rule,
Unbroken as the sacred chain of Nature,
That links the jarring elements in peace.”

These are British sentiments. Above forty years ago, they found an echo in the breast of applauding audiences, and, to this hour, they are the voice of the people, in defiance of the *metaphysics* and the *new lights* of certain politicians, who would gladly find their private advantage in the disasters of their country; a race of men, *quibus nulla ex honesto spes.*

The Prologue to Irene is written with elegance, and, in a peculiar style, shews the literary pride and lofty spirit of the author. The
Epi-

Epilogue, we are told in a late publication, was written by Sir William Young. This is a new discovery, but by no means probable. When the appendages to a Dramatic Performance are not assigned to a friend, or an unknown hand, or a person of fashion, they are always supposed to be written by the author of the Play. It is to be wished, however, that the Epilogue in question could be transferred to any other writer. It is the worst *Jeu d'Esprit* that ever fell from Johnson's pen.

An account of the various pieces contained in this edition, such as miscellaneous tracts and philological dissertations, would lead beyond the intended limits of this essay. It will suffice to say, that they are the productions of a man who never wanted decorations of language, and always taught his reader to think. The life of the late king of Prussia, as far as it extends, is a model of the biographical style. The Review of *THE ORIGIN OF EVIL* was, perhaps, written with asperity; but the angry epitaph, which it provoked from *SOAME JENYNS*, was an ill-timed resentment, unworthy of the genius of that amiable author.

The

The Rambler may be considered as Johnson's great work. It was the basis of that high reputation which went on increasing to the end of his days. The circulation of those periodical essays was not, at first, equal to their merit. They had not, like the Spectators, the art of charming by variety; and indeed how could it be expected? The wits of queen Anne's reign sent their contributions to the Spectator; and Johnson stood alone. A stage-coach, says Sir Richard Steele, must go forward on stated days, whether there are passengers or not. So it was with the Rambler, every Tuesday and Saturday, for two years. In this collection, Johnson is the great moral teacher of his countrymen; his essays form a body of ethics; the observations on life and manners are acute and instructive; and the papers, professedly critical, serve to promote the cause of literature. It must, however, be acknowledged, that a settled gloom hangs over the author's mind; and all the essays, except eight or ten, coming from the same fountain-head, no wonder that they have the raciness of the soil from which they sprang. Of this uniformity

formity Johnson was sensible. He used to say, that if he had joined a friend or two, who would have been able to intermix papers of a sprightly turn, the collection would have been more miscellaneous, and, by consequence, more agreeable to the generality of readers. This he used to illustrate by repeating two beautiful stanzas from his own Ode to Cave, or *Sylvanus Urban*:

Non ulla Musis pagina gratior,
 Quam quæ severis ludicra jungere
 Novit, fatigatamque nugis
 Utilibus recreare mentem.
 Texente nymphis ferta Lycoride,
 Rosæ ruborem sic viola adjuvat
 Immista, sic Iris refulget
 Æthereis variata fucis.

It is remarkable, that the pomp of diction, which has been objected to Johnson, was first assumed in the Rambler. His Dictionary was going on at the same time, and, in the course of that work, as he grew familiar with technical and scholastic words, he thought that the bulk of his readers were equally learned; or at least would admire the splendour and dignity of the
 style.

style. And yet it is well known, that he praised in Cowley the easy and unaffected structure of the sentences. Cowley may be placed at the head of those who cultivated a clear and natural style. Dryden, Tillotson, and Sir William Temple, followed. Addison, Swift, and Pope, with more correctness, carried our language well nigh to perfection. Of Addison, Johnson was used to say, *He is the Raphael of Essay Writers.* How he differed so widely from such elegant models is a problem not to be solved, unless it be true that he took an early tincture from the writers of the last century, particularly Sir Thomas Browne. Hence the peculiarities of the style, new combinations, sentences of an unusual structure, and words derived from the learned languages. His own account of the matter is, “When
 “common words were less pleasing to the ear,
 “or less distinct in their signification, I familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas.” But he forgot the observation of Dryden: *If too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed, not to assist the natives, but to conquer them.* There is, it must be admitted,
 a swell

