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THE  
L I F E  
OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.  
VOL. I.



**LONDON :**  
**Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,**  
**New-Street-Square.**

BOSWELL'S LIFE  
OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, L.L.D.  
VOL. I.

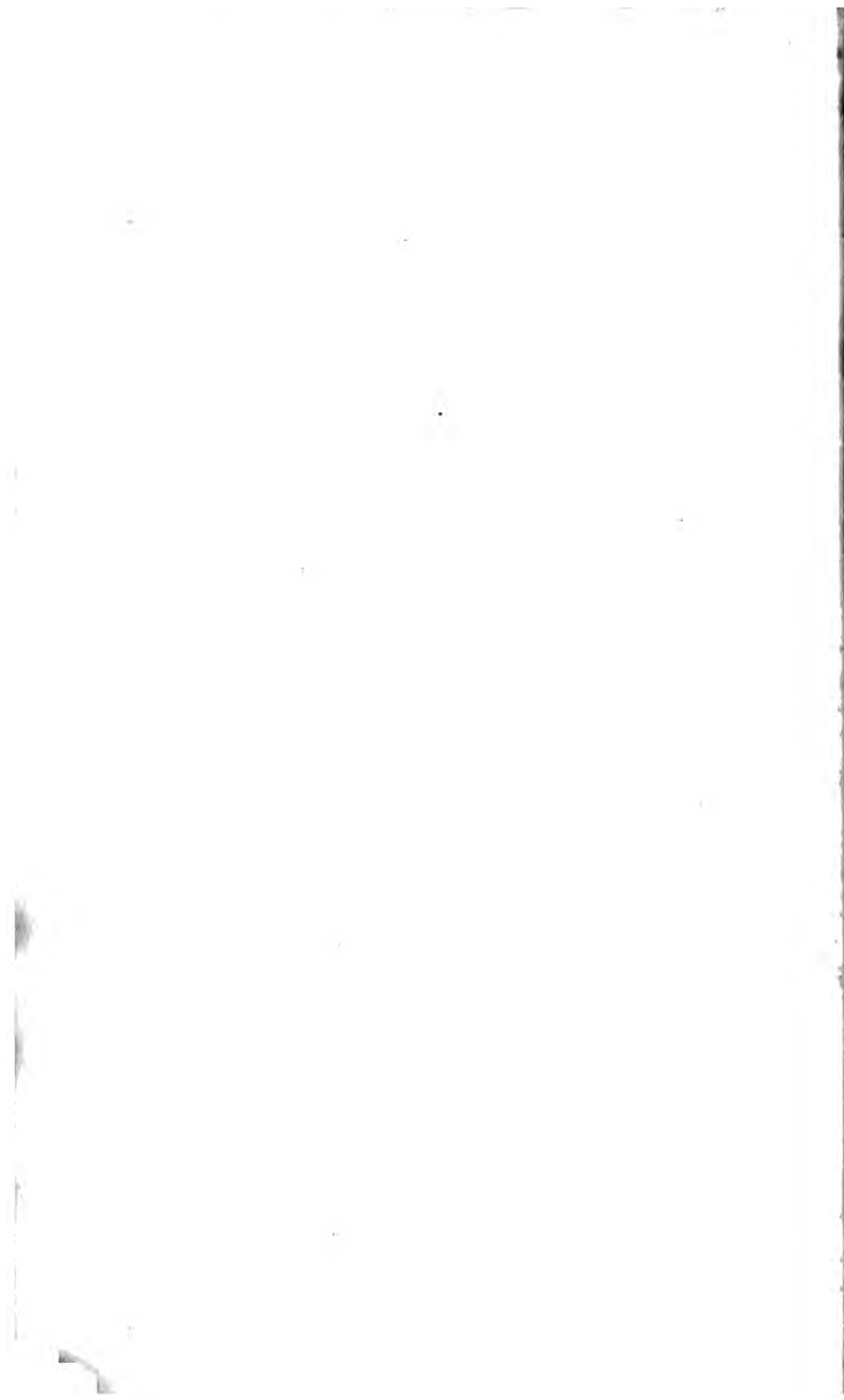


Drawn by J. Stanfield, R. A.

Engraved by E. Finden.

*The House in which Johnson was born;*  
Market place, Lichfield.

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.  
1833.



THE  
LIFE  
OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

INCLUDING  
A JOURNAL OF HIS TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES;

BY  
JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
ANECDOTES BY HAWKINS, PIOZZI, MURPHY,  
TYERS, REYNOLDS, STEEVENS, &c.

AND NOTES BY VARIOUS HANDS.

57  
..... *Quo fit ut OMNIS*  
*Votivâ pateat veluti depicta tabellâ*  
VITA SENIS . . . . . HOR. 1 Sat. lib. II.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXXXV.

18.



LONDON :  
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,  
New-Street-Square.

## PREFACE.

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THE object of this undertaking is to place before the public, in an uniform and portable form, and at a very moderate price, *all* the existing materials for the biography of Dr. Johnson, together with copious illustrations, critical, explanatory, and graphical. The collection will be comprised in eight volumes— one volume to be published on the 1st of every month, until the whole is completed.

The “Life of Johnson” by Boswell—the most interesting and instructive specimen of biography that has ever been given to the world—must, of course, occupy the chief space and attention; and that author’s “Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides” will be incorporated in his main narrative, after the example of his last editor, the Right Hon. John Wilson Croker; who justly observes, that nothing could have prevented Boswell himself from making this arrangement, but the legal obstacle arising out of his previous contract with the bookseller who had published the Journal.

Johnson's own Diary of his Tour into Wales in 1774, first published by Mr. Duppa in 1816, and various private letters to Mrs. Thrale and others, have also been inserted [within brackets] in the text of Boswell; he himself having uniformly availed himself of similar new materials, as they reached his hand while occupied with the second and third editions of his work.

The present Editors, however, have not judged it proper to follow the example of Mr. Croker, in interweaving with the text of Boswell any materials, however valuable, derived from other pens than those of Dr. Johnson and the original biographer himself. Their plan has been to give, from minor biographers and miscellaneous authorities, in the form of *foot-notes* to Boswell's text, whatever appeared to bear directly on the subjects therein discussed, or on *facts* of Johnson's life therein omitted; but to reserve for their seventh and eighth volumes the rich assemblage of mere conversational fragments, supplied by Piozzi, Hawkins, Tyers, Miss Reynolds, Murphy, Cumberland, Nichols, and the other friends and acquaintances of Dr. Johnson, who have, in their various writings, added to the general record of his wit and wisdom. This arrangement has seemed that most consistent with a just estimation of the literary character of Boswell. Altogether unrivalled in his own style of narrative, it was considered as hardly fair to his memory, that his text should not appear pure and unbroken.

The division of Boswell's text into chapters, now

for the first time adopted, will, the Editors presume, be found convenient to the reader.

In the *Appendices* to the various volumes; in the foot-notes throughout; and in the compilation of the miscellaneous pages of the seventh and eighth volumes, the Editors have availed themselves, to the fullest extent compatible with their general scheme, of Mr. Croker's admirable annotations. The edition of 1831 excited so much notice among the leading contributors to our periodical press, that a new and plentiful source of elucidation, both historical and critical, has been placed at the command of Mr. Croker's successors; and of this, also, they have endeavoured to make the proper use. Finally, the Publisher has been enabled, by the kindness of his literary friends, to enrich the present work with a very considerable supply of illustrative materials entirely new;—but of this it will become the Editors to say little, until their task shall have been completed.

It has been their ambition, and it is their earnest hope, to be instrumental in opening and familiarising to the greatly expanded, and hourly expanding circle of intelligent readers in the less affluent classes of the community, a mine of information and amusement, which may be said to have been hitherto accessible only to the purchasers of expensive books; and even to these by no means so directly or so conveniently as, after the lapse of so many years, and with them of so many legal copyrights, might have fairly been expected in this æra of cheap literature.



Reserving for the Preface to the last volume what they may have to say with respect to the minor biographers of Johnson, the Editors now proceed to a few remarks on the great work of Boswell.

His *Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides in 1773*, was published in 1785, the year after Johnson's death, in one volume octavo; and has since been separately printed many times. It was, as has been mentioned, first incorporated with the Author's general narrative of the Doctor's Life in the edition of Mr. Croker, 1831; and this example will assuredly be adhered to in all future editions. Not the least interesting circumstance connected with this Tour is, that Johnson read from time to time Boswell's record of his sayings and doings, and so far from being displeased with its minuteness, expressed great admiration of its accuracy, and encouraged the chronicler to proceed with his grand ulterior undertaking; viz., the "*Life of Johnson*:" which first appeared, in two volumes quarto, in April 1791, — seven years after Dr. Johnson's death.

Boswell gave a second edition of the *Life* in 1794, and was engaged in preparing a third, when death overtook him in 1795. His new materials were made use of by his friend and executor, the estimable Edmond Malone, who brought out the third edition in 1799; and superintended likewise the fourth in 1804; a fifth, in 1807; and a sixth, in 1811. In these editions, Mr. Malone gave many valuable notes of his own; and was also furnished with important assistance by Dr. Charles Burney, author of the "*History of Music*," and father of the

authoress of "Evelina;" by the Rev. J. Blakeway of Shrewsbury; James Bindley, Esq., First Commissioner of Stamps; the Rev. Dr. Vyse, Rector of Lambeth; the Rev. Dr. Kearney, Archdeacon of Raphoe, in Ireland; and James Boswell, Esq., jun., the second son of the Biographer. The contributions of Malone, and his various friends, are distinguished in the present collection by their respective signatures.

Mr. Chalmers further enriched the Annotations on Boswell, in the ninth edition, which he published in 1822; and he liberally allowed Mr. Croker to make whatever use he pleased of that edition, when preparing the eleventh, that of 1831. The tenth was an anonymous one, published at Oxford in 1826; but this was hardly more than a handsome reprint of the earlier copies.

Besides the materials accumulated by Boswell himself, his intelligent son, Malone, Chalmers, and their various literary allies, Mr. Croker's character and station opened to him, when preparing the edition of 1831, many new and most interesting sources of information, both manuscript and oral. He acknowledges more especially, in his preface, the copious communications of the Rev. Dr. Hall, Master of Pembroke College, Oxford,—from which he was enabled to throw unexpected light on some of the earlier chapters of Dr. Johnson's personal career; those of the Rev. Dr. Harwood, the historian of Lichfield, who procured for him, through Mrs. Pearson, the widow of the legatee of Miss Lucy Porter, many letters addressed to that lady

by Dr. Johnson, but for which Boswell had inquired in vain ; of Lord Rokeby, the nephew and heir of Mrs. Montague, who placed Johnson's correspondence with her at his disposal ; of Mr. Langton, the grandson of Bennet Langton, who, in like manner, opened his family repositories ; of Mr. Palmer, grand-nephew of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who contributed, besides various autograph letters and notes of Johnson to his great-aunt, Miss Reynolds, a MS. of seventy pages, written by that lady, and entitled "Recollections of Dr. Johnson ;" of Mr. Markland, whom he thanks (as the present Editors must again do) for "a great deal of zealous assistance and valuable information," — including "a copy of Mrs. Piozzi's Anecdotes, copiously annotated, *propria manu*, by Mr. Malone : " of Mr. J. L. Anderdon, for some of the original letters, memoranda, and note-books used by Boswell when composing the LIFE ; of the present MACLEOD, son of the Chief who received Johnson at Dunvegan in 1773, for a curious autobiographical fragment, written by his father ; of Sir Walter Scott, for a series of very interesting notes on the "*Tour to the Hebrides*:" of the venerable Lord Stowell, the friend and executor of Johnson, for dictating some *recollections* of the Doctor, of which, although the notes, by an unfortunate accident, were lost, the substance had not escaped Mr. Croker's own memory ; of Dr. Elrington, the Lord Bishop of Ferns ; and, finally, of Mr. D'Israeli, — the Marquess Wellesley, — the Marquess of Lansdowne, — Lord Bexley, —

Lord St. Helens, — the late Earl Spenser; and various other distinguished persons.

From the Preface to Mr. Croker's edition we shall now extract those passages of a more general interest, which ought to be in the hands of all those who are to profit by that gentleman's ingenuity and research : —

“ It were superfluous to expatiate on the merits, at least as a source of amusement, of Boswell's LIFE OF JOHNSON. Whatever doubts may have existed as to the prudence or the propriety of the *original* publication — however naturally private confidence was alarmed, or individual vanity offended, the voices of criticism and complaint were soon drowned in the general applause. And no wonder : the work combines within itself the four most entertaining classes of writing — biography, memoirs, familiar letters, and that assemblage of literary anecdotes which the French have taught us to distinguish by the termination *Ana*.

“ Having no domestic ties or duties, the latter portion of Dr. Johnson's life was, as Mrs. Piozzi observes, nothing but *conversation*, and that conversation was watched and recorded from night to night and from hour to hour with zealous attention and unceasing diligence. No man, the most staid or the most guarded, is always the same in health, in spirits, in opinions. Human life is a series of inconsistencies; and when Johnson's early misfortunes, his protracted poverty, his strong passions, his violent prejudices, and, above all, his mental infirmities are considered, it is only wonderful that a portrait so laboriously minute and so painfully faithful does not exhibit more of blemish, incongruity, and error.

“ The life of Dr. Johnson is indeed a most curious *chapter in the history of man*; for certainly there is no instance of the life of any other human being having been exhibited in so much detail, or with so much fidelity. There are, perhaps,

not many men who have practised so much self-examination as to know *themselves* as well as every reader knows Dr. Johnson.

“ We must recollect that it is not his *table-talk* or his literary conversations only that have been published: all his most private and most trifling correspondence — all his most common as well as his most confidential intercourses — all his most secret communion with his own conscience — and even the solemn and contrite exercises of his piety, have been divulged and exhibited to the ‘garish eye’ of the world without reserve — I had almost said, without delicacy. Young, with gloomy candour, has said

‘ Heaven’s Sovereign saves all beings but himself  
That hideous sight, a naked human heart.’

What a man must Johnson have been, whose heart, having been laid more bare than that of any other mortal ever was, has passed almost unblemished through so terrible an ordeal!

“ But, while we contemplate with such interest this admirable and perfect *portrait*, let us not forget the *painter*. pupils and imitators have added draperies and backgrounds, but the *head* and *figure* are by Mr. Boswell.

“ Mr. Burke told Sir James Mackintosh, that he thought Johnson showed more powers of mind in company than in his writings, and on another occasion said, that he thought Johnson appeared greater in Mr. Boswell’s volumes than even in his own.

“ It was a strange and fortunate concurrence, that one so prone to talk and who talked so well, should be brought into such close contact and confidence with one so zealous and so able to record. Dr. Johnson was a man of extraordinary powers, but Mr. Boswell had qualities, in their own way, almost as rare. He united lively manners with indefatigable diligence, and the volatile curiosity of a man about town with the drudging patience of a chronicler. With a very good opinion of himself, he was quick in discerning, and frank in applauding, the excellencies of others. Though proud of his own name and lineage, and ambitious of the countenance of

the great, he was yet so cordial an admirer of merit, wherever found, that much public ridicule, and something like contempt, were excited by the modest assurance with which he pressed his acquaintance on all the notorieties of his time, and by the ostentatious (but, in the main, laudable) assiduity with which he attended the exile Paoli and the low-born Johnson! These were amiable, and, for us, fortunate inconsistencies. His contemporaries indeed, not without some colour of reason, occasionally complained of him as vain, inquisitive, troublesome, and giddy; but his vanity was inoffensive — his curiosity was commonly directed towards laudable objects — when he meddled, he did so, generally, from good-natured motives — and his giddiness was only an exuberant gaiety, which never failed in the respect and reverence due to literature, morals, and religion; and posterity gratefully acknowledges the taste, temper, and talents with which he selected, enjoyed, and described that polished and intellectual society which still lives in his work, and without his work had perished!

‘ Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona  
Multi : sed omnes illacrymabiles  
Urgentur, ignotique longâ  
Nocte, carent quia vate sacro.’ (1) — HOR.

Such imperfect though interesting sketches as Ben Jonson’s visit to Drummond, Selden’s Table Talk, Swift’s Journal, and Spence’s Anecdotes, only tantalise our curiosity and excite our regret that there was no *Boswell* to preserve the conversation and illustrate the life and times of Addison, of Swift himself, of Milton, and, above all, of Shakspeare! We can hardly refrain from indulging ourselves with the imagination of works so instructive and delightful; but that were idle; except as it may tend to increase our obligation to the faithful and fortunate biographer of Dr. Johnson.

(1) [“ Before great Agamemnon reign’d  
Reign’d kings as great as he, and brave,  
Whose huge ambition’s now contain’d  
In the small compass of a grave;  
In endless night they sleep, unwept, unknown;  
No bard had they to make all time their own.” — FRANCIS.]

“ Mr. Boswell’s birth and education familiarised him with the highest of his acquaintance, and his good-nature and conviviality with the lowest. He describes society of all classes with the happiest discrimination. Even his foibles assisted his curiosity; he was sometimes laughed at, but always well received; he excited no envy, he imposed no restraint. It was well known that he made notes of every conversation, yet no timidity was alarmed, no delicacy demurred; and we are perhaps indebted to the lighter parts of his character for the patient indulgence with which every body submitted to sit for their pictures.

“ Nor were his talents inconsiderable. He had looked a good deal into books, and more into the world. The narrative portion of his work is written with good sense, in an easy and perspicuous style, and without (which seems odd enough) any palpable imitation of Johnson. But in recording conversations he is unrivalled: that he was eminently accurate in substance, we have the evidence of all his contemporaries; but he is also in a high degree characteristic — dramatic. The incidental observations with which he explains or enlivens the dialogue, are terse, appropriate, and picturesque — we not merely hear his company, *we see them!*

“ Yet his father was, we are told, by no means satisfied with the life he led, nor his eldest son with the kind of reputation he attained: neither liked to hear of his connexion even with Paoli or Johnson; and both would have been better pleased if he had contented himself with a domestic life of sober respectability.

“ The public, however, the dispenser of fame, has judged differently, and considers the biographer of Johnson as the most eminent part of the family pedigree. With less activity, less indiscretion, less curiosity, less enthusiasm, he might, perhaps, have been what the old lord would, no doubt, have thought more respectable; and have been pictured on the walls of Auchinleck (the very name of which we never should have heard) by some stiff, provincial painter. in a lawyer’s wig or a squire’s hunting cap; but his portrait, by Reynolds, would not have been ten times engraved; his name could never have

become — as it is likely to be — as far spread and as lasting as the English language ; and ‘ the world had wanted ’ a work to which it refers as a manual of amusement, a repository of wit, wisdom, and morals, and a lively and faithful history of the manners and literature of England, during a period hardly second in brilliancy, and superior in importance, even to the Augustan age of Anne.”

To these masterly strictures of Mr. Croker we now append some of the passages in which other writers have recorded their estimation of Boswell ; concluding with a few extracts from the periodical literature of our own times.

*Malone.*

“ Highly as this work is now estimated, it will, I am confident, be still more valued by posterity a century hence, when the excellent and extraordinary man, whose wit and wisdom are here recorded, shall be viewed at a still greater distance ; and the instruction and entertainment they afford will at once produce reverential gratitude, admiration, and delight.” — *Preface, 1804.*

*Sir William Forbes.*

“ The circle of Mr. Boswell’s acquaintance among the learned, the witty, and indeed among men of all ranks and professions, was extremely extensive, as his talents were considerable, and his convivial powers made his company much in request. His warmth of heart towards his friends was very great ; and I have known few men who possessed a stronger sense of piety, or more fervent devotion (tinctured, no doubt, with some little share of superstition ; which had, probably, in some degree, been fostered by his habits of intimacy with Dr. Johnson), perhaps not always sufficient to regulate his imagination, or direct his conduct, yet still genuine, and founded both in his understanding and his heart. His Life of



that extraordinary man must be allowed to be one of the most characteristic and entertaining biographical works in the English language."—*Life of Beattie*, vol. ii. p. 166.

*Cumberland.*

"Under the hospitable roof of Mr. Dilly, the biographer of Johnson passed many jovial, joyous hours: here he has located some of the liveliest scenes and most brilliant passages in his entertaining anecdotes of his friend Samuel Johnson, who yet lives and speaks in him. The book of Boswell is, ever as the year comes round, my winter-evening's entertainment. I loved the man: he had great convivial powers, and an inexhaustible fund of good-humour in society; no body could detail the spirit of a conversation in the true style and character of the parties more happily than my friend James Boswell."—*Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 227.

*Farrington.*

"Of those who were frequently at Sir Joshua Reynolds's parties, Mr. Boswell was very acceptable to him. He was a man of excellent temper, and with much gaiety of manner, possessed a shrewd understanding, and close observation of character. He had a happy faculty of dissipating that reserve, which too often damps the pleasure of English society. His good-nature and social feeling always inclined him to endeavour to produce that effect; which was so well known, that when he appeared, he was hailed as the harbinger of festivity. Sir Joshua was never more happy than when, on such occasion, Mr. Boswell was seated within his hearing. The Royal Society gratified Sir Joshua by electing Mr. Boswell their Secretary of Foreign Correspondence; which made him an Honorary Member of that body."—*Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, p. 83.

*Sir Walter Scott.*

"Of all the men distinguished in this or any other age, Dr. Johnson has left upon posterity the strongest and most

vivid impression, so far as person, manners, disposition, and conversation are concerned. We do but name him, or open a book which he has written, and the sound or action recall to the imagination at once his form, his merits, his peculiarities, nay, the very uncouthness of his gestures, and the deep impressive tone of his voice. We learn not only what he said, but form an idea how he said it; and have, at the same time, a shrewd guess of the secret motive why he did so, and whether he spoke in sport or in anger, in the desire of conviction, or for the love of debate. It was said of a noted wag, that his bon-mots did not give full satisfaction when published, because he could not print his face. But with respect to Dr. Johnson, this has been in some degree accomplished; and, although the greater part of the present generation never saw him, yet he is, in our mind's eye, a personification as lively as that of Siddons in *Lady Macbeth*, or Kemble in *Cardinal Wolsey*. All this, as the world knows, arises from his having found in James Boswell such a biographer as no man but himself ever had, or ever deserved to have. Considering the eminent persons to whom it relates, and the quantity of miscellaneous information and entertaining gossip which it brings together, his *Life of Johnson* may be termed, without exception, the best parlour-window book that ever was written." — *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. i. p. 260.

*Edinburgh Review.*

“Boswell was the very prince of retail wits and philosophers. One principal attraction of his *Life of Johnson* is the contrast which, in some respects, it presents to the Doctor's own works. Instead of the pompous common-places which he was in the habit of piling together and rounding into periods in his closet, his behaviour and conversation in company might be described as a continued exercise of spleen, an indulgence of irritable humours, a masterly display of character. He made none but home-thrusts, but desperate lounges, but palpable hits. No turgidity; no flaccidness; no bloated flesh: all was

muscular strength and agility. It was this vigorous and voluntary exercise of his faculties, when freed from all restraint, in the intercourse of private society, that has left such a rich harvest for his Biographer ; and it cannot be denied that it has been well and carefully got in. Other works furnish us with curious particulars, but minute and disjointed : — they want picturesque grouping and dramatic effect. We have the opinions and sayings of eminent men : but they do not grow out of the occasion : we do not know at whose house such a thing happened, nor the effect it had on those who were present. We have good things served up in sandwiches, but we do not sit down, as in Boswell, to ‘ an ordinary of fine discourse.’ There is no eating and drinking going on. We have nothing like Wilkes’s plying Johnson with the best bits at Dilly’s table, and overcoming his Tory prejudices by the good things he offered, and the good things he said ; nor does any Goldsmith drop in after tea, with his peach-coloured coat, like one dropped from the clouds, bewildered with his finery and the success of a new work.” — No. lxvi. 1820.

“ The ‘ Life of Johnson ’ is one of the best books in the world. It is assuredly a great, a very great, work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, — Shakspeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, — Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly, that it is not worth while to place them : Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere. We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect so singular a phenomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography — Boswell has beaten them all. This book resembles nothing so much as the conversation of the inmates of the Palace of Truth.” — No. cxii. 1832.

*Quarterly Review.*

“ Our vivacious neighbours, more fond of talk, found a pleasure, when silent, in writing down the talk of others,

even to their *Arlequiniana*, for Harlequin too must talk in France. Of their flock, the bell-wether is the *Menagiana*. Yet the four volumes are eclipsed by the singular splendour of Boswell's Johnson. All other *Ana* are usually confined to a single person, and chiefly run on the particular subject connected with that person; but Boswell's is the *Ana* of all mankind; nor can the world speedily hope to receive a similar gift; for it is scarcely more practicable to find another Boswell than another Johnson." — No. xlvi. 1820.

"Boswell's Life of Johnson is, we suspect, the richest dictionary of wit and wisdom any language can boast. Even if it were possible to consider his delineation of Johnson merely as a character in a novel of the period, the world would have owed him, and acknowledged, no trivial obligation. But what can the best character in any novel ever be, compared to a full-length of the reality of genius? and what specimen of such reality will ever surpass the 'OMNIS votivâ veluti depicta tabellâ VITA SENIS?' — the first, and as yet by far the most complete picture of the whole life and conversation of one of that rare order of beings, the rarest, the most influential of all, whose mere genius entitles and enables them to act as great independent controlling powers upon the general tone of thought and feeling of their kind, and invests the very soil where it can be shown they ever set foot, with a living and sacred charm of interest, years and ages after the loftiest of the contemporaries, that did or did not condescend to notice them, shall be as much forgotten as if they had never strutted their hour on the glittering stage? Boswell's 'Johnson' is, without doubt, — excepting, yet hardly excepting, a few immortal monuments of creative genius, — that English book which, were this island to be sunk to-morrow, with all that it inhabits, would be most prized in other days and countries, by the students 'of us and of our history.' To the influence of Boswell we owe, probably, three fourths of what is most entertaining, as well as no inconsiderable portion of whatever is most instructive, in all the books of memoirs that have subsequently appeared." — No. xci. 1832.

The graphical embellishments of the present Volume are, —

I. A whole-length portrait of Johnson, from an original painting in the possession of Mr. Archdeacon Cambridge, the son of the Doctor's friend, Richard Owen Cambridge, Esq., of Twickenham; and "considered," says the proprietor, "by all who knew him, to be an exact representation of his figure, appearance, and action."

II. A view of the market-place of Lichfield, with the house and shop of Michael Johnson, in which the Doctor was born; and,

III. A copy of a curious drawing, representing the principal visitors at Tunbridge Wells, in 1748; among whom appear Doctor and Mrs. Johnson, Garrick, Speaker Onslow, Lord Chatham, Miss Chudleigh, and several other distinguished individuals. The names of the persons are fac-similes of the hand-writing of Richardson the novelist.

In the Appendix will be found some Notices of Michael Johnson, father of the Doctor; and the whole of the extraordinary Fragment, first published in 1805, under the title of "An Account of the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from his Birth to his Eleventh Year, written by Himself."

Albemarle Street,  
Feb. 1835.

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## CHAPTER X.

1752—1753.

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THE  
L I F E  
OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

BY  
JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

VOL. I.

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“AFTER MY DEATH I WISH NO OTHER HERALD,  
NO OTHER SPEAKER OF MY LIVING ACTIONS,  
TO KEEP MINE HONOUR FROM CORRUPTION,  
BUT SUCH AN HONEST CHRONICLER AS GRIFFITH.” (1)

SHAKSPEARE, *Henry VIII.*

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(1) See Dr. Johnson's letter to Mrs. Thrale, dated Ostick in Skie, September 30. 1773: — “Boswell writes a regular journal of our travels, which, I think, contains as much of what I say and do, as of all other occurrences together; ‘*for such a faithful chronicler is Griffith.*’” — BOSWELL.

## DEDICATION.

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TO

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

MY DEAR SIR,

EVERY liberal motive that can actuate an Author in the dedication of his labours, concurs in directing me to you, as the person to whom the following Work should be inscribed.

If there be a pleasure in celebrating the distinguished merit of a contemporary, mixed with a certain degree of vanity not altogether inexcusable, in appearing fully sensible of it, where can I find one, in complimenting whom I can with more general approbation gratify those feelings? Your excellence, not only in the Art over which you have long presided with unrivalled fame, but also in Philosophy and elegant Literature, is well known to the present, and will continue to be the admiration of future ages.

Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, by which you are so amiable in private society, and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common centre of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious ; all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you.

If a man may indulge an honest pride, in having it known to the world, that he has been thought worthy of particular attention by a person of the first eminence in the age in which he lived, whose company has been universally courted, I am justified in availing myself of the usual privilege of a Dedication, when I mention that there has been a long and uninterrupted friendship between us.

If gratitude should be acknowledged for favours received, I have this opportunity, my dear Sir, most sincerely to thank you for the many happy hours which I owe to your kindness, — for the cordiality with which you have at all times been pleased to welcome me, — for the number of valuable acquaintances to whom you have introduced me, — for the *noctes cœnæque Deûm*, which I have enjoyed under your roof.

If a work should be inscribed to one who is master of the subject of it, and whose approbation, therefore, must insure it credit and success, the *Life of Dr. Johnson* is, with the greatest propriety, dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was the intimate and beloved friend of that great man; the friend, whom he declared to be "the most invulnerable man he knew; whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to abuse." You, my dear Sir, studied him, and knew him well: you venerated and admired him. Yet, luminous as he was upon the whole, you perceived all the shades which mingled in the grand composition; all the little peculiarities and slight blemishes which marked the literary Colossus. Your very warm commendation of the specimen which I gave in my "*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*," of my being able to preserve his conversation in an authentic and lively manner, which opinion the public has confirmed, was the best encouragement for me to persevere in my purpose of producing the whole of my stores.

In one respect, this Work will, in some passages, be different from the former. In my "*Tour*," I was almost unboundedly open in my communications, and from my eagerness to display the wonderful fertility and readiness of Johnson's wit, freely

showed to the world its dexterity, even when I was myself the object of it. I trusted that I should be liberally understood, as knowing very well what I was about, and by no means as simply unconscious of the pointed effects of the satire. I own, indeed, that I was arrogant enough to suppose that the tenor of the rest of the book would sufficiently guard me against such a strange imputation. But it seems I judged too well of the world ; for, though I could scarcely believe it, I have been undoubtedly informed, that many persons, especially in distant quarters, not penetrating enough into Johnson's character, so as to understand his mode of treating his friends, have arraigned my judgment, instead of seeing that I was sensible of all that they could observe.

It is related of the great Dr. Clarke<sup>(1)</sup>, that when in one of his leisure hours he was unbending himself with a few friends in the most playful and frolic-

(1) [Dr. Samuel Clarke was born at Norwich, in 1675, and died in 1729. "In the opinion of Dr. Johnson, he was," says Mr. Seward, "the most complete literary character that England ever produced. He has been censured by some for playing at cards, and for being occasionally a practical joker : but those who make this objection only to the perfection of this great man's character, do not consider that the most busy persons are, in general, the most easily amused." — Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 320. Of Barrow it is said, that "as he could presently learn to play at all games, so he could accommodate his discourse to all capacities."]

some manner, he observed Beau Nash<sup>(1)</sup> approaching; upon which he suddenly stopped;—“My boys,” said he, “let us be grave: here comes a fool.” The world, my friend, I have found to be a great fool, as to that particular on which it has become necessary to speak very plainly. I have, therefore, in this Work been more reserved; and though I tell nothing but the truth, I have still kept in my mind that the whole truth is not always to be exposed. This, however, I have managed so as to occasion no diminution of the pleasure which my book should afford; though malignity may sometimes be disappointed of its gratifications.

I am,

My dear Sir,

Your much obliged friend,

And faithful humble servant,

JAMES BOSWELL.

London, April 20. 1791.

(1) [Richard Nash, Esq., many years Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, was born in 1674, and died in 1761. A Life of this extraordinary character, by Goldsmith, was published in 1762; at p. 156 of which, the above anecdote is related.]



ADVERTISEMENT  
TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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I AT last deliver to the world a Work which I have long promised, and of which, I am afraid, too high expectations have been raised. The delay of its publication must be imputed, in a considerable degree, to the extraordinary zeal which has been shown by distinguished persons in all quarters to supply me with additional information concerning its illustrious subject ; resembling in this the grateful tribes of ancient nations, of which every individual was eager to throw a stone upon the grave of a departed hero, and thus to share in the pious office of erecting an honourable monument to his memory.

The labour and anxious attention with which I have collected and arranged the materials of which these volumes are composed, will hardly be conceived by those who read them with careless facility. The stretch of mind and prompt assiduity by which so many conversations were preserved, I myself, at some distance of time, contemplate with wonder ; and I must be allowed to suggest, that the nature of the work, in other respects, as it consists of innumerable detached particulars, all which, even the most minute, I have spared no pains

to ascertain with a scrupulous authenticity, has occasioned a degree of trouble far beyond that of any other species of composition. Were I to detail the books which I have consulted, and the inquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels, I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me only observe, as a specimen of my trouble, that I have sometimes been obliged to run half over London, in order to fix a date correctly ; which, when I had accomplished, I well knew would obtain me no praise, though a failure would have been to my discredit. And after all, perhaps, hard as it may be, I shall not be surprised if omissions or mistakes be pointed out with invidious severity. I have also been extremely careful as to the exactness of my quotations ; holding that there is a respect due to the public, which should oblige every author to attend to this, and never presume to introduce them with, — “ I think I have read ;” or, “ If I remember right,” when the originals may be examined.

I beg leave to express my warmest thanks to those who have been pleased to favour me with communications and advice in the conduct of my Work. But I cannot sufficiently acknowledge my obligations to my friend Mr. Malone<sup>(1)</sup>, who was so good as to allow me to read to him almost the whole of my manuscript, and make such

(1) [“ Mr. Malone’s acquaintance with Mr. Boswell commenced in 1785, when, happening accidentally, at Mr. Baldwin’s printing-house, to be shown a sheet of the ‘Tour to the Hebrides,’ which contained Johnson’s character, he was so much struck with the spirit and fidelity of the portrait, that he requested to be introduced to the writer. From this period a friendship took place between them, which ripened into the strictest and most cordial intimacy, and lasted, without interruption, as long as Mr. Boswell lived.” — Memoir of Malone, by J. Boswell, junior, p. 19.]

remarks as were greatly for the advantage of the Work ; though it is but fair to him to mention, that upon many occasions I differed from him, and followed my own judgment. I regret exceedingly that I was deprived of the benefit of his revision, when not more than one half of the book had passed through the press ; but after having completed his very laborious and admirable edition of SHAKSPEARE, for which he generously would accept of no other reward but that fame which he has so deservedly obtained, he fulfilled his promise of a long-wished for visit to his relations in Ireland ; from whence his safe return *finibus Atticis* is desired by his friends here, with all the classical ardour of *Sic te Diva potens Cypri* ; for there is no man in whom more elegant and worthy qualities are united ; and whose society, therefore, is more valued by those who know him.

It is painful to me to think, that while I was carrying on this Work, several of those to whom it would have been most interesting have died. Such melancholy disappointments we know to be incident to humanity ; but we do not feel them the less. Let me particularly lament the Reverend Thomas Warton, and the Reverend Dr. Adams. (1) Mr. Warton, amidst his variety of genius and learning, was an excellent biographer. His contributions to my collection are highly estimable ; and as he had a true relish of my "Tour to the Hebrides," I trust I should now have been gratified with a larger share of his kind approbation. Dr. Adams, eminent as the Head of a College, as a writer, and as a

(1) [Dr. Thomas Warton, the historian of English poetry, died May 21. 1790, aged 63. Dr. Adams died Jan. 13. 1789, aged 82.]

most amiable man, had known JOHNSON from his early years, and was his friend through life. What reason I had to hope for the countenance of that venerable gentleman to this Work, will appear from what he wrote to me upon a former occasion from Oxford, November 17. 1785: — “Dear Sir, I hazard this letter, not knowing where it will find you, to thank you for your very agreeable ‘Tour,’ which I found here on my return from the country, and in which you have depicted our friend so perfectly to my fancy, in every attitude, every scene and situation, that I have thought myself in the company, and of the party almost throughout. It has given very general satisfaction; and those who found most fault with a passage here and there, have agreed that they could not help going through, and being entertained with the whole. I wish, indeed, some few gross expressions had been softened, and a few of our hero’s foibles had been a little more shaded; but it is useful to see the weaknesses incident to great minds; and you have given us Dr. Johnson’s authority that in history all ought to be told.”