a swell of language, often out of all proportion to the sentiment; but there is, in general, a fullness of mind, and the thought seems to expand with the sound of the words. Determined to discard colloquial barbarisms and licentious idioms, he forgot the elegant simplicity that distinguishes the writings of Addison. He had what Locke calls a round-about view of his subject; and, though he was never tainted, like many modern wits, with the ambition of shining in paradox, he may be fairly called an ORIGINAL THINKER. His reading was extensive. He treasured in his mind whatever was worthy of notice, but he added to it from his own meditation. He collected, *quæ reconderet, auclaque promeret*. Addison was not so profound a thinker. He was *born to write, converse, and live, with ease*; and he found an early patron in Lord Somers. He depended, however, more upon a fine taste than the vigour of his mind. His Latin Poetry shews, that he relished, with a just selection, all the refined and delicate beauties of the Roman classics; and when he cultivated his native language, no wonder that he formed that graceful style, which has been so justly admired; simple, yet elegant;

elegant ; adorned, yet never over-wrought ; rich in allusion, yet pure and perspicuous ; correct, without labour, and, though sometimes deficient in strength, yet always musical. His essays, in general, are on the surface of life ; if ever original, it was in pieces of humour. Sir Roger de Coverley, and the Tory Fox-hunter, need not be mentioned. Johnson had a fund of humour, but he did not know it, nor was he willing to descend to the familiar idiom and the variety of diction which that mode of composition required. The letter, in the Rambler, N^o 12, from a young girl that wants a place, will illustrate this observation. Addison possessed an unclouded imagination, alive to the first objects of nature and of art. He reaches the sublime without any apparent art. When he tells us, “ If we consider the fixed stars as
 “ so many oceans of flame, that are each of
 “ them attended with a different set of planets ;
 “ if we still discover new firmaments and new
 “ lights, that are sunk farther in those un-
 “ fathomable depths of æther, we are lost in a
 “ labyrinth of suns and worlds, and con-
 “ founded with the magnificence and immen-
 “ sity of nature ;” the ease, with which this
 passage

passage rises to unaffected grandeur, is the secret charm that captivates the reader. Johnson is always lofty; he seems, to use Dryden's phrase, to be o'er-inform'd with meaning, and his words do not appear to himself adequate to his conception. He moves in state, and his periods are always harmonious. His Oriental Tales are in the true style of Eastern magnificence, and yet none of them are so much admired as the Visions of Mirza. In matters of criticism, Johnson is never the echo of preceding writers. He thinks and decides for himself. If we except the Essays on the Pleasures of Imagination, Addison cannot be called a philosophical critic. His moral Essays are beautiful; but in that province nothing can exceed the Rambler, though Johnson used to say, that the Essay on *The burthens of mankind* (in the Spectator, N^o 558) was the most exquisite he had ever read. Talking of himself, Johnson said, "Topham Beauclerk has wit, and every thing comes from him with ease; but, when I say a good thing, I seem to labour." When we compare him with Addison, the contrast is still stronger. Addison lends grace and ornament to truth; Johnson gives it force and energy. Addison

son makes virtue amiable; Johnson represents it as an awful duty. Addison insinuates himself with an air of modesty; Johnson commands like a dictator; but a dictator in his splendid robes, not labouring at the plough. Addison is the Jupiter of Virgil, with placid serenity talking to Venus:

“Vultu, quo cœlum tempestatesque serenat.”

Johnson is JUPITER TONANS: he darts his lightning, and rolls his thunder, in the cause of virtue and piety. The language seems to fall short of his ideas; he pours along, familiarizing the times of philosophy, with bold inversions, and sonorous periods; but we may apply to him what Pope has said of Homer: “It is
 “the sentiment that swells and fills out the
 “diction, which rises with it, and forms itself
 “about it; like glass in the furnace, which
 “grows to a greater magnitude, as the breath
 “within is more powerful, and the heat more
 “intense.”