Such a sanction to my faculty of giving a just representation of Dr. Johnson I could not conceal. Nor will I suppress my satisfaction in the consciousness, that by recording so considerable a portion of the wisdom and wit of “the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century (1),” I have largely provided for the instruction and entertainment of mankind.

London, April 20. 1791.

(1) See Mr. Malone’s preface to his edition of Shakspeare.

ADVERTISEMENT  
TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THAT I was anxious for the success of a Work which had employed much of my time and labour, I do not wish to conceal: but whatever doubts I at any time entertained, have been entirely removed by the very favourable reception with which it has been honoured. That reception has excited my best exertions to render my Book more perfect; and in this endeavour I have had the assistance not only of some of my particular friends, but of many other learned and ingenious men, by which I have been enabled to rectify some mistakes, and to enrich the Work with many valuable additions. These I have ordered to be printed separately in quarto, for the accommodation of the purchasers of the first edition. May I be permitted to say, that the typography of both editions does honour to the press of Mr. Henry Baldwin, now Master of the Worshipful Company of Stationers, whom I have long known a worthy man and an obliging friend. (1)

(1) [Mr. Henry Baldwin died, at Richmond, Feb. 21. 1813. Connected with a phalanx of the first-rate wits, Bonnel Thornton, Garrick, Colman, Steevens, &c., he set up, with the success

In the strangely mixed scenes of human existence, our feelings are often at once pleasing and painful. Of this truth, the progress of the present Work furnishes a striking instance. It was highly gratifying to me that my friend, Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS, to whom it is inscribed, lived to peruse it, and to give the strongest testimony to its fidelity<sup>(1)</sup>; but before a second edition, which he contributed to improve, could be finished, the world has been deprived of that most valuable man; a loss of which the regret will be deep, and lasting, and extensive, proportionate to the felicity which he diffused through a wide circle of admirers and friends.

In reflecting that the illustrious subject of this Work, by being more extensively and intimately known, however elevated before, has risen in the veneration and love of mankind, I feel a satisfaction beyond what fame can afford. We cannot, indeed, too much or too often

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it so well deserved, a literary newspaper, 'The St. James's Chronicle,' and brought it to a height of literary eminence till then unknown. — NICHOLS.]

(1) [Sir Joshua Reynolds died February 23. 1792. in his 69th year. Mr. Croker says: — "Mr. Wordsworth has obligingly furnished me with the following copy of a note in a blank page of his copy of Boswell's work, dictated and signed in Mr. Wordsworth's presence by the late Sir George Beaumont, whose own accuracy was exemplary, and who lived very much in the society of Johnson's latter days: — 'Rydal Mount, September 12. 1826. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me at his table, immediately after the publication of this book, that every word of it might be depended upon as if given on oath. Boswell was in the habit of bringing the proof sheets to his house, previously to their being struck off; and if any of the company happened to have been present at the conversation recorded, he requested him or them to correct any error; and not satisfied with this, he would run over all London for the sake of verifying any single word which might be disputed.—G. H. BEAUMONT.'" ]

admire his wonderful powers of mind, when we consider that the principal store of wit and wisdom which this Work contains, was not a particular selection from his general conversation, but was merely his occasional talk at such times as I had the good fortune to be in his company ; and, without doubt, if his discourse at other periods had been collected with the same attention, the whole tenor of what he uttered would have been found equally excellent.

His strong, clear, and animated enforcement of religion, morality, loyalty, and subordination, while it delights and improves the wise and the good, will, I trust, prove an effectual antidote to that detestable sophistry which has been lately imported from France, under the false name of *philosophy*, and with a malignant industry has been employed against the peace, good order, and happiness of society, in our free and prosperous country ; but, thanks be to God, without producing the pernicious effects which were hoped for by its propagators.

It seems to me, in my moments of self-complacency, that this extensive biographical work, however inferior in its nature, may in one respect be assimilated to the *Odyssey*. Amidst a thousand entertaining and instructive episodes the Hero is never long out of sight ; for they are all in some degree connected with him ; and HE, in the whole course of the history, is exhibited by the author for the best advantage of his readers :

— *Quid virtus et quid sapientia possit,  
Utile proposuit nobis exemplar Ulyssen.* (1)

(1) [“ To show what pious wisdom’s power can do,  
The poet sets Ulysses in our view.”— FRANCIS.]

Should there be any cold-blooded and morose mortals who really dislike this Book, I will give them a story to apply. When the great Duke of Marlborough, accompanied by Lord Cadogan, was one day reconnoitring the army in Flanders, a heavy rain came on, and they both called for their cloaks. Lord Cadogan's servant, a good-humoured alert lad, brought his Lordship's in a minute. The Duke's servant, a lazy sulky dog, was so sluggish, that his Grace being wet to the skin, reproved him, and had for answer with a grunt, "I came as fast as I could;" upon which the Duke calmly said, "Cadogan, I would not for a thousand pounds have that fellow's temper."

There are some men, I believe, who have, or think they have, a very small share of vanity. Such may speak of their literary fame in a decorous style of diffidence. But I confess, that I am so formed by nature and by habit, that to restrain the effusion of delight, on having obtained such fame, to me would be truly painful. Why then should I suppress it? Why "out of the abundance of the heart" should I not speak? Let me then mention with a warm, but no insolent exultation, that I have been regaled with spontaneous praise of my work by many and various persons eminent for their rank, learning, talents, and accomplishments; much of which praise I have under their hands to be repositied in my archives at Auchinleck. An honourable and reverend friend, speaking of the favourable reception of my volumes, even in the circles of fashion and elegance, said to me, "you have made them all talk Johnson." — Yes, I may add, I have



16 ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

*Johnsonised* the land ; and I trust they will not only *talk*, but *think*, Johnson.

To enumerate those to whom I have been thus indebted, would be tediously ostentatious. I cannot, however, but name one, whose praise is truly valuable, not only on account of his knowledge and abilities, but on account of the magnificent, yet dangerous embassy, in which he is now employed, which makes every thing that relates to him peculiarly interesting. Lord Macartney (1) favoured me with his own copy of my book, with a number of notes, of which I have availed myself. On the first leaf I found in his Lordship's handwriting, an inscription of such high commendation, that even I, vain as I am, cannot prevail on myself to publish it.

J. BOSWELL.

July 1. 1793.

(1) [George, Earl Macartney, was born in Ireland, in 1737. In 1792, he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to the Emperor of China. In 1797, an account of his embassy was published, by his secretary, Sir George Staunton. He died in 1806, and, in the following year, a Memoir of his Life and a selection from his writings, were published by John Barrow, F. R. S., Secretary to the Admiralty; who had also accompanied his lordship to China.]

THE  
L I F E  
OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

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CHAPTER I.

1709—1716.

*Introduction. — Johnson's Birth and Parentage. — He inherits from his Father "a vile Melancholy." — His Account of the Members of his Family. — Traditional Stories of his Precocity. — Taken to London to be touched by Queen Anne for the Scrofula.*

To write the life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous, task.

Had Dr. Johnson written his own Life, in conformity with the opinion which he has given, that every man's life may be best written by himself<sup>(1)</sup>,

(1) Idler, No. 84. ["Those relations are commonly of most value, in which the writer tells his own story."]

had he employed in the preservation of his own history, that clearness of narration and elegance of language in which he has embalmed so many eminent persons, the world would probably have had the most perfect example of biography that was ever exhibited. But although he at different times, in a desultory manner, committed to writing many particulars of the progress of his mind and fortunes, he never had persevering diligence enough to form them into a regular composition. Of these memorials a few have been preserved; but the greater part was consigned by him to the flames, a few days before his death.

As I had the honour and happiness of enjoying his friendship for upwards of twenty years; as I had the scheme of writing his life constantly in view; as he was well apprised of this circumstance, and from time to time obligingly satisfied my enquiries, by communicating to me the incidents of his early years; as I acquired a facility in recollecting, and was very assiduous in recording his conversation, of which the extraordinary vigour and vivacity constituted one of the first features of his character; and as I have spared no pains in obtaining materials concerning him, from every quarter where I could discover that they were to be found, and have been favoured with the most liberal communications by his friends; I flatter myself that few biographers have entered upon such a work as this, with more advantages; independent of literary abilities, in which I am not vain enough to compare myself

with some great names who have gone before me in this kind of writing.

Since my work was announced, several Lives and Memoirs of Dr. Johnson have been published, the most voluminous of which is one compiled for the booksellers of London, by Sir John Hawkins, Knight <sup>(1)</sup>, a man whom, during my long intimacy with Dr. Johnson, I never saw in his company, I think, but once, and I am sure not above twice. Johnson might have esteemed him for his decent religious demeanour, and his knowledge of books and literary history; but, from the rigid formality of his manners, it is evident that they never could have lived together with companionable ease and familiarity; nor had Sir John Hawkins that nice perception which was necessary to mark the finer and less obvious parts of Johnson's character. His being appointed one of his executors gave him an opportunity of taking possession of such fragments

(1) The greatest part of this book was written while Sir John Hawkins was alive; and I avow, that one object of my strictures was to make him feel some compunction for his illiberal treatment of Dr. Johnson. Since his decease, I have suppressed several of my remarks upon his work. But though I would not "war with the dead" *offensively*, I think it necessary to be strenuous in *defence* of my illustrious friend, which I cannot be, without strong animadversions upon a writer who has greatly injured him. Let me add, that though I doubt I should not have been very prompt to gratify Sir John Hawkins with any compliment in his lifetime, I do now frankly acknowledge, that, in my opinion, his volume, however inadequate and improper as a life of Dr. Johnson, and however discredited by unpardonable inaccuracies in other respects, contains a collection of curious anecdotes and observations, which few men but its author could have brought together. — BOSWELL. [Sir John Hawkins published his Life of Johnson in 1787, and died in 1789.]

of a diary and other papers as were left ; of which, before delivering them up to the residuary legatee, whose property they were, he endeavoured to extract the substance. In this he has not been very successful, as I have found upon a perusal of those papers, which have been since transferred to me. Sir John Hawkins's ponderous labours, I must acknowledge, exhibit a *farrago*, of which a considerable portion is not devoid of entertainment to the lovers of literary gossiping ; but, besides its being swelled out with long unnecessary extracts from various works, (even one of several leaves from Osborne's Harleian Catalogue, and those not compiled by Johnson, but by Oldys,) a very small part of it relates to the person who is the subject of the book ; and, in that, there is such an inaccuracy in the statement of facts, as in so solemn an author is hardly excusable, and certainly makes his narrative very unsatisfactory. But what is still worse, there is throughout the whole of it a dark uncharitable cast, by which the most unfavourable construction is put upon almost every circumstance in the character and conduct of my illustrious friend ; who, I trust, will, by a true and fair delineation, be vindicated both from the injurious misrepresentations of this author, and from the slighter aspersions of a lady who once lived in great intimacy with him.

There is, in the British Museum, a letter from Bishop Warburton to Dr. Birch, on the subject of biography ; which, though I am aware it may expose me to a charge of artfully raising the value of my own work, by contrasting it with that of which I

have spoken, is so well conceived and expressed, that I cannot refrain from here inserting it:—

“ I shall endeavour,” says Dr. Warburton, “ to give you what satisfaction I can in any thing you want to be satisfied in any subject of Milton, and am extremely glad you intend to write his life. Almost all the life-writers we have had before Toland and Desmaiseaux are indeed strange insipid creatures; and yet I had rather read the worst of them, than be obliged to go through with this of Milton’s, or the other’s life of Boileau, where there is such a dull, heavy succession of long quotations of disinteresting passages, that it makes their method quite nauseous. But the verbose, tasteless Frenchman seems to lay it down as a principle, that every life must be a book, and, what’s worse, it proves a book without a life; for what do we know of Boileau, after all his tedious stuff? You are the only one (and I speak it without a compliment) that by the vigour of your style and sentiments, and the real importance of your materials, have the art (which one would imagine no one could have missed) of adding agreements to the most agreeable subject in the world, which is literary history. — Nov. 24. 1737.” (1)

Instead of melting down my materials into one mass, and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason, in his *Memoirs of Gray*. Wherever narrative is necessary to explain, connect, and supply, I furnish it to the best of my abilities; but in the chronological series of Johnson’s life, which I trace

(1) Brit. Mus. 4320. Ayscough’s Catal. Sloane MSS.

as distinctly as I can, year by year, I produce, wherever it is in my power, his own minutes, letters, or conversation, being convinced that this mode is more lively, and will make my readers better acquainted with him, than even most of those were who actually knew him—but could know him only partially; whereas there is here an accumulation of intelligence from various points, by which his character is more fully understood and illustrated.

Indeed, I cannot conceive a more perfect mode of writing any man's life, than not only relating all the most important events of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought; by which mankind are enabled as it were to see him live, and to “live o'er each scene (1)” with him, as he actually advanced through the several stages of his life. Had his other friends been as diligent and ardent as I was, he might have been almost entirely preserved. As it is, I will venture to say, that he will be seen in this work more completely than any man who has ever yet lived.

And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write not his panegyric, which must be all praise, but his Life; which, great and good as he was, must not be supposed to be entirely perfect. To be as he was, is indeed subject of panegyric enough to any man in this state of being; but in every picture there should be shade as well as light, and when I delineate him without reserve, I do

(1) [“To make mankind in conscious virtue bold,  
Live o'er each scene, and be what they behold.”

POPE.]

what he himself recommended, both by his precept and his example:—

“ If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection; we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyric, and not to be known from one another but by extrinsic and casual circumstances. ‘ Let me remember,’ says Hale, ‘ when I find myself inclined to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country.’ If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth.” [Rambler, No. 60.]

What I consider as the peculiar value of the following work, is the quantity it contains of Johnson’s Conversation; which is universally acknowledged to have been eminently instructive and entertaining; and of which the specimens that I have given upon a former occasion <sup>(1)</sup> have been received with so much approbation, that I have good grounds for supposing that the world will not be indifferent to more ample communications of a similar nature.

That the conversation of a celebrated man, if his talents have been exerted in conversation, will best

(1) [Boswell alludes to his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, separately published in 1785, but now given, according to the natural order of time, and the universally-approved example of Mr. Croker, as a constituent and important part of the author’s *Life of Johnson*. See volumes iii. and iv. *post.*]



display his character <sup>(1)</sup>, is, I trust, too well established in the judgment of mankind, to be at all shaken by a sneering observation of Mr. Mason, in his Memoirs of Mr. William Whitehead, in which there is literally no *Life*, but a mere dry narrative of facts. I do not think it was quite necessary to attempt a depreciation of what is universally esteemed, because it was not to be found in the immediate object of the ingenious writer's pen; for in truth, from a man so still and so tame, as to be contented to pass many years as the domestic companion of a superannuated lord and lady <sup>(2)</sup>, conversation could no more be expected, than from a Chinese mandarin on a chimney-piece, or the fantastic figures on a gilt leather skreen.

If authority be required, let us appeal to Plutarch, the prince of ancient biographers:— *Οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δῆλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις, καὶ ῥῆμα, καὶ παιδιὰ τις ἔμφασιν ἤθους ἐποίησεν μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι, παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται, καὶ πολιορκία πόλεων: —* “Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but very often an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest, shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles.” <sup>(3)</sup>

(1) [Johnson expresses a somewhat contrary opinion (*post*, 1780); and every one must be aware, that his own circle furnishes exceptions to Boswell's remark.]

(2) [Whitehead lived with William, third Earl of Jersey, and Anne Egerton, his countess.]

(3) Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*; Langhorne's translation.

To this may be added the sentiments of the very man whose life I am about to exhibit : —

“ The business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue. The account of Thuanus is, with great propriety, said by its author to have been written, that it might lay open to posterity the private and familiar character of that man, *cujus ingenium et candorem ex ipsius scriptis sunt olim semper miraturi*, — whose candour and genius will, to the end of time, be by his writings preserved in admiration.

“ There are many invisible circumstances, which, whether we read as enquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences. Thus, Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot, in his account of Catiline, to remark, that his walk was now quick, and again slow, as an indication of a mind revolving with violent commotion.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, the story of Melancthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us, that when he had made an appointment, he expected not only the hour, but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense; and all the plans and enterprises of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal

(1) [ ——— “ You may sometimes trace  
A feeling in each footstep, as disclosed  
By Sallust in his Catiline, who, chased  
By all the demons of all passions, show'd  
Their work, even by the way in which he trode.” —  
BYRON, vol. xvi. p. 171.]

character, which represents him as careful of his health, and negligent of his life.

“ But, biography has often been allotted to writers, who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from public papers, but imagine themselves writing a life, when they exhibit a chronological series of actions or preferments ; and have so little regard to the manners or behaviour of their heroes, that more knowledge may be gained of a man’s real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.

“ There are, indeed, some natural reasons why these narratives are often written by such as were not likely to give much instruction or delight, and why most accounts of particular persons are barren and useless. If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence ; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition. We know how few can portray a living acquaintance, except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind ; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original.” [Rambler, No. 60.]

I am fully aware of the objections which may be made to the minuteness, on some occasions, of my detail of Johnson’s conversation, and how happily it is adapted for the petty exercise of ridicule, by men of superficial understanding, and ludicrous

fancy; but I remain firm and confident in my opinion, that minute particulars are frequently characteristic, and always amusing, when they relate to a distinguished man. I am therefore exceedingly unwilling that any thing, however slight, which my illustrious friend thought it worth his while to express, with any degree of point, should perish. For this almost superstitious reverence, I have found very old and venerable authority, quoted by our great modern prelate, Secker, in whose tenth sermon there is the following passage:—

“ Rabbi David Kimchi (1), a noted Jewish commentator, who lived about five hundred years ago, explains that passage in the first Psalm, ‘ His leaf also shall not wither,’ from Rabbins yet older than himself, thus:— That ‘ even the idle talk,’ so he expresses it, ‘ of a good man ought to be regarded;’ the most superfluous things, he saith, are always of some value. And other ancient authors have the same phrase nearly in the same sense.”

Of one thing I am certain, that, considering how highly the small portion which we have of the table-talk, and other anecdotes, of our celebrated writers is valued, and how earnestly it is regretted that we have not more, I am justified in preserving rather too many of Johnson’s sayings, than too few; especially as, from the diversity of dispositions, it cannot be known with certainty beforehand, whether what may seem trifling to some, and perhaps to the collector himself, may not be most agreeable to

(1) [David Kimchi, a Spanish Rabbi, died, at an advanced age, in 1240, leaving several works still held in high estimation by the learned Jews.]

many; and the greater number that an author can please in any degree, the more pleasure does there arise to a benevolent mind.

To those who are weak enough to think this a degrading task, and the time and labour which have been devoted to it misemployed, I shall content myself with opposing the authority of the greatest man of any age, Julius Cæsar, of whom Bacon observes, that “in his book of apophthegms which he collected, we see that he esteemed it more honour to make himself but a pair of tables, to take the wise and pithy words of others, than to have every word of his own to be made an apophthegm or an oracle.” [Advancement of Learning, Book I.]

Having said thus much by way of Introduction, I commit the following pages to the candour of the public.

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SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the 18th of September, N. S. 1709; and his initiation into the Christian church was not delayed; for his baptism is recorded, in the register of St. Mary's parish in that city, to have been performed on the day of his birth: his father is there styled *Gentleman*, a circumstance of which an ignorant panegyrist has praised him for not being proud; when the truth is, that the appellation of *Gentleman*, though now lost in the indiscriminate assumption of *Esquire*, was commonly taken by those who could

not boast of gentility. (1) His father was Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Lichfield as a bookseller and stationer. His mother was Sarah Ford, descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. They were well advanced in years when they married, and never had more than two children, both sons; Samuel, their first-born, who lived to be the illustrious character whose various excellence I am to endeavour to record, and Nathanael, who died in his twenty-fifth year. (2)

Mr. Michael Johnson was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; yet, as in the most solid rocks veins of unsound substance are often discovered, there was in him a mixture of that disease, the nature of which eludes the most minute enquiry, though the effects are well known to be a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness. From him, then, his son inherited, with some other qualities, “a vile melancholy (3),” which, in his too strong expression of any disturbance of the mind, “made him mad all his life, at least not sober.” (4) Michael

(1) The title *Gentleman* had still, in 1709, some degree of its original meaning, and as Mr. Johnson served the office of sheriff of Lichfield in that year, he seems to have been fully entitled to it. The Doctor, at his entry on the books of Pembroke college, and at his matriculation, designated himself as *filius generosi*. — CROKER.

(2) [For some curious particulars concerning Johnson's father, see APPENDIX to this volume, No. I.]

(3) [See *post*, September 16. 1773.]

(4) One of the most curious and important chapters in the history of the human mind is still to be written, that of heredit-

was, however, forced by the narrowness of his circumstances to be very diligent in business, not only in his shop, but by occasionally resorting to several towns in the neighbourhood, some of which were at a considerable distance from Lichfield. At that time booksellers' shops in the provincial towns of England were very rare, so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day. He was a pretty good Latin scholar, and a citizen so creditable as to be made one of the magistrates of Lichfield; and, being a man of good sense, and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which, how-

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ary insanity. The symptomatic facts by which the disease might be traced are generally either disregarded from ignorance of their real cause and character, or, when observed, carefully suppressed by domestic or professional delicacy. This is natural, and even laudable; yet there are several important reasons why the obscurity in which such facts are usually buried may be regretted. *Morally*, we should wish to know, as far as may be permitted to us, the nature of our own intellect, its powers, and its weaknesses; — *medically*, it might be possible, by early and systematic treatment, to avert or mitigate the disease which, there is reason to suppose, is now often unknown or mistaken; — *legally*, it would be desirable to have any additional means of discriminating between guilt and misfortune, and of ascertaining, with more precision, the nice bounds which divide moral guilt from what may be called physical errors; — and in the highest and most important of all the springs of human thought or action, it would be consolatory and edifying to be able to distinguish, with greater certainty, rational faith and judicious piety, from the enthusiastic confidence or the gloomy despondence of disordered imaginations. The memory of every man who has lived, not inattentively, in society, will furnish him with instances to which these considerations might have been usefully applied. But in reading the life of Doctor Johnson (who was conscious of the disease and of its cause, and of whose blood there remains no one whose feelings can be now offended,) they should be kept constantly in view; not merely as a subject of general interest, but as elucidating and explaining many of the errors, peculiarities, and weaknesses of that extraordinary man.

— CROKER.

ever, he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging unsuccessfully (1) in a manufacture of parchment. (2) He was a zealous high-churchman and royalist, and retained his attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power.

There is a circumstance in his life somewhat romantic, but so well authenticated, that I shall not omit it. A young woman of Leek, in Staffordshire, while he served his apprenticeship there, conceived a violent passion for him; and though it met with no

(1) In this undertaking, nothing prospered; they had no sooner bought a large stock of skins, than a heavy duty was laid upon that article, and, from Michael's absence by his many avocations as a bookseller, the parchment business was committed to a faithless servant, and thence they gradually declined into strait circumstances. — *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lv. p. 100.

(2) Johnson, in his Dictionary, defines "EXCISE, a hateful tax, levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the *common judges* of property, but by *wretches* hired by those to whom excise is paid;" and, in the *Idler* (No. 65.), he calls a *Commissioner of Excise* "one of the *lowest* of all human beings." This violence of language seems so little reasonable, that I was induced to suspect some cause of *personal animosity*; this mention of the trade in parchment (an *exciseable* article) afforded a clue, which has led to the confirmation of that suspicion. In the records of the Excise Board is to be found the following letter, addressed to the supervisor of excise at Lichfield: — "July 27. 1725. The commissioners received yours of the 22d instant, and since the justices would not give judgment against Mr. Michael Johnson, *the tanner*, notwithstanding the facts were fairly against him, the Board direct that the next time he offends, you do not lay an information against him, but send an affidavit of the fact, that he may be prosecuted in the Exchequer." — It does not appear whether he offended again, but here is a sufficient cause of his son's animosity against commissioners of excise, and of the allusion in the Dictionary to the *special* jurisdiction under which that revenue is administered. The reluctance of the justices to convict will appear not unnatural, when it is recollected that M. Johnson was, *this very year*, chief magistrate of the city. — CROKER.



favourable return, followed him to Lichfield, where she took lodgings opposite to the house in which he lived, and indulged her hopeless flame. When he was informed that it so preyed upon her mind that her life was in danger, he, with a generous humanity, went to her and offered to marry her, but it was then too late: her vital power was exhausted; and she actually exhibited one of the very rare instances of dying for love. She was buried in the cathedral of Lichfield; and he, with a tender regard, placed a stone over her grave with this inscription:—

Here lies the Body of  
Mrs. ELIZABETH BLANEY, a Stranger.  
She departed this Life  
20th of September, 1694.

JOHNSON'S mother was a woman of distinguished understanding. I asked his old school-fellow, Mr. Hector, surgeon, of Birmingham, if she was not vain of her son. He said, "she had too much good sense to be vain, but she knew her son's value." Her piety was not inferior to her understanding; and to her must be ascribed those early impressions of religion upon the mind of her son, from which the world afterwards derived so much benefit. He told me, that he remembered distinctly having had the first notice of Heaven, "a place to which good people went," and hell, "a place to which bad people went," communicated to him by her, when a little child in bed with her; and that it might be the better fixed in his memory, she sent him to repeat it to Thomas Jackson, their man-servant: he not

being in the way, this was not done; but there was no occasion for any artificial aid for its preservation.

In following so very eminent a man from his cradle to his grave, every minute particular, which can throw light on the progress of his mind, is interesting. That he was remarkable, even in his earliest years, may easily be supposed; for — to use his own words in his *Life of Sydenham*, — “ That the strength of his understanding, the accuracy of his discernment, and the ardour of his curiosity, might have been remarked from his infancy, by a diligent observer, there is no reason to doubt: for, there is no instance of any man, whose history has been minutely related, that did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour.”

In all such investigations it is certainly unwise to pay too much attention to incidents which the credulous relate with eager satisfaction, and the more scrupulous or witty inquirer considers only as topics of ridicule; yet there is a traditional story of the infant Hercules of toryism, so curiously characteristic, that I shall not withhold it. It was communicated to me in a letter from Miss Mary Adye of Lichfield.

“ When Dr. Sacheverel was at Lichfield, Johnson was not quite three years old. My grandfather Hammond observed him at the cathedral perched upon his father’s shoulders, listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher. Mr. Hammond asked Mr. Johnson how he could possibly think of bringing such an infant to church, and in the midst of so great a crowd. He answered, because it was impossible to keep him at home;

for, young as he was, he believed he had caught the public spirit and zeal for Sacheverel, and would have staid for ever in the church, satisfied with beholding him." (1)

Nor can I omit a little instance of that jealous independence of spirit, and impetuosity of temper, which never forsook him. The fact was acknowledged to me by himself, upon the authority of his mother. One day, when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted, that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel before he ventured to step over it. His schoolmistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his strength would permit.

Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his

(1) The gossiping anecdotes of the Lichfield ladies are all apocryphal. Sacheverel, by his sentence, pronounced in Feb. 1710, was interdicted for three years from preaching; so that he could not have preached at Lichfield while Johnson was under three years of age. But what decides the falsehood of Miss Adye's story is, that Sacheverel's triumphal progress through the midland counties was in 1710; and it appears by the books of the corporation of Lichfield, that he was received in that town and complimented by the attendance of the corporation, "and a present of three dozen of wine," on the 16th of June, 1710; when the "*infant Hercules of toryism*" was just *nine months* old. — CROKER.

presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, "Sam, you must get this by heart." She went up stairs, leaving him to study it: but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. "What's the matter?" said she. "I can say it," he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

But there has been another story of his infant precocity generally circulated, and generally believed, the truth of which I am to refute upon his own authority. It is told<sup>(1)</sup> that, when a child of three years old, he chanced to tread upon a duckling, the eleventh of a brood, and killed it; upon which, it is said, he dictated to his mother the following epitaph:—

" Here lies good master duck,  
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on;  
If it had lived, it had been *good luck*,  
For then we'd had an *odd one*."

There is surely internal evidence that this little composition combines in it, what no child of three years old could produce, without an extension of its faculties by immediate inspiration; yet Mrs. Lucy Porter, Dr. Johnson's step-daughter, positively maintained to me, in his presence, that there could be no doubt of the truth of this anecdote, for she had heard it

(1) Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, by Hester Lynch Piozzi, p. 11.; Life of Dr. Johnson, by Sir John Hawkins, p. 6.

from his mother. So difficult is it to obtain an authentic relation of facts, and such authority may there be for error; for he assured me, that his father made the verses, and wished to pass them for his child's. He added, "My father was a foolish old man; that is to say, foolish in talking of his children."<sup>(1)</sup>

Young Johnson had the misfortune to be much afflicted with the scrofula, or king's evil, which disfigured a countenance naturally well formed, and hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from that of the other. There is amongst his prayers, one inscribed "*When my EYE was restored to its use*"<sup>(2)</sup>, which ascertains a defect

(1) This anecdote of the duck, though disproved by internal and external evidence, has, nevertheless, upon supposition of its truth, been made the foundation of the following ingenious and fanciful reflections of Miss Seward, amongst the communications concerning Dr. Johnson with which she has been pleased to favour me: — "These infant numbers contain the seeds of those propensities which, through his life, so strongly marked his character, of that poetic talent which afterwards bore such rich and plentiful fruits; for, excepting his orthographic works, every thing which Dr. Johnson wrote was poetry, whose essence consists not in numbers, or in jingle, but in the strength and glow of a fancy, to which all the stores of nature and of art stand in prompt administration; and in an eloquence which conveys their blended illustrations in a language 'more tuneable than needs or rhyme or verse to add more harmony.' The above little verses also show that superstitious bias which 'grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength,' and, of late years particularly, injured his happiness, by presenting to him the gloomy side of religion, rather than that bright and cheering one which gilds the period of closing life with the light of pious hope." This is so beautifully imagined, that I would not suppress it. But, like many other theories, it is deduced from a supposed fact, which is, indeed, a fiction.

(2) Prayers and Meditations, p. 27.

that many of his friends knew he had, though I never perceived it.<sup>(1)</sup> I supposed him to be only near-sighted; and indeed I must observe, that in no other respect could I discern any defect in his vision; on the contrary, the force of his attention and perceptive quickness made him see and distinguish all manner of objects, whether of nature or of art, with a nicety that is rarely to be found. When he and I were travelling in the Highlands of Scotland, and I pointed out to him a mountain which I observed resembled a cone, he corrected my inaccuracy, by showing me that it was, indeed, pointed at the top, but that one side of it was larger than the other. And the ladies with whom he was acquainted agree, that no man was more nicely and minutely critical in the elegance of female dress. When I found that he saw the romantic beauties of Islam, in Derbyshire, much better than I did, I told him, that he resembled an able performer upon a bad instrument. How false and contemptible, then, are all the remarks which have been made to the prejudice either of his candour or of his philosophy, founded upon a supposition that he was almost blind. It has been said, that he contracted this grievous malady from his nurse. His mother, — yielding to the superstitious notion, which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country, as to the virtue of the regal touch<sup>(2)</sup>; a notion which our kings encouraged,

(1) Speaking himself of the imperfection of one of his eyes, he said, "The dog was never good for much." — BURNBY.

(2) [This healing gift is said to have been derived to our princes from Edward the Confessor. For much curious matter relating to the royal touch, see Barrington's "History of An-

and to which a man of such inquiry and such judgment as Carte<sup>(1)</sup> could give credit; carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne.<sup>(2)</sup> Mrs. Johnson, indeed, as Mr. Hector informed me, acted by the advice of the celebrated Sir John Floyer, then a physician in Lichfield. Johnson used to talk of this very frankly; and Mrs. Piozzi has preserved his very picturesque description of the scene, as it remained upon his fancy. Being asked, if he could remember Queen Anne,—“He had,” he said, “a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood.” This touch, however, was without any effect. I ventured to say to him, in allusion to the political principles in which he was educated, and of which he ever retained some odour, that “his mother had not carried him far enough; she should have taken him to ROME.”

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cient Statutes,” p. 107. In the London Gazette, No. 2180., there is this advertisement: — “Whitehall, Oct. 8. 1686. His Majesty is graciously pleased to appoint to heal, weekly, for the evil, upon Fridays; and hath commanded his physicians and chirurgeons to attend at the office appointed for that purpose in the Meuse, upon Thursdays, in the afternoon, to give out tickets.”]

(1) [In consequence of a note, in vindication of the efficacy of the royal touch, which Carte admitted into the first volume of his History of England, the corporation of London withdrew their subscription, and the work instantaneously fell into almost total, but certainly undeserved, neglect. — NICHOLS.]

It would seem, that Swift might be included amongst the believers, as, in his Journal to Stella, he says, “I spoke to the Duchess of Ormond, to get a lad touched for the evil, the son of a grocer.” Scott’s Swift, vol. ii. p. 252. — MARKLAND.]

(2) [It appears, by the newspapers of the time, that on the 30th of March, 1712, two hundred persons were touched by Queen Anne.]

## CHAPTER II.

1716—1728.

*Johnson goes to School at Lichfield. — Particulars of his boyish Days. — Removed to the School of Stourbridge. — Specimens of his School Exercises and early Verses. — He leaves Stourbridge, and passes two Years with his Father.*

HE was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. He told me she could read the black letter, and asked him to borrow for her, from his father, a bible in that character. When he was going to Oxford, she came to take leave of him, brought him, in the simplicity of her kindness, a present of gingerbread, and said he was the best scholar she ever had. He delighted in mentioning this early compliment; adding, with a smile, that “this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive.” His next instructor in English was a master, whom, when he spoke of him to me, he familiarly called Tom Brown, who, said he, “published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE: but, I fear, no copy of it can now be had.”

He began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher or under-master of Lichfield school, “a man,” said he, “very skilful in his little way.” With him he



continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head master, who, according to his account, "was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe. He used," said he, "to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question, and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, Sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him."

It is, however, but justice to the memory of Mr. Hunter to mention, that though he might err in being too severe, the school of Lichfield was very respectable in his time. The late Dr. Taylor, prebendary of Westminster, who was educated under him, told me, that "he was an excellent master, and that his ushers were most of them men of eminence; that Holbrook, one of the most ingenious men, best scholars, and best preachers of his age, was usher during the greatest part of the time that Johnson was at school. Then came Hague, of whom as much might be said, with the addition that he was an elegant poet. Hague was succeeded by Green<sup>(1)</sup>,

(1) [Dr. John Green was born in 1706, and died, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1779. He was one of the writers of the celebrated "Athenian Letters," published by the Earl of Hardwicke in 1798.]

afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, whose character in the learned world is well known. In the same form with Johnson was Congreve, who afterwards became chaplain to Archbishop Boulter, and by that connection obtained good preferment in Ireland. He was a younger son of the ancient family of Congreve, in Staffordshire, of which the poet was a branch. His brother sold the estate. There was also Lowe, afterwards canon of Windsor.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Indeed, Johnson was very sensible how much he owed to Mr. Hunter. Mr. Langton one day asked him, how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, I believe, he was exceeded by no man of his time; he said, “My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing.” He told Mr. Langton, that while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, “And this I do to save you from the gallows.” Johnson, upon all occasions, expressed his approbation of enforcing instruction by means of the rod<sup>(2)</sup>: “I would rather,” said he, “have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task,

(1) [Among other eminent men, Addison, Wollaston, Garrick, Bishop Newton, Chief-Justice Willes, Chief-Baron Parker, and Chief-Justice Wilmot were educated at this seminary.]

(2) [In a conversation with Dr. Burney, in the year 1775, Johnson said, “There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end they lose at the other.”]

and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other."

When Johnson saw some young ladies in Lincolnshire who were remarkably well behaved, owing to their mother's strict discipline and severe correction, he exclaimed, in one of Shakspeare's lines a little varied<sup>(1)</sup>,

"*Rod*, I will honour thee for this thy duty."

That superiority over his fellows, which he maintained with so much dignity in his march through life, was not assumed from vanity and ostentation, but was the natural and constant effect of those extraordinary powers of mind, of which he could not but be conscious by comparison; the intellectual difference, which in other cases of comparison of characters is often a matter of undecided contest, being as clear in his case as the superiority of stature in some men above others. Johnson did not strut or stand on tip-toe: he only did not stoop. From his earliest years, his superiority was perceived and acknowledged. He was from the beginning *Ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν*, a king of men. His schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, has obligingly furnished me with many particulars of his boyish days; and assured me that he never knew him corrected at school, but for talking and diverting other boys from their business. He seemed to

(1) More than a little. The line is in *King Henry VI., Part II.* act iv. sc. last: —

"Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed." — MALONE.

learn by intuition ; for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion he did more than any one else. In short, he is a memorable instance of what has been often observed, that the boy is the man in miniature ; and that the distinguishing characteristics of each individual are the same, through the whole course of life. His favourites used to receive very liberal assistance from him ; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, such the desire to obtain his regard, that three of the boys, of whom Mr. Hector was sometimes one, used to come in the morning as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him ; and thus he was borne triumphant. Such a proof of the early predominance of intellectual vigour is very remarkable, and does honour to human nature.<sup>(1)</sup> Talking to me once himself of his being much distinguished at school, he told me, “They never thought to raise me by comparing me to any one ; they never said, Johnson is as good a scholar as such a one, but such a one is as good a scholar as Johnson ; and this was said but of one, but of Lowe ; and I do not think he was as good a scholar.”

(1) [This ovation Mr. Boswell believed to have been an honour paid to the early predominance of his intellectual powers alone ; but they who remember what boys are, and who consider that Johnson's corporeal prowess was by no means despicable, will be apt to suspect that the homage was enforced, at least as much by awe of the one, as by admiration of the other. — ANDERSON.]

He discovered a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was uncommonly inquisitive; and his memory was so tenacious, that he never forgot any thing that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector remembers having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated *verbatim*, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line.

He never joined with the other boys in their ordinary diversions: his only amusement was in winter, when he took a pleasure in being drawn upon the ice by a boy barefooted, who pulled him along by a garter fixed round him; no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large. His defective sight, indeed, prevented him from enjoying the common sports; and he once pleasantly remarked to me, "how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them." Lord Chesterfield, however, has justly observed in one of his letters, when earnestly cautioning a friend against the pernicious effects of idleness, that active sports are not to be reckoned idleness in young people; and that the listless torpor of doing nothing alone deserves that name. Of this dismal inertness of disposition, Johnson had all his life too great a share. Mr. Hector relates, that "he could not oblige him more than by sauntering away the hours of vacation in the fields, during which he was more engaged in talking to himself than to his companion."

Dr. Percy<sup>(1)</sup>, the Bishop of Dromore, who was long intimately acquainted with him, and has pre-

(1) [Dr. Thomas Percy, the editor of the "Reliques," was born at Bridgenorth, in 1728. In 1782, he was nominated to the see of Dromore; where he died in 1811.]

served a few anecdotes concerning him, regretting that he was not a more diligent collector, informs me, that “when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and he retained his fondness for them through life; so that,” adds his lordship, “spending part of a summer at my parsonage-house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of *Felixmarte of Hircania* <sup>(1)</sup>, in folio, which he read quite through. Yet I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession.”

After having resided for some time at the house of his uncle, Cornelius Ford <sup>(2)</sup>, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master. This step was taken by the advice of his cousin the Rev. Mr. Ford, a man in whom both talents and good dispositions were disgraced by

(1) [“*Historia del Principe Felixmarte de Hircania, y de su estraño nascimiento; por Don Melchior de Ubeda.*” Fol. Pincia, 1556. Another edition was printed at Valladolid in the following year. This very rare romance formed one of the volumes of Don Quixote’s library. See lib. i. ch. 6. Mr. Bowle, in his edition of Don Quixote, published in 1781, in six volumes, quarto, has the following note respecting Felixmarte: —“His father was the Prince Florisan de Misia, and his mother the Princess Martedina. Chap. 10. of book i. of his History treats of the strange birth of the Prince Felixmarte; and says, that the princess, retiring apart to a private place, gave birth to a son in the hands of a wild woman, named Belsagina, who, seeing the names of his parents, thought it would be well to call him Florismarte, because it partook of both; but the princess, thinking that if he was called Felixmarte it would be more significant, ordered that he should be so named.” — T. RODD.]

(2) Cornelius Ford, according to Sir John Hawkins, was his cousin-german, being the son of Dr. Ford, an eminent physician, who was brother to Johnson’s mother. — MALONE.

licentiousness (1), but who was a very able judge of what was right. At this school he did not receive so much benefit as was expected. It has been said, that he acted in the capacity of an assistant to Mr. Wentworth, in teaching the younger boys. "Mr. Wentworth," he told me, "was a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; but I cannot blame him much. I was then a big boy; he saw I did not reverence him, and that he should get no honour by me. I had brought enough with me to carry me through; and all I should get at his school would be ascribed to my own labour, or to my former master. Yet he taught me a great deal."

He thus discriminated, to Dr. Percy, bishop of Dromore, his progress at his two grammar-schools:—"At one, I learned much in the school, but little from the master; in the other, I learnt much from the master, but little in the school."

The Bishop also informs me, that Dr. Johnson's father, before he was received at Stourbridge, applied to have him admitted as a scholar and assistant to the Rev. Samuel Lea, M.A., head master of Newport

(1) He is said to be the original of the parson in Hogarth's *Midnight Modern Conversation*. — BOSWELL.

In his *Life of Fenton*, Johnson mentions "Ford, a clergyman at that time too well known, whose abilities, instead of furnishing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wise." — CROKER.

[For Johnson's own account of "his mother's nephew," Ford, see *post*, May 12. 1778. On the authority of Sir John Hawkins, Mr. Nichols states, that "when the *Midnight Modern Conversation* came out, the general opinion was, that the divine was the portrait of Orator Henley." As Ford died in August 1731, and the print was not published till 1733, or 1734, it appears unlikely that Hogarth should have meant to represent him. — W. SMITH, jun.]

school, in Shropshire ;—a very diligent good teacher, at that time in high reputation, under whom Mr. Hollis is said, in the Memoirs of his Life, to have been also educated. (1) This application to Mr. Lea was not successful ; but Johnson had afterwards the gratification to hear that the old gentleman, who lived to a very advanced age, mentioned it as one of the most memorable events of his life, that “ he was *very near* having that great man for his scholar.”

He remained at Stourbridge little more than a year (2), and then he returned home, where he may be said to have loitered, for two years, in a state very unworthy his uncommon abilities. He had already given several proofs of his poetical genius, both in his school-exercises and in other occasional compositions. Of these I have obtained a considerable collection, by the favour of Mr. Wentworth, son of one of his masters, and of Mr. Hector, his school-fellow and friend ; from which I select the following specimens :—

TRANSLATION OF VIRGIL. Pastoral I.

*Melibœus.*

Now, Tityrus, you, supine and careless laid,  
 Play on your pipe beneath this beechen shade ;  
 While wretched we about the world must roam,  
 And leave our pleasing fields and native home,  
 Here at your ease you sing your amorous flame,  
 And the wood rings with Amarillis' name.

(1) As was likewise the Bishop of Dromore many years afterwards.

(2) [Yet here his genius was so distinguished that, although little better than a school-boy, he was admitted into the best company of the place, and had no common attention paid to him ; of which remarkable instances were long remembered there. — PERCY.]



*Tityrus.*

Those blessings, friend, a deity bestow'd,  
 For I shall never think him less than God :  
 Oft on his altar shall my firstlings lie,  
 Their blood the consecrated stones shall dye :  
 He gave my flocks to graze the flowery meads,  
 And me to tune at ease th' unequal reeds.

*Melibæus.*

My admiration only I exprest  
 (No spark of envy harbours in my breast),  
 That, when confusion o'er the country reigns,  
 To you alone this happy state remains.  
 Here I, though faint myself, must drive my goats,  
 Far from their ancient fields and humble cots.  
 This scarce I lead, who left on yonder rock  
 Two tender kids, the hopes of all the flock.  
 Had we not been perverse and careless grown,  
 This dire event by omens was foreshown ;  
 Our trees were blasted by the thunder stroke,  
 And left-hand crows, from an old hollow oak,  
 Foretold the coming evil by their dismal croak.

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 TRANSLATION OF HORACE. Book I. Ode xxii.

THE man, my friend, whose conscious heart  
 With virtue's sacred ardour glows,  
 Nor taints with death the envenom'd dart,  
 Nor needs the guard of Moorish bows :

Though Scythia's icy cliffs he treads,  
 Or horrid Afric's faithless sands ;  
 Or where the famed Hydaspes spreads  
 His liquid wealth o'er barbarous lands.

For while by Chloe's image charm'd,  
 Too far in Sabine woods I stray'd ;  
 Me singing, careless and unarm'd,  
 A grizly wolf surprised, and fled.

No savage more portentous stain'd  
 Apulia's spacious wilds with gore ;  
 No fiercer Juba's thirsty land,  
 Dire nurse of raging lions, bore.

Place me where no soft summer gale  
 Among the quivering branches sighs ;  
 Where clouds condensed for ever veil  
 With horrid gloom the frowning skies :

Place me beneath the burning line,  
 A clime deny'd to human race :  
 I'll sing of Chloe's charms divine,  
 Her heavenly voice, and beauteous face.

---

TRANSLATION OF HORACE. Book II. Ode ix.

CLOUDS do not always veil the skies,  
 Nor showers immerse the verdant plain ;  
 Nor do the billows always rise,  
 Or storms afflict the ruffled main.

Nor, Valgius, on th' Armenian shores  
 Do the chain'd waters always freeze ;  
 Not always furious Boreas roars,  
 Or bends with violent force the trees.

But you are ever drown'd in tears,  
 For Mystes dead you ever mourn ;  
 No setting Sol can ease your care,  
 But finds you sad at his return.

The wise experienced Grecian sage  
 Mourn'd not Antilochus so long ;  
 Nor did King Priam's hoary age  
 So much lament his slaughter'd son.

Leave off, at length, these woman's sighs,  
 Augustus' numerous trophies sing ;  
 Repeat that prince's victories,  
 To whom all nations tribute bring.

Niphates rolls an humbler wave,  
 At length the undaunted Scythian yields,  
 Content to live the Roman's slave,  
 And scarce forsakes his native fields.

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TRANSLATION OF PART OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN  
 HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE. From the Sixth Book  
 of HOMER'S ILIAD.

SHE ceased ; then godlike Hector answer'd kind  
 (His various plumage sporting in the wind),  
 That post, and all the rest, shall be my care ;  
 But shall I, then, forsake the unfinished war ?  
 How would the Trojans brand great Hector's name !  
 And one base action sully all my fame,  
 Acquired by wounds and battles bravely fought !  
 Oh ! how my soul abhors so mean a thought.  
 Long since I learn'd to slight this fleeting breath,  
 And view with cheerful eyes approaching death.  
 The inexorable sisters have decreed  
 That Priam's house and Priam's self shall bleed :  
 The day will come, in which proud Troy shall yield,  
 And spread its smoking ruins o'er the field.

Yet Hecuba's, nor Priam's hoary age,  
Whose blood shall quench some Grecian's thirsty rage,  
Nor my brave brothers, that have bit the ground,  
Their souls dismiss'd through many a ghastly wound,  
Can in my bosom half that grief create,  
As the sad thought of your impending fate :  
When some proud Grecian dame shall tasks impose,  
Mimic your tears, and ridicule your woes ;  
Beneath Hyperia's waters shall you sweat,  
And, fainting, scarce support the liquid weight :  
Then shall some Argive loud insulting cry,  
Behold the wife of Hector, guard of Troy !  
Tears, at my name, shall drown those beauteous eyes,  
And that fair bosom heave with rising sighs.  
Before that day, by some brave hero's hand,  
May I lie slain, and spurn the bloody sand.

---

TO A YOUNG LADY ON HER BIRTHDAY. (1)

THIS tributary verse receive, my fair,  
Warm with an ardent lover's fondest prayer.  
May this returning day for ever find  
Thy form more lovely, more adorn'd thy mind ;  
All pains, all cares, may favouring Heaven remove,  
All but the sweet solitudes of love !  
May powerful nature join with grateful art,  
To point each glance, and force it to the heart !  
O then, when conquered crowds confess thy sway,  
When ev'n proud wealth and prouder wit obey,  
My fair, be mindful of the mighty trust,  
Alas ! 't is hard for beauty to be just.

(1) Mr. Hector informs me, that this was made almost *impromptu*, in his presence.

Those sovereign charms with strictest care employ ;  
 Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy :  
 With his own form acquaint the forward fool,  
 Shown in the faithful glass of ridicule ;  
 Teach mimic censure her own faults to find,  
 No more let coquettes to themselves be blind,  
 So shall Belinda's charms improve mankind.

---

THE YOUNG AUTHOR. (1)

WHEN first the peasant, long inclined to roam,  
 Forsakes his rural sports and peaceful home,  
 Pleased with the scene the smiling ocean yields,  
 He scorns the verdant meads and flow'ry fields ;  
 Then dances jocund o'er the watery way,  
 While the breeze whispers, and the streamers play :  
 Unbounded prospects in his bosom roll,  
 And future millions lift his rising soul ;  
 In blissful dreams he digs the golden mine,  
 And raptured sees the new-found ruby shine.  
 Joys insincere ! thick clouds invade the skies,  
 Loud roar the billows, high the waves arise ;  
 Sick'ning with fear, he longs to view the shore,  
 And vows to trust the faithless deep no more.

So the young Author, panting after fame,  
 And the long honours of a lasting name,  
 Intrusts his happiness to human kind,  
 More false, more cruel, than the seas or wind.  
 " Toil on, dull crowd," in ecstasies he cries,  
 " For wealth or title, perishable prize ;  
 While I those transitory blessings scorn,  
 Secure of praise from ages yet unborn."

(1) This he inserted, with many alterations, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1743. [He, however, did not add his name.]

This thought once form'd, all counsel comes too late,  
 He flies to press, and hurries on his fate ;  
 Swiftly he sees the imagined laurels spread,  
 And feels the unfading wreath surround his head.  
 Warn'd by another's fate, vain youth, be wise,  
 Those dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's.

The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise,  
 To some retreat the baffled writer flies ;  
 Where no sour critics snarl, no sneers molest,  
 Safe from the tart lampoon, and stinging jest ;  
 There begs of Heaven a less distinguish'd lot,  
 Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot.

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EPILOGUE INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN SPOKEN BY A  
 LADY WHO WAS TO PERSONATE THE GHOST OF  
 HERMIONE. (1)

YE blooming train, who give despair or joy,  
 Bless with a smile, or with a frown destroy ;  
 In whose fair cheeks destructive Cupids wait,  
 And with unerring shafts distribute fate ;  
 Whose snowy breasts, whose animated eyes,  
 Each youth admires, though each admirer dies ;  
 Whilst you deride their pangs in barb'rous play,  
 Unpitying see them weep, and hear them pray,  
 And unrelenting sport ten thousand lives away ;  
 For you, ye fair, I quit the gloomy plains,  
 Where sable night in all her horror reigns ;  
 No fragrant bowers, no delightful glades,  
 Receive the unhappy ghosts of scornful maids.

(1) Some young ladies at Lichfield having proposed to act  
 "The Distressed Mother," Johnson wrote this, and gave it to  
 Mr. Hector to convey it privately to them.

For kind, for tender nymphs the myrtle blooms,  
And weaves her bending boughs in pleasing glooms :  
Perennial roses deck each purple vale,  
And scents ambrosial breathe in every gale :  
Far hence are banish'd vapours, spleen, and tears,  
Tea, scandal, ivory teeth, and languid airs :  
No pug, nor favourite Cupid there enjoys  
The balmy kiss, for which poor Thyrsis dies ;  
Form'd to delight, they use no foreign arms,  
Nor torturing whalebones pinch them into charms ;  
No conscious blushes there their cheeks inflame,  
For those who feel no guilt can know no shame ;  
Unfaded still their former charms they shew,  
Around them pleasures wait, and joys for ever new.  
But cruel virgins meet severer fates ;  
Expell'd and exiled from the blissful seats,  
To dismal realms, and regions void of peace,  
Where furies ever howl, and serpents hiss.  
O'er the sad plains perpetual tempests sigh,  
And pois'nous vapours, black'ning all the sky,  
With livid hue the fairest face o'er cast,  
And every beauty withers at the blast :  
Where'er they fly their lovers' ghosts pursue,  
Inflicting all those ills which once they knew ;  
Vexation, Fury, Jealousy, Despair,  
Vex ev'ry eye, and ev'ry bosom tear ;  
Their foul deformities by all descry'd,  
No maid to flatter, and no paint to hide.  
Then melt, ye fair, while clouds around you sigh,  
Nor let disdain sit louring in your eye ;  
With pity soften every awful grace,  
And beauty smile auspicious in each face ;  
To ease their pains exert your milder power,  
So shall you guiltless reign, and all mankind adore.

The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he

thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch<sup>(1)</sup>, whom he had seen mentioned, in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years, he told me, was not works of mere amusement, "not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly; though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod: but in this irregular manner," added he, "I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me, I was the best qualified for the university that he had ever known come there."

(1) This was, probably, the folio edition of Petrarch's *Opera Omnia quæ extant*, Bas. 1554. It could have been only the Latin works that Johnson read, as there is no reason to suppose that he was, at this period, able to read Italian. — CROKER.



In estimating the progress of his mind during these two years, as well as in future periods of his life, we must not regard his own hasty confession of idleness; for we see, when he explains himself, that he was acquiring various stores; and, indeed, he himself concluded the account with saying, "I would not have you think I was doing nothing then." He might, perhaps, have studied more assiduously; but it may be doubted, whether such a mind as his was not more enriched by roaming at large in the fields of literature, than if it had been confined to any single spot. The analogy between body and mind is very general, and the parallel will hold as to their food, as well as any other particular. The flesh of animals who feed excursively is allowed to have a higher flavour than that of those who are cooped up. May there not be the same difference between men who read as their taste prompts, and men who are confined in cells and colleges to stated tasks? (1)

(1) Dr. Johnson's prodigious memory and talents enabled him to collect from desultory reading a vast mass of general information; but he was in no *science*, and indeed we might almost say, in no branch of literature, what is usually called a *profound scholar*—that character is only to be earned by laborious study; and Mr. Boswell's fanciful allusion to the flavour of the flesh of animals seems fallacious, not to say foolish. — CROKER.

## CHAPTER III.

1728—1731.

*Enters at Pembroke College, Oxford.—His College Life.—The “Morbid Melancholy” lurking in his Constitution gains Strength.—Translates Pope’s Messiah into Latin Verse.—His Course of Reading at Oxford.—Quits College.*

THAT a man in Mr. Michael Johnson’s circumstances should think of sending his son to the expensive university of Oxford, at his own charge, seems very improbable. The subject was too delicate to question Johnson upon: but I have been assured by Dr. Taylor, that the scheme never would have taken place, had not a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his schoolfellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion; though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) A neighbouring gentleman, Mr. Andrew Corbett, having a son, who had been educated in the same school with Johnson, whom he was about to send to Pembroke College, in Oxford, a proposal was made and accepted, that Johnson should attend his son thither, in quality of assistant in his studies.—HAWKINS.

Andrew Corbett appears, from the books of Pembroke College, to have been admitted February 24. 1727, and his name was removed from the books February 21. 1732; so that, as Johnson entered in October, 1728, and does not appear to have returned after Christmas, 1729, Corbett was of the university twenty months *before* and twelve or thirteen months *after* John-

He, however, went to Oxford, and was entered a commoner of Pembroke College, on the 31st of October, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

The Reverend Dr. Adams, who afterwards presided over Pembroke College with universal esteem, told me he was present, and gave me some account of what passed on the night of Johnson's arrival at Oxford. On that evening, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, who was to be his tutor. His being put under any tutor, reminds us of what Wood says of Robert Burton, author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," when elected student of Christ-church; "for form's sake, *though he wanted not a tutor*, he was put under the tuition of Dr. John Bancroft, afterwards Bishop of Oxon." (1)

His father seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar, and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner appeared strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius; and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

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son. And, on reference to the college books, it appears that Corbett's residence was so irregular, and so little coincident with Johnson's, that there is no reason to suppose that Johnson was employed either as the *private tutor* of Corbett, as Hawkins states, or his *companion*, as Boswell suggests. — CROKER.

(1) Athen. Oxon. edit. 1721, i. 627.

His tutor, Mr. Jorden, fellow of Pembroke, was not, it seems, a man of such abilities as we should conceive requisite for the instructor of Samuel Johnson, who gave me the following account of him: — “He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man; and I did not profit much by his instructions. (1) Indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to college I waited upon him, and then staid away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jorden asked me why I had not attended. I answered, I had been sliding in Christ-church meadow. And this I said with as much *nonchalance* as I am now (2) talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor.” — BOSWELL. “That, Sir, was great fortitude of mind.” — JOHNSON. “No, Sir; stark insensibility.” (3)

The fifth of November was at that time kept with great solemnity at Pembroke College, and exercises upon the subject of the day were required. Johnson

(1) “Johnson,” says Hawkins, “would oftener risk the payment of a small fine than attend his lectures; nor was he studious to conceal the reason of his absence. Upon occasion of one such imposition, he said to Jorden, ‘Sir, you have sconced me two-pence for non-attendance at a lecture not worth a penny.’” It has been thought worth while to preserve this anecdote, as an early specimen of the antithetical style of Johnson’s conversation. — CROKER.

(2) Oxford, March 20. 1776.

(3) It ought to be remembered, that Dr. Johnson was apt, in his literary as well as moral exercises, to overcharge his defects. Dr. Adams informed me, that he attended his tutor’s lectures, and also the lectures in the College Hall, very regularly. — BOSWELL.

When he related to me this anecdote, he laughed very heartily at his own insolence, and said they endured it from him with a gentleness that, whenever he thought of it, astonished himself. — PIOZZI.

neglected to perform his, which is much to be regretted ; for his vivacity of imagination, and force of language, would probably have produced something sublime upon the Gunpowder Plot. To apologise for his neglect, he gave in a short copy of verses, entitled *Somnium*, containing a common thought, “ that the Muse had come to him in his sleep and whispered, that it did not become him to write on such subjects as politics ; he should confine himself to humbler themes :” but the versification was truly Virgilian.(<sup>1</sup>)

He had a love and respect for Jorden, not for his literature (<sup>2</sup>), but for his worth. “ Whenever,” said he, “ a young man becomes Jorden’s pupil, he becomes his son.”

Having given such a specimen of his poetical powers, he was asked by Mr. Jorden to translate Pope’s *Messiah* into Latin verse, as a Christmas exercise. He performed it with uncommon rapidity, and in so masterly a manner, that he obtained great applause from it, which ever after kept him high in the estimation of his college, and, indeed, of all the university.

(1) He told me, that when he made his first declamation, he wrote over but one copy, and that coarsely ; and having given it into the hand of the tutor, was obliged to begin by chance, and continue on how he could, for he had got but little of it by heart ; so, fairly trusting to his present powers for immediate supply, he finished by adding astonishment to the applause of all who knew how little was owing to study. A prodigious risk, however, said some one : “ Not at all,” exclaims Johnson ; “ no man, I suppose, leaps at once into deep water, who does not know how to swim.” — PIOZZI.

(2) [Johnson used to say, “ He scarcely knew a noun from an adverb.” — NICHOLS.]

It is said, that Mr. Pope expressed himself concerning it in terms of strong approbation.<sup>(1)</sup> Dr. Taylor told me, that it was first printed for old Mr. Johnson, without the knowledge of his son, who was very angry when he heard of it. A Miscellany of Poems, collected by a person of the name of Husbands<sup>(2)</sup>, was published at Oxford in 1731. In that Miscellany, Johnson's Translation of the Messiah appeared, with this modest motto from Scaliger's Poetics, "*Ex alieno ingenio poeta, ex suo tantum versificator.*"<sup>(3)</sup>

I am not ignorant that critical objections have been made to this and other specimens of Johnson's Latin poetry. I acknowledge myself not competent to decide on a question of such extreme nicety. But I am satisfied with the just and discriminative eulogy pronounced upon it by my friend Mr. Courtenay.

“ And with like ease his vivid lines assume  
The garb and dignity of ancient Rome.  
Let college verse-men trite conceits express,  
Trick'd out in splendid shreds of Virgil's dress ;  
From playful Ovid cull the tinsel phrase,  
And vapid notions hitch in pilfer'd lays ;

(1) The poem having been shown to Pope, by a son of Dr. Arbuthnot, then a gentleman commoner of Christ-church, was read, and returned with this encomium, “The writer of this poem will leave it a question for posterity, whether his or mine be the original.” — HAWKINS.

(2) John Husbands was a contemporary of Johnson at Pembroke College, having been admitted a Fellow and A.M. in 1726. — HALL.

(3) [It was also published, with Johnson's name, in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xxii. p. 184.]

Then with mosaic art the piece combine,  
And boast the glitter of each dulcet line :  
Johnson adventured boldly to transfuse  
His vigorous sense into the Latin muse ;  
Aspired to shine by unreflected light,  
And with a Roman's ardour think and write.  
He felt the tuneful Nine his breast inspire,  
And, like a master, waked the soothing lyre :  
Horatian strains a grateful heart proclaim,  
While Sky's wild rocks resound his Thralia's name.  
Hesperia's plant, in some less skilful hands,  
To bloom a while, factitious heat demands :  
Though glowing Maro a faint warmth supplies,  
The sickly blossom in the hot-house dies :  
By Johnson's genial culture, art, and toil,  
Its root strikes deep, and owns the fost'ring soil ;  
Imbibes our sun through all its swelling veins,  
And grows a native of Britannia's plains." (1)

The " morbid melancholy," which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those particularities, and that aversion to regular life, which, at a very early period, marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation of the year 1729 (2), he felt himself overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and

(1) " Poetical Review of the Literary and Moral Character of Dr. Johnson, by John Courtenay, Esq. M. P." [Mr. Courtenay was born at Carlingford, in 1738. He died March 21. 1815.]

(2) It seems, as Dr. Hall suggests, probable, that this is a mistake for 1730: Johnson appears to have remained in college during the vacation of 1729, and we have no trace of him in the year 1730, during which he was, possibly, labouring under this malady, and, on that account, absent from college. — CROKER.

impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved; and all his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence. How wonderful, how unsearchable are the ways of God! Johnson, who was blest with all the powers of genius and understanding in a degree far above the ordinary state of human nature, was at the same time visited with a disorder so afflictive, that they who know it by dire experience will not envy his exalted endowments. That it was, in some degree, occasioned by a defect in his nervous system, that inexplicable part of our frame, appears highly probable. He told Mr. Paradise <sup>(1)</sup> that he was sometimes so languid and inefficient, that he could not distinguish the hour upon the town-clock.

Johnson, upon the first violent attack of this disorder, strove to overcome it by forcible exertions. He frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but all in vain. His expression concerning it to me was, "I did not then know how to manage it." His distress became so intolerable, that he applied to Dr. Swinfen, physician in Lichfield, his god-father, and put into his hands a state of his case, written in Latin.

(1) John Paradise, Esq. D.C.L. of Oxford, and F.R.S., was of Greek extraction, the son of the English consul at Salonica, where he was born: he was educated at Padua, but resided the greater part of his life in London; in the literary circles of which he was generally known, and highly esteemed. He became intimate with Johnson in the latter portion of the Doctor's life; was a member of his Essex Street club, and attended his funeral. He died Dec. 12. 1795. — CROKER.



Dr. Swinfen was so much struck with the extraordinary acuteness, research, and eloquence of this paper, that in his zeal for his godson he showed it to several people. His daughter, Mrs. Desmoulins, who was many years humanely supported in Dr. Johnson's house in London, told me, that upon his discovering that Dr. Swinfen had communicated his case, he was so much offended, that he was never afterwards fully reconciled to him. He indeed had good reason to be offended; for though Dr. Swinfen's motive was good, he inconsiderately betrayed a matter deeply interesting and of great delicacy, which had been intrusted to him in confidence; and exposed a complaint of his young friend and patient, which, in the superficial opinion of the generality of mankind, is attended with contempt and disgrace.

But let not little men triumph upon knowing that Johnson was an HYPOCHONDRIAC, was subject to what the learned, philosophical, and pious Dr. Cheyne has so well treated under the title of "The English Malady." (1) Though he suffered severely from it, he was not therefore degraded. The powers of his great mind might be troubled, and their full exercise suspended at times; but the mind itself was ever entire. As a proof of this, it is only necessary to consider, that, when he was at the very worst, he

(1) [Dr. Mason Good has taken the very words of Hamlet to describe the first stage of this malady: — "I have, of late, (but, wherefore I know not,) lost all my mirth; foregone all custom of exercises; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof, fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours."]

composed that state of his own case, which showed an uncommon vigour, not only of fancy and taste, but of judgment. (1) I am aware that he himself was too ready to call such a complaint by the name of *madness*; in conformity with which notion, he has traced its gradations, with exquisite nicety, in one of the chapters of his *RASSELAS*. (2) But there is surely a clear distinction between a disorder which affects only the imagination and spirits, while the judgment is sound, and a disorder by which the judgment itself is impaired. This distinction was made to me by the late Professor Gaubius (3) of Leyden, physician to the Prince of Orange, in a conversation which I had with him several years ago, and he expanded it thus: "If," said he, "a man tells me that he is grievously disturbed, for that he *imagines* he sees a ruffian coming against him with a drawn sword, though at the same time he is *conscious* it is a delusion, I pronounce him to have a disordered imagination; but if a man tells me that he *sees* this, and in consternation calls to me to look at it, I pronounce him to be *mad*."

It is a common effect of low spirits or melancholy, to make those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering those evils which happen

(1) ["They are of profound judgments in some things, excellent apprehensions, judicious, wise, and witty; for melancholy advanceth men's conceits more than any humour whatever." — BURTON.]

(2) [Chapter 43., On the dangerous Prevalence of Imagination.]

(3) [Jerome David Gaubius was born, at Heidelberg, in 1705. He died in 1780, leaving several works of considerable value. A translation into English of his "*Institutiones Pathologiæ Medicinalis*" appeared in 1779.]

to be most strongly presented to their minds. Some have fancied themselves to be deprived of the use of their limbs, some to labour under acute diseases, others to be in extreme poverty; when, in truth, there was not the least reality in any of the suppositions; so that, when the vapours were dispelled, they were convinced of the delusion. To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded. Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment. That his own diseased imagination should have so far deceived him is strange; but it is stranger still that some of his friends should have given credit to his groundless opinion, when they had such undoubted proofs that it was totally fallacious; though it is by no means surprising that those who wish to depreciate him should, since his death, have laid hold of this circumstance, and insisted upon it with very unfair aggravation. (1)

Amidst the oppression and distraction of a disease which very few have felt in its full extent, but many (2) have experienced in a slighter degree,

(1) Johnson says, in a letter to Dr. Warton (Dec. 24. 1754), "Poor dear Collins! I have been often *near his state*, and therefore have it in great commiseration." — CROKER.

(2) Mr. Boswell was himself occasionally afflicted with this morbid depression of spirits, and was, at intervals, equally liable to paroxysms of what may be called *morbid vivacity*. He wrote, as Mr. D'Israeli observes, a Series of Essays in the London

Johnson, in his writings, and in his conversation, never failed to display all the varieties of intellectual excellence. (1) In his march through this world to a better, his mind still appeared grand and brilliant, and impressed all around him with the truth of Virgil's noble sentiment—

“*Ignæus est ollis vigor et cælestis origo.*” (2)

The history of his mind as to religion is an important article. I have mentioned the early im-

Magazine, under the title of the “Hypochondriac,” commencing in 1777, and carried on till 1782. — CROKER.

[Jan. 29. 1791, Boswell writes thus to Mr. Malone—“I have, for some weeks, had the most woful return of melancholy, in so much that I have not only had no relish of any thing, but a continual uneasiness; and all the prospect before me, for the rest of life, has seemed gloomy and hopeless.” Again, March 8., —“In the night between the last of February and first of this month, I had a sudden relief from the inexplicable disorder, which occasionally clouds my mind and makes me miserable.” — From the originals in the possession of Mr. Upcott.]

(1) [“I cannot conceive a man in perfect health being much affected by a charge of *hypochondriacism*, because his complexion and conduct must amply refute it. But, were it true, to what does it amount?—to an impeachment of a liver complaint. ‘I will tell it to the world,’ exclaimed Smelfungus. ‘You had better,’ said I, ‘tell it to your physician.’ There is nothing dishonourable in such a disorder, which is more peculiarly the malady of students. It has been the complaint of the good, and the wise, and the witty, and even of the gay. Regnard, the author of the best French comedy after Molière, was *atrabilious*, and Molière himself saturnine. Dr. Johnson, Gray, and Burns, were all, more or less, affected by it occasionally. It was the prelude to the more awful malady of Collins, Cowper, Swift, and Smart; but it by no means follows that a partial affliction of this disorder is to terminate like theirs.” — BYRON, vol. vi. p. 396.]

(2) [“Their souls at first from high Olympus came;  
And, if not blunted by the mortal frame,  
Th’ ethereal fires would ever burn the same.”

DRYDEN.]

pressions made upon his tender imagination by his mother, who continued her pious cares with assiduity, but, in his opinion, not with judgment. "Sunday," said he, "was a heavy day to me when I was a boy. (1) My mother confined me on that day, and made me read 'The Whole Duty of Man,' from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I had read the chapter on theft, which from my infancy I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before; so there was no accession of knowledge. A boy should be introduced to such books, by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellencies of composition; that the mind being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects may not grow weary."

He communicated to me the following particulars upon the subject of his religious progress:—"I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation, so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year; and still I find a

(1) See some judicious remarks on the happiest mode of training the youthful mind, so that religious habits may be associated with *cheerfulness*, by Bishop Jebb (*Sacred Literature*, 7.). That amiable writer, when animadverting on this passage, is somewhat uncandid, if not unjust. Surely, those deficiencies in spiritual attainments, which Johnson himself lamented, as having been caused either by neglect or injudicious treatment in his boyhood, ought not to be included in the catalogue of his failings! — MARKLAND.

great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up ‘Law’s<sup>(1)</sup> Serious Call to a Holy Life,’ expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational enquiry.”<sup>(2)</sup> From this time forward religion was

(1) William Law was born 1686, entered, in 1705, of Em. Coll. Camb., Fellow in 1711, and A.M. in 1712. On the accession of the Hanover family he refused the oaths. He was tutor to Mr. Gibbon’s father, at Putney, and finally retired, with two pious ladies, Mrs. Hutchinson and Mrs. Gibbon, the aunt of the historian, to a kind of conventual seclusion at King’s Cliffe, his native place. He died in 1761.—CROKER.

(2) Mrs. Piozzi has given a strange fantastical account of the original of Dr. Johnson’s belief in our most holy religion. “At the age of *ten* years his mind was disturbed by scruples of infidelity, which preyed upon his spirits, and made him very uneasy, the more so, as he revealed his uneasiness to none, being naturally (as he said) of a sullen temper, and reserved disposition. He searched, however, diligently, but fruitlessly, for evidences of the truth of revelation; and, at length, *recollecting* a book he had *once* seen [*I suppose at five years old*] in his father’s shop, entitled “*De Veritate Religionis*,” &c. he began to think himself *highly culpable* for neglecting such a means of information, and took himself severely to task for this *sin*, adding many acts of voluntary, and to others unknown, *penance*. The first opportunity which offered, of course, he seized the book with avidity; but, on examination, *not finding himself scholar enough to peruse its contents*, set his heart at rest; and not thinking to enquire whether there were any English books written on the subject, followed his usual amusements, and *considered his conscience as lightened of a crime*. He redoubled his diligence to learn the language that contained the information he most wished for; but from the pain which *guilt* [*namely, having omitted to read what he did not understand*] had given him, he now began to deduce the soul’s immortality

the predominant object of his thoughts; though, with the just sentiments of a conscientious Christian, he lamented that his practice of its duties fell far short of what it ought to be.