It is not the design of this comparison to decide between those two eminent writers. In

matters of taste every reader will chuse for himself. Johnson is always profound, and of course gives the fatigue of thinking. Addison charms while he instructs; and writing, as he always does, a pure, an elegant, and idiomatic, style, he may be pronounced the safest model for imitation.

The essays written by Johnson in the *Adventurer* may be called a continuation of the *Rambler*. The *IDLER*, in order to be consistent with the assumed character, is written with abated vigour, in a style of ease and unlaboured elegance. It is the *Odysssey* after the *Iliad*. Intense thinking would not become the *IDLER*. The first number presents a well-drawn portrait of an *Idler*, and from that character no deviation could be made. Accordingly, Johnson forgets his austere manner, and plays us into sense. He still continues his lectures on human life, but he adverts to common occurrences, and is often content with the topic of the day. An advertisement in the beginning of the first volume informs us, that twelve entire *Essays* were a contribution from different hands. One of these, N^o 33, is the
journal

journal of a Senior Fellow at Cambridge, but, as Johnson, being himself an original thinker, always revolted from servile imitation, he has printed the piece, with an apology, importing that the journal of a citizen in the *Spectator* almost precluded the attempt of any subsequent writer. This account of the Idler may be closed, after observing, that the author's mother being buried on the 23d of January, 1759, there is an admirable paper, occasioned by that event, on Saturday the 27th of the same month, N° 41. The reader, if he pleases, may compare it with another fine paper in the *Rambler*, N° 54, on the conviction that rushes on the mind at the bed of a dying friend.

“*Rasselas*,” says Sir John Hawkins, “is a specimen of our language scarcely to be paralleled; it is written in a style refined to a degree of *immaculate purity*, and displays the whole force of *turgid* eloquence.” One cannot but smile at this encomium. *Rasselas* is undoubtedly both elegant and sublime. It is a view of human life, displayed, it must be owned, in gloomy colours. The author's natural melancholy, depressed, at the time, by the approaching dis-

1 2

solution

solution of his mother, darkened the picture. A tale, that should keep curiosity awake by the artifice of unexpected incidents, was not the design of a mind pregnant with bitter things. He, who reads the heads of the chapters, will find, that it is not a course of adventures that invites him forward, but a discussion of interesting questions; Reflections on Human Life; the History of *Imlac*, the Man of Learning; a Dissertation upon Poetry; the Character of a wise and happy Man, who discourses with energy on the government of the passions, and on a sudden, when Death deprives him of his daughter, forgets all his maxims of wisdom and the eloquence that adorned them, yielding to the stroke of affliction with all the vehemence of the bitterest anguish. It is by pictures of life, and profound moral reflection, that expectation is engaged and gratified throughout the work. The History of the Mad Astronomer, who imagines that, for five years, he possessed the regulation of the weather, and that the sun passed from tropic to tropic by his direction, represents in striking colours the sad effect of a distempered imagination. It becomes the more affecting, when we recollect that

that it proceeds from one, who lived in fear of the same dreadful visitation; from one who says emphatically, "Of the uncertainties in our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason." The enquiry into the cause of madness, and the dangerous prevalence of imagination, till, in time, some particular train of ideas fixes the attention, and the mind recurs constantly to the favourite conception, is carried on in a train of acute observation; but it leaves us room to think, that the author was transcribing from his own apprehensions. The discourse on the nature of the soul gives us all that philosophy knows, not without a tincture of superstition. It is remarkable that the vanity of human pursuits was, about the same time, the subject that employed both Johnson and Voltaire; but *Candide* is the work of a lively imagination; and *Rasselas*, with all its splendour of eloquence, exhibits a gloomy picture. It should, however, be remembered, that the world has known the WEEPING as well as the LAUGHING philosopher.