This instance of a mind such as that of Johnson being first disposed, by an unexpected incident, to think with anxiety of the momentous concerns of eternity, and of "what he should do to be saved," may for ever be produced in opposition to the superficial and sometimes profane contempt that has been thrown upon those occasional impressions which it is certain many Christians have experienced: though it must be acknowledged that weak minds, from an erroneous supposition that no man is in a state of grace who has not felt a particular conversion, have, in some cases, brought a degree of ridicule upon them; a ridicule, of which it is inconsiderate or unfair to make a general application.

How seriously Johnson was impressed with a sense of religion, even in the vigour of his youth, appears from the following passage in his minutes kept by way of diary:—"Sept. 7. 1736. I have this day en-

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[*a sensation of pain in this world being an unquestionable proof of existence in another*], which was the point that belief first stopped at; and from that moment resolving to be a Christian, became one of the most zealous and pious ones our nation ever produced." (Anecdotes, p. 17.) This is one of the numerous misrepresentations of this lively lady, which it is worth while to correct; for if credit should be given to such a childish, irrational, and ridiculous statement of the foundation of Dr. Johnson's faith in Christianity, how little credit would be due to it! Mrs. Piozzi seems to wish, that the world should think Dr. Johnson also under the influence of that easy logic, "*Stet pro ratione voluntas.*"

tered upon my 28th year. Mayest thou, O God, enable me, for Jesus Christ's sake, to spend this in such a manner, that I may receive comfort from it at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Amen."

The particular course of his reading while at Oxford, and during the time of vacation which he passed at home, cannot be traced.<sup>(1)</sup> Enough has been said of his irregular mode of study. He told me, that from his earliest years he loved to read poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end; that he read Shakspeare at a period so early, that the speech of the ghost in Hamlet terrified him when he was alone; that Horace's Odes were the compositions in which he took most delight<sup>(2)</sup>, and it was long before he liked his Epistles and Satires. He told me what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little Epigram; that the study of which he was the most fond was metaphysics, but he had not read much, even in that

(1) He had little relish for mathematical learning, and was content with such a degree of knowledge in physics, as he could not but acquire in the ordinary exercises of the place: his fortunes and circumstances had determined him to no particular course of study, and were such as seemed to exclude him from every one of the learned professions. — HAWKINS.

(2) Though some of his odes are easy, and in what he no doubt thought the Horatian style, we shall see that to Miss Carter he confessed a fondness for Martial, and his epigrams certainly were influenced by that partiality. Dr. Hall has a small volume of hendecasyllabic poetry, entitled "Poetæ Rusticantis Literatum Otium, sive Carmina Andreae Francisci Landesii. Lond. 1713;" which belonged to Johnson, and some peculiarities of the style of these verses may be traced in his college compositions. — CROKER.



way. I always thought that he did himself injustice in his account of what he had read, and that he must have been speaking with reference to the vast portion of study which is possible, and to which a few scholars in the whole history of literature have attained ; for when I once asked him whether a person, whose name I have now forgotten, studied hard, he answered, " No, Sir. I do not believe he studied hard. I never knew a man who studied hard. I conclude, indeed, from the effects, that some men have studied hard, as Bentley and Clarke." Trying him by that criterion upon which he formed his judgment of others, we may be absolutely certain, both from his writings and his conversation, that his reading was very extensive. Dr. Adam Smith<sup>(1)</sup>, than whom few were better judges on this subject, once observed to me, that " Johnson knew more books than any man alive." He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end. He had, from the irritability of his constitution, at all times, an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. A certain apprehension arising from novelty, made him write his first exercise at college twice over ; but he

(1) Boswell might have selected, if not a better judge, at least better authority ; for Adam Smith had comparatively little intercourse with Johnson, and the sentence pronounced is one which could only be justified by an intimate literary acquaintance. But Boswell's *nationality* (though he fancied he had quite subdued it) inclined him to quote the eminent Scottish professor. We shall see many instances of a similar (not illaudable) disposition. — CROKER.

never took that trouble with any other composition ; and we shall see that his most excellent works were struck off at a heat, with rapid exertion.(<sup>1</sup>)

Yet he appears, from his early notes or memorandums in my possession, to have at various times attempted, or at least planned, a methodical course of study, according to computation, of which he was all his life fond, as it fixed his attention steadily upon something without, and prevented his mind from preying upon itself. Thus I find in his handwriting the number of lines in each of two of Euripides's Tragedies, of the Georgics of Virgil, of the first six books of the Æneid, of Horace's Art of Poetry, of three of the books of Ovid's Metamorphoses, of some parts of Theocritus, and of the tenth Satire of Juvenal ; and a table, showing at the rate of various numbers a day, (I suppose, verses to be read,) what would be, in each case, the total amount in a week, month, and year.(<sup>2</sup>)

No man had a more ardent love of literature, or a higher respect for it, than Johnson. His apartment in Pembroke College was that upon the second floor over the gateway The enthusiast of learning

(1) He told Dr. Burney, that he never wrote any of his works that were printed twice over. Dr. Burney's wonder at seeing several pages of his "Lives of the Poets," in manuscript, with scarce a blot or erasure, drew this observation from him.—MALONE.

(2) ["I resolve to study the Scriptures ; I hope in the original languages. Six hundred and forty verses every Sunday will nearly comprise the Scriptures in a year.— The plan which I formed for reading the Scriptures was to read six hundred verses in the Old Testament, and two hundred in the New, every week."— Prayers and Med., pp. 57. 99.]

will ever contemplate it with veneration. One day, while he was sitting in it quite alone, Dr. Panting<sup>(1)</sup>, then master of the College, whom he called "a fine Jacobite fellow," overheard him uttering this soliloquy in his strong emphatic voice: "Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua. And I'll mind my business. For an *Athenian* blockhead is the worst of all blockheads."<sup>(2)</sup>

Dr. Adams told me that Johnson, while he was at Pembroke College, "was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life." But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently; for the truth is, that he was then depressed by poverty, and irritated by disease. When I mentioned to him this account as given me by Dr. Adams, he said, "Ah, Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my litera-

(1) [Dr. Matthew Panting died Feb. 12. 1739. See *Gent. Mag.*, vol. ix. p. 106.]

(2) I had this anecdote from Dr. Adams, and Dr. Johnson confirmed it. Bramston, in his "Man of Taste," has the same thought: —

"Sure of all blockheads scholars are the worst." — BOSWELL.

Johnson's meaning, however, is, that a scholar who is a blockhead, must be the worst of all blockheads, because he is without excuse. But Bramston, in the assumed character of an ignorant coxcomb, maintains, that *all* scholars are blockheads, on account of their scholarship. — J. BOSWELL, jun.

ture and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

The Bishop of Dromore observes in a letter to me, "The pleasure he took in vexing the tutors and fellows has been often mentioned. But I have heard him say, what ought to be recorded to the honour of the present venerable master of that college, the Reverend William Adams, D.D., who was then very young <sup>(1)</sup>, and one of the junior fellows; that the mild but judicious expostulations of this worthy man, whose virtue awed him, and whose learning he revered, made him really ashamed of himself, 'though I fear (said he) I was too proud to own it.'

"I have heard from some of his contemporaries that he was generally seen lounging at the college gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the college discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled." <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Dr. Adams was about two years older than Johnson, having been born in 1707. He became a Fellow of Pembroke in 1723, D.D. in 1756, and Master of the College in 1775. — HALL.

(2) There are preserved, in Pembroke College, some of these themes, or exercises, both in prose and verse: the following, though the two first lines are awkward, has more point and pleasantry than his epigrams usually have. It may be surmised, that the college beer was at this time indifferent: —

" *Mea nec Falernæ  
Temperant vites, neque Formiani  
Pocula colles.*"

" Quid mirum Maro quod dignè canit arma virumque,  
Quid quod putidulùm nostra Camæna sonat?  
Limosum nobis Promus dat callidus haustum,  
Virgilio vires uva Falerna dedit.  
Carmina vis nostri scribant meliora Poetæ?  
Ingenium jubeas purior haustus alat!"

He very early began to attempt keeping notes or memorandums, by way of a diary of his life. I find, in a parcel of loose leaves, the following spirited resolution to contend against his natural indolence : “ Oct. 1729. *Desidiæ valedixi; syrenis istius cantibus surdam posthac aurem obversurus.* I bid farewell to Sloth, being resolved henceforth not to listen to her syren strains.” I have also in my possession a few leaves of another *Libellus*, or little book, entitled *ANNALES*, in which some of the early particulars of his history are registered in Latin.

I do not find that he formed any close intimacies with his fellow-collegians. But Dr. Adams told me, that he contracted a love and regard for Pembroke College, which he retained to the last. A short time before his death he sent to that college a present of all his works<sup>(1)</sup>, to be deposited in their library: and he had thoughts of leaving to it his house at Lichfield; but his friends who were about him very properly dissuaded him from it, and he bequeathed

Another is in a graver and better style: —

“ *Adjecere bonæ paulo plus artis Athenæ.*”

“ *Quas natura dedit dotes, Academia promit;  
Dat menti propriis Musa nitere bonis.  
Materiam statuæ sic præbet marmora tellus,  
Saxea Phidiacâ spirat imago manu.*”

Johnson repeated this idea in the Latin verses on the termination of his Dictionary, entitled ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ, but not, as I think, so elegantly as in the epigram. — CROKER. [The thought is beautifully expressed in the Spectator, by Addison, No. 415.]

(1) Certainly, not *all*; and those which we have are not all marked as presented by him. — HALL.

it to some poor relations. He took a pleasure in boasting of the many eminent men who had been educated at Pembroke. In this list are found the names of Mr. Hawkins the Poetry Professor, Mr. Shenstone, Sir William Blackstone, and others<sup>(1)</sup>; not forgetting the celebrated popular preacher, Mr. George Whitefield, of whom, though Dr. Johnson did not think very highly, it must be acknowledged that his eloquence was powerful<sup>(2)</sup>, his views pious and charitable, his assiduity almost incredible; and that, since his death, the integrity of his character has been fully vindicated. Being himself a poet, Johnson was peculiarly happy in mentioning how many of the sons of Pembroke were poets; adding, with a smile of sportive triumph, "Sir, we are a nest of singing-birds."

He was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his own college: and I have, from the information of Dr. Taylor, a very strong instance of that rigid honesty which he ever inflexibly preserved. Taylor had obtained his father's consent to be entered

(1) [To the list should be added, Francis Beaumont, the dramatic writer; Sir Thomas Browne, whose life Johnson wrote; Sir James Dyer, twenty-four years Chief Justice of the King's Bench, Lord Chancellor Harcourt, the celebrated John Pym, Francis Rous, the Speaker of Cromwell's parliament, and the infamous Bishop Bonner. — W. SMITH, JUN.]

(2) [An ignorant man described his eloquence oddly, but strikingly, when he said, that Mr. Whitefield preached like a lion. So strange a comparison conveyed no unapt a notion of the force and vehemence and passion of that oratory, which awed the hearers, and made them tremble like Felix before the apostle. Yet, in all his discourses, there was a fervent and melting charity, an earnestness of persuasion, an outpouring of redundant love, which seemed to enter the heart which it pierced, and to heal it with balm. — SOUTHEY, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 150.]

of Pembroke, that he might be with his schoolfellow Johnson, with whom, though some years older than himself, he was very intimate. This would have been a great comfort to Johnson. But he fairly told Taylor that he could not, in conscience, suffer him to enter where he knew he could not have an able tutor. He then made enquiry all round the university, and having found that Mr. Bateman, of Christ-church, was the tutor of highest reputation, Taylor was entered of that college. <sup>(1)</sup> Mr. Bateman's lectures were so excellent, that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ-church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. How must we feel when we read such an anecdote of Samuel Johnson! <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Circumstantially as this story is told, there is good reason for disbelieving it. Taylor was admitted commoner of Christ-church, June 27. 1730: but it will be seen, that Johnson left Oxford six months before. — CROKER.

(2) Fortune has rarely condescended to be the companion of genius: the dunce finds a hundred roads to her palace; there is but one open, and that a very indifferent one, for men of letters. Cervantes is supposed to have wanted bread; Camoens, deprived of the necessaries of life, perished in the streets; Tasso was obliged to borrow a crown from a friend to subsist through the week; Ariosto complains bitterly of poverty in his Satires; Racine found Corneille dying, deprived even of a little broth; Spenser languished out his life in misery, and died in want of bread; Otway, Butler, and Chatterton it is sufficient to name. — D'ISRAELI.

His spirited refusal of an eleemosynary supply of shoes arose, no doubt, from a proper pride. But, considering his ascetic disposition at times, as acknowledged by himself in his Meditations, and the exaggeration with which some have treated the peculiarities of his character, I should not wonder to hear it ascribed to a principle of superstitious mortification; as we are told by Tursellinus, in his Life of St. Ignatius Loyola, that this intrepid founder of the order of Jesuits, when he arrived at Goa, after having made a severe pilgrimage through the eastern deserts, persisted in wearing his miserable shattered shoes, and when new ones were offered him, rejected them as an unsuitable indulgence.

The *res angusta domi* prevented him from having the advantage of a complete academical education. The friend to whom he had trusted for support had deceived him. His debts in college, though not great, were increasing; and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the college in autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years. (1)

(1) It will be observed, that Mr. Boswell slurs over the years 1729, 1730, and 1731, under the general inference that they were all spent at Oxford; but Dr. Hall's accurate statement of dates from the college books proves, that Johnson *personally* left college Dec. 12. 1729, though his *name* remained on the books till Oct. 8. 1731. Here, then, are two important years, the 21st and 22d of his age, to be accounted for; and Mr. Boswell's assertion (a little farther on), that he could not have been as-



Dr. Adams, the worthy and respectable master of Pembroke College, has generally had the reputation of being Johnson's tutor. The fact, however, is, that in 1731, Mr. Jorden quitted the college, and his pupils were transferred to Dr. Adams; so that had Johnson returned, Dr. Adams *would have been his tutor*. It is to be wished, that this connection had taken place. His equal temper, mild disposition, and politeness of manners, might have insensibly softened the harshness of Johnson, and infused into him those more delicate charities, those *petites morales*, in which, it must be confessed, our great moralist was more deficient than his best friends could fully justify. Dr. Adams paid Johnson this high compliment. He said to me at Oxford, in 1776, "I was his nominal tutor; but he was above my mark." When I repeated it to Johnson, his eyes flashed with grateful satisfaction, and he exclaimed, "That was liberal and noble." (1)

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sistant to Anthony Blackwall, *because* Blackwall died in 1730, before Johnson had left college, falls to the ground. That these two years were not pleasantly or profitably spent, may be inferred from the silence of Johnson and all his friends about them. It is due to Pembroke to note particularly this absence, because that institution possesses two scholarships, to one of which Johnson would have been eligible, and probably (considering his claims) elected, in 1730, had he been a candidate. — CROKER.

(1) If Adams called himself his nominal tutor, only because the pupil was above his mark, the expression would be liberal and noble; but if he was his nominal tutor, only because he would have been his tutor if Johnson had returned, the case is different, and Boswell is, either way, guilty of an inaccuracy. — CROKER. [Johnson's *name*, after the retirement of Jorden, must have appeared on the College books among the pupils of Adams.]

[“There was nothing marked in Dr. Adams's connection with Dr. Johnson, from which he might, with propriety, be styled his tutor.”— Dr. PARR, Nichols's *Illust.* vol. v. p. 277.]

## CHAPTER IV.

1731—1736.

*Johnson leaves Oxford. — Death of his Father. — Mr. Gilbert Walmesley. — Captain Garrick. — Mrs. Hill Boothby. — “Molly Aston.” — Johnson becomes Usher of Market-Bosworth School. — Removes to Birmingham. — Translates Lobo’s Voyage to Abyssinia. — Returns to Lichfield. — Proposes to print the Latin Poems of Politian. — Offers to write for the Gentleman’s Magazine. — His juvenile Attachments. — Marries. — Opens a private Academy at Edial. — David Garrick his Pupil. — Commences “Irene.”*

AND NOW (I had almost said *poor*) Samuel Johnson returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. His father’s misfortunes in trade rendered him unable to support his son (1); and for some time there appeared no means by which he could maintain himself. In the December of this year his father died.

The state of poverty in which he died appears from a note in one of Johnson’s little diaries of the following year, which strongly displays his spirit and virtuous dignity of mind.

(1) [Johnson’s father, either during his continuance at the university, or possibly before, had been by misfortunes rendered insolvent, if not, as Johnson told me, an actual bankrupt. — HAWKINS, p. 17.]

“ 1732, Julii 15. *Undecim aureos deposui, quo die quicquid ante matris funus (quod serum sit precor) de paternis bonis sperari licet, viginti scilicet libras, accepi. Usque adeo mihi fortuna fingenda est. Interea, ne paupertate vires animi languescant, nec in flagitia egestas abigat, cavendum.* I layed by eleven guineas on this day, when I received twenty pounds, being all that I have reason to hope for out of my father's effects, previous to the death of my mother; an event which I pray God may be very remote. I now therefore see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile, let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act.”

Johnson was so far fortunate, that the respectable character of his parents, and his own merit, had, from his earliest years, secured him a kind reception in the best families at Lichfield. Among these I can mention Mr. Howard, Dr. Swinfen, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Levett, Captain Garrick, father of the great ornament of the British stage; but above all, Mr. Gilbert Walmesley (1), Registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court of Lichfield, whose character, long after his decease, Dr. Johnson has, in his life of Edmund

(1) Mr. Warton informs me, that this early friend of Johnson was entered a Commoner of Trinity College, Oxford, aged 17, in 1698; and is the author of many Latin verse translations in the Gentleman's Magazine. One of them [vol. xv. p. 102.] is a translation of “My time, O ye Muses, was happily spent,” &c. He died August 3. 1751, and a monument to his memory has been erected in the cathedral of Lichfield, with an inscription written by Mr. Seward, one of the prebendaries.

Smith, thus drawn in the glowing colours of gratitude (1):

“ Of Gilbert Walmesley, thus presented to my mind, let me indulge myself in the remembrance. I knew him very early ; he was one of the first friends that literature procured me, and I hope, that at least my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

“ He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy, yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was a Whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party ; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him, and he endured me.

“ He had mingled with the gay world without exemption from its vices or its follies ; but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind. His belief of revelation was unshaken ; his learning preserved his principles ; he grew first regular, and then pious.

“ His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great, and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes, in which I have not some advantage from his friendship.

“ At this man’s table I enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours, with companions such as are not often found — with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life ; with Dr. James, whose skill in physic will be long remembered ; and with David Garrick, whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend. But what are the hopes of man ! I am disappointed by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure.”

(1) [The Life of Smith appeared in 1779.]

In these families he passed much time in his early years. In most of them, he was in the company of ladies, particularly at Mr. Walmesley's, whose wife and sisters-in-law, of the name of Aston, and daughters of a baronet, were remarkable for good breeding; so that the notion which has been industriously circulated and believed, that he never was in good company till late in life, and, consequently, had been confirmed in coarse and ferocious manners by long habits, is wholly without foundation. Some of the ladies have assured me, they recollected him well when a young man, as distinguished for his complaisance.

And that his politeness was not merely occasional and temporary, or confined to the circles of Lichfield, is ascertained by the testimony of a lady, who, in a paper with which I have been favoured by a daughter of his intimate friend and physician, Dr. Lawrence, thus describes Dr. Johnson some years afterwards.

“As the particulars of the former part of Dr. Johnson's life do not seem to be very accurately known, a lady hopes that the following information may not be unacceptable. — She remembers Dr. Johnson on a visit to Dr. Taylor (1), at Ashbourn, some time between the end of the year 37, and the middle of the year 40; she rather thinks it to have been after he and his wife were removed to London. During his stay at Ashbourn, he made frequent visits to Mr. Meynell, at

(1) Dr. Taylor must have been at this time a very young man. His residence at Ashbourn was patrimonial, and not ecclesiastical; and the house and grounds which Dr. Johnson's visits have rendered remarkable, are now the property of Mr. Webster, Dr. Taylor's legatee. — CROKER.

Bradley, where his company was much desired by the ladies of the family, who were, perhaps, in point of elegance and accomplishments, inferior to few of those with whom he was afterwards acquainted. Mr. Meynell's eldest daughter was afterwards married to Mr. Fitzherbert, father to Mr. Alleyne Fitzherbert <sup>(1)</sup>, lately minister to the court of Russia. Of her, Dr. Johnson said, in Dr. Lawrence's study, that she had the best understanding he ever met with in any human being. At Mr. Meynell's he also commenced that friendship with Mrs. Hill Boothby <sup>(2)</sup>, sister to the present Sir Brook Boothby, which continued till her death. The *young woman whom he used to call Molly Aston* <sup>(3)</sup>, was sister to Sir Thomas Aston <sup>(4)</sup>, and daughter to a baronet; she was also sister to the wife of his friend, Mr. Gilbert Walmesley. Besides his intimacy with the above-mentioned persons, who were surely people of rank and education, while he was yet at Lichfield he used to be frequently at the house of Dr. Swinfen, a gentleman of very ancient family in Staffordshire, from which, after the death of his elder brother, he inherited a good estate. He was, besides, a physician of very extensive practice; but for want of

(1) [Afterwards Lord St. Helens.]

(2) [Miss Boothby was born in 1708, and died in 1756. For the last three years of her life this lady corresponded with Dr. Johnson, and some of her letters are inserted in the APPENDIX to Vol. II.]

(3) The words of Sir John Hawkins, p. 316.

(4) Sir Thomas Aston, Bart., who died in January, 1724-5, left one son, named Thomas also, and eight daughters. Of the daughters, Catharine married Johnson's friend, the Hon. Henry Hervey; Margaret, Gilbert Walmesley. Another of these ladies [Jane] married the Rev. Mr. Gastrell [the man who cut down Shakspeare's mulberry-tree]; Mary, or *Molly Aston*, as she was usually called, became the wife of Captain Brodie of the navy. Another sister, who was unmarried, was living at Lichfield in 1776. — MALONE. [She died in 1785.]

due attention to the management of his domestic concerns, left a very large family in indigence. One of his daughters, Mrs. Desmoulins, afterwards found an asylum in the house of her old friend, whose doors were always open to the unfortunate, and who well observed the precept of the Gospel, for he 'was kind to the unthankful and to the evil.' " (1)

In the forlorn state of his circumstances, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher(2) in the

(1) Here Mr. Boswell has admitted the insinuation of an anonymous informant against poor Mrs. Desmoulins, as bitter, surely, as any thing which can be charged against any of his rival biographers; and, strange to say, this scandal is conveyed in a quotation from the book of Charity. Mrs. Desmoulins was, probably, not popular with "the ladies of Lichfield." She is supposed to have forfeited the protection of her own family by, what they thought, a derogatory marriage. Her husband, it is said, was a writing-master. — CROKER.

(2) [It has appeared, since Boswell wrote, that Johnson had been endeavouring, the year before this, to obtain the situation of usher at the Grammar School of Stourbridge, where he himself had been partly educated. The following letter of thanks to the schoolmaster, who had tried to help him on that occasion, was first published in the Manchester Herald, and afterwards inserted in Nichols's Literary Anecdotes, vol. viii. p. 416. : —

“ TO MR. GEORGE HICKMAN.

“ Lichfield, Oct. 30. 1731.

“ Sir, — I have so long neglected to return you thanks for the favour and assistance received from you at Stourbridge, that I am afraid you have now done expecting it. I can, indeed, make no apology, but by assuring you, that this delay, whatever was the cause of it, proceeded neither from forgetfulness, disrespect, nor ingratitude. Time has not made the sense of obligation less warm, nor the thanks I return less sincere. But while I am acknowledging one favour, I must beg another — that you would excuse the composition of the verses you desired. Be pleased to consider, that versifying against one's inclination is the most disagreeable thing in the world; and that one's own disappointment is no inviting subject; and that though the gratifying of you might have prevailed over my dislike of it, yet it proves, upon reflection, so barren, that, to attempt to write

school of Market-Bosworth, in Leicestershire, to which it appears, from one of his little fragments of a diary, that he went on foot, on the 16th of July. —“ *Julii 16. Bosvortiam pedes petii.*” But it is not true, as has been erroneously related, that he was assistant to the famous Anthony Blackwall, whose merit has been honoured by the testimony of Bishop Hurd<sup>(1)</sup>, who was his scholar; for Mr. Blackwall died on the 8th of April, 1730<sup>(2)</sup>, more than a year before Johnson left the University.

This employment was very irksome to him in every respect, and he complained grievously of it in his letters to his friend, Mr. Hector, who was now settled as a surgeon at Birmingham. The letters are lost; but Mr. Hector recollects his writing “that the poet had described the dull sameness of his existence in these words, ‘*Vitam continet una dies*’ (one day contains the whole of my life); that it was unvaried as the note of the cuckoo; and that he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the

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upon it, is to undertake to build without materials. As I am yet unemployed, I hope you will, if any thing should offer, remember and recommend, Sir, your humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”]

(1) There is here (as Mr. James Boswell observes to me) a slight inaccuracy. Bishop Hurd, in the Epistle Dedicatory prefixed to his Commentary on Horace’s Art of Poetry, &c. does not praise Blackwall, but the Rev. Mr. Budworth, headmaster of the Grammar School at Brewood, in Staffordshire, who had himself been bred under Blackwall. — MALONE. [We shall see presently, on the authority of Mr. Nichols, that Johnson proposed himself to Mr. Budworth, as an assistant.]

(2) See *Gent. Mag.*, Dec. 1784, p. 957.



grammar rules." His general aversion to this painful drudgery was greatly enhanced by a disagreement between him and Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of the school, in whose house, I have been told, he officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain, so far, at least, as to say grace at table, but was treated with what he represented as intolerable harshness; and, after suffering for a few months such complicated misery<sup>(1)</sup>, he relinquished a situation which all his life afterwards he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror. But it is probable that at this period, whatever uneasiness he may have endured, he laid the foundation of much future eminence by application to his studies.

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr. Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham, as his guest, at the house of Mr.

(1) Mr. Malone states, that he had read a letter of Johnson's to a friend, dated July 27. 1732, saying, that he had then recently left Sir Wolstan Dixie's house, and had some hopes of succeeding, either as master or usher, in the school of Ashbourn. If Mr. Malone be correct in the date of this letter, and Mr. Boswell be also right in placing the extract from the diary under the year 1732, Johnson's sojourn at Bosworth could have been not more than ten days, a time too short to be characterised as "a period of complicated misery," and to be remembered during a long life "with the strongest aversion and horror." It seems very extraordinary, that the laborious diligence and the lively curiosity of Hawkins, Boswell, Murphy, and Malone, were able to discover so little of the history of Johnson's life from December, 1729, to his marriage in July, 1736, and that what they have told should be liable to so much doubt. It may be inferred, that it was a period to which Johnson looked back with little satisfaction, and of which he did not love to talk; though it cannot be doubted that, during these five or six important years, he must have collected a large portion of that vast stock of information, with which he afterwards surprised and delighted the world. — CROKER.

Warren, with whom Mr. Hector lodged and boarded. Mr. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, who he soon found could be of much service to him in his trade, by his knowledge of literature; and he even obtained the assistance of his pen in furnishing some numbers of a periodical essay, printed in the newspaper of which Warren was proprietor. After very diligent inquiry, I have not been able to recover those early specimens of that particular mode of writing by which Johnson afterwards so greatly distinguished himself.

He continued to live as Mr. Hector's guest for about six months, and then hired lodgings in another part of the town<sup>(1)</sup>, finding himself as well situated at Birmingham as he supposed he could be any where, while he had no settled plan of life, and very scanty means of subsistence. He made some valuable acquaintances there, amongst whom were Mr. Porter, a mercer, whose widow he afterwards married, and Mr. Taylor, who, by his ingenuity in mechanical inventions, and his success in trade, acquired an immense fortune. But the comfort of being near Mr. Hector, his old school-fellow and intimate friend, was Johnson's chief inducement to continue here.

In what manner he employed his pen at this period, or whether he derived from it any pecuniary

(1) Sir John Hawkins states, from one of Johnson's diaries, that, in June 1733, he lodged in Birmingham, at the house of a person named Jervis, probably a relation of Mrs. Porter, whom he afterwards married, and whose maiden name was Jervis. — MALONE.

advantage, I have not been able to ascertain. He probably got a little money from Mr. Warren; and we are certain, that he executed here one piece of literary labour, of which Mr. Hector has favoured me with a minute account. Having mentioned that he had read at Pembroke College a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, by Lobo (<sup>1</sup>), a Portuguese Jesuit, and that he thought an abridgment and translation of it from the French into English might be an useful and profitable publication, Mr. Warren and Mr. Hector joined in urging him to undertake it. He accordingly agreed; and the book not being to be found in Birmingham, he borrowed it of Pembroke College. A part of the work being very soon done, one Osborn, who was Mr. Warren's printer, was set to work with what was ready, and Johnson engaged to supply the press with copy as it should be wanted; but his constitutional indolence soon prevailed, and the work was at a stand. Mr. Hector, who knew that a motive of humanity would be the most prevailing argument with his friend, went to Johnson, and represented to him, that the printer could have no other employment till this undertaking was finished, and that the poor man and his family were suffering. Johnson, upon this, exerted the powers of his mind, though his body was relaxed. He lay in bed with the book, which was a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote. Mr. Hector carried the sheets to the press, and corrected almost

(1) [Father Jerome Lobo, a Jesuit missionary, was born at Lisbon, in 1593, where he died, in 1678. His *Voyage to Abyssinia* was translated from the Portuguese into French, by the Abbé Le Grand, in 1728.]

all the proof sheets, very few of which were even seen by Johnson. In this manner, with the aid of Mr. Hector's active friendship, the book was completed, and was published in 1735, with London upon the title-page, though it was in reality printed at Birmingham, a device too common with provincial publishers. For this work he had from Mr. Warren only the sum of five guineas. (1)

This being the first prose work of Johnson, it is a curious object of enquiry how much may be traced in it of that style which marks his subsequent writings with such peculiar excellence; with so happy an union of force, vivacity, and perspicuity. I have perused the book with this view, and have found that here, as I believe in every other translation, there is in the work itself no vestige of the translator's own style (2); for the language of translation being adapted to the thoughts of another person, insensibly follows their cast, and, as it were, runs into a mould that is ready prepared.

Thus, for instance, taking the first sentence that occurs at the opening of the book, p. 4.:—

“ I lived here above a year, and completed my studies in divinity; in which time some letters were received from the fathers of Ethiopia, with an account that Sultan Segned, Emperor of Abyssinia, was converted to the church of Rome; that many of his subjects had

(1) [The book was poorly printed, on very bad paper, in Birmingham, and published by Bettesworth and Hitch, Paternoster Row, without the translator's name.]

(2) [There was, perhaps, no great room for elegance of style; but a superior skill and judgment are displayed by the manner in which he has abridged some theological dissertations.—  
PERCY.]

followed his example, and that there was a great want of missionaries to improve these prosperous beginnings. Every body was very desirous of seconding the zeal of our fathers, and of sending them the assistance they requested ; to which we were the more encouraged, because the Emperor's letter informed our Provincial, that we might easily enter his dominions by the way of Dancala ; but, unhappily, the secretary wrote Geila for Dancala, which cost two of our fathers their lives."

Every one acquainted with Johnson's manner will be sensible that there is nothing of it here ; but that this sentence might have been composed by any other man. But, in the Preface the Johnsonian style begins to appear ; and though use had not yet taught his wing a permanent and equable flight, there are parts of it which exhibit his best manner in full vigour. I had once the pleasure of examining it with Mr. Edmund Burke, who confirmed me in this opinion, by his superior critical sagacity, and was, I remember, much delighted with the following specimen : —

"The Portuguese traveller, contrary to the general vein of his countrymen, has amused his reader with no romantic absurdity, or incredible fictions ; whatever he relates, whether true or not, is at least probable ; and he who tells nothing exceeding the bounds of probability, has a right to demand that they should believe him who cannot contradict him.

"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 rocks without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants.

“ The reader will here find no regions cursed with irremediable barrenness, or blest with spontaneous fecundity ; no perpetual gloom, or unceasing sunshine ; nor are the nations here described either devoid of all sense of humanity, or consummate in all private or social virtues. Here are no Hottentots without religious policy or articulate language ; no Chinese perfectly polite, and completely skilled in all sciences ; he will discover, what will always be discovered by a diligent and impartial enquirer, 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 distributions, but has balanced, in most countries, their particular inconveniences by particular favours.”

Here we have an early example of that brilliant and energetic expression, which, upon innumerable occasions in his subsequent life, justly impressed the world with the highest admiration. Nor can any one, conversant with the writings of Johnson, fail to discern his hand in this passage of the Dedication to John Warren, Esq. of Pembrokehire, though it is ascribed to Warren the bookseller : —

“ A generous and elevated mind is distinguished by nothing more certainly than an eminent degree of curiosity <sup>(1)</sup> ; nor is that curiosity ever more agreeably or usefully employed, than in examining the laws and customs of foreign nations. I hope, therefore, the present I now presume to make, will not be thought improper ; which, however, it is not my business as a dedicator to commend, nor as a bookseller to depreciate.”

(1) See Rambler, No. 103. [“ Curiosity is the thirst of the soul,” &c.]

It is reasonable to suppose, that his having been thus accidentally led to a particular study of the history and manners of Abyssinia, was the remote occasion of his writing, many years afterwards, his admirable philosophical tale, the principal scene of which is laid in that country.

Johnson returned to Lichfield early in 1734, and in August that year he made an attempt to procure some little subsistence by his pen; for he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian<sup>(1)</sup>: “*Angeli Politiani Poemata Latini, quibus Notas, cum historiâ Latinæ poeseos à Petrarchæ ævo ad Politiani tempora deductâ, et vitâ Politiani fusius quam antehac enarrata, addidit SAM. JOHNSON.*”<sup>(2)</sup>

It appears that his brother Nathaniel had taken up his father's trade; for it is mentioned, “that subscriptions are taken in by the Editor, or N. Johnson,

(1) May we not trace a fanciful similarity between Politian and Johnson? Huetius, speaking of Paulus Pelissonius Fontaneri, says “— in quo natura, ut olim in Angelo Politiano, deformitatem oris excellentis ingenii præstantiâ compensavit.” Comment. de reb. ad eum pertin. Edit. Amstel. 1718. p. 200. — BOSWELL.

In this learned masquerade of Paulus Pelissonius Fontaneri, we have some difficulty in detecting Madame de Sevigné's friend, M. Pelisson, of whom M. de Guilleragues used the phrase, which has since grown into a proverb, “qu'il abusait de la permission qu'ont les hommes d'être laids.” — See Madame de Sevigné's Letter, Jan. 5. 1674. Huet, bishop of Avranches, wrote Memoirs of his own time, in Latin, from which Boswell has extracted this scrap of pleasantry. — CROKER.

[For a full account of Politian and his Poems, see Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo of Medici.]

(2) The book was to contain more than thirty sheets, the price to be two shillings and sixpence at the time of subscribing, and two shillings and sixpence at the delivery of a perfect book in quires.

bookseller, of Lichfield." (1) Notwithstanding the merit of Johnson, and the cheap price at which this book was offered, there were not subscribers enough to insure a sufficient sale; so the work never appeared, and, probably, never was executed. (2)

We find him again this year at Birmingham, and there is preserved the following letter from him to Mr. Edward Cave, the original compiler and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. (3)

LETTER I. TO MR. CAVE.

" Nov. 25. 1734.

" Sir, — As you appear no less sensible than your readers of the defects of your poetical article, you will

(1) Nathaniel kept the shop as long as he lived, as did his mother, after him, till her death. Miss Seward tells us, that Miss Lucy Porter, from the age of twenty to her fortieth year (when she was raised to a state of competency by the death of her eldest brother), " had boarded in Lichfield with Dr. Johnson's mother, who still kept that little bookseller's shop by which her husband had supplied the scanty means of subsistence: meantime Lucy Porter kept the best company in our little city, but would make no engagement on market-days, lest *Granny*, as she called Mrs. Johnson, should catch cold by serving in the shop. There Lucy Porter took her place, standing behind the counter, nor thought it a disgrace to thank a poor person who purchased from her a penny battledoor." Lett. 1. 117. — CROKER.

(2) [It is to be regretted that the project was not afterwards revived, as a new life of Politian, and a history of Latin poetry from the age of Petrarch to the time of Politian, would have been a valuable accession to Italian literature. — ANDERSON.]

(3) [To the "*Grub-Street Journal*," a weekly publication of small importance, we may trace the origin of this very valuable literary miscellany. The "*Journal*" began in Jan. 1730: the encouragement it met with suggested to Cave an improvement on its plan; and, in 1731, he produced the first number of the "*Gentleman's Magazine, or Monthly Intelligencer, by Sylvanus Urban, Gent.*" See *Memoirs of the Society of Grub Street*, p. 12.]



not be displeas'd, if, in order to the improvement of it, I communicate to you the sentiments of a person who will undertake, on reasonable terms, sometimes to fill a column.

“ His opinion is, that the public would not give you a bad reception, if, beside the current wit of the month, which a critical examination would generally reduce to a narrow compass, you admitted not only poems, inscriptions, &c. never printed before, which he will sometimes supply you with, but likewise short literary dissertations in Latin or English, critical remarks on authors ancient or modern, forgotten poems that deserve revival, or loose pieces, like Floyer's (1), worth preserving. By this method, your literary article, for so it might be called, will, he thinks, be better recommended to the public than by low jests, awkward buffoonery, or the dull scurrilities of either party.

“ If such a correspondence will be agreeable to you, be pleas'd to inform me in two posts what the conditions are on which you shall expect it. Your late offer (2) gives me no reason to distrust your generosity.

(1) [“ A Letter from the late Sir John Floyer, in recommendation of the Cold Bath.” *Gent. Mag.* 1734, p. 197. This letter was probably sent by Johnson himself: the Doctor, a very short time before his death, press'd Mr. Nichols to give to the public some account of the life and works of Sir John Floyer, “ whose learning and piety,” he said, “ deserve recording.” — See *Lit. Anec.*, vol. v. p. 19. — Sir John Floyer was born about the year 1646, and died in Jan. 1734, at Lichfield; where an original portrait of him is preserved. Bishop Hough, in a letter dated July 4. 1730, says, “ Sir John Floyer has been with me some weeks; and all my neighbours are surpris'd to see a man of eighty-five, who has his memory, understanding, and all his senses good, and seems to labour under no infirmity. He is of a happy temper, not to be moved with what he cannot remedy; which, I really believe, has, in a great measure, helped to preserve his health and prolong his days.” The excellent prelate was himself, at the period of writing this letter, in his eightieth year.]

(2) A prize of fifty pounds for the best poem “ On Life, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.” See *Gent. Mag.* vol. iv.

If you engage in any literary projects besides this paper, I have other designs to impart, if I could be secure from having others reap the advantage of what I should hint.

“Your letter by being directed to *S. Smith*, to be left at the Castle in Birmingham, Warwickshire, will reach

● “Your humble servant.”

Mr. Cave has put a note on this letter, “Answered Dec. 2.” But whether any thing was done in consequence of it we are not informed.

Johnson had, from his early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge school, he was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses, which I have not been able to recover<sup>(1)</sup>;

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p. 560. [“Being,” says Dr. Johnson, “but newly acquainted with wealth, and thinking the influence of fifty pounds very great, Cave expected the first authors of the kingdom to appear as competitors; and offered the allotment of the prize to the university. But, when the time came, no name was seen among the writers that had ever been seen before.” — *Life of Cave.*]

(1) He also wrote some amatory verses, before he left Staffordshire, which our author appears not to have seen. They were addressed “to Miss Hickman, playing on the spinet.” At the back of this early poetical effusion, of which the original copy, in Johnson’s handwriting, was obligingly communicated to me by Mr. John Taylor, is the following attestation: — “Written by the late Dr. Samuel Johnson, on my mother, then Miss Hickman, playing on the spinet. J. Turton.” Dr. Turton, the physician, writer of this certificate, who died in April, 1806, in his 71st year, was born in 1735. The verses in question, therefore, which have been printed in some late editions of Johnson’s poems, must have been written before that year. Miss Hickman, it is believed, was a lady of Staffordshire. — MALONE. [She was, no doubt, the daughter of the friendly schoolmaster at Stourbridge. See *antè*, p. 86. n.]

but with what facility and elegance he could warble the amorous lay, will appear from the following lines which he wrote for his friend Mr. Edmund Hector: —

VERSES TO A LADY, ON RECEIVING FROM HER A SPRIG  
OF MYRTLE.

“ What hopes, what terrors does thy gift create,  
Ambiguous emblem of uncertain fate !  
The myrtle, ensign of supreme command,  
Consign'd by Venus to Melissa's hand ;  
Not less capricious than a reigning fair,  
Now grants, and now rejects, a lover's prayer.  
In myrtle shades oft sings the happy swain,  
In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain ;  
The myrtle crowns the happy lovers' heads,  
The unhappy lover's grave the myrtle spreads :  
O then the meaning of thy gift impart,  
And ease the throbbings of an anxious heart !  
Soon must this bough, as you shall fix his doom,  
Adorn Philander's head, or grace his tomb.” (1)

(1) Mrs. Piozzi gives the following account of this little composition from Dr. Johnson's own relation to her, on her enquiring whether it was rightly attributed to him: — “ I think it is now just forty years ago, that a young fellow had a sprig of myrtle given him by a girl he courted, and asked me to write him some verses that he might present her in return. I promised, but forgot ; and when he called for his lines at the time agreed on, — ‘ Sit still a moment,’ says I, ‘ dear Mund, and I'll fetch them thee’ — so stepped aside for five minutes, and wrote the nonsense you now keep such a stir about.” *Anecdotes*, p. 34. In my first edition I was induced to doubt the authenticity of this account, by the following circumstantial statement in a letter to me from Miss Seward, of Lichfield: — “ I know those verses were addressed to Lucy Porter, when he was enamoured of her in his boyish days, two or three years before he had seen her mother, his future wife. He wrote them at my grandfather's, [Mr. Hunter, the schoolmaster,] and gave them to Lucy in the presence of my mother, to whom he showed them on the instant. She used to repeat them to me, when I asked her for

His juvenile attachments to the fair sex were, however, very transient; and it is certain, that he formed no criminal connection whatsoever. Mr. Hector, who lived with him in his younger days in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, has assured me, that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect; and that, though

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*the Verses Dr. Johnson gave her on a Sprig of Myrtle, which he had stolen or begged from her bosom.* We all know honest Lucy Porter to have been incapable of the mean vanity of applying to herself a compliment not *intended* for her." Such was this lady's statement, which I make no doubt she supposed to be correct: but it shows how dangerous it is to trust too implicitly to traditional testimony and ingenious inference; for Mr. Hector has lately assured me that Mrs. Piozzi's account is, in this instance, accurate, and that he was the person for whom Johnson wrote those verses, which have been erroneously ascribed to Mr. Hammond. I am obliged, in so many instances, to notice Mrs. Piozzi's incorrectness of relation, that I gladly seize this opportunity of acknowledging, that however often, she is not always, inaccurate.

The author having been drawn into a controversy with Miss Anna Seward, in consequence of the preceding statement (which may be found in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxiii. and lxiv.), received the following letter from Mr. Edmund Hector on the subject:—

"Dear Sir,—I am sorry to see you are engaged in altercation with a lady, who seems unwilling to be convinced of her errors. Surely it would be more ingenuous to acknowledge than to persevere. Lately, in looking over some papers I meant to burn, I found the original manuscript of the Myrtle, with the date on it, 1731, which I have enclosed.

"The true history (which I could swear to) is as follows:—Mr. Morgan Graves, the elder brother of a worthy clergyman near Bath, [the Rev. Richard Graves, author of the "Spiritual Quixote,"] with whom I was acquainted, waited upon a lady in this neighbourhood, who, at parting, presented him the branch. He showed it me, and wished much to return the compliment in verse. I applied to Johnson, who was with me, and in about half an hour dictated the verses, which I sent to my friend. I most solemnly declare, at that time, Johnson was an entire stranger to the Porter family; and it was almost two years after, that I introduced him to the acquaintance of Porter, whom I bought my clothes of.

"If you intend to convince this obstinate woman, and to exhibit to the public the truth of your narrative, you are at liberty to make what use you please of this statement. I hope you will pardon me for taking up so much of your time. Wishing you *multos et felices annos*, I shall subscribe myself your obliged humble servant, E. HECTOR. Birmingham, Jan. 9. 1794."

he loved to exhilarate himself with wine, he never knew him intoxicated but once. (1)

In a man whom religious education has secured from licentious indulgences, the passion of love, when once it has seized him, is exceedingly strong; being unimpaired by dissipation, and totally concentrated in one object. This was experienced by Johnson, when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter, after her first husband's death. Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding: he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff,

(1) In 1735, Mr. Walmesley endeavoured to procure Johnson the mastership of the grammar-school at Solihull, in Warwickshire. This and the cause of failure appear by the following curious letter, addressed to Mr. Walmesley, and preserved in the records of Pembroke College: —

“Solihull, ye 30 August, 1735. Sir, — I was favoured with yours of ye 13th inst. in due time, but deferred answering it til now, it takeing up some time to informe the ffæofees [of the school] of the contents thereof; and before they would return an Answer, desired some time to make enquiry of ye caracter of Mr. Johnson, who all agree that he is an excellent scholar, and upon that account deserves much better than to be school-master of Solihull. But then he has the caracter of being a very haughty ill-natured gent., and yt he has such a way of distorting his fface (wh though he ca'nt help) ye gent. think it may affect some young ladds; for these two reasons he is not approved on, ye late master Mr. Crompton's huffing the ffæofees being stil in their memory. However we are all extremely obliged to you for thinking of us, and for proposeing so good a schollar, but more especially is, dear sir, your very humble servant,  
HENRY GRESWOLD.”

It was probably prior to this that an attempt to obtain the situation of assistant in Mr. Budworth's school, at Brewood, had also failed, and for the same reasons. Mr. Budworth lamented his having been under the necessity of declining the engagement from an apprehension that the paralytic affection under which Johnson laboured might become the object of imitation or ridicule amongst his pupils. This anecdote Captain Budworth, his grandson, confirmed to Mr. Nichols. — CROKER.

and separated behind ; and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule.<sup>(1)</sup> Mrs. Porter was so much engaged by his conversation, that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, “ This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life.”

Though Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson<sup>(2)</sup>, and her person and manner, as described to me by the late Mr. Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others<sup>(3)</sup>, she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents<sup>(4)</sup>, as she certainly in-

(1) [Johnson’s countenance, when in a good humour, was not disagreeable : — his face clear, his complexion good, and his features not ill-formed, many ladies have thought they might not be unattractive when he was young. Much misrepresentation has prevailed on this subject. — PERCY.]

(2) Though there was a great disparity of years between her and Dr. Johnson, she was not quite so old as she is here represented, being only at the time of her marriage in her forty-eighth year, as appears by the following extract from the parish register of Great Peatling, in Leicestershire : — “ Anno Dom. 1688-9. Elizabeth, the daughter of William Jervis, Esq. and Mrs. Anne his wife, was born the 4th day of February and *mané*, baptized 16th day of the same month, by Mr. Smith, Curate of Little Peatling. John Allen, Vicar.” — MALONE. [Mr. Malone has given evidence that the family of Mrs. Johnson had once been possessed of a considerable landed property at Great Peatling : so that there was no absurdity in the Doctor’s commemoration, in her epitaph, of her *stirps generosa*.]

(3) That in Johnson’s eyes she was handsome, appears from the epitaph which he caused to be inscribed on her tombstone, not long before his own death, and which will be found in a subsequent page, under the year 1752. — MALONE.

(4) The following account of Mrs. Johnson, and her family, is copied from a paper, written by Lady Knight, at Rome, and transmitted by her to Mr. Hoole, the translator of Metastasio, &c. : —

“ Mrs. Williams’s account of Mrs. Johnson was, that she had a good understanding, and great sensibility, but inclined to be satirical. Her first husband died insolvent : her sons were much disgusted with her for her

spired him with more than ordinary passion; and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage; which he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their disparity of years, and her want of fortune. But Mrs. Johnson knew too well the ardour of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. But though Mr. Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, "Sir, it was a love-marriage on both sides," I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn [9th July]:—"Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover

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second marriage, perhaps because they, being struggling to get advanced in life, were mortified to think she had allied herself to a man who had not any visible means of being useful to them; however, she always retained her affection for them. While they [Dr. and Mrs. Johnson] resided in Gough Square, her son, the officer, knocked at the door, and asked the maid, if her mistress was at home. She answered, 'Yes, sir; but she is sick in bed.'—'Oh,' says he, 'if it's so, tell her that her son Jervis called to know how she did;' and was going away. The maid begged she might run up to tell her mistress, and, without attending his answer, left him. Mrs. Johnson, enraptured to hear her son was below, desired the maid to tell him she longed to embrace him. When the maid descended, the gentleman was gone, and poor Mrs. Johnson was much agitated by the adventure: it was the only time he ever made an effort to see her. Dr. Johnson did all he could to console his wife, but told Mrs. Williams, 'Her son is uniformly undutiful; so I conclude, like many other sober men, he might once in his life be drunk, and in that fit nature got the better of his pride.'"

— MALONE.

like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me ; and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice ; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it ; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity : but there is no doubt, that Johnson, though he thus showed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life ; and in his " Prayers and Meditations," we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased even after her death.

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated near his native city. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1736<sup>(1)</sup> there is the following advertisement : —

*" At EDIAL, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON."* <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) This project must have been formed before his marriage, for the advertisement appears in the *Magazine* for June and July, 1736. Is it not possible, that the obvious advantage of having a woman of experience to superintend an establishment of this kind may have contributed to a match so disproportionate in point of age? — CROKER.

(2) [A view of "Edial Hall, the residence of Dr. Samuel Johnson," is given in *Harwood's History of Lichfield*, 1809 ; where it is stated, that "the house has undergone no material alteration since it was inhabited by this illustrious tenant."]



But the only pupils that were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely <sup>(1)</sup>, a young gentleman of good fortune, who died early. As yet, his name had nothing of that celebrity which afterwards commanded the highest attention and respect of mankind. Had such an advertisement appeared after the publication of his *London*, or his *Rambler*, or his *Dictionary*, how would it have burst upon the world! with what eagerness would the great and the wealthy have embraced an opportunity of putting their sons under the learned tuition of Samuel Johnson! The truth, however, is, that he was not so well qualified for being a teacher of elements, and a conductor in learning by regular gradations, as men of inferior powers of mind. His own acquisitions had been made by fits and starts, by violent irruptions in the regions of knowledge; and it could not be expected that his impatience would be subdued, and his impetuosity restrained, so as to fit him for a quiet guide to novices. The art of communicating instruction, of whatever kind, is much to be valued; and I have ever thought that those who devote themselves to this employment, and do their duty with diligence and success, are entitled to very high respect from the community, as Johnson himself often maintained. Yet I am of opinion,

(1) [Son of Mr. Offely, of Whichenoure Park, in Staffordshire, the ancient manor of the Somervilles, held, like Dunmow in Essex, by the memorable service of giving a fitch of bacon as a reward to any husband and wife who could say, that they never had had the least difference within the space of twelve months after marriage. — ANDERSON.]

that the greatest abilities are not only not required for this office, but render a man less fit for it.

While we acknowledge the justness of Thomson's beautiful remark,

“ Delightful task ! to rear the tender thought,  
And teach the young idea how to shoot ! ”<sup>(1)</sup>

we must consider that this delight is perceptible only by “ a mind at ease,” a mind at once calm and clear ; but that a mind gloomy and impetuous, like that of Johnson, cannot be fixed for any length of time in minute attention, and must be so frequently irritated by unavoidable slowness and error in the advances of scholars, as to perform the duty, with little pleasure to the teacher, and no great advantage to the pupils.<sup>(2)</sup> Good temper is a most essential requisite in a preceptor. Horace paints the character as *bland* :

“ — Ut pueris olim dant crustula *blandi*  
Doctores, elementa velint ut discere prima.”<sup>(3)</sup>

Johnson was not more satisfied with his situation as the master of an academy, than with that of the usher of a school ; we need not wonder, therefore, that he did not keep his academy above a year and

(1) Thomson's beautiful remark is just, only because the poet applies it to the first education of a child by its own fond parents, and not to the drudgery of hired instruction in the advanced stages of learning. — CROKER.

(2) [A good schoolmaster minces his precepts for children to swallow, hanging clogs on the nimbleness of his own soul, that his scholars may go along with him. — FULLER.]

(3) [“ As masters fondly soothe their boys to read  
With cakes and sweetmeats—let us now proceed.”  
FRANCIS.]

a half. From Mr. Garrick's account, he did not appear to have been profoundly revered by his pupils. His oddities of manner, and uncouth gesticulations, could not but be the subject of merriment to them ; and, in particular, the young rogues used to listen at the door of his bedchamber, and peep through the key-hole, that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs. Johnson, whom he used to name by the familiar appellation of *Tetty* or *Tetsey*, which, like *Betty* or *Betsey*, is provincially used as a contraction for *Elizabeth*, her Christian name, but which to us seems ludicrous, when applied to a woman of her age and appearance. Mr. Garrick described her to me as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials ; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour. (1) I have seen Garrick exhibit her, by his exquisite talent of mimicry, so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter ; but he, probably, as is the case in all such representations, considerably aggravated the picture.

That Johnson well knew the most proper course to be pursued in the instruction of youth is authentically ascertained by the following paper (2) in his

(1) [As Johnson kept Garrick much in awe when present, David, when his back was turned, repaid the restraint with ridicule of him and his dulcinea, which should be read with great abatement. — PERCY.]

(2) That this crude Sketch for the arrangement of the lower classes of a grammar-school "*authentically ascertains that John-*

own handwriting, given about this period to a relation, and now in the possession of Mr. John Nichols : —

“ SCHEME FOR THE CLASSES OF A GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

“ When the introduction, or formation of nouns and verbs, is perfectly mastered, let them learn

“ Corderius by Mr. Clarke, beginning at the same time to translate out of the introduction, that by this means they may learn the syntax. Then let them proceed to Erasmus, with an English translation, by the same author.

“ Class II. learns Eutropius and Cornelius Nepos, or Justin, with the translation.

“ N. B. The first class gets for their part every morning the rules which they have learned before, and in the afternoon learns the Latin rules of the nouns and verbs. They are examined in the rules which they have learned, every Thursday and Saturday.

“ The second class does the same whilst they are in Eutropius ; afterwards their part is in the irregular nouns and verbs, and in the rules for making and scanning verses. They are examined as the first.

“ Class III. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in the morning, and Cæsar’s *Commentaries* in the afternoon.

“ Practise in the Latin rules till they are perfect in

son well knew the *most proper* course to be pursued in the *instruction* of youth,” is a bold and illogical assertion. It may even be doubted whether it is good as far as it goes, and whether the beginning with authors of *inferior latinity*, and allowing the assistance of *translations*, be, indeed, the *most proper* course of classical instruction ; nor are we, while ignorant of the peculiar circumstances for which the paper was drawn up, entitled to conclude that it contains Dr. Johnson’s mature and general sentiments on even the narrow branch of education to which it refers. Indeed, in the second paper, Johnson advises his friend not to read “ the *latter* authors till you are well versed in those of the *purser* ages.” — CROKER.

them ; afterwards in Mr. Leeds's <sup>(1)</sup> Greek Grammar. Examined as before. Afterwards they proceed to Virgil, beginning at the same time to write themes and verses, and to learn Greek ; from thence passing on to Horace, &c. as shall seem most proper.<sup>(2)</sup>

“ I know not well what books to direct you to, because you have not informed me what study you will apply yourself to. I believe it will be most for your advantage to apply yourself wholly to the languages, till you go to the university. The Greek authors I think it best for you to read are these : —

Cebes.

Ælian.

Lucian by Leeds.

Xenophon.

Homer.

Theocritus.

Euripides.

} Attic.

Ionic.

Doric.

Attic and Doric.

“ Thus you will be tolerably skilled in all the dialects, beginning with the Attic, to which the rest must be referred.

“ In the study of Latin, it is proper not to read the latter authors, till you are well versed in those of the purest ages ; as Terence, Tully, Cæsar, Sallust, Nepos, Velleius Paterculus, Virgil, Horace, Phædrus.

“ The greatest and most necessary task still remains, to attain a habit of expression, without which knowledge is of little use. This is necessary in Latin, and more necessary in English ; and can only be acquired by a daily imitation of the best and correctest authors.

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

(1) [Dr. Edward Leedes, head master of the grammar-school at Bury St. Edmunds.]

(2) Mr. Boswell has printed these as *one* paper ; but it seems clear that they are *two* separate schemes, the first for a school, the second for the individual studies of some young friend. —  
CROKER.

While Johnson kept his academy, there can be no doubt that he was insensibly furnishing his mind with various knowledge; but I have not discovered that he wrote any thing except a great part of his tragedy of IRENE. Mr. Peter Garrick, the elder brother of David, told me that he remembered Johnson's borrowing the Turkish History <sup>(1)</sup> of him, in order to form his play from it. When he had finished some part of it, he read what he had done to Mr. Walmesley, who objected to his having already brought his heroine into great distress, and asked him, "How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?" Johnson, in sly allusion to the supposed oppressive proceedings of the court of which Mr. Walmesley was registrar, replied, "Sir, I can put her into the Spiritual Court!"

Mr. Walmesley, however, was well pleased with this proof of Johnson's abilities as a dramatic writer, and advised him to finish the tragedy, and produce it on the stage.

(1) [Of Knolles's History of the Turks, Johnson says, in the Rambler; "it displays all the excellences that narration can admit, and nothing could have sunk its author in obscurity, but the remoteness and barbarity of the people whose story he relates." No. 122.

"Old Knolles," said Lord Byron, at Missolonghi, a few weeks before his death, "was one of the first books that gave me pleasure when a child; and I believe it had much influence on my future wishes to visit the Levant, and gave, perhaps, the oriental colouring which is observed in my poetry." Works, vol. ix. p. 141.

"The reverse of Johnson's decision we conceive to be more just. Knolles owes his fame, in a great degree, to his subject. The young imagination of Byron is said to have been strongly excited by the kindling pages of this historian: we suspect, however, that it was the Turkish character, its stern vigour, and its imposing and somewhat mysterious dignity, even, perhaps, the haughty and ferocious visages, in their noble and picturesque costume, which struck the congenial mind of the poet."—Quarterly Review, vol. xlix. p. 285.]

## CHAPTER V.

1737—1738.

*Johnson goes to London with David Garrick. — Takes Lodgings in Exeter Street. — Retires to Greenwich, and proceeds with "Irene." — Projects a Translation of the History of the Council of Trent. — Returns to Lichfield, and finishes "Irene." — Removes to London with his Wife. — Becomes a Writer in the Gentleman's Magazine.*

JOHNSON now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance, that his pupil, David Garrick, went thither at the same time <sup>(1)</sup>, with intent to complete

(1) Both of them used to talk pleasantly of this their first journey to London. Garrick, evidently meaning to embellish a little, said one day in my hearing, "We rode and tied." And the Bishop of Killaloe (Dr. Barnard) informed me, that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself thus: — "That was the year when I came to London with two-pence halfpenny in my pocket." Garrick overhearing him, exclaimed, "Eh? what do you say? with two-pence halfpenny in your pocket?" — Johnson. "Why, yes; when I came with two-pence halfpenny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three-halfpence in thine." — BOSWELL.

This *may* have been said in raillery, but could not have been true. Indeed, Boswell, in the next page, acknowledges that Johnson had a little money at his arrival; but, however that may be, Garrick, a young gentleman coming to town, not as an adventurer, but to complete his education and prepare for the bar, could not have been in such indigent circumstances. — CROKER.

his education, and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage.

This joint expedition of those two eminent men to the metropolis was many years afterwards noticed in an allegorical poem on Shakspeare's mulberry tree, by Mr. Lovibond, the ingenious author of "The Tears of Old-May-day." (1)

They were recommended to Mr. Colson (2), an eminent mathematician and master of an academy, by the following letter from Mr. Walmesley : —

LETTER 2. TO THE REV. MR. COLSON.

" Lichfield, March 2. 1737.

" DEAR SIR, — I had the favour of yours, and am extremely obliged to you ; but I cannot say I had a greater affection for you upon it than I had before, being long since so much endeared to you, as well by an early friendship, as by your many excellent and valuable

(1) [Edward Lovibond was a gentleman of fortune, residing at Hampton, whose works were little known in his own day, and are now quite neglected, though Dr. Anderson has introduced them into the Scotch edition of the British Poets. According to the information of Mr. Chalmers, he was a director of the East India Company. He died in 1773.]

(2) [The Rev. John Colson became, in 1709, first master or the free-school at Rochester. In 1739, he was appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge; and died in December, 1759. "Mrs. Piozzi," observes Mr. Croker, "has stated, that the character of *Gelidus*, in the 24th Rambler, was meant to represent Mr. Colson; but this may be doubted, for, as Mr. Colson resided constantly at Rochester till his removal to Cambridge, it is not likely that Mr. Walmesley's letter could produce any intercourse or acquaintance between him and Johnson; and it appears, from Davies's Life of Garrick (vol. i. p. 14.), a work revised by Johnson, that Mr. Colson's character could have no resemblance to the absurdities of *Gelidus*."] ]



qualifications ; and, had I a son of my own, it would be my ambition, instead of sending him to the university, to dispose of him as this young gentleman is.

“ He, and another neighbour of mine, one Mr. Samuel Johnson, set out this morning for London together. Davy Garrick to be with you early the next week, and Mr. Johnson to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy-writer. If it should any way lie in your way, doubt not but you would be ready to recommend and assist your countryman,

“ G. WALMESLEY.”

How he employed himself upon his first coming to London is not particularly known.<sup>(1)</sup> I never heard that he found any protection or encouragement by the means of Mr. Colson, to whose academy David Garrick went. Mrs. Lucy Porter told me, that Mr. Walmesley gave him a letter of introduction to Lintot his bookseller, and that Johnson wrote some things for him ; but I imagine this to be a mistake, for I have discovered no trace of it, and I am pretty sure he told me, that Mr. Cave was the first publisher by whom his pen was engaged in London.

He had a little money when he came to town, and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris,

(1) One curious anecdote was communicated by himself to Mr. John Nichols. Mr. Wilcox, the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author, eyed his robust frame attentively, and, with a significant look, said, “ You had better buy a porter’s knot.” He, however, added, “ Wilcox was one of my best friends.”

a staymaker, in Exeter Street, adjoining Catharine Street, in the Strand. "I dined," said he, "very well for eight-pence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New Street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing." (1)

He at this time, I believe, abstained entirely from fermented liquors: a practice to which he rigidly conformed for many years together, at different periods of his life. (2)

(1) Painful as it is to relate, I have heard Dr. Johnson assert, that he subsisted himself, for a considerable space of time, upon the scanty pittance of four-pence halfpenny per day. — CUMBERLAND.

(2) At this time his abstinence from wine may, perhaps, be attributed to poverty, but in his subsequent life he was restrained from that indulgence by, as it appears, moral, or rather medical, considerations. He probably found by experience that wine, though it dissipated for a moment, yet eventually aggravated the hereditary disease under which he suffered; and perhaps it may have been owing to a long course of abstinence, that his mental health seems to have been better in the latter than in the earlier portion of his life. He says, in his *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 73., "By abstinence from wine and suppers, I obtained sudden and great relief, and had freedom of mind restored to me; which I have wanted for all this year, without being able to find any means of obtaining it." See also Sept. 16. 1773. Selden had the same notion; for being consulted by a person of quality, whose imagination was strangely disturbed, he advised him "not to disorder himself with eating or drinking; to eat very little supper, and say his prayers duly when he went to bed; and I (Selden) made but little question but he would be well in three or four days." — *Table Talk*, p. 17. These remarks are important, because *depression of spirits* is too often treated on a contrary system, from ignorance of, or inattention to, what may be its *real* cause. — CROKER.

His Ofellus, in the Art of Living in London <sup>(1)</sup>, I have heard him relate, was an Irish painter, whom he knew at Birmingham, and who had practised his own precepts of economy for several years in the British capital. He assured Johnson, who, I suppose, was then meditating to try his fortune in London, but was apprehensive of the expense, “that thirty pounds a year was enough to enable a man to live there without being contemptible. He allowed ten pounds for clothes and linen. He said a man might live in a garret at eighteen-pence a week; few people would enquire where he lodged; and if they did, it was easy to say, ‘Sir, I am to be found at such a place.’ By spending three-pence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours every day in very good company; he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and milk for a penny, and do without supper. On *clean-shirt-day* he went abroad, and paid visits.” I have heard him more than once talk of his frugal friend, whom he recollected with esteem and kindness, and did not like to have one smile at the recital. “This man,” said he, gravely, “was a

(1) [“Quæ virtus et quanta, boni, sit vivere parvo,  
(Nec meus hic sermo; sed quæ præcepit Ofellus,  
Rusticus, abnormis sapiens, crassaque Minerva,)  
Discite, non inter lances mensaque nitentes.”  
HOR. *Sat.* ii. lib. ii.

“What, and how great, the virtue and the art  
To live on little with a cheerful heart,  
(A doctrine sage, but, truly, none of mine,)  
Let’s talk, my friends, but talk before we dine.”  
POPE, *Imit.*

The *Ofellus* of Horace was an honest countryman, whose patrimony had been seized by Augustus, and given to one of the soldiers that had served against Brutus and Cassius.]

very sensible man, who perfectly understood common affairs : a man of a great deal of knowledge of the world, fresh from life, not strained through books. He borrowed a horse and ten pounds at Birmingham. Finding himself master of so much money, he set off for West Chester, in order to get to Ireland. He returned the horse, and probably the ten pounds too, after he had got home."

Considering Johnson's narrow circumstances in the early part of his life, and particularly at the interesting era of his launching into the ocean of London, it is not to be wondered at, that an actual instance, proved by experience, of the possibility of enjoying the intellectual luxury of social life upon a very small income, should deeply engage his attention, and be ever recollected by him as a circumstance of much importance. He amused himself, I remember, by computing how much more expense was absolutely necessary to live upon the same scale with that which his friend described, when the value of money was diminished by the progress of commerce. It may be estimated that double the money might now with difficulty be sufficient.

Amidst this cold obscurity, there was one brilliant circumstance to cheer him ; he was well acquainted with Mr. Henry Hervey (1), one of the branches of

(1) The Hon. Henry Hervey, third son of the first Earl of Bristol, quitted the army and took orders. He married a sister of Sir Thomas Aston, by whom he got the Aston Estate, and assumed the name and arms of that family. — BOSWELL.

Mr. Hervey's acquaintance and kindness Johnson probably owed to his friend Walmsley. Hervey and Walmsley, it will be recollected, married two sisters. — CROKER.

the noble family of that name, who had been quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army, and had at this time a house in London, where Johnson was frequently entertained, and had an opportunity of meeting genteel company. Not very long before his death, he mentioned this, among other particulars of his life, which he was kindly communicating to me; and he described this early friend "Harry Hervey," thus: "He was a vicious man<sup>(1)</sup>, but very kind to me. If you call a dog HERVEY I shall love him."

He told me he had now written only three acts of his *IRENE*, and that he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat further, and used to compose, walking in the Park; but did not stay long enough at that place to finish it.

At this period we find the following letter from him to Mr. Edward Cave, which, as a link in the chain of his literary history, it is proper to insert:—

LETTER 3. TO MR. CAVE.

"Greenwich, next door to the Golden Heart,  
Church Street, July 12. 1737.

"SIR, — Having observed in your papers very uncommon offers of encouragement to men of letters, I have chosen, being a stranger in London, to communicate to you the following design, which, I hope, if you join in it, will be of advantage to both of us.

(1) For the excesses which Dr. Johnson characterises as vicious, Mr. Hervey was, probably, as much to be *pitied* as blamed. He was *very eccentric*. — CROKER.

“ The History of the Council of Trent <sup>(1)</sup> having been lately translated into French, and published with large notes by Dr. Le Courayer, the reputation of that book is so much revived in England, that, it is presumed, a new translation of it from the Italian <sup>(2)</sup>, together with Le Courayer’s notes from the French, could not fail of a favourable reception.

“ If it be answered, that the History is already in English, it must be remembered, that there was the same objection against Le Courayer’s undertaking, with this disadvantage, that the French had a version by one of their best translators, whereas you cannot read three pages of the English history without discovering that the style is capable of great improvements ; but whether those improvements are to be expected from this attempt, you must judge from the specimen, which, if you approve the proposal, I shall submit to your examination.

“ Suppose the merit of the versions equal, we may hope that the addition of the notes will turn the balance in our favour, considering the reputation of the annotator.

“ Be pleased to favour me with a speedy answer, if you are not willing to engage in this scheme ; and appoint me a day to wait upon you, if you are. I am, Sir, your humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.”

It should seem from this letter, though subscribed with his own name, that he had not yet been introduced to Mr. Cave. We shall presently see what was done in consequence of the proposal which it contains.

(1) [The celebrated work of Father Paul Sarpi.]

(2) This proves that Johnson had now acquired Italian ; probably directed to that study by the volume of Petrarch (mentioned *antè*, p. 55.), the latter part of which contained his Italian poems. — CROKER.

In the course of the summer he returned to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson, and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated. A few days before his death, while burning a great mass of papers, he picked out from among them the original unformed sketch of this tragedy, in his own handwriting, and gave it to Mr. Langton, by whose favour a copy of it is now in my possession. It contains fragments of the intended plot, and speeches for the different persons of the drama, partly in the raw materials of prose, partly worked up into verse; as also a variety of hints for illustration, borrowed from the Greek, Roman, and modern writers. The handwriting is very difficult to be read, even by those who were best acquainted with Johnson's mode of penmanship, which at all times was very particular. The King having graciously accepted of this manuscript as a literary curiosity, Mr. Langton made a fair and distinct copy of it, which he ordered to be bound up with the original and the printed tragedy; and the volume is deposited in the King's library.<sup>(1)</sup> His Majesty was pleased to permit Mr. Langton to take a copy of it for himself.

The whole of it is rich in thought and imagery, and happy expressions; and of the *disjecta membra* scattered throughout, and as yet unarranged, a good dramatic poet might avail himself with considerable

(1) [The library of King George III. now forms, by the munificent donation of his son, George IV., part of the great national collection in the British Museum.]

advantage. I shall give my readers some specimens of different kinds, distinguishing them by the italic character.

*“ Nor think to say, here will I stop,  
Here will I fix the limits of transgression,  
Nor farther tempt the avenging rage of heaven.  
When guilt like this once harbours in the breast,  
Those holy beings, whose unseen direction  
Guides through the maze of life the steps of man,  
Fly the detested mansions of impiety,  
And quit their charge to horror and to ruin.”*

A small part only of this interesting admonition is preserved in the play, and is varied, I think, not to advantage:—

*“ The soul once tainted with so foul a crime,  
No more shall glow with friendship’s hallow’d ardour,  
Those holy beings whose superior care  
Guides erring mortals to the paths of virtue,  
Affrighted at impiety like thine,  
Resign their charge to baseness and to ruin.”*

*“ I feel the soft infection  
Flush in my cheek, and wander in my veins.  
Teach me the Grecian arts of soft persuasion.”*

*“ Sure this is love, which heretofore I conceived the  
dream of idle maids, and wanton poets.”*

*“ Though no comets or prodigies foretold the ruin of  
Greece, signs which heaven must by another miracle  
enable us to understand, yet might it be foreshown, by  
tokens no less certain, by the vices which always bring  
it on.”*



This last passage is worked up in the tragedy itself as follows :—

LEONTIUS.