The Dictionary does not properly fall within the province of this essay. The preface, however, will be found in this edition. He who reads the close of it, without acknowledging the force of the pathetic and sublime, must have more insensibility in his composition than usually falls to the share of man. The work itself, though in some instances abuse has been loud, and in others malice has endeavoured to undermine its fame, still remains the MOUNT ATLAS of English Literature.

Though storms and tempests thunder on its brow,
And oceans break their billows at its feet,
It stands unmov'd, and glories in its height.

That Johnson was eminently qualified for the office of a commentator on Shakspeare, no man can doubt; but it was an office which he never cordially embraced. The publick expected more than he had diligence to perform; and yet his edition has been the ground on which every subsequent commentator has chosen to build. One note, for its singularity, may be thought worthy of notice in this place. Hamlet says, *For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a God-kissing carrion.* In this

War-

Warburton discovered the *origin of evil*. Hamlet, he says, breaks off in the middle of the sentence ; but the learned commentator knows what he was going to say, and, being unwilling to keep the secret, he goes on in a train of philosophical reasoning that leaves the reader in astonishment. Johnson, with true piety, adopts the fanciful hypothesis, declaring it to be a noble emendation, which almost sets the critic on a level with the author. The general observations at the end of the several plays, and the preface, will be found in this edition. The former, with great elegance and precision, give a summary view of each drama. The preface is a tract of great erudition and philosophical criticism.

Johnson's political pamphlets, whatever was his motive for writing them, whether gratitude for his pension, or the solicitation of men in power, did not support the cause for which they were undertaken. They are written in a style truly harmonious, and with his usual dignity of language. When it is said that he advanced positions repugnant to the *common rights of mankind*, the virulence of party may

be suspected. It is, perhaps, true, that, in the clamour raised throughout the kingdom, Johnson over-heated his mind; but he was a friend to the rights of man, and he was greatly superior to the littleness of spirit that might incline him to advance what he did not think and firmly believe. In the *False Alarm*, though many of the most eminent men in the kingdom concurred in petitions to the throne, yet Johnson, having well surveyed the mass of the people, has given, with great humour and no less truth, what may be called, *the birth, parentage, and education, of a remonstrance*. On the subject of Falkland's islands, the fine dissuasive, from too hastily involving the world in the calamities of war, must extort applause even from the party that wished, at that time, for scenes of tumult and commotion. It was in the same pamphlet that Johnson offered battle to JUNIUS; a writer, who, by the uncommon elegance of his style, charmed every reader, though his object was to inflame the nation in favour of a faction. Junius fought in the dark; he saw his enemy, and had his full blow, while he himself remained safe in obscurity. But let us not, said Johnson, mistake
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the venom of the shaft for the vigour of the bow. The keen invective which he published on that occasion promised a paper-war between two combatants, who knew the use of their weapons. A battle between them was as eagerly expected as between Mendoza and Big Ben. But Junius, whatever was his reason, never returned to the field. He laid down his arms, and has, ever since, remained as secret as the MAN IN THE MASK in Voltaire's History.

The account of his journey to the Hebrides, or Western Isles of Scotland, is a model for such as shall hereafter relate their travels. The author did not visit that part of the world in the character of an Antiquary, to amuse us with wonders taken from the dark and fabulous ages; nor, as a Mathematician, to measure a degree, and settle the longitude and latitude of the several islands. Those, who expected such information, expected what was never intended. *In every work regard the writer's end.* Johnson went to see men and manners, modes of life, and the progress of civilization. His remarks are so artfully blended with the
rapidity

rapidity and elegance of his narrative, that the reader is inclined to wish, as Johnson did with regard to GRAY, that *to travel, and to tell his travels, had been more of his employment.*

As to Johnson's Parliamentary Debates, nothing with propriety can be said in this place. They are collected in two volumes by Mr. Stockdale, and the flow of eloquence which runs through the several speeches is sufficiently known.