— “ That power that kindly spreads  
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,  
To warn the wand’ring linnet to the shade,  
Beheld, without concern, expiring Greece,  
And not one prodigy foretold our fate.

DEMETRIUS.

“ A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it ;  
A feeble government, eluded laws,  
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,  
And all the maladies of sinking states.  
When public villany, too strong for justice,  
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,  
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,  
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard ?  
When some neglected fabric nods beneath  
The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,  
Must heaven despatch the messengers of light,  
Or wake the dead, to warn us of its fall ? ”

MAHOMET (to IRENE). “ *I have tried thee, and joy to find that thou deservest to be loved by Mahomet, — with a mind great as his own. Sure, thou art an error of nature, and an exception to the rest of thy sex, and art immortal ; for sentiments like thine were never to sink into nothing. I thought all the thoughts of the fair had been to select the graces of the day, dispose the colours of the flaunting (flowing) robe, tune the voice and roll the eye, place the gem, choose the dress, and add new roses to the fading cheek, but — sparkling.* ”

Thus in the tragedy :—

“ Illustrious maid, new wonders fix me thine ;  
Thy soul completes the triumphs of thy face ;

I thought, forgive my fair, the noblest aim,  
The strongest effort of a female soul  
Was but to choose the graces of the day,  
To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,  
Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,  
And add new roses to the faded cheek."

I shall select one other passage, on account of the doctrine which it illustrates.

IRENE observes, "*that the Supreme Being will accept of virtue, whatever outward circumstances it may be accompanied with, and may be delighted with varieties of, worship: but is answered, That variety cannot affect that Being, who, infinitely happy in his own perfections, wants no external gratifications; nor can infinite truth be delighted with falsehood; that though he may guide or pity those he leaves in darkness, he abandons those who shut their eyes against the beams of day.*"

Johnson's residence at Lichfield, on his return to it at this time, was only for three months; and as he had as yet seen but a small part of the wonders of the metropolis, he had little to tell his townsmen. He related to me [Sept. 20. 1773,] the following minute anecdote of this period:—"In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it; the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me, whether I was one of those who gave the wall, or those who took it. *Now* it is fixed that every man keeps to the right; or, if one is taking the wall, another yields it; and it is never a dispute."

He now removed to London with Mrs. Johnson ; but her daughter, who had lived with them at Edial, was left with her relations in the country. His lodgings were for some time in Woodstock Street, near Hanover Square, and afterwards in Castle Street, near Cavendish Square. As there is something pleasingly interesting, to many, in tracing so great a man through all his different habitations, I shall, before this work is concluded, present my readers with an exact list of his lodgings and houses, in order of time, which, in placid condescension to my respectful curiosity, he one evening [Oct. 10. 1779,] dictated to me, but without specifying how long he lived at each. In the progress of his life I shall have occasion to mention some of them as connected with particular incidents, or with the writing of particular parts of his works. To some, this minute attention may appear trifling ; but when we consider the punctilious exactness with which the different houses in which Milton resided have been traced by the writers of his life, a similar enthusiasm may be pardoned in the biographer of Johnson.

His tragedy being by this time, as he thought, completely finished and fit for the stage, he was very desirous that it should be brought forward. Mr. Peter Garrick told me, that Johnson and he went together to the Fountain tavern, and read it over, and that he afterwards solicited Mr. Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury Lane theatre, to have it acted at his house ; but Mr. Fleetwood would not accept it, probably because it was not patronised by some man of high rank ; and it was not acted till 1749, when

his friend David Garrick was manager of that theatre.

The Gentleman's Magazine, begun and carried on by Mr. Edward Cave, under the name of Sylvanus Urban, had attracted the notice and esteem of Johnson, in an eminent degree, before he came to London as an adventurer in literature. He told me, that when he first saw St. John's Gate, the place where that deservedly popular miscellany was originally printed, he "beheld it with reverence." (1) I suppose, indeed, that every young author has had the same kind of feeling for the magazine or periodical publication which has first entertained him, and in which he has first had an opportunity to see himself in print, without the risk of exposing his name. I myself recollect such impressions from the Scots Magazine, which was begun at Edinburgh in the year 1739, and has been ever conducted with judgment, accuracy, and propriety. (2) I yet cannot help thinking of it with

(1) If, as Mr. Boswell supposes, Johnson looked at St. John's Gate as the printing-office of Cave, surely a less emphatical term than *reverence* would have been more just. The Gentleman's Magazine had been, at this time, but six years before the public, and its contents were, until Johnson himself contributed to improve it, entitled to any thing rather than *reverence*; but it is much more probable that Johnson's *reverence* was excited by the recollections connected with the ancient gate itself, the last relic of the once extensive and magnificent priory of the heroic knights of the order of St. John of Jerusalem, suppressed at the dissolution, and destroyed by successive dilapidations. Its last prior, Sir William Weston, though compensated with the annual pension (enormous in those days) of 1000*l.*, died of a broken heart, on Ascension-day, 1540, the very day the house was suppressed. — CROKER.

(2) [The Scots Magazine, particularly valuable under the years 1745-6, &c. for its details of the expedition of Prince

an affectionate regard. Johnson has dignified the Gentleman's Magazine by the importance with which he invests the life of Cave; but he has given it still greater lustre by the various admirable essays which he wrote for it.

Though Johnson was often solicited by his friends to make a complete list of his writings, and talked of doing it, I believe with a serious intention that they should all be collected on his own account, he put it off from year to year, and at last died without having done it perfectly. I have one in his own handwriting, which contains a certain number; I indeed doubt if he could have remembered every one of them, as they were so numerous, so various, and scattered in such a multiplicity of unconnected publications; nay, several of them published under the names of other persons, to whom he liberally contributed from the abundance of his mind. We must, therefore, be content to discover them, partly from occasional information given by him to his friends, and partly from internal evidence. <sup>(1)</sup>

His first performance in the Gentleman's Magazine, which for many years was his principal source

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Charles Edward Stuart, and in subsequent times enlivened with the original essays of many eminent persons, has been for some years past discontinued. 1835.]

(1) While, in the course of my narrative, I enumerate his writings, I shall take care that my readers shall not be left to waver in doubt, between certainty and conjecture, with regard to their authenticity; and, for that purpose, shall mark with an *asterisk* (\*) those which he acknowledged to his friends, and with a *dagger* (†) those which are ascertained to be his by internal evidence. When any other pieces are ascribed to him, I shall give my reasons.

of employment and support, was a copy of Latin verses, in March, 1738, addressed to the editor in so happy a style of compliment, that Cave must have been destitute both of taste and sensibility, had he not felt himself highly gratified.

Ad URBANUM. \*

Urbane, nullis fesse laboribus,  
 Urbane, nullis victe calumniis,  
 Cui fronte sertum in eruditâ  
 Perpetuò viret et virebit ;

Quid moliatur gens imitantium,  
 Quid et minetur, sollicitus parùm,  
 Vacare solis perge Musis,  
 Juxta animo studiisque felix.

Linguae procacis plumbea spicula,  
 Fidens, superbo frange silentio ;  
 Victrix per obstantes catervas  
 Sedulitas animosa tendet.

Intende nervos, fortis, inanibus  
 Risurus olim nisibus æmuli ;  
 Intende jam nervos, habebis  
 Participes operæ Camœnas.

Non ulla Musis pagina gratior,  
 Quam quæ severis ludicra jungere  
 Novit, fatigatamque nugis  
 Utilibus recreare mentem.

Texente nymphis sarta Lycoride,  
 Rosæ ruborem sic viola adjuvat  
 Immista, sic Iris refulget  
 Æthereis variata fucis. (1)

S. J.

(1) A translation of this Ode, by an unknown correspondent, appeared in the Magazine for the month of May following : —

It appears that he was now enlisted by Mr. Cave as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, by which he probably obtained a tolerable livelihood. At what time, or by what means, he had acquired a competent knowledge both of French and Italian, I do not know ; but he was so well skilled in them, as to be sufficiently qualified for a translator. That part of his labour which consisted in emendation and improvement of the productions of other contributors, like that employed in levelling ground, can be perceived only by those who had an opportunity of com-

“ Hail, Urban ! indefatigable man,  
Unwearied yet by all thy useful toil !  
Whom num’rous slanderers assault in vain ;  
Whom no base calumny can put to foil.  
But still the laurel on thy learned brow  
Flourishes fair, and shall for ever grow,” &c. &c.

[The following less vapid translation, attributed by Mr. Nichols to Mr. Jackson of Canterbury, appeared in the year of Johnson’s death, 1784 : —

“ Urban, whom neither toil profound  
Fatigues, nor calumnies o’erthrow ; —  
The wreath, thy learned brows around,  
Still grows, and will for ever grow.

Of rivals let no cares infest,  
Of what they threaten or prepare ;  
Blest in thyself, thy projects blest,  
Thy hours still let the muses share.

The leaden shafts which folly throws,  
In silent dignity despise :  
Superior o’er opposing foes,  
Thy vigorous diligence shall rise.

Exert thy strength, each vain design,  
Each rival soon shalt thou disdain ;  
Arise, for see thy task to join,  
Approach the muses’ fav’ring train.

How grateful to each muse the page,  
Where grave with sprightly themes are join’d ;  
And useful levities engage,  
And recreate the wearied mind.

Thus the pale violet to the rose  
Adds beauty ’midst the garland’s dies ;  
And thus the changeful rainbow throws  
Its varied splendours o’er the skies.”]

paring the original with the altered copy. What we certainly know to have been done by him in this way was the debates in both houses of Parliament, under the name of "The Senate of Lilliput," sometimes with feigned denominations of the several speakers, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names, in the manner of what is called anagram, so that they might easily be deciphered. Parliament then kept the press in a kind of mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to such devices. In our time it has acquired an unrestrained freedom, so that the people in all parts of the kingdom have a fair, open, and exact report of the actual proceedings of their representatives and legislators, which in our constitution is highly to be valued; though, unquestionably, there has of late been too much reason to complain of the petulance with which obscure scribblers have presumed to treat men of the most respectable character and situation.

This important article of the Gentleman's Magazine was, for several years, executed by Mr. William Guthrie, a man who deserves to be respectably recorded in the literary annals of this country. He was descended of an ancient family in Scotland; but having a small patrimony, and being an adherent of the unfortunate house of Stuart, he could not accept of any office in the state; he therefore came to London, and employed his talents and learning as an "author by profession." His writings in history, criticism, and politics, had considerable merit. <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) How much poetry he wrote, I know not; but he informed me that he was the author of the beautiful little piece,



He was the first English historian who had recourse to that authentic source of information, the Parliamentary Journals; and such was the power of his political pen, that, at an early period, government thought it worth their while to keep it quiet by a pension (1), which he enjoyed till his death. Johnson esteemed him enough to wish that his life should be written. The debates in Parliament, which were brought home and digested by Guthrie, whose memory, though surpassed by others who have since followed him in the same department, was yet very quick and tenacious, were sent by Cave to Johnson for his revision; and, after some time, when Guthrie had attained to greater variety of employment, and the speeches were more and more enriched by the accession of Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself, from the scanty notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both houses of Parliament. Sometimes, however, as he himself told me, he had nothing more communicated to him than the names of the several speakers, and the part which they had taken in the debate.

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“The Eagle and Robin Redbreast,” in the collection of poems entitled, “The Union,” though it is there said to be written by Alexander Scott, before the year 1600.

(1) [See, in D'Israeli's “Calamities of Authors,” vol. i. p. 5., a letter from Guthrie to the minister, dated June 3. 1762, stating, that a pension of 200*l.* a year had been “regularly and quarterly” paid him, ever since the year 1745-6; and offering to serve his Majesty, under the minister's “future patronage and protection, with greater zeal, if possible, than ever.” Guthrie was born at Brechin, in 1708, and died in 1770.]

## CHAPTER VI.

1738—1741.

*Johnson publishes "London, a Poem."—Letters to Cave relating thereto.—Endeavours, without Success, to obtain the Degree of Master of Arts.—Recommended by Pope to Earl Gower.—The Earl's Letter on his Behalf.—Begins a Translation of Father Paul Sarpi's History.—Publishes "A Complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage"—and "Marmor Norfolciense."—Pope's Note to Richardson concerning him.—Characteristic Anecdotes.—Writes the Debates in Parliament, under the Disguise of "the Senate of Lilliput."*

THUS was Johnson employed during some of the best years of his life, as a mere literary labourer "for gain, not glory," solely to obtain an honest support. He, however, indulged himself in occasional little sallies, which the French so happily express by the term *jeux d'esprit*, and which will be noticed in their order, in the progress of this work.

But what first displayed his transcendent powers, and "gave the world assurance of the man," was his "London, a Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal;" which came out in May this year, and burst forth with a splendour, the rays of which will for ever encircle his name. Boileau had imitated the same satire with great success, applying it to

Paris; but an attentive comparison will satisfy every reader, that he is much excelled by the English Juvenal. (1) Oldham had also imitated it, and applied it to London; all which performances concur to prove, that great cities, in every age, and in every country, will furnish similar topics of satire. Whether Johnson had previously read Oldham's imitation (2), I do not know; but it is not a little remarkable, that there is scarcely any coincidence found between the two performances, though upon the very same subject. The only instances are, in describing London as the *sink* of foreign worthlessness: —

—— “ the *common shore*,  
Where France does all her filth and ordure pour.”  
OLDHAM.

“ The *common shore* of Paris and of Rome.”  
JOHNSON.

(1) It is hardly fair to compare the poems in this hostile way: Boileau's was a mere *badinage*, complaining of, or laughing at, the *personal* dangers and inconveniences of Paris. Johnson's object was to satirise the *moral* depravity of a great city. —  
CROKER.

(2) [John Oldham, whose Satires against the Jesuits gained him the appellation of “ the English Juvenal,” was born in 1653, and died in 1683, in his thirtieth year. At one period of his life he was a perfect votary of the bottle. In a letter (now in the Bodleian Library) written by him to one of his companions, after he had retired from London, he says, “ Thou knowest, Jack, there was never a more unconcerned coxcomb than myself once; but experience and thinking have made me quit that humour. I think virtue and sobriety (how much soever the men of wit may turn 'em into ridicule) the only measures to be happy, and believe the feast of a good conscience the best treat that can make a true epicure. I find I retain all the briskness, acrimony, and gaiety I had, but purged from the dross and lees of debauchery; and am as merry as ever, though not so mad.”]

And,

“ No calling or profession comes amiss,  
A *needy monsieur* can be what he please.”

OLDHAM.

“ All sciences a *fasting monsieur* knows.”

JOHNSON.

The particulars which Oldham has collected, both as exhibiting the horrors of London, and of the times, contrasted with better days, are different from those of Johnson, and in general well chosen, and well expressed. <sup>(1)</sup>

There are in Oldham's imitation, many prosaic verses and bad rhymes, and his poem sets out with a strange inadvertent blunder: —

“ Though much concern'd to *leave* my old dear friend,  
I must, however, *his* design commend  
Of fixing in the country.”

It is plain he was not going to leave his *friend*; his friend was going to leave *him*. A young lady at once corrected this with good critical sagacity, to

“ Though much concern'd to *lose* my old dear friend.”

There is one passage in the original better trans- fused by Oldham than by Johnson: —

“ *Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,  
Quàm quod ridiculos homines facit.*”

(1) I own it pleased me to find amongst them one trait of the manners of the age in London, in the last century, to shield from the sneer of English ridicule, what was, some time ago, too common a practice in my native city of Edinburgh!

“ If what I've said can't from the town affright,  
Consider other *dangers of the night*;  
When brickbats are from upper stories thrown,  
And *emptied chamberpots come pouring down*  
From garret windows.”

which is an exquisite remark on the galling meanness and contempt annexed to poverty. Johnson's imitation is, —

“ Of all the griefs that harass the distrest,  
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest.”

Oldham's, though less elegant, is more just, —

“ Nothing in poverty so ill is borne,  
As its exposing men to grinning scorn.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Where or in what manner this poem was composed, I am sorry that I neglected to ascertain with precision from Johnson's own authority. He has marked upon his corrected copy of the first edition of it, “ Written in 1738 ;” and, as it was published in the month of May in that year, it is evident that much time was not employed in preparing it for the press. The history of its publication I am enabled to give in a very satisfactory manner; and judging from myself, and many of my friends, I trust that it will not be uninteresting to my readers.

We may be certain, though it is not expressly named in the following letters to Mr. Cave, in 1738, that they all relate to it : —

LETTER 4. TO MR. CAVE.

“ Castle Street, Wednesday Morning. [March, 1738.]

“ SIR, — When I took the liberty of writing to you a few days ago, I did not expect a repetition of this same

(1) [“ O Poverty, thy thousand ills combined  
Sink not so deep into the generous mind  
As the contempt and laughter of mankind !”  
GIFFORD'S JUVENAL.]

pleasure so soon ; for a pleasure I shall always think it, to converse in any manner with an ingenious and candid man : but having the enclosed poem in my hands to dispose of for the benefit of the author, (of whose abilities I shall say nothing, since I send you his performance,) I believe I could not procure more advantageous terms from any person than from you, who have so much distinguished yourself by your generous encouragement of poetry ; and whose judgment of that art nothing but your commendation of my trifle (1) can give me any occasion to call in question. I do not doubt but you will look over this poem with another eye, and reward it in a different manner from a mercenary bookseller, who counts the lines he is to purchase, and considers nothing but the bulk. I cannot help taking notice, that, besides what the author may hope for on account of his abilities, he has likewise another claim to your regard, as he lies at present under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune. I beg, therefore, that you will favour me with a letter to-morrow, that I may know what you can afford to allow him, that he may either part with it to you, or find out (which I do not expect) some other way more to his satisfaction.

“ I have only to add, that as I am sensible I have transcribed it very coarsely, which, after having altered it, I was obliged to do, I will, if you please to transmit the sheets from the press, correct it for you ; and take the trouble of altering any stroke of satire which you may dislike.

“ By exerting on this occasion your usual generosity, you will not only encourage learning, and relieve distress, but (though it be in comparison of the other motives of very small account) oblige, in a very sensible manner, Sir, your very humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

(1) His Ode “*Ad Urbanum*” was, no doubt, the trifle referred to. — CROKER.

## LETTER 5. TO MR. CAVE.

“ Monday, No. 6. Castle Street. [March, 1738.]

“ SIR, — I am to return you thanks for the present <sup>(1)</sup> you were so kind as to send by me, and to entreat that you will be pleased to inform me, by the penny-post, whether you resolve to print the poem. If you please to send it me by the post, with a note to Dodsley, I will go and read the lines to him, that we may have his consent to put his name in the title-page. As to the printing, if it can be set immediately about, I will be so much the author’s friend, as not to content myself with mere solicitations in his favour. I propose, if my calculation be near the truth, to engage for the reimbursement of all that you shall lose by an impression of five hundred ; provided, as you very generously propose, that the profit, if any, be set aside for the author’s use, excepting the present you made, which, if he be a gainer, it is fit he should repay. I beg that you will let one of your servants write an exact account of the expense of such an impression, and send it with the poem, that I may know what I engage for. I am very sensible, from your generosity on this occasion, of your regard to learning, even in its unhappiest state ; and cannot but think such a temper deserving of the gratitude of those who suffer so often from a contrary disposition. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

## LETTER 6. TO MR. CAVE.

[April, 1738.]

“ SIR, — I waited on you to take the copy to Dodsley’s : as I remember the number of lines which it

(1) Though Cave had not taste enough to be struck with the value of the poem, he had, we see, charity enough to relieve the pressing wants of the author, in the shape of a present. — CROKER.

contains, it will be no longer than Eugenio (1), with the quotations, which must be subjoined at the bottom of the page ; part of the beauty of the performance (if any beauty be allowed it) consisting in adapting Juvenal's sentiments to modern facts and persons. It will, with those additions, very conveniently make five sheets. And since the expense will be no more, I shall contentedly insure it, as I mentioned in my last. If it be not therefore gone to Dodsley's, I beg it may be sent me by the penny-post, that I may have it in the evening. I have composed a Greek Epigram to Eliza (2), and think she ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Lewis le Grand. Pray send me word when you will begin upon the poem, for it is a long way to walk. I would leave my Epigram, but have not daylight to transcribe it. I am, Sir, yours, &c.

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

LETTER 7.

TO MR. CAVE.

[April, 1738.]

“SIR, — I am extremely obliged by your kind letter, and will not fail to attend you to-morrow with Irene, who looks upon you as one of her best friends.

“I was to-day with Mr. Dodsley, who declares very warmly in favour of the paper you sent him, which he desires to have a share in, it being, as he says, *a creditable thing to be concerned in*. I knew not what answer to make till I had consulted you, nor what to demand on the author's part; but am very willing that, if you please, he should have a part in it, as he will

(1) A poem, published in 1737, of which see an account, *post*, under April 30. 1773.

(2) The learned Mrs. Elizabeth Carter. This lady, of whom frequent mention will be found in these Memoirs, was daughter of Nicholas Carter, D.D. She was born in 1717, and died, in Clarges Street, February 19. 1806, in her eighty-ninth year. — MALONE.



undoubtedly be more diligent to disperse and promote it. If you can send me word to-morrow what I shall say to him, I will settle matters, and bring the poem with me for the press, which, as the town empties, we cannot be too quick with. I am, Sir, yours, &c.

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

To us who have long known the manly force, bold spirit, and masterly versification of this poem, it is a matter of curiosity to observe the diffidence with which its author brought it forward into public notice, while he is so cautious as not to avow it to be his own production; and with what humility he offers to allow the printer to “alter any stroke of satire which he might dislike.” That any such alteration was made, we do not know. If we did, we could not but feel an indignant regret; but how painful is it to see that a writer of such vigorous powers of mind was actually in such distress, that the small profit which so short a poem, however excellent, could yield, was courted as a “relief!”

It has been generally said, I know not with what truth, that Johnson offered his “London” to several booksellers, none of whom would purchase it. To this circumstance Mr. Derrick (1) alludes in the following lines of his “Fortune, a Rhapsody:” —

(1) [Samuel Derrick, a native of Ireland, was born in 1724. He was apprenticed to a linen-draper, but abandoned that calling, first, for the stage, where he soon failed, and then for the trade of literature. Besides “Fortune, a Rhapsody” (1753), he published a translation of the Third Satire of Juvenal, a View of the Stage, an edition of Dryden’s Poems, and “Letters written from Liverpool, Chester,” &c. It will be seen that Johnson had “a great kindness” for him, and that he was Boswell’s “first tutor in the ways of London.” In 1761, Derrick succeeded Beau Nash as master of the ceremonies at Bath, where he died in 1769.]

“ Will no kind patron Johnson own?  
 Shall Johnson friendless range the town?  
 And every publisher refuse  
 The offspring of his happy muse? ”

But we have seen that the worthy, modest, and ingenious Mr. Robert Dodsley (1) had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit, and thought it creditable to have a share in it. The fact is, that, at a future conference, he bargained for the whole property of it, for which he gave Johnson ten guineas, who told me, “ I might perhaps have accepted of less ; but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem, and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead.”

I may here observe, that Johnson appeared to me to undervalue Paul Whitehead upon every occasion when he was mentioned, and, in my opinion, did not do him justice ; but when it is considered that Paul Whitehead was a member of a riotous and profane club (2), we may account for Johnson’s having a prejudice against him. Paul Whitehead was, indeed, unfortunate in being not only slighted by Johnson,

(1) [Robert Dodsley was born in 1703. He had been servant to Miss Lowther, and in 1733 published, by subscription, a volume of poems, entitled “ The Muse in Livery.” He afterwards wrote “ The Toyshop,” “ The King and Miller of Mansfield,” “ Cleone, a Tragedy,” “ The Economy of Human Life,” and other pieces. In 1758 he projected, in concert with Mr. Burke, the Annual Register, and in 1759 he was succeeded in his business as a bookseller by his brother James. R. Dodsley died in 1764.]

(2) [Paul Whitehead belonged to that jovial association of choice spirits, called the Beef Steak Club, held in Covent Garden theatre, and consisting of an heterogeneous mixture of peers, poets, and players. He died in 1774, bequeathing his heart to his patron, Lord le Despenser, who deposited it in a mausoleum in his garden, at High Wycombe. — ANDERSON.]

but violently attacked by Churchill, who utters the following imprecation :—

“ May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall ?)  
Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul ! ”

yet I shall never be persuaded to think meanly of the author of so brilliant and pointed a satire as “ Manners.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Johnson’s “ London ” was published in May, 1738<sup>(2)</sup>; and it is remarkable, that it came out on

(1) [“ Paul Whitehead, a small poet, was summoned before the Lords for a poem called ‘ Manners,’ together with Dodsley, his publisher. Whitehead, who hung loose upon society, skulked and escaped; but Dodsley’s shop and family made his appearance necessary. He was, however, soon dismissed; and the whole process was probably intended rather to intimidate Pope than to punish Whitehead.” — JOHNSON, *Life of Pope.*]

(2) Sir John Hawkins, p. 86., tells us, “ The event (Savage’s retirement) is *antedated* in the poem of ‘ London; ’ but in every particular, except the difference of a year, what is there said of the departure of Thales must be understood of Savage, and looked upon as *true history.*” This conjecture is, I believe, entirely groundless. I have been assured that Johnson said he was not so much as acquainted with Savage when he wrote his “ London.” If the departure mentioned in it was the departure of Savage, the event was not *antedated* but *foreseen*; for “ London ” was published in May, 1738, and Savage did not set out for Wales till July, 1739. However well Johnson could defend the credibility of *second sight*, he did not pretend that he himself was possessed of that faculty. — BOSWELL.

Notwithstanding Mr. Boswell’s proofs, and Dr. Johnson’s own assertion, the identity of Savage and Thales has been repeated by all the biographers, and has obtained general vogue. It may, therefore, be worth while to add, that Johnson’s residence at Greenwich (which, as it was the scene of his *fancied* parting from Thales, is currently taken to have been that of his *real* separation from Savage,) occurred two years before the latter event; and at that time it does not appear that Johnson was so much as acquainted with Savage, or even with Cave, at whose house he first met Savage: again, Johnson distinctly tells us, in his *Life of Savage*, that the latter took his departure for Wales, not by embarking at Greenwich, but by the Bristol

the same morning with Pope's satire, entitled “1738:” so that England had at once its Juvenal and Horace as poetical monitors. The Rev. Dr. Douglas <sup>(1)</sup>, now Bishop of Salisbury, to whom I am indebted for some obliging communications, was then a student at Oxford, and remembers well the effect which “London” produced. Every body was delighted with it; and there being no name to it, the first buzz of the literary circles was, “Here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope.” And it is recorded in the Gentleman's Magazine of that year, p. 269.,

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stage coach; and, finally and decisively, Johnson, if Thales had been Savage, could never have admitted into his poem two lines which seem to point so forcibly at the drunken fray, when Savage stabbed a Mr. Sinclair, for which he was convicted of *murder*: —

“Some frolic *drunkard*, reeling from a feast,  
Provokes a broil, and *stabs* you in a jest.”

There is, certainly, a curious coincidence between some points of the characters of Thales and Savage; but it seems equally certain that the coincidence was fortuitous. Mr. Murphy endeavours to reconcile the difficulties by supposing that Savage's retirement was in contemplation eighteen months before it was carried into effect: but even if this were true (which may well be doubted), it would not alter the facts — that “London” was written before Johnson knew Savage; and that one of the severest strokes in the satire touched Savage's sorest point. —  
CROKER.

(1) Douglas was a Scotchman by birth, but educated at St. Mary Hall and Balliol College, Oxford, (M.A. 1743, D.D. 1758,) and owed his first promotions to Lord Bath (to whose son he had been tutor), and his literary reputation to his detection of Lauder. He wrote several political pamphlets, and prepared Captain Cook's third journal for publication. But his most valuable work is “The Criterion,” a refutation of the objections of Hume and others to the miracles recorded in the New Testament. He was made Bishop of Carlisle in 1788, and translated to Salisbury in 1791, in which see he died in 1807. —  
CROKER.

that it "got to the second edition in the course of a week."

One of the warmest patrons of this poem on its first appearance was General Oglethorpe, whose "strong benevolence of soul" was unabated during the course of a very long life; though it is painful to think, that he had but too much reason to become cold and callous, and discontented with the world, from the neglect which he experienced of his public and private worth, by those in whose power it was to gratify so gallant a veteran with marks of distinction.<sup>(1)</sup> This extraordinary person was as remarkable for his learning and taste, as for his other eminent qualities; and no man was more prompt, active, and generous, in encouraging merit. I have heard Johnson gratefully acknowledge, in his presence, the kind and effectual support which he gave to his "London," though unacquainted with its author.

Pope, who then filled the poetical throne without a rival, it may reasonably be presumed, must have

(1) [James Edward Oglethorpe, born in 1698, was admitted of C. C. C. Oxford in 1714; but he soon after entered the army, and served under Prince Eugene against the Turks. His activity in settling the colony of Georgia obtained for him the immortality of Pope's celebrated panegyric: —

"One, driven by strong benevolence of soul,  
Shall fly, like Oglethorpe, from pole to pole."

In 1745 he was promoted to the rank of Major-General, and had a command during the Scotch rebellion, in the course of which he was rather unfortunate. He became, however, a Lieutenant-General in 1747, and a General in 1765. He sat in five or six parliaments, and was there considered as a high Tory, if not a Jacobite; to which, probably, as Mr. Croker has conjectured, he may have owed some mortifications and neglects.]

been particularly struck by the sudden appearance of such a poet; and to his credit let it be remembered, that his feelings and conduct on the occasion were candid and liberal. He requested Mr. Richardson<sup>(1)</sup>, son of the painter, to endeavour to find out who this new author was. Mr. Richardson, after some enquiry, having informed him that he had discovered only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, “He will soon be *deterré*.<sup>(2)</sup> We shall presently see, from a note written by Pope, that he was himself afterwards more successful in his enquiries than his friend.

That in this justly-celebrated poem may be found a few rhymes which the critical precision of English prosody at this day would disallow cannot be denied; but with this small imperfection, which in the general blaze of its excellence is not perceived, till the mind has subsided into cool attention, it is, undoubtedly, one of the noblest productions in our language, both for sentiment and expression. The nation was then in that ferment against the court and the ministry, which some years after ended in the downfall of Sir Robert Walpole; and it has been

(1) There were three Richardsons known at this period in the literary world: 1st, Jonathan the elder, usually called the Painter, though he was an author as well as a painter; he died in 1745, aged 80: 2d, Jonathan the younger, who is the person mentioned in the text, who also painted, though not as a profession, and who published several works; he died in 1771, aged 77: 3d, Samuel, the author of the celebrated novels. He was by trade a printer, and had the good sense to continue, during the height of his fame, his attention to his business. He died in 1761, aged 72. — CROKER.

(2) Sir Joshua Reynolds, from the information of the younger Richardson.

said, that Tories are Whigs when out of place, and Whigs Tories when in place ; so, as a Whig administration ruled with what force it could, a Tory opposition had all the animation and all the eloquence of resistance to power, aided by the common topics of patriotism, liberty, and independence ! Accordingly, we find in Johnson's "London" the most spirited invectives against tyranny and oppression, the warmest predilection for his own country, and the purest love of virtue ; interspersed with traits of his own particular character and situation, not omitting his prejudices as a "true-born Englishman (1)," not only against foreign countries, but against Ireland and Scotland. On some of these topics I shall quote a few passages :—

"The cheated nation's happy fav'rites see ;  
Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me."

"Has heaven reserved, in pity to the poor,  
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore ?  
No secret island in the boundless main ?  
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain ?  
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,  
And bear Oppression's insolence no more."

"How, when competitors like these contend,  
Can *surly Virtue* hope to find a friend ?"

"This mournful truth is every where confess'd,  
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D !"

(1) It is, however, remarkable, that he uses the epithet, which undoubtedly, since the union between England and Scotland, ought to denominate the natives of both parts of our island : —

"Was early taught a Briton's rights to prize."

We may easily conceive with what feeling a great mind like his, cramped and galled by narrow circumstances, uttered this last line, which he marked by capitals. The whole of the poem is eminently excellent, and there are in it such proofs of a knowledge of the world, and of a mature acquaintance with life, as cannot be contemplated without wonder, when we consider that he was then only in his twenty-ninth year, and had yet been so little in the "busy haunts of men." (1)

Yet while we admire the poetical excellence of this poem, candour obliges us to allow, that the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught had no just cause. There was, in truth, *no* "oppression;" the "nation" was *not* "cheated." Sir Robert Walpole was a wise and a benevolent minister, who thought that the happiness and prosperity of a commercial country like ours would be best promoted by peace, which he accordingly maintained with credit, during a very long period. Johnson himself afterwards [Oct. 21. 1773] honestly acknowledged the merit of Walpole, whom he called "a fixed star;" while he characterised his

(1) What follows will show that Boswell himself was of opinion that "London" was dictated rather by youthful feeling, inflamed by the political frenzy of the times, than by any "knowledge of the world," or any "mature acquaintance with life." Nor is it the least remarkable of the inconsistencies between Johnson's early precepts and subsequent practice, that he who was, in all his latter age, the most constant and enthusiastic admirer of London, should have begun life with this vigorous and bitter invective against it. The truth is, he was now writing for bread, cared comparatively little about the real merits or defects of the minister or the metropolis, and only thought how best to make his poem sell. — CROKER.



opponent, Pitt, as “a meteor.” But Johnson’s juvenile poem was naturally impregnated with the fire of opposition, and upon every account was universally admired.

Though thus elevated into fame, and conscious of uncommon powers, he had not that bustling confidence, or, I may rather say, that animated ambition, which one might have supposed would have urged him to endeavour at rising in life. But such was his inflexible dignity of character, that he could not stoop to court the great; without which, hardly any man has made his way to a high station. (1) He could not expect to produce many such works as his “London,” and he felt the hardships of writing for bread; he was therefore willing to resume the office of a schoolmaster, so as to have a sure, though moderate, income for his life; and an offer being made to him of the mastership of a school (2), provided he could obtain the degree of Master of Arts, Dr. Adams was applied to, by a common friend, to know

(1) This seems to be an erroneous and mischievous assertion. If Mr. Boswell, by *stooping to court the great*, means base flatteries and unworthy compliances, then it may be safely asserted that such arts (whatever small successes they may have had) are not those by which men have risen to *high stations*. Look at the instances of elevation to be found in Mr. Boswell’s own work — Lord Chatham, Lord Mansfield, Mr. Burke, Mr. Hamilton, Lord Loughborough, Lord Thurlow, Lord Stowell, and so many dignitaries of the law and the church, in whose society Dr. Johnson passed his later days — with what can *they* be charged which would have disgraced Johnson? Boswell, it may be suspected, wrote this under some little personal disappointment in his own courtship of the great, which he more than once hints at. Johnson’s opinions on this point will be found under Feb. 1766, and Sept. 1777. — CROKER.

(2) [At Appleby, in Leicestershire. See *Gent. Mag.* May, 1793.]

whether that could be granted him as a favour from the University of Oxford. But though he had made such a figure in the literary world, it was then thought too great a favour to be asked.

Pope, without any knowledge of him but from his "London," recommended him to Earl Gower<sup>(1)</sup>, who endeavoured to procure for him a degree from Dublin, by the following letter to a friend of Dean Swift:—

LETTER 8. FROM EARL GOWER.

"Trentham, Aug. 1. 1739.

"SIR, — 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 his neighbourhood, who are trustees of a charity-school now vacant; the certain salary is sixty pounds a 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 this 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 recommended by the Dean. They say, he is

(1) [In 1742, John, second Lord Gower, was nominated Lord Privy Seal, and, having twice filled the office of one of the Lords Justices during the King's absence, he was, in July, 1746, created Viscount Trentham and Earl Gower. He died in 1754.]

not afraid of the strictest examination, though he is of so long a journey; and will venture it, if the Dean thinks it necessary; choosing rather to die upon the road, *than be starved to death in translating for booksellers*; which has been his only subsistence for some time past.

“ I fear there is more difficulty in this affair than those good-natured gentlemen apprehend; 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 assuring you that I am, with great truth, Sir, your faithful servant,  
GOWER.”

It was, perhaps, no small disappointment to Johnson that this respectable application had not the desired effect; yet how much reason has there been, both for himself and his country, to rejoice that it did not succeed, as he might probably have wasted in obscurity those hours in which he afterwards produced his incomparable works.

About this time he made one other effort to emancipate himself from the drudgery of authorship. He applied to Dr. Adams, to consult Dr. Smalbroke <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Richard Smalbroke, LL.D., second son of Bishop Smalbroke, succeeded his brother Thomas as chancellor of the diocese of Lichfield in 1778, and died the senior member of the College of Advocates. The long connection of the Smalbroke family with Lichfield, probably pointed him out to Johnson as a person able and willing to advise him. — CROKER.

of the Commons, whether a person might be permitted to practise as an advocate there, without a doctor's degree in civil law. "I am," said he, "a total stranger to these studies; but whatever is a profession, and maintains numbers, must be within the reach of common abilities, and some degree of industry." Dr. Adams was much pleased with Johnson's design to employ his talents in that manner, being confident he would have attained to great eminence. And, indeed, I cannot conceive a man better qualified to make a distinguished figure as a lawyer; for he would have brought to his profession a rich store of various knowledge, an uncommon acuteness, and a command of language, in which few could have equalled, and none have surpassed him. He who could display eloquence and wit in defence of the decision of the House of Commons upon Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, and of the unconstitutional taxation of our fellow-subjects in America, must have been a powerful advocate in any cause. But here, also, the want of a degree was an insurmountable bar.

He was, therefore, under the necessity of persevering in that course, into which he had been forced; and we find that his proposal from Greenwich to Mr. Cave, for a translation of Father Paul Sarpi's History, was accepted. (1)

(1) In the Weekly Miscellany, Oct. 21. 1738, there appeared the following advertisement:—

"Just published, Proposals for printing the History of the Council of Trent, translated from the Italian of Father Paul Sarpi; with the Author's Life, and Notes theological, historical, and critical, from the French edition of Dr. Le Courayer. To which are added, Observations on the History, and Notes and Illustrations from various Authors, both printed and manu.

Some sheets of this translation were printed off, but the design was dropt; for it happened oddly enough, that another person of the name of Samuel Johnson, librarian of St. Martin's in the Fields, and curate of that parish, engaged in the same undertaking, and was patronised by the clergy, particularly by Dr. Pearce, afterwards Bishop of Rochester. Several light skirmishes passed between the rival translators, in the newspapers of the day; and the consequence was that they destroyed each other, for neither of them went on with the work. It is much to be regretted, that the able performance <sup>(1)</sup> of that celebrated genius Fra Paolo, lost the advantage of being incorporated into British literature by the masterly hand of Johnson.

I have in my possession, by the favour of Mr. John Nichols, a paper in Johnson's handwriting, entitled

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script. By S. Johnson. 1. The work will consist of two hundred sheets, and be two volumes in quarto, printed on good paper and letter. 2. The price will be 18s. each volume, to be paid, half a guinea at the delivery of the first volume, and the rest at the delivery of the second volume in sheets. Two-pence to be abated for every sheet less than two hundred. It may be had on a large paper, in three volumes, at the price of three guineas; one to be paid at the time of subscribing, another at the delivery of the first, and the rest at the delivery of the other volumes. The work is now in the press, and will be diligently prosecuted. Subscriptions are taken in by Mr. Dodsley in Pall Mall, Mr. Rivington in St. Paul's Church Yard, by E. Cave at St. John's Gate, and the Translator, at No. 6. in Castle Street, by Cavendish Square."

(1) [Johnson, in his *Life of Sarpi*, describes the *History of the Council of Trent*, as "a work unequalled for the judicious disposition of the matter, and artful texture of the narration — commended by Dr. Burnet as the completest model of historical writing — and celebrated by Mr. Wotton as equivalent to any production of antiquity; in which the reader finds liberty without licentiousness, piety without hypocrisy, freedom of speech without neglect of decency, severity without rigour, and extensive learning without ostentation."]

“ Account between Mr. Edward Cave and Samuel Johnson, in relation to a version of *Father Paul, &c.* begun August the 2d, 1738 ;” by which it appears, that from that day to the 21st of April, 1739, Johnson received for this work 49*l.* 7*s.* in sums of one, two, three, and sometimes four guineas at a time, most frequently two. And it is curious to observe the minute and scrupulous accuracy with which Johnson had pasted upon it a slip of paper, which he has entitled “ Small account,” and which contains one article, “ Sept. 9th, Mr. Cave laid down 2*s.* 6*d.*” There is subjoined to this account, a list of some subscribers to the work, partly in Johnson’s handwriting, partly in that of another person ; and there follows a leaf or two on which are written a number of characters which have the appearance of a shorthand, which, perhaps, Johnson was then trying to learn.

## LETTER 9.

## TO MR. CAVE.

“ Wednesday. [Aug. or Sept. 1738.]

“ SIR, — I did not care to detain your servant while I wrote an answer to your letter, in which you seem to insinuate that I had promised more than I am ready to perform. If I have raised your expectations by any thing that may have escaped my memory, I am sorry ; and if you remind me of it, shall thank you for the favour. If I made fewer alterations than usual in the *Debates*, it was only because there appeared, and still appears to be, less need of alteration. The verses to *Lady Firebrace* (1) may be had when you please, for

(1) They appeared in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for Sept. 1738, with this title: — “ Verses to *Lady Firebrace*, at Bury

you know that such a subject neither deserves much thought nor requires it.

“ The Chinese Stories (1) may be had folded down when you please to send, in which I do not recollect that you desired any alterations to be made.

“ An answer to another query I am very willing to write, and had consulted with you about it last night, if there had been time ; for I think it the most proper way of inviting such a correspondence as may be an advantage to the paper, not a load upon it.

“ As to the Prize Verses, a backwardness to determine their degrees of merit is not peculiar to me. You may, if you please, still have what I can say ; but I shall engage with little spirit in an affair, which I shall *hardly* end to my own satisfaction, and *certainly* not to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. (2)

“ As to Father Paul, I have not yet been just to my proposal, but have met with impediments, which, I hope, are now at an end ; and if you find the progress hereafter not such as you have a right to expect, you can easily stimulate a negligent translator.

“ If any or all of these have contributed to your discontent, I will endeavour to remove it ; and desire

Assizes.” It seems quite unintelligible how these six silly lines should be the production of Johnson, and made to the *order* (to use the tradesman’s phrase) of Cave. These considerations, and some stupid lines in praise of *Suffolk* beauties, in the same volume, lead to a conjecture that Cave may have sent some verses of another correspondent, on Lady Firebrace, to Johnson to correct or curtail. It is next to impossible that they could be originally Johnson’s own ; and it may also be observed, that Boswell does not afterwards mention them in his list of Johnson’s contributions to the magazine. — CROKER.

(1) Du Halde’s Description of China was then publishing by Mr. Cave, in weekly numbers, whence Johnson was to select pieces for the embellishment of the magazine. — NICHOLS.

(2) The premium of forty pounds proposed for the best poem on the Divine Attributes is here alluded to. — NICHOLS.

you to propose the question to which you wish for an answer. I am, Sir, your humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.” (1)

LETTER 10.      TO MR. CAVE.

[Sept. 1738.]

“SIR, — I am pretty much of your opinion, that the Commentary cannot be prosecuted with any appearance of success; for as the names of the authors concerned are of more weight in the performance than its own intrinsic merit, the public will be soon satisfied with it. And I think the Examen should be pushed forward with the utmost expedition. Thus, ‘This day, &c. an Examen of Mr. Pope’s Essay, &c. containing a succinct Account of the Philosophy of Mr. Leibnitz on the System of the Fatalists, with a Confutation of their Opinions, and an Illustration of the Doctrine of Free Will’ (with what else you think proper).

“It will, above all, be necessary to take notice, that it is a thing distinct from the Commentary.

“I was so far from imagining they stood still (2), that I conceived them to have a good deal before-hand, and therefore was less anxious in providing them more. But if ever they stand still on my account, it must, doubtless, be charged to me; and whatever else shall be reasonable, I shall not oppose; but beg a suspense of judgment till morning, when I must entreat you to send me a dozen proposals, and you shall then have copy to spare. I am, Sir, yours, *impransus*,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“Pray muster up the proposals if you can, or let the boy recall them from the booksellers.”

(1) [The original of this letter is in Mr. Upcott’s possession. 1835.]

(2) The compositors in Mr. Cave’s printing-office, who appear by this letter to have then waited for copy. — NICHOLS.



But although he corresponded with Mr. Cave concerning *a translation* of Crousaz's *Examen* of Pope's *Essay on Man*, and gave advice as one anxious for its success, I was long ago convinced by a perusal of the Preface, that *this translation* was erroneously ascribed to him ; and I have found this point ascertained, beyond all doubt, by the following article in Dr. Birch's manuscripts in the British Museum :—

“ Elisæ Carteræ, S. P. D. Thomas Birch. Versionem tuam *Examinis* Crousaziani jam perlegi. Summam styli et elegantiam, et in re difficillimâ proprietatem, admiratus. Dabam Novemb. 27<sup>o</sup>. 1738.” (1)

Indeed, Mrs. Carter has lately acknowledged to Mr. Seward, that she was the translator of the “ *Examen*.”

It is remarkable, that Johnson's last quoted letter to Mr. Cave concludes with a fair confession that he had not a dinner ; and it is no less remarkable, that though in this state of want himself, his benevolent heart was not insensible to the necessities of an humble labourer in literature, as appears from the very next letter :—

LETTER 11. TO MR. CAVE.

[No date.]

“ DEAR SIR, — You may remember I have formerly talked with you about a *Military Dictionary*. The eldest Mr. Macbean (2), who was with Mr. Chambers,

(1) Birch MSS. Brit. Mus. 4323. [See Pennington's *Life of Mrs. Carter*, p. 42.]

(2) [Alexander Macbean published, in 1773, a *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, to which Johnson furnished the preface. In 1781, he being then oppressed by age and poverty, the Doctor obtained for him, through the interest of Lord Thurlow, an

has very good materials for such a work, which I have seen, and will do it at a very low rate. <sup>(1)</sup> I think the terms of war and navigation might be comprised, with good explanations, in one 8vo. pica, which he is willing to do for twelve shillings a sheet, to be made up a guinea at the second impression. If you think on it, I will wait on you with him. I am, Sir, your humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.

“ Pray lend me Topsel on Animals.” <sup>(2)</sup>

I must not omit to mention, that this Mr. Macbean was a native of Scotland.

In the Gentleman's Magazine of this year, Johnson gave a Life of Father Paul;\* and he wrote the Preface to the volume,† which, though prefixed to it when bound, is always published with the appendix, and is therefore the last composition belonging to it. The ability and nice adaptation with which he could draw up a prefatory address, was one of his peculiar excellencies.

It appears, too, that he paid a friendly attention to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter; for in a letter from Mr. Cave to Dr. Birch, November 28. this year, I find “Mr. Johnson advises Miss C. to undertake a translation of *Boethius de Cons.* because there is prose and verse, and to put her name to it when published.” This

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admission into the Charter House. He died in June, 1784. “He was,” says Johnson, (*post*, June 26. 1784,) “one of those who, as Swift says, stood as a screen between me and death.”]

(1) This book was published.

(2) [“The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents. London, 1658, fol. with cuts.”]

advice was not followed ; probably from an apprehension that the work was not sufficiently popular for an extensive sale. How well Johnson himself could have executed a translation of this philosophical poet, we may judge from the following specimen which he has given in the Rambler (*Motto to No. 7.*) : —

“ O qui perpetuâ mundum ratione gubernas,  
Terrarum cœlique sator ! —  
Disjice terrenæ nebulas et pondera molis,  
Atque tuo splendore mica ! Tu namque serenum,  
Tu requies tranquilla piis. Te cernere finis,  
Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus, idem.”

“ O Thou whose power o’er moving worlds presides,  
Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,  
On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,  
And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.  
'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast,  
With silent confidence and holy rest ;  
From thee, great God ! we spring, to thee we tend,  
Path, motive, guide, original, and end !”

In 1739<sup>(1)</sup>, beside the assistance which he gave to the Parliamentary Debates, his writings in the Gentleman’s Magazine were “ The Life of Boerhaave,”\*

(1) Johnson addressed to Mrs. Carter, in the Magazine for April, 1738 (not 1739), an epigram to *Eliza*,\* both in Greek and Latin ; and probably, also, the following Latin epigram in that for July : —

“ Elysios Popi dum ludit læta per hortos,  
En avida lauros carpit Elisa manu,  
Nil opus furto. Lauros tibi, dulcis Elisa,  
Si neget optata Popus, Apollo dabit.”

This year’s Magazine also contains the celebrated Latin epigram “ To a Lady (Miss Maria Aston) who spoke in Defence of Liberty,” and a Greek epigram to “ Dr. Birch.” — CROKER.

in which it is to be observed, that he discovers that love of chemistry which never forsook him; "An Appeal to the Public in Behalf of the Editor;" † "An Address to the Reader;" † "An Epigram both in Greek and Latin to Eliza,"\* and also English Verses (1) to her (2);\* and "A Greek Epigram to Dr. Birch."\* It has been erroneously supposed, that an essay published in that Magazine this year, entitled "The Apotheosis of Milton," was written by Johnson; and on that supposition it has been improperly inserted in the edition of his works by the booksellers, after his decease. Were there no positive testimony as to this point, the style of the performance, and the name of Shakspeare not being

(1) I have permitted this statement to remain in the text, though I can find in the Magazine for 1739 but one copy of English verses to *Eliza*. They are in December, and signed Amasius, which is the signature of some other pieces now known to have been written by Collins; but, as Boswell erroneously attributed the Greek and Latin verses to Eliza to this year, the English verses may, like the others, have belonged to 1738; though even in that volume I can find nothing addressed to Eliza in English which could be Johnson's, except a translation of his own (as I conceive) Latin epigram on the gathering Pope's laurels. It is not easy to account for the inaccuracy with which Mr. Boswell confounds these two years. — CROKER.

(2) And, probably, the following Latin epigram to Dr. Birch: —

" IN BIRCHIIUM.

" Arte novâ rarâque fide perscripserat ausus  
Birchius egregios claraque gesta virum.  
Hunc oculis veri Fautrix lustravit acutis,  
Et placido tandem hæc edidit ore, Dea:  
' Perge modo, atque tuas olim post funera laudes  
Qui scribat meritas Birchius alter erit.' "

My chief reasons for supposing this Latin epigram to be Johnson's are, that it is a version of his own acknowledged Greek epigram which appeared in the preceding Magazine, and that he had followed his Greek epigram on *Eliza* with a Latin paraphrase in the same style as this. — CROKER.

mentioned in an Essay professedly reviewing the principal English poets, would ascertain it not to be the production of Johnson. But there is here no occasion to resort to internal evidence; for my Lord Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Douglas) has assured me, that it was written by Guthrie. His separate publications were, "A Complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage, from the malicious and scandalous Aspersions of Mr. Brooke (1), Author of *Gustavus Vasa*,"\* being an ironical attack upon them for their suppression of that Tragedy; and "Marmor Norfolciense; or, an Essay on an ancient prophetic Inscription, in monkish Rhyme, lately discovered near Lynne, in Norfolk, by Probus Britannicus."\* In this performance, he, in a feigned inscription, supposed to have been found in Norfolk, the county of Sir Robert Walpole, then the obnoxious prime minister of this country, inveighs against the Brunswick succession, and the measures of government consequent upon it. (2) To this supposed prophecy he added a Commentary, making each expression apply to the times, with warm anti-Hanoverian zeal.

This anonymous pamphlet, I believe, did not

(1) [Henry Brooke, the author of the celebrated novel of "The Fool of Quality," was a native of Ireland. In 1738, his tragedy of *Gustavus Vasa* was rehearsed at Drury Lane; but, it being supposed to satirize Sir Robert Walpole, an order came from the Lord Chamberlain to prohibit its appearance. This, however, did Brooke no injury, as he was encouraged to publish the play by a subscription, which amounted to 800*l*. He died in 1783.]

(2) The inscription and the translation of it are preserved in the London Magazine for the year 1739, p. 244.

make so much noise as was expected, and, therefore, had not a very extensive circulation. Sir John Hawkins relates, that “warrants were issued, and messengers employed to apprehend the author; who, though he had forborne to subscribe his name to the pamphlet, the vigilance of those in pursuit of him had discovered:” and we are informed, that he lay concealed in Lambeth-marsh till the scent after him grew cold. This, however, is altogether without foundation; for Mr. Steele (<sup>1</sup>), one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, who, amidst a variety of important business, politely obliged me with his attention to my enquiry, informed me, that “he directed every possible search to be made in the records of the Treasury and Secretary of State’s Office, but could find no trace whatever of any warrant having been issued to apprehend the author of this pamphlet.”

“Marmor Norfolciense” became exceedingly scarce, so that I, for many years, endeavoured in vain to procure a copy of it. At last I was indebted to the malice of one of Johnson’s numerous petty adversaries, who, in 1775, published a new edition of it, “with Notes and a Dedication to Samuel Johnson, LL.D. by Tribunus;” in which some puny scribbler invidiously attempted to found upon it a charge of inconsistency against its author, because he had accepted of a pension from his present

(1) [The Right Hon. Thomas Steele, eldest son of Thomas Steele, Esq. Recorder of Chichester, was appointed Secretary to the Treasury in 1784. He represented Chichester in parliament from 1780 to 1807; was appointed, in 1791, Paymaster of the Forces; and died Dec. 8. 1823.]

Majesty, and had written in support of the measures of government. As a mortification to such impotent malice, of which there are so many instances towards men of eminence, I am happy to relate, that this *telum imbelles* did not reach its exalted object, till about a year after it thus appeared, when I mentioned it to him, supposing that he knew of the republication. To my surprise, he had not yet heard of it. He requested me to go directly and get it for him, which I did. He looked at it and laughed, and seemed to be much diverted with the feeble efforts of his unknown adversary, who, I hope, is alive to read this account. "Now," said he, "here is somebody who thinks he has vexed me sadly; yet, if it had not been for you, you rogue, I should probably never have seen it." (1)

(1) These two satirical pamphlets were, in some degree, prompted by the principle which Johnson frequently declared to be the only true genuine motive to writing, namely, pecuniary profit. This principle was not only avowed by Johnson, but seems to have been wrought by him into a habit. He was never greedy of money, but without money could not be stimulated to write. Yet was he not so indifferent to the subjects that he was requested to write on, as at any time to abandon either his religious or political principles. He would no more have put his name to an Arian or Socinian tract than to a defence of Atheism. At the time when "Faction Detected" came out, a pamphlet of which the late Lord Egmont is now generally understood to have been the author, Osborne, the bookseller, held out to him a strong temptation to answer it, which he refused, being convinced, as he assured me, that the charge contained in it was made good, and that the argument grounded thereon was unanswerable. The truth is, that Johnson's political prejudices were a mist that the eye of his judgment could not penetrate: in all the measures of Walpole's government he could see nothing right; nor could he be convinced, in his invectives against a standing army, as the Jacobites affected to call it, that the peasantry of a country was not an adequate defence against an invasion of it by an armed force.

As Mr. Pope's note concerning Johnson, alluded to in a former page, refers both to his "London," and his "Marmor Norfolciense," I have deferred inserting it till now. I am indebted for it to Dr. Percy, the bishop of Dromore, who permitted me to copy it from the original in his possession. It was presented to his lordship by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom it was given by the son of Mr. Richardson the painter, the person to whom it is addressed. I have transcribed it with minute exactness, that the peculiar mode of writing, and imperfect spelling of that celebrated poet, may be exhibited to the curious in literature. It justifies Swift's epithet of "paper-sparing Pope (1)," for it is written on a slip no larger than a common message-card, and was sent to Mr. Richardson, along with the imitation of Juvenal.

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He almost asserted in terms, that the succession to the crown had been illegally interrupted, and that from whig politics none of the benefits of government could be expected. From hence it appears, and to his honour be it said, that his principles co-operated with his necessities, and that prostitution of his talents could not, in justice, be imputed to him. — HAWKINS.

- (1) ["Get all your verses printed fair,  
Then let them well be dried;  
And Curll must have a special care  
To leave the margin wide.  
Lend these to *paper-sparing* Pope;  
And when he sits to write,  
No letter with an envelope  
Could give him more delight."

Advice to the Grub-Street  
Verse Writers, 1726.

The original MS. of Pope's Homer (preserved in the British Museum) is almost entirely written on the covers of letters, and sometimes between the lines of the letters themselves. — NICHOLS.]



“ This is imitated by one Johnson who put in for a Publick-school in Shropshire, but was disappointed. He has an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes, so as to make Him a sad Spectacle. <sup>(1)</sup> Mr. P. from the merit of This Work which was all the knowledge he had of Him endeavour'd to serve Him without his own application ; & wrote to my L<sup>d</sup>. gore, but he did not succeed. Mr. Johnson published afterw<sup>ds</sup>. another Poem in Latin with Notes the whole very Humerous call'd the Norfolk Prophecy. P.”

Johnson had been told of this note ; and Sir Joshua Reynolds informed him of the compliment which it contained, but, from delicacy, avoided showing him the paper itself. When Sir Joshua observed to Johnson that he seemed very desirous to see Pope's note, he answered, “ Who would not be proud to have such a man as Pope so solicitous in inquiring about him ? ”

The infirmity to which Mr. Pope alludes, appeared to me also, as will be hereafter observed, to be of the convulsive kind, and of the nature of that distemper called St. Vitus's dance <sup>(2)</sup> ; and in this opinion I am confirmed by the description which Sydenham gives of that disease. “ This disorder is

(1) It is clear that, as Johnson advanced in life, these convulsive infirmities, though never entirely absent, were so far subdued, that he could not be called a *sad spectacle*. We have seen that he was rejected from two schools on account of these distortions, which in his latter years were certainly not violent enough to excite disgust. — CROKER.

(2) [Dr. Reid says, it is remarkable that St. Vitus is no where to be found in the Roman Kalendar ; and he supposes, that, from “ some misunderstanding or inaccuracy of manuscript, *chorea invita*, the original and genuine name of the disease called St. Vitus's dance, was read and copied *chorea St. Viti*.” This is very probable. — SOUTHEY, *Omniana*, vol. i. p. 325.]

a kind of convulsion. It manifests itself by halting or unsteadiness of one of the legs, which the patient draws after him like an idiot. If the hand of the same side be applied to the breast, or any other part of the body, he cannot keep it a moment in the same posture, but it will be drawn into a different one by a convulsion, notwithstanding all his efforts to the contrary." Sir Joshua Reynolds, however, was of a different opinion, and favoured me with the following Paper.

" Those motions or tricks of Dr. Johnson are improperly called convulsions. He could sit motionless, when he was told so to do, as well as any other man. My opinion is, that it proceeded from a habit (<sup>1</sup>) which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions; and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Whenever he was not engaged in conversation, such thoughts were sure to rush into his mind; and, for this reason, any company, any employment whatever, he preferred to being alone. The great business of his life (he said) was to escape from himself. This disposition he considered as the disease of his mind, which nothing cured but company.

" One instance of his absence and particularity, as it is characteristic of the man, may be worth relating. When he and I took a journey together into the West, we visited the late Mr. Bankes, of Dorsetshire (<sup>2</sup>);

(1) Sir Joshua Reynolds's notion on this subject is confirmed by what Johnson himself said to a young lady, the niece of his friend Christopher Smart. See a note by Mr. Boswell on some particulars communicated by Reynolds, under March 30. 1783.  
— MALONE.

(2) [The then representative of the family of Bankes of

the conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and stretching his right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him, and in a very courteous manner assured him, though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started from his reverie, like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word."

While we are on this subject, my readers may not be displeased with another anecdote, communicated to me by the same friend, from the relation of Mr. Hogarth.

Johnson used to be a pretty frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Richardson, author of *Clarissa*, and other novels of extensive reputation. Mr. Hogarth came one day to see Richardson, soon after the execution of Dr. Cameron for having taken arms for the house of Stuart in 1745-6; and being a warm partisan of George the Second, he observed to Richardson, that certainly there must have been some very unfavourable circumstances lately discovered in this particular case, which had induced the King to approve of an execution for rebellion so long after the time when it was committed, as this had the appearance of putting a man to death in cold

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Corfe Castle: for the gallant defence of which mansion by Lady Banks, during the great civil war, see *Clarendon*, vol. iv. The present representative of this distinguished family is William John Banks, Esq., the well-known Oriental traveller, and late M. P. for Dorsetshire. 1835.]

blood<sup>(1)</sup>, and was very unlike his Majesty's usual clemency. While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was an idiot, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as a very good man. To his great surprise, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr. Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument, and burst out into an invective against George the Second, as one who, upon all occasions, was unrelenting and barbarous; mentioning many instances; particularly, that when an officer

(1) Impartial posterity may, perhaps, be as little inclined as Dr. Johnson was, to justify the uncommon rigour exercised in the case of Dr. Archibald Cameron. He was an amiable and truly honest man; and his offence was owing to a generous, though mistaken, principle of duty. Being obliged, after 1746, to give up his profession as a physician, and to go into foreign parts, he was honoured with the rank of Colonel, both in the French and Spanish service. He was a son of the ancient and respectable family of Cameron of Lochiel; and his brother, who was the chief of that brave clan, distinguished himself by moderation and humanity, while the Highland army marched victorious through Scotland. It is remarkable of this chief, that though he had earnestly remonstrated against the attempt as hopeless, he was of too heroic a spirit not to venture his life and fortune in the cause, when personally asked by him whom he thought his prince. — BOSWELL.

[Sir Walter Scott states, in his Introduction to Redgauntlet (Waverley Novels, vol. xxxv. p. viii. &c.), that the government of George II. were in possession of sufficient evidence that Dr. Cameron had returned to the Highlands, *not*, as he alleged on his trial, for family affairs merely, but as the secret agent of the Pretender in a new scheme of rebellion: the ministers, however, preferred trying this indefatigable partisan on the ground of his undeniable share in the insurrection of 1745, rather than rescuing themselves and their master from the charge of harshness, at the expense of making it universally known, that a fresh rebellion had been in agitation so late as 1752.]

of high rank had been acquitted by a court martial, George the Second had, with his own hand, struck his name off the list. <sup>(1)</sup> In short, he displayed such a power of eloquence, that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that this idiot had been at the moment inspired. Neither Hogarth nor Johnson were made known to each other at this interview. <sup>(2)</sup>

In 1740, Dr. Johnson wrote for the Gentleman's Magazine the "Preface," † the "Life of Admiral Blake,"\* and the first parts of those of "Sir Francis Drake,"\* and "Philip Barretier"\* <sup>(3)</sup>, both which he

(1) Dr. Cameron was executed on the 7th of June, 1753. No instance can be traced in the War or Admiralty Offices, of any officer of high rank being struck out of the list about that period, after acquittal by a court martial. — CROKER.

(2) Mr. Hogarth, among the variety of kindnesses shown to me, was used to be very earnest that I should obtain the acquaintance, and, if possible, the friendship, of Dr. Johnson, whose conversation was, (he said,) to the talk of other men, like Titian's painting compared to Hudson's. Of Dr. Johnson, when my father and Hogarth were talking together about him one day, "That man," said the latter, "is not contented with believing the Bible, but he fairly resolves, I think, to believe nothing *but* the Bible. Johnson (added he), though so wise a fellow, is more like King David than King Solomon; for he says, in his haste, that all men are liars." Dr. Johnson made four lines on the death of poor Hogarth, which were equally true and pleasing: I know not why Garrick's were preferred to them: —

' The hand of him here torpid lies,  
That drew the essential form of grace;  
Here closed in death the attentive eyes,  
That saw the manners in the face.' — PROZZI.

(3) His attention was probably drawn to Barretier by his friend Miss Carter, with whom that ingenious young man corresponded. He died in 1740. If we were to form an opinion of the extent of Barretier's learning, the force of his mind, or the goodness of his taste, from what has been preserved of his correspondence in the Life of Miss Carter (p. 70—94.), the praises lavished on him by his biographer would appear very extravagant. — CROKER.

finished the following year. He also wrote an "Essay on Epitaphs,"\* and an "Epitaph on Philips, a Musician,"\* which was afterwards published, with some other pieces of his, in Mrs. Williams's Miscellanies. This Epitaph is so exquisitely beautiful, that I remember even Lord Kames<sup>(1)</sup>, strangely prejudiced as he was against Dr. Johnson, was compelled to allow it very high praise. It has been ascribed to Mr. Garrick, from its appearing at first with the signature G.; but I have heard Mr. Garrick declare, that it was written by Dr. Johnson, and give the following account of the manner in which it was composed. Johnson and he were sitting together; when, amongst other things, Garrick repeated an Epitaph upon this Philips by a Dr. Wilkes, in these words:

“ Exalted soul ! whose harmony could please  
The love-sick virgin, and the gouty ease ;  
Could jarring discord, like Amphion, move  
To beauteous order and harmonious love ;  
Rest here in peace, till angels bid thee rise,  
And meet thy blessed Saviour in the skies.”

Johnson shook his head at these common-place funeral lines, and said to Garrick, “I think, Davy, I can make a better.” Then, stirring about his tea for a little while, in a state of meditation, he almost extempore produced the following verses;

“ Philips, whose touch harmonious could remove  
The pangs of guilty power or hapless love ;

(1) Henry Home, one of the Lords of Session in Scotland, author of the “Elements of Criticism,” “Sketches of the History of Man,” and other valuable works. — CROKER.

Rest here, distress'd by poverty no more,  
 Here find that calm thou gav'st so oft before ;  
 Sleep, undisturb'd, within this peaceful shrine,  
 Till angels wake thee with a note like thine ! ” (1)

At the same time that Mr. Garrick favoured me with this anecdote, he repeated a very pointed Epigram by Johnson, on George the Second and Colley Cibber, which has never yet appeared, and of which I know not the exact date. Dr. Johnson afterwards gave it to me himself : —

“ Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,  
 And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign ;  
 Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing,  
 For Nature form'd the Poet for the King.”

(1) The epitaph of Philips is in the porch of Wolverhampton church. The prose part of it is curious : —

“ *Near this place lies Charles Claudius Philips, whose absolute contempt of riches, and inimitable performances upon the violin, made him the admiration of all that knew him. He was born in Wales, made the tour of Europe, and, after the experience of both kinds of fortune, died in 1732.*”

Mr. Garrick appears not to have recited the verses correctly, the original being as follows. One of the various readings is remarkable, as it is the germ of Johnson's concluding line : —

“ Exalted soul, *thy various sounds* could please  
 The love-sick virgin, and the gouty ease ;  
 Could jarring *crowds*, like old Amphion, move  
 To beauteous order and harmonious love ;  
 Rest here in peace, till Angels bid thee rise,  
 And meet thy Saviour's *consort* in the skies.”

Dr. Wilkes, the author of these lines, was a Fellow of Trinity College, in Oxford, and rector of Pitchford, in Shropshire : he collected materials for a history of that county, and is spoken of by Brown Willis, in his History of Mitred Abbies, vol. ii. p. 189. But he was a native of Staffordshire ; and to the antiquities of that county was his attention chiefly confined. Mr. Shaw has had the use of his papers. — BLAKENAY.

By *consort*, in the above lines, I suppose *concert* is meant ; but still I do not see the germ of Johnson's thought. That music may be among the joys of heaven, has been sometimes suggested ; but that the dead were to be “awakened by *harmonious notes*,” seems quite new, and not quite orthodox. — CROKER.

In 1741, he wrote for the Gentleman's Magazine, the "Preface;"† "Conclusion of his Lives of Drake and Barretier;"\* "A free Translation of the Jests of Hierocles, with an Introduction;"† and, I think, the following pieces: "Debate on the Proposal of Parliament to Cromwell, to assume the Title of King, abridged, modified, and digested;"† "Translation of Abbé Guyon's Dissertation on the Amazons;"† "Translation of Fontenelle's Panegyric on Dr. Morin."† Two notes upon this appear to me undoubtedly his. He this year, and the two following, wrote the Parliamentary Debates. He told me himself, that he was the sole composer of them for those three years only. He was not, however, precisely exact in his statement, which he mentioned from hasty recollection; for it is sufficiently evident, that his composition of them began November 19. 1740, and ended February 23. 1742-3.

It appears from some of Cave's letters to Dr. Birch, that Cave had better assistance for that branch of his Magazine, than has been generally supposed; and that he was indefatigable in getting it made as perfect as he could. Thus, 21st July, 1735,

"I trouble you with the inclosed, because you said you could easily correct what is here given for Lord Chesterfield's speech. I beg you will do so as soon as you can for me, because the month is far advanced."

And 15th July, 1737,

"As you remember the debates so far as to perceive the speeches already printed are not exact, I beg the favour that you will peruse the inclosed, and, in the best manner your memory will serve, correct the mis-



taken passages, or add any thing that is omitted. I should be very glad to have something of the Duke of Newcastle's speech, which would be particularly of service. A gentleman has Lord Bathurst's speech to add something to."

And July 3, 1744,

" You will see what stupid, low, abominable stuff is put <sup>(1)</sup> upon your noble and learned friend's <sup>(2)</sup> character, such as I should quite reject, and endeavour to do something better towards doing justice to the character. But as I cannot expect to attain my desire in that respect, it would be a great satisfaction, as well as an honour to our work, to have the favour of the genuine speech. It is a method that several have been pleased to take, as I could show, but I think myself under a restraint. I shall say so far, that I have had some by a third hand, which I understood well enough to come from the first; others by penny-post, and others by the speakers themselves, who have been pleased to visit St. John's Gate, and show particular marks of their being pleased." — [Birch's MSS. in Brit. Mus. 4302.]

There is no reason, I believe, to doubt the veracity of Cave. It is, however, remarkable that none of these letters are in the years during which Johnson alone furnished the Debates, and one of them is in the very year after he ceased from that labour. Johnson told me, that as soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them; " for he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood."

(1) I suppose, in another compilation of the same kind.

(2) Doubtless, Lord Hardwicke.

And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions, which had passed for realities.

He nevertheless agreed with me in thinking, that the debates which he had framed were to be valued as orations upon questions of public importance. They have accordingly been collected in volumes, properly arranged, and recommended to the notice of parliamentary speakers by a preface, written by no inferior hand. <sup>(1)</sup> I must, however, observe, that, although there is in those debates a wonderful store of political information, and very powerful eloquence, I cannot agree that they exhibit the manner of each particular speaker, as Sir John Hawkins seems to think. But, indeed, what opinion can we have of his judgment, and taste in public speaking, who presumes to give, as the characteristics of two celebrated orators, “the deep-mouthed rancour of Pulteney, and the yelping pertinacity of Pitt?” <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) I am assured that the editor is Mr. George Chalmers, whose commercial works are well known and esteemed. — BOSWELL. This collection is stated in the Preface to the Parliamentary History, vol. xii., to be very incomplete: of thirty-two debates, twelve are given under wrong dates, and several of Johnson's best compositions are wholly omitted; amongst others, the important debate of Feb. 13. 1741, on Mr. Sandys's motion for the removal of Sir Robert Walpole; other omissions, equally striking, are complained of. — CROKER.