It will not be useless to mention two more volumes, which may form a proper supplement to this edition. They contain a set of Sermons left for publication by John Taylor, LL.D. The Reverend Mr. Hayes, who ushered these Discourses into the world, has not given them as the composition of Dr. Taylor. All he could say for his departed friend was, that he left them in silence among his papers. Mr. Hayes knew them to be the production of a superior mind; and the writer of these Memoirs owes it to the candour of that elegant scholar, that he is now warranted to give an additional proof of Johnson's ardour in the cause of piety and every moral duty. The last discourse in the collection was intended to be delivered by Dr.
Taylor

Taylor at the funeral of Johnson's wife; but that Reverend gentleman declined the office, because, as he told Mr. Hayes, the praise of the deceased was too much amplified. He, who reads the piece, will find it a beautiful moral lesson, written with temper, and nowhere overcharged with ambitious ornaments. The rest of the Discourses were the fund, which Dr. Taylor, from time to time, carried with him to his pulpit. He had the **LARGEST BULL*** in England, and some of the best Sermons.

We come now to the Lives of the Poets, a work undertaken at the age of seventy, yet the most brilliant, and certainly the most popular, of all our Author's writings. For this performance he needed little preparation. Attentive always to the history of letters, and by his own natural bias fond of Biography, he was the more willing to embrace the proposition of the Booksellers. He was versed in the whole body of English Poetry; and his rules of criticism were settled with precision. The dissertation, in the Life of Cowley, on the metaphysical Poets of the last century, has the attraction of

* See Johnson's Letters from Ashbourne in Vol. XII. of this edition.

novelty as well as sound observation. The writers, who followed Dr. Donne, went in quest of something better than truth and nature. As Sancho says in Don Quixotte, they wanted better bread than is made with wheat. They took pains to bewilder themselves, and were ingenious for no other purpose than to err. In Johnson's review of Cowley's works, false wit is detected in all its shapes, and the Gothic taste, for glittering conceits and far-fetched allusions, is exploded, never, it is hoped, to revive again.

An author, who has published his observations on the Life and Writings of Dr. Johnson, speaking of the Lives of the Poets, says, "These compositions, abounding in strong and acute remarks, and with many fine and even sublime passages, have unquestionably great merit; but, if they be regarded merely as containing narrations of the Lives, delineations of the characters, and strictures of the several authors, they are far from being always to be depended on." He adds, "The characters are sometimes partial, and there is sometimes TOO MUCH MALIGNITY of misrepresentation,

“ representation, to which, perhaps, may be
 “ joined no inconsiderable portion of erroneous
 “ criticism.” The several clauses of this cen-
 sure deserve to be answered as fully as the limits
 of this essay will permit.

In the first place, the facts are related upon
 the best intelligence, and the best vouchers that
 could be gleaned, after a great lapse of time.
 Probability was to be inferred from such ma-
 terials as could be procured, and no man better
 understood the nature of historical evidence than
 Dr. Johnson; no man was more religiously
 an observer of truth. If his History is any
 where defective, it must be imputed to the
 want of better information, and the errors of
 uncertain tradition.

Ad nos vix tenuis famæ perlabitur aura.

If the strictures on the works of the various
 authors are not always satisfactory, and if er-
 roneous criticisms may sometimes be suspected,
 who can hope that in matters of taste all shall
 agree? The instances, in which the public
 mind has differed from the positions advanced
 by the author, are few in number. It has
 been

been said, that justice has not been done to Swift; that Gay and Prior are undervalued; and that Gray has been harshly treated. This charge, perhaps, ought not to be disputed. Johnson, it is well known, had conceived a prejudice against Swift. His friends trembled for him when he was writing that life, but were pleased, at last, to see it executed with temper and moderation. As to Prior, it is probable that he gave his real opinion, but an opinion that will not be adopted by men of lively fancy. With regard to Gray, when he condemns the apostrophe, in which Father Thames is desired to tell who drives the hoop, or tosses the ball, and then adds, that Father Thames had no better means of knowing than himself; when he compares the abrupt beginning of the first stanza of the bard to the ballad of JOHNNY ARMSTRONG, "*Is there ever a man in all Scotland;*" there are, perhaps, few friends of Johnson, who would not wish to blot out both the passages. It may be questioned whether the remarks on Pope's Essay on Man can be received without great caution. It has been already mentioned, that Croufaz, a professor in Switzerland, eminent for his Treatise of Logic, started

started up a professed enemy to that poem. Johnson says, "his mind was one of those, in which philosophy and piety are happily united. He looked with distrust upon all metaphysical systems of theology, and was persuaded, that the positions of Pope were intended to draw mankind away from Revelation, and to represent the whole course of things as a necessary concatenation of indissoluble fatality." This is not the place for a controversy about the Leibnitzian system. Warburton, with all the powers of his large and comprehensive mind, published a Vindication of Pope; and yet Johnson says, that "in many passages a religious eye may easily discover expressions not very favourable to morals or to liberty." This sentence is severe, and, perhaps, dogmatical. Croufaz wrote an Examen of THE ESSAY ON MAN, and afterwards a Commentary on every remarkable passage; and though it now appears that Mrs. Elizabeth Carter translated the foreign Critic, yet it is certain that Johnson encouraged the work, and, perhaps, imbibed those early prejudices which adhered to him to the end of his life. He shuddered at the idea of irreligion.

Hence we are told in the Life of Pope, “ Never
 “ were penury of knowledge and vulgarity of
 “ sentiment so happily disguised; Pope, in the
 “ chair of wisdom, tells much that every man
 “ knows, and much that he did not know him-
 “ self; and gives us comfort in the position,
 “ that, *though man’s a fool, yet God is wise*; that
 “ human advantages are unstable; that our
 “ true honour is, not to have a great part, but
 “ to act it well; that virtue only is our own,
 “ and that happiness is always in our power.
 “ The reader, when he meets all this in its new
 “ array, no longer knows the talk of his mo-
 “ ther and his nurse.” But may it not be said,
 that every system of Ethics must or ought to ter-
 minate in plain and general maxims for the use of
 life? and, though in such axioms, no discovery is
 made, does not the beauty of the moral theory
 consist in the premises, and the chain of reason-
 ing that leads to the conclusion? May not
 truth, as Johnson himself says, be conveyed to
 the wind by a new train of intermediate images?
 Pope’s doctrine about the ruling passion does
 not seem to be refuted, though it is called, in
 harsh terms, pernicious as well as false, tend-
 ing to establish a kind of moral predestination,
 or

or over-ruling principle, which cannot be resisted. But Johnson was too easily alarmed in the cause of religion. Organized as the human race is, individuals have different inlets of perception, different powers of mind, and different sensations of pleasure and pain.

All spread their charms, but charm not all alike,
 On different senses different objects strike ;
 Hence different passions more or less inflame,
 As strong or weak the organs of the frame.
 And hence one master-passion in the breast,
 Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

Brumoy says, Pascal from his infancy felt himself a geometrician ; and Vandyke, in like manner, was a painter. Shakspeare, who of all poets had the deepest insight into human nature, was aware of a prevailing bias in the operations of every mind. By him we are told, "*Masterless Passion sways us to the mood of what it likes or loaths.*"

It remains to enquire, whether in the lives before us the characters are partial, and too often drawn with malignity of misrepresentation. To prove this it is alleged, that Johnson has misrepresented the circumstances relative to the

translation of the first Iliad, and maliciously ascribed that performance to Addison, instead of Tickell, with too much reliance on the testimony of Pope, taken from the account in the papers left by Mr. Spence. For a refutation of the fallacy imputed to Addison, we are referred to a note in the *Biographia Britannica*, written by the late *Judge Blackstone*, who, it is said, examined the whole matter with accuracy, and found that the first regular statement of the accusation against Addison was published by Ruffhead, in his *Life of Pope*, from the materials which he received from Dr. Warburton. But, with all due deference to the learned Judge, whose talents deserve all praise, this account is by no means accurate.

Sir Richard Steele, in a dedication of the *Comedy of the Drummer* to Mr. Congreve, gave the first insight into that business. He says, in a style of anger and resentment, “ If
 “ that gentleman (Mr. Tickell) thinks himself
 “ injured, I will allow I have wronged him
 “ upon this issue, that (if the reputed translator
 “ of the first book of Homer shall please to
 “ give us another book) there shall appear
 “ another

“another good judge in poetry, besides Mr. Alexander Pope, who shall like it.” The authority of Steele outweighs all opinions founded on vain conjecture, and, indeed, seems to be decisive, since we do not find that Tickell, though warmly pressed, thought proper to vindicate himself.

But the grand proof of Johnson’s malignity is the manner in which he has treated the character and conduct of Milton. To enforce this charge has wearied sophistry and exhausted the invention of a party. What they cannot deny, they palliate; what they cannot prove, they say is probable. But why all this rage against Dr. Johnson? Addison, before him, had said of Milton;

Oh! had the Poet ne’er prophan’d his pen,
To varnish o’er the guilt of faithless men!

And had not Johnson an equal right to avow his sentiments? Do his enemies claim a privilege to abuse whatever is valuable to Englishmen, either in Church or State? and must the liberty of UNLICENSED PRINTING be denied to the friends of the British constitution?

It is unnecessary to pursue the argument through all its artifices, since, dismantled of ornament and seducing language, the plain truth may be stated in a narrow compass. Johnson knew that Milton was a republican; he says, “an acrimonious and furly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason, than that a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.” Johnson knew that Milton talked aloud “of the danger of READMITTING KINGSHIP in this nation;” and when Milton adds, “that a commonwealth was commended, or rather ENJOINED, by our Saviour himself, to all Christians, not without a remarkable disallowance, and the brand of Gentilism UPON KINGSHIP,” Johnson thought him no better than a wild enthusiast. He knew, as well as Milton, “that the happiness of a nation must needs be firmest and certainest in a full and free council of their own electing, where no single person, but reason only, ways;” but the example of all the republics, recorded in the annals of mankind, gave him no room
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to hope that REASON ONLY would be heard. He knew that the republican form of government, having little or no complication, and no consonance of parts by a nice mechanism forming a regular whole, was too simple to be beautiful even in theory. In practice it, perhaps, never existed. In its most flourishing state, at Athens, Rome, and Carthage, it was a constant scene of tumult and commotion. From the mischiefs of a wild democracy, the progress has ever been to the dominion of an aristocracy; and the word *aristocracy* fatally includes the boldest and most turbulent citizens, who rise by their crimes, and call themselves the best men in the state. By intrigue, by cabal, and faction, a pernicious oligarchy is sure to succeed, and end at last in the tyranny of a single ruler. Tacitus, the great master of political wisdom, saw, under the mixed authority of king, nobles, and people, a better form of government than Milton's boasted republic; and what Tacitus admired in theory, but despaired of enjoying, Johnson saw established in this country. He knew that it had been overturned by the rage of frantic men; but he knew that, after the iron rod of Cromwell's usurpa-

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tion, the constitution was once more restored to its first principles. Monarchy was established, and this country was regenerated. It was regenerated a second time at the Revolution: the rights of men were then defined, and the blessings of good order and civil liberty have been ever since diffused through the whole community.

The peace and happiness of society were what Dr. Johnson had at heart. He knew that Milton called his *Defence of the Regicides* a defence of the people of England, but, however glossed and varnished, he thought it an apology for murder. Had the men, who, under a shew of liberty, brought their king to the scaffold, proved by their subsequent conduct, that the public good inspired their actions, the end might have given some sanction to the means; but usurpation and slavery followed. Milton undertook the office of secretary under the despotic power of Cromwell, offering the incense of adulation to his master, with the titles of *Director of public Councils, the Leader of unconquered Armies, the Father of his Country*. Milton declared, at the same time, that *nothing is more pleasing to God, or*
more

more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind should have the sovereign power. In this strain of servile flattery Milton gives us the right divine of tyrants. But it seems, in the same piece, he exhorts Cromwell “not to desert those great principles of liberty which he had professed to espouse; for, it would be a grievous enormity, if, after having successfully opposed tyranny, he should himself act the part of a tyrant, and betray the cause that he had defended.” This desertion of every honest principle the advocate for liberty lived to see. Cromwell acted the tyrant; and, with vile hypocrisy, told the people, that he had consulted the Lord, and the Lord would have it so. Milton took an under part in the tragedy. Did that become the defender of the people of England? Brutus saw his country enslaved; he struck the blow for freedom, and he died with honour in the cause. Had he lived to be a secretary under Tiberius, what would now be said of his memory?

But still, it seems, the prostitution with which Milton is charged, since it cannot be defended, is to be retorted on the character of Johnson.

For

For this purpose a book has been published, called *Remarks on Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton, to which are added Milton's Tractate of Education, and Arcopagitica*. In this laboured tract we are told, "There is one performance ascribed to the pen of the Doctor, where the prostitution is of so singular a nature, that it would be difficult to select an adequate motive for it out of the mountainous heap of conjectural causes of human passions or human caprice. It is the speech of the late unhappy Dr. William Dodd, when he was about to hear the sentence of the law pronounced upon him, in consequence of an indictment for forgery. The voice of the publick has given the honour of manufacturing this speech to Dr. Johnson; and the style and configuration of the speech itself confirm the imputation. But it is hardly possible to divine what could be his motive for accepting the office. A man, to express the precise state of mind of another, about to be destined to an ignominious death for a capital crime, should, one would imagine, have some consciousness, that he himself had incurred some guilt of the same kind." In all the schools of sophistry is there

there to be found so vile an argument? In the purlieus of Grub-street is there such another mouthful of dirt? In the whole quiver of Malice is there so envenomed a shaft?

After this it is to be hoped, that a certain class of men will talk no more of Johnson's malignity. The last apology for Milton is, that he acted according to his principles. But Johnson thought those principles detestable; pernicious to the constitution in Church and State, destructive of the peace of society, and hostile to the great fabric of civil policy, which the wisdom of ages has taught every Briton to revere, to love, and cherish. He reckoned Milton in that class of men, of whom the Roman historian says, when they want, by a sudden convulsion, to overturn the government, they roar and clamour for liberty; if they succeed, they destroy liberty itself. *Ut imperium evertant, Libertatem præferunt; si perverterint, libertatem ipsam aggredientur.* Such were the sentiments of Dr. Johnson; and it may be asked, in the language of Bolingbroke, "Are these sentiments, which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any
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“situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow?” Johnson has done ample justice to Milton’s poetry: the Criticism on Paradise Lost is a sublime composition. Had he thought the author as good and pious a citizen as Dr. Watts, he would have been ready, notwithstanding his non-conformity, to do equal honour to the memory of the man.

It is now time to close this essay, which the author fears has been drawn too much into length. In the progress of the work, feeble as it may be, he thought himself performing the last human office to the memory of a friend, whom he loved, esteemed, and honoured.

His saltem accumulæ donis, et fungar inani
Munere.—

The author of these Memoirs has been anxious to give the features of the man, and the true character of the author. He has not suffered the hand of partiality to colour his excellences with too much warmth; nor has he endeavoured to throw his singularities too much into the shade. Dr. Johnson’s failings may well be forgiven for the sake of his virtues. His defects were spots in the sun. His piety, his kind affections, and the goodness

ness of his heart, present an example worthy of imitation. His works still remain a monument of genius and of learning. Had he written nothing but what is contained in this edition, the quantity shews a life spent in study and meditation. If to this we added the labour of his Dictionary and other various productions, it may be fairly allowed, as he used to say of himself, that he has written his share. In the volumes here presented to the publick, the reader will find a perpetual source of pleasure and instruction. With due precautions, authors may learn to grace their style with elegance, harmony, and precision; they may be taught to think with vigour and perspicuity; and, to crown the whole, by a diligent attention to these books all may advance in virtue.

F I N I S;