(2) [Mr. Murphy says: — “That Johnson was the author of the debates during that period (Nov. 19. 1740, to Feb. 1742-3) was not generally known; but the secret transpired several years afterwards, and was avowed by himself on the following occasion: — Mr. Wedderburne (afterwards Lord Loughborough and Earl of Rosslyn), 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 Demosthenes, 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 in 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 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 sides they took, and the order in which they rose, together with notes of the arguments advanced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form which they now have in the Parliamentary Debates." To this discovery Dr. Francis made answer: — "Then, sir, you have exceeded Demosthenes himself; for to say that you have exceeded Francis's Demosthenes, would be saying nothing." The rest of the company bestowed lavish encomiums on Johnson: one, in particular, praised his impartiality; observing, that he dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. "That is not quite true," said Johnson; "I saved appearances tolerably well, but I took care that the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it."

The passage in Hawkins to which Boswell alludes, at p. 169., is as follows: — "In the perusal of these debates, we cannot but wonder at the powers that produced them. The author had never passed those gradations that lead to the knowledge of men and business: born to a narrow fortune, of no profession, conversant chiefly with books, unacquainted with the style of any other than academical disputation, and so great a stranger to senatorial manners, that he never was within the walls of either house of parliament. † That a man, under these disadvantages, should be able to frame a system of debate; to compose speeches of such excellence, both in matter and form, as scarcely to be

\* There is here some inaccuracy; the debate in question was written in 1741. In Mr. Boswell's list of Johnson's residences, he appears not to have resided in Exeter Street after his return to London in 1737. — CROKER.

† [But once: see preceding paragraph. — MARKLAND.]

equalled by those of the most able and experienced statesmen; is, I say, matter of astonishment, and a proof of talents that qualified him for a speaker in the most august assembly on earth.

“ Cave, who had no idea of the powers of eloquence over the human mind, became sensible of its effects in the profits it brought him: he had long thought that the success of his Magazine proceeded from those parts of it that were conducted by himself; which were the abridgment of weekly papers written against the ministry, such as the *Craftsman*, *Fog's Journal*, *Common Sense*, the *Weekly Miscellany*, the *Westminster Journal*, and others; and also marshalling the pastorals, the elegies, and the songs, the epigrams, and the rebuses, that were sent him by various correspondents; and was scarcely able to see the causes that at this time increased the sale of his pamphlet from ten to fifteen thousand copies a month. But if he saw not, he felt them, and manifested his good fortune by buying an old coach and a pair of older horses; and, that he might avoid the suspicion of pride in setting up an equipage, he displayed to the world the source of his affluence, by a representation of *St. John's Gate*, instead of his arms, on the door-panel. This, he told me himself, was the reason of distinguishing his carriage from others, by what some might think a whimsical device, and also for causing it to be engraven on all his plate.

“ Johnson had his reward, over and above the pecuniary recompence vouchsafed him by Cave, in the general applause of his labours, which the increased demand for the Magazine implied\*; but this, as his performances fell short of his powers, gratified him but little; on the contrary, he disapproved the deceit he was compelled to practise: his notions of morality were so strict, that he would scarcely allow the violation of truth in the most trivial instances, and saw, in falsehood of all kinds, a turpitude that he could never be thoroughly reconciled to; and, though the fraud was perhaps not greater than the fictitious relations in *Sir Thomas More's Utopia*, *Lord Bacon's Nova Atlantis*, and *Bishop Hall's Mundus alter et idem*, Johnson was not easy till he had disclosed the deception.

“ In the mean time, it was curious to observe how the deceit operated. It has above been remarked, that Johnson had the art to give different colours to the several speeches; so that some appear to be declamatory and energetic, resembling the orations of *Demosthenes*; others, like those of *Cicero*, calm, persuasive; others, more particularly those attributed to such country gentlemen, merchants, and seamen as had seats in par-

\* Sir J. Hawkins seems (as well as the other biographers) to have over-rated the value, to Cave and the public, of Johnson's Parliamentary Debates. It is shown in the preface to the *Parliamentary History for 1738* (ed. 1812), that one of Cave's rivals, the *London Magazine*, often excelled the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in the priority and accuracy of its parliamentary reports, which were contributed by *Gordon*, the translator of *Tacitus*. — CROKER.

liament, bear the characteristic of plainness, bluntness, and an affected honesty, as opposed to the plausibility of such as were understood or suspected to be courtiers. The artifice had its effect: Voltaire was betrayed by it into a declaration, that the eloquence of ancient Greece and Rome was revived in the British senate; and a speech of the late Earl of Chatham, when Mr. Pitt, in opposition to one of Mr. Horatio Walpole, received the highest applause, and was, by all that read it, taken for genuine.

“It must be owned, that, with respect to the general principles avowed in the speeches, and the sentiments therein contained, they agree with the characters of the persons to whom they are ascribed. Thus, to instance in those of the Upper House, the speeches of the Duke of Newcastle, the Lords Carteret and Ilay, are calm, temperate, and persuasive; those of the Duke of Argyle and Lord Talbot, furious and declamatory; and Lord Chesterfield’s \* and Lord Hervey’s florid but flimsy. In the other House, the speeches may be thus characterised: the minister’s, mild and conciliatory; Mr. Pulteney’s, nervous, methodical, and weighty; Mr. Shippen’s, blunt and dogmatical; Sir John Barnard’s, clear, especially on commercial subjects; Lyttelton’s, stiff, and imitative of the Roman oratory; and Pitt’s, void of argument, but rhapsodically and diffusively eloquent.

“The confession of Johnson above mentioned was the first that revealed the secret that the debates inserted in the Gentleman’s Magazine were fictitious, and composed by himself. After that, he was free, and indeed industrious, in the communication of it; for, being informed that Dr. Smollett was writing a History of England, and had brought it down to the last reign, he cautioned him not to rely on the debates as given in the Magazine, for that they were not authentic, but, excepting as to their general import, the work of his own imagination.”  
— HAWKINS, *Life*, p. 122. 129.]

\* It is very remarkable that Dr. Maty, who wrote the *Life* and edited the Works of Lord Chesterfield, with the use of his Lordship’s papers, under the eye of his surviving friends, and in the lifetime of Johnson, should have published, as “specimens of his Lordship’s eloquence, in the strong nervous style of Demosthenes, as well as in the witty ironical manner of Tully,” three speeches, which are certainly the composition of Dr. Johnson. See Chesterfield’s Works, vol. ii. p. 319. — CROKER.

## CHAPTER VII.

1741—1744.

*Johnson finishes "Irene" — Writes "Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough" — Lives of Burman and Sydenham — "Proposals for printing Bibliotheca Harleiana." — Projects a History of Parliament. — Writes "Considerations on the Dispute between Crousaz and Warburton, on Pope's Essay on Man" — "Dedication to James's Dictionary" — "Friendship, an Ode." — His extreme Indigence at this Time. — His Acquaintance with Savage. — Anecdotes. — Publishes "The Life of Richard Savage." — Case of the Countess of Macclesfield. — Writes "Preface to the Harleian Miscellany."*

THIS year I find that his tragedy of IRENE had been for some time ready for the stage, and that his necessities made him desirous of getting as much as he could for it without delay; for there is the following letter from Mr. Cave to Dr. Birch, in the same volume of manuscripts in the British Museum, from which I copied those above quoted. They were most obligingly pointed out to me by Sir William Musgrave<sup>(1)</sup>, one of the curators of that noble repository.

(1) [Sir William Musgrave, Bart., commissioner for auditing the public accounts, died in 1800.]

“ Sept. 9. 1741.

“ I have put Mr. Johnson’s play into Mr. Gray’s <sup>(1)</sup> hands, in order to sell it to him, if he is inclined to buy it; but I doubt whether he will or not. He would dispose of the copy, and whatever advantage may be made by acting it. Would your society <sup>(2)</sup>, or any gentleman, or body of men that you know, take such a bargain? He and I are very unfit to deal with theatrical persons. Fleetwood was to have acted it last season, but Johnson’s diffidence or <sup>(3)</sup> prevented it.”

I have already mentioned that “ Irene,” was not brought into public notice till Garrick was manager of Drury-lane theatre.

In 1742 <sup>(4)</sup> he wrote for the Gentleman’s Magazine, the “ Preface,” † the “ Parliamentary Debates,” \* “ Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough,” \* then the popular

(1) [John Gray was a bookseller, at the Cross Keys in the Poultry, the shop formerly kept by Dr. Samuel Chandler. Like his predecessor, he became a dissenting minister; but he afterwards took orders in the church, and held a living at Ripon in Yorkshire.]

(2) Not the Royal Society; but the Society for the Encouragement of Learning, of which Dr. Birch was a leading member. Their object was, to assist authors in printing expensive works. It existed from about 1735 to 1746, when, having incurred a considerable debt, it was dissolved.

(3) There is no erasure here, but a mere blank; to fill up which may be an exercise for ingenious conjecture. — BOSWELL. Probably *pride*. Such, at least, is the common-place antithesis. — CROKER.

(4) From one of his letters to a friend, written in June, 1742, it should seem that he then purposed to write a play on the subject of Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, and to have it ready for the ensuing winter. The passage alluded to, however, is somewhat ambiguous; and the work which he then had in contemplation may have been a *history* of that monarch. — MALONE.

topic of conversation. This Essay is a short but masterly performance. We find him, in No. 13. of his Rambler, censuring a profligate sentiment in that "Account" (2), and again insisting upon it strenuously in conversation. (3) "An Account of the Life of Peter Burman,"\* I believe chiefly taken from a foreign publication; as, indeed, he could not himself know much about Burman; "Additions to his Life of Barretier,"\* "The Life of Sydenham,"\* afterwards prefixed to Dr. Swan's edition of his works; "Proposals for printing Bibliotheca Harleiana, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford."\* His account of that celebrated collection of books, in which he displays the importance to literature, of what the French call a *catalogue raisonné*, when the subjects of it are extensive and various, and it is executed with ability, cannot fail to impress all his readers

(1) [The most singular part of this Essay is the character of King William at the conclusion: — "In the beginning of his reign, he found that his old friends, the Whigs, treated him ill; in the midst of it, he was convinced that he was ill served by them; and the conduct of all his parliaments showed him plainly that the bulk of the nation were Tories; and, therefore, he at last wisely resolved to be served by the moderate men of all parties, and to make no distinction, but the natural and great distinction of such as were well affected to his government, and such as were against it."]

(2) ["A late female minister of state has been shameless enough to inform the world, that she used, when she wanted to extract any thing from her sovereign, to remind her of Montaigne's reasoning; who has determined, that to tell a secret to a friend is no breach of fidelity, because the number of persons trusted is not multiplied, — a man and his friend being virtually the same." — Rambler, No. 13.]

(3) [See *post*, Sept. 10. 1773.]



with admiration of his philological attainments. It was afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the Catalogue, in which the Latin accounts of books were written by him. (1) He was employed in this business by Mr. Thomas Osborne the bookseller, who purchased the library for 13,000*l.*, a sum which Mr. Oldys says, in one of his manuscripts, was not more than the binding of the books had cost (2); yet, as Dr. Johnson assured me, the slowness of the sale was such, that there was not much gained by it. It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne (3) down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber."

A very diligent observer may trace him where we should not easily suppose him to be found. I have no doubt that he wrote the little abridgment entitled "Foreign History," in the Magazine for

(1) [In my humble opinion, the preface is unworthy of the Doctor: it contains a few general philological reflections, expressed in a style sufficiently stately, but is divested of bibliographical anecdote and interesting intelligence. — DIBDIN, *Bibliomania*.]

(2) [See *Censura Literaria*, vol. i. p. 438.]

(3) [Osborne appears, in the *Dunciad*, contending for the prize among the booksellers, and carrying it off: —

"Osborne, through perfect modesty o'ercome,  
Crown'd with the jordan, walks contented home."

He was extremely ignorant: of title-pages or editions he had no knowledge or remembrance, but in all the petty tricks of his trade he was most expert. Dr. Johnson, in his *Life of Pope*, says, that he was "entirely destitute of shame, without sense of any disgrace, but that of poverty." He died in 1767.]

December. To prove it, I shall quote the Introduction : —

“ As this is that season of the year in which Nature may be said to command a suspension of hostilities, and which seems intended, by putting a short stop to violence and slaughter, to afford time for malice to relent, and animosity to subside ; we can scarce expect any other account than of plans, negotiations, and treaties, of proposals for peace, and preparations for war.”

As also this passage : —

“ Let those who despise the capacity of the Swiss, tell us by what wonderful policy, or by what happy conciliation of interests, it is brought to pass, that in a body made up of different communities and different religions, there should be no civil commotions, though the people are so warlike, that to nominate and raise an army is the same.”

I am obliged to Mr. Astle <sup>(1)</sup> for his ready permission to copy the two following letters, of which the originals are in his possession. Their contents show that they were written about this time, and that Johnson was now engaged in preparing an historical account of the British Parliament.

LETTER 12. TO MR. CAVE.

[Aug. 1743.]

“ SIR, — I believe I am going to write a long letter, and have therefore taken a whole sheet of paper.

(1) [Thomas Astle, Esq., many years Keeper of the Records in the Tower, one of the Keepers of the Paper Office, and Trustee of the British Museum. He contributed many articles to the *Archæologia*; but his principal work was the “*Origin and Progress of Writing, as well Hieroglyphic as Elementary.*” He died Dec. 1. 1803.]

The first thing to be written about is our historical design.

“ You mentioned the proposal of printing in numbers as an alteration in the scheme, but I believe you mistook, some way or other, my meaning ; I had no other view than that you might rather print too many of five sheets, than of five and thirty.

“ With regard to what I shall say on the manner of proceeding, I would have it understood as wholly indifferent to me, and my opinion only, not my resolution. *Emptoris sit eligere.*

“ I think the insertion of the exact dates of the most important events in the margin, or of so many events as may enable the reader to regulate the order of facts with sufficient exactness, the proper medium between a journal, which has regard only to time, and a history, which ranges facts according to their dependence on each other, and postpones or anticipates according to the convenience of narration. I think the work ought to partake of the spirit of history, which is contrary to minute exactness, and of the regularity of a journal, which is inconsistent with spirit. For this reason, I neither admit numbers or dates, nor reject them.

“ I am of your opinion with regard to placing most of the resolutions, &c. in the margin, and think we shall give the most complete account of parliamentary proceedings that can be contrived. The naked papers, without an historical treatise interwoven, require some other book to make them understood. I will date the succeeding facts with some exactness, but I think in the margin.

“ You told me on Saturday that I had received money on this work, and found set down 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* reckoning the half guinea of last Saturday. As you hinted to me that you had many calls for money, I would not press you too hard, and therefore shall desire only, as I send it in, two guineas for a sheet of

copy ; the rest you may pay me when it may be more convenient ; and even by this sheet payment I shall, for some time, be very expensive.

“ The Life of Savage I am ready to go upon ; and in great primer, and pica notes, I reckon on sending in half a sheet a day ; but the money for that shall likewise lie by in your hands till it is done. With the debates, shall not I have business enough ? if I had but good pens.

“ Towards Mr. Savage’s Life what more have you got ? I would willingly have his trial, &c., and know whether his defence be at Bristol, and would have his collection of Poems, on account of the preface ; — “ The Plain Dealer,” (1) — all the Magazines that have any thing of his or relating to him.

“ I thought my letter would be long, but it is now ended ; and I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

“ The boy found me writing this almost in the dark, when I could not quite easily read yours.

“ I have read the Italian : — nothing in it is well.

“ I had no notion of having any thing for the Inscription. (2) I hope you don’t think I kept it to extort a price. I could think of nothing till to-day. If you could spare me another guinea for the history, I should take it very kindly, to-night ; but if you do not, I shall not think it an injury. I am almost well again.”

(1) [“The Plain Dealer” was a periodical paper, published in 1724, and written by Mr. Hill and Mr. Bond, whom Savage called the two contending powers of light and darkness. They wrote, by turns, each six essays ; and the character of the work was observed regularly to rise in Mr. Hill’s week, and fall in Mr. Bond’s. — JOHNSON, Life of Savage.]

(2) [Neither this Inscription nor the Soldier’s Letter mentioned in the next letter have been discovered.]

## LETTER 13. TO MR. CAVE.

“ SIR, — You did not tell me your determination about the *Soldier's Letter*, which I am confident was never printed. I think it will not do by itself, or in any other place, so well as the Mag. Extraordinary. If you will have it all, I believe you do not think I set it high; and I will be glad if what you give, you will give quickly.

“ You need not be in care about something to print, for I have got the State Trials, and shall extract Laver, Atterbury, and Macclesfield from them, and shall bring them to you in a fortnight; after which I will try to get the South Sea Report.”

[*No date, nor signature.*]

I would also ascribe to him an “ Essay on the Description of China, from the French of Du Halde.” †

His writings in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1743, are, the Preface, † the Parliamentary Debates, † “ Considerations on the Dispute between Crousaz and Warburton, on Pope's Essay on Man; ” † in which, while he defends Crousaz, he shows an admirable metaphysical acuteness and temperance in controversy; Ad Lauram parituram Epigramma<sup>(1)</sup>; \*

- (1) *Angliacas inter pulcherrima Laura puellas,  
Mox uteri pondus depositura grave,  
Adsit, Laura, tibi facilis Lucina dolenti,  
Neve tibi noceat prænituisset Deæ.*

Mr. Hector was present when this Epigram was made *impromptu*. The first line was proposed by Dr. James, and Johnson was called upon by the company to finish it, which he instantly did. — BOSWELL.

The following elegant Latin Ode, which appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1743 (vol. xiii. p. 548.), was, many years ago, pointed out to James Bindley, Esq. as written by Johnson, and may safely be attributed to him: —

and, "A Latin Translation of Pope's Verses on his Grotto:"\* and, as he could employ his pen with equal success upon a small matter as a great, I suppose him to be the author of an advertisement for Osborne, concerning the great Harleian Catalogue.

But I should think myself much wanting, both to my illustrious friend and my readers, did I not introduce here, with more than ordinary respect, an exquisitely beautiful Ode, which has not been inserted in any of the collections of Johnson's poetry,

AD ORNATISSIMAM PUELLAM.

*Vanæ sit arti, sit studio modus,  
Formosa virgo : sit speculo quies,  
Curamque quærendi decoris  
Mitte, supervacuosque cultus.*

*Ut fortuitis verna coloribus  
Depicta vulgo rura magis placent,  
Nec invident horto nitenti  
Divitias operosiores :*

*Lenique fons cum murmure pulchrior  
Obliquat ultro præcipitem fugam  
Inter reluctantes lapillos, et  
Ducit aquas temerè sequentes :*

*Utque inter undas, inter et arbores,  
Jam vere primo dulce strepunt aves,  
Et arte nullâ gratiores  
Ingeminant sine lege cantus :*

*Nativa sic te gratia, te nitor  
Simplex decebit, te veneres tuæ ;  
Nudus Cupido suspicatur  
Artifices nimis apparatus.*

*Ergo fluentem tu malè sedula,  
Ne sæva inuras semper acu comam ;  
Nec sparsa odorato nitentes  
Pulvere dedecores capillos ;*

*Quales nec olim vel Ptolemæia  
Jactabat uxor, sidereo in choro  
Utcunque devotæ refulgent  
Verticis exuviæ decori ;*

*Nec diva mater, cum similem tuæ  
Mentita formam, et pulchrior aspici,  
Permisit incomtas protervis  
Fusa comas agitare ventis. — MALONE.*

written by him at a very early period, as Mr. Hector informs me, and inserted in the Gentleman's Magazine of this year.

FRIENDSHIP, AN ODE.\*

- “ Friendship, peculiar boon of Heaven,  
The noble mind's delight and pride,  
To men and angels only given,  
To all the lower world denied.
- “ While love, unknown among the blest,  
Parent of thousand wild desires,  
The savage and the human breast  
Torments alike with raging fires ;
- “ With bright, but oft destructive, gleam,  
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly ;  
Thy lambent glories only beam  
Around the favourites of the sky.
- “ Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys  
On fools and villains ne'er descend :  
In vain for thee the tyrant sighs,  
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.
- “ Directress of the brave and just,  
O guide us through life's darksome way !  
And let the tortures of mistrust  
On selfish bosoms only prey.
- “ Nor shall thine ardour cease to glow,  
When souls to blissful climes remove :  
What raised our virtue here below,  
Shall aid our happiness above.”

Johnson had now an opportunity of obliging his schoolfellow Dr. James, of whom he once observed, "No man brings more mind to his profession." James published this year his "Medicinal Dictionary," in three volumes folio. Johnson, as I understood from him, had written, or assisted in writing, the proposals for this work; and being very fond of the study of physic, in which James was his master, he furnished some of the articles. He, however, certainly wrote for it the Dedication to Dr. Mead,† which is conceived with great address, to conciliate the patronage of that very eminent man. (1)

It has been circulated, I know not with what authenticity, that Johnson considered Dr. Birch (2) as a dull writer, and said of him, "Tom Birch is as brisk as a bee in conversation; but no sooner does he take a pen in his hand, that it becomes a torpedo to him, and benumbs all his faculties." That the

(1) "Sir, — That the Medicinal Dictionary is dedicated to you, is to be imputed only to your reputation for superior skill in those sciences which I have endeavoured to explain and facilitate: and you are, therefore, to consider this address, if it be agreeable to you, as one of the rewards of merit; and, if otherwise, as one of the inconveniencies of eminence.

"However you shall receive it, my design cannot be disappointed; because this public appeal to your judgment will show that I do not found my hopes of approbation upon the ignorance of my readers, and that I fear his censure least, whose knowledge is most extensive. I am, Sir, your most obedient humble servant, R. JAMES."

(2) [Dr. Thomas Birch was born in London, of Quaker parents, Nov. 23. 1705. To this early friend of Johnson, we are indebted for "The General Dictionary, Historical and Critical," the "Thurlow State Papers," the "History of the Royal Society," and other laborious works. In January, 1776, his horse being frightened at a gun shot off by a boy at birds, on the Hampstead Road, he was thrown and killed on the spot.]



literature of this country is much indebted to Birch's activity and diligence, must certainly be acknowledged. We have seen that Johnson honoured<sup>(1)</sup> him with a Greek Epigram; and his correspondence with him, during many years, proves that he had no mean opinion of him.

LETTER 14. TO DR. BIRCH.

“ Thursday, Sept. 29. 1743.

“ SIR, — I hope you will excuse me for troubling you on an occasion on which I know not whom else I can apply to: I am at a loss for the lives and characters of Earl Stanhope, the two Craggs, and the minister Sunderland; and beg that you will inform [me] where I may find them, and send any pamphlets, &c. relating to them to Mr. Cave, to be perused for a few days by, Sir, your most humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

His circumstances were at this time embarrassed; yet his affection for his mother was so warm, and so liberal, that he took upon himself a debt of hers, which, though small in itself, was then considerable to him. This appears from the following letter which he wrote to Mr. Levett, of Lichfield, the original of which lies now before me.

(1) No doubt, as the case has turned out, Birch is *honoured* by Johnson's compliment; but at the time when it was written, Birch was of eminence in the literary world, and (what affected Johnson more nearly) high in the estimation of Cave; and Johnson's learned flatteries of him, Miss Carter, and Mr. Urban, were all probably prompted by the same motive, — a desire to propitiate Cave. I have seen a MS. letter of Bishop Warburton's, in which he insists, in his usual decisive tone, on the poor use which Birch made in his writings of the materials which he possessed. — CROKER.

## LETTER 15. TO MR. LEVETT, IN LICHFIELD.

December 1. 1743.

“ SIR, — I am extremely sorry that we have encroached so much upon your forbearance with respect to the interest, which a great perplexity of affairs hindered me from thinking of with that attention that I ought, and which I am not immediately able to remit to you, but will pay it (I think twelve pounds) in two months. I look upon this, and on the future interest of that mortgage, as my own debt; and beg that you will be pleased to give me directions how to pay it, and not to mention it to my dear mother. If it be necessary to pay this in less time, I believe I can do it; but I take two months for certainty, and beg an answer whether you can allow me so much time. I think myself very much obliged to your forbearance, and shall esteem it a great happiness to be able to serve you. I have great opportunities of dispersing any thing that you may think it proper to make public. I will give a note for the money, payable at the time mentioned, to any one here that you shall appoint. I am, Sir, your most obedient, and most humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

“ At Mr. Osborne’s, bookseller, in Gray’s Inn.”

It does not appear that he wrote any thing in 1744<sup>(1)</sup> for the Gentleman’s Magazine, but the Preface.† His life of Barretier was now republished in

(1) In this and the two next years, Mr. Boswell has not assigned to Johnson any contributions to the Gentleman’s Magazine, yet there seems little doubt that from his connection with that work he derived, for some years, the chief and almost the only means of subsistence for himself and his wife: perhaps he may have acted as general editor with an annual allowance, and he no doubt employed himself on more literary works than have been acknowledged. In this point the public loss is, perhaps, not great. What he was unwilling to avow, we need not be very solicitous to discover. Indeed, his personal history is, about this period, a blank, hidden, it is to be feared, in the obscurity of indigence. — CROKER.

a pamphlet by itself. But he produced one work this year, fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was "The Life of Richard Savage\* ;" a man, of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character<sup>(1)</sup> was marked by profligacy, insolence, and ingratitude: yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind, had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired; and as Savage's misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread, his visits to St. John's Gate naturally brought Johnson and him together. <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) As a specimen of Savage's temper, I insert the following letter from him to a noble Lord [Tyrconnel], to whom he was under great obligations, but who, on account of his bad conduct, was obliged to discard him. The original was in the hands of the late Francis Cockayne Cust, Esq., one of his Majesty's counsel learned in the law: —

"Right Honourable BRUTE and BOOBY, — I find you want (as Mr. — is pleased to hint,) to swear away my life, that is, the life of your creditor, because he asks you for a debt. The public shall soon be acquainted with this, to judge whether you are not fitter to be an Irish evidence, than to be an Irish peer. I defy and despise you. I am, your determined adversary, R. S."

(2) Sir John Hawkins gives the world to understand, that Johnson, "being an admirer of genteel manners, was captivated by the address and demeanour of Savage, who, as to his exterior, was, to a remarkable degree, accomplished."— HAWKINS'S Life, p. 52. But Sir John's notions of gentility must appear somewhat ludicrous, from his stating the following circumstance as presumptive evidence that Savage was a good swordsman: — "That he understood the exercise of a gentleman's weapon, may be inferred from the use made of it in that rash encounter related in his Life." The dexterity here alluded to was, that Savage, in a nocturnal fit of drunkenness, stabbed

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence <sup>(1)</sup>, that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. <sup>(2)</sup> Yet in these almost incredible scenes of

a man at a coffee-house, and killed him: for which he was tried at the Old Bailey, and found guilty of murder.

Johnson, indeed, describes him as having "a grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien; but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners." How highly Johnson admired him for that knowledge which he himself so much cultivated, and what kindness he entertained for him, appears from the following lines in the Gentleman's Magazine for April, 1738, which I am assured were written by Johnson: —

*“ Ad Ricardum Savage.*

*“Humani studium generis cui pectore fervet  
O colat humanum te foveatque genus.”*

(1) The following striking proof of Johnson's extreme indigence, when he published the Life of Savage, was communicated to Mr. Boswell, by Mr. Richard Stowe, of Apsley, in Bedfordshire, from the information of Mr. Walter Harte, author of the Life of Gustavus Adolphus: — "Soon after Savage's Life was published, Mr. Harte dined with Edward Cave, and occasionally praised it. Soon after, meeting him, Cave said, 'You made a man very happy t'other day.' — 'How could that be?' says Harte; 'nobody was there but ourselves.' Cave answered, by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily, that he did not choose to appear; but, on hearing the conversation, he was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book." — MALONE.

(2) As Johnson was married before he settled in London, and must have always had a habitation for his wife, some readers have wondered how he ever could have been driven to stroll about with Savage, all night, for want of a lodging. But it should be remembered, that Johnson, at different periods, had lodgings in the vicinity of London; and his finances certainly would not admit of a double establishment. When, therefore, he spent a convivial day in London, and found it too late to return to any country residence he may occasionally have had, having no lodging in town, he was obliged to pass the night in the manner described above; for though, at that period, it was not uncommon for two men to sleep together, Savage, it appears, could accommodate him with nothing but his company in the open air. — MALONE.

distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterwards enriched the life of his unhappy companion, and those of other poets.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation ; but, in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and " resolved they would *stand by their country.*"

I am afraid, however, that by associating with Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct, for which, in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr. Hector ; but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind. <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) We are to remember, that Johnson was, at this time, a husband : can it, therefore, be supposed, that the society of such a man as Savage had any tendency to improve him in the exercise of the domestic virtues ? Nay rather we must doubt it, and ascribe to an indifference in the discharge of them, arising from their nocturnal excursions, the incident of a temporary separation of Johnson from his wife, which soon took place ; and that, while he was in a lodging in Fleet Street, she was harboured by a friend near the Tower. It is true that this separation continued but a short time ; and that if, indeed, his affection, at that instant, was alienated from her, it soon returned. — HAWKINS, *Life of Johnson.*

Sir John Hawkins very uncharitably attributes to the influence of Savage, a separation which took place (*as he alone asserts*) between Johnson and his wife about this period. This separation (if Hawkins be even so far correct) may be explained without any reference to Savage. The whole course of Johnson's life and conduct warrants us in supposing that this temporary separation was produced by pecuniary distress, and not by an

That Johnson was anxious that an authentic and favourable account of his extraordinary friend should first get possession of the public attention, is evident from a letter which he wrote in the Gentleman's Magazine for August of the year preceding its publication.

LETTER 16. TO MR. URBAN.

“ As your collections show how often you have owed the ornaments of your poetical pages to the correspondence of the unfortunate and ingenious Mr. Savage, I doubt not but you have so much regard to his memory as to encourage any design that may have a tendency to the preservation of it from insults or calumnies ; and therefore, with some degree of assurance, intreat you to inform the public, that his Life will speedily be published by a person who was favoured with his confidence, and received from himself an account of most of the transactions which he proposes to mention, to the time of his retirement to Swansea in Wales.

“ From that period, to his death in the prison of Bristol, the account will be continued from materials still less liable to objection ; his own letters, and those of his friends, some of which will be inserted in the work, and abstracts of others subjoined in the margin.

“ It may be reasonably imagined, that others may have the same design ; but as it is not credible that they can obtain the same materials, it must be expected

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interruption of affection. Johnson would be naturally solicitous that his wife should find in her own family a temporary refuge from the want with which he was struggling. There is no where to be found a single trace to justify the accusation which Hawkins so wantonly and so odiously, and, it may be assumed, so falsely makes. Johnson's fate in this particular is a little hard : he is at once ridiculed for being extravagantly uxorious, and censured for a profligate disregard of his wife. — CROKER.

they will supply from invention the want of intelligence; and that, under the title of 'The Life of Savage,' they will publish only a novel, filled with romantic adventures and imaginary amours. You may therefore, perhaps, gratify the lovers of truth and wit, by giving me leave to inform them in your Magazine, that my account will be published in 8vo. by Mr. Roberts, in Warwick Lane."

[No signature.]

In February, 1744, it accordingly came forth from the shop of Roberts, between whom and Johnson I have not traced any connection, except the casual one of this publication. (1) In Johnson's "Life of Savage," although it must be allowed that its moral is the reverse of—" *Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo*," a very useful lesson is inculcated, to guard men of warm passions from a too free indulgence of them; and the various incidents are related in so clear and animated a manner, and illuminated throughout with so much philosophy, that it is one of the most interesting narratives in the English language. (2) Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that

(1) There seems reason to suppose that Cave sometimes permitted the name of another printer to appear on the title-pages of books of which he was, in fact, the publisher: see *antè*, p. 108. In this case the fact is certain; as it appears from the letter to Cave, August, 1743, that Johnson sold the work to him even before it was written. — CROKER.

[Cave was the purchaser of the copyright, and the following is a copy of Johnson's receipt for the money:—"The 14th day of December, received of Mr. Ed. Cave, the sum of fifteen guineas, in full, for compiling and writing 'The Life of Richard Savage, Esq.' deceased; and in full for all materials thereto applied, and not found by the said Edward Cave. I say, received by me, SAM. JOHNSON. Dec. 14. 1743."]

(2) It gives, like Raphael's Lazarus or Murillo's Beggar, pleasure as a work of art, while the original could only excite

upon his return from Italy he met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed, is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say [Aug. 19. 1773], "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the Life of Savage at a sitting; but then I sat up all night."

He exhibits the genius of Savage to the best advantage, in the specimens of his poetry which he has selected, some of which are of uncommon merit. We, indeed, occasionally find such vigour and such point, as might make us suppose that the generous aid of Johnson had been imparted to his friend. Mr. Thomas Warton made this remark to me; and, in support of it, quoted from the poem entitled "The Bastard," a line in which the fancied superiority of one "stamped in Nature's mint with extasy," is contrasted with a regular lawful descendant of some great and ancient family:

"No tenth transmitter of a foolish face."

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disgust. Johnson has spread over Savage's character the varnish, or rather the veil, of stately diction and extenuatory phrases, but cannot prevent the observant reader from seeing that the subject of this biographical essay was, as Mr. Boswell calls him, "an ungrateful and insolent profligate;" and so little do his works show of that poetical talent for which he has been celebrated, that, if it had not been for Johnson's embalming partiality, his works would probably be now as unheard of as they are unread. — CROKER.



But the fact is, that this poem was published some years before Johnson and Savage were acquainted.

It is remarkable, that in this biographical disquisition there appears a very strong symptom of Johnson's prejudice against players; a prejudice which may be attributed to the following causes: first, the imperfection of his organs, which were so defective that he was not susceptible of the fine impressions which theatrical excellence produces upon the generality of mankind; secondly, the cold rejection of his tragedy; and, lastly, the brilliant success of Garrick, who had been his pupil, who had come to London at the same time with him, not in a much more prosperous state than himself, and whose talents he undoubtedly rated low, compared with his own. His being outstripped by his pupil in the race of immediate fame, as well as of fortune, probably made him feel some indignation, as thinking, that whatever might be Garrick's merits in his art, the reward was too great when compared with what the most successful efforts of literary labour could attain. At all periods of his life Johnson used to talk contemptuously of players<sup>(1)</sup>; but in this work he speaks

(1) It is another of those remarkable inconsistencies in Johnson's character, before alluded to, that as the first publication of this determined admirer of the metropolis was a satire on London, so the first production of this despiser of the stage should be a play! Mr. Boswell is obliged to admit what was too obvious to be concealed — but he does so with reluctance and great tenderness of expression — that Dr. Johnson *envied* Garrick, and we shall see that he even *envied* Sheridan, and to this source must, we fear, be attributed his "indignation" against players. This is no doubt a blot on Johnson's character, and we have seen, and shall see, too many instances of this infirmity. — CROKER.

of them with peculiar acrimony; for which, perhaps, there was formerly too much reason, from the licentious and dissolute manners of those engaged in that profession. It is but justice to add, that in our own time such a change has taken place, that there is no longer room for such an unfavourable distinction.

His schoolfellow and friend, Dr. Taylor, told me a pleasant anecdote of Johnson's triumphing over his pupil, David Garrick. When that great actor had played some little time at Goodman's Fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him perform, and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and old Giffard. (1) Johnson, who was ever depreciating stage-players, after censuring some mistakes in emphasis, which Garrick had committed in the course of that night's acting, said, "The players, Sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis." Both Garrick and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it; upon which Johnson rejoined, "Well now, I'll give you something to speak, with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth Commandment, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'" Both tried at it, said Dr. Taylor, and both mistook the emphasis,

(1) [Giffard was the manager of Goodman's Fields playhouse, where Garrick made his first appearance, Oct. 19. 1741, in the character of Richard the Third.]

which should be upon *not* and *false witness*.<sup>(1)</sup> Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.

His "Life of Savage" was no sooner published, than the following liberal praise was given to it, in "The Champion," a periodical paper: —

"This pamphlet is, without flattery to its author, as just and well written a piece of its kind as I ever saw; so that at the same time that it highly deserves, it certainly stands very little in need of this recommendation. As to the history of the unfortunate person, whose memoirs compose this work, it is certainly penned with equal accuracy and spirit, of which I am so much the better judge, as I know many of the facts mentioned to be strictly true, and very fairly related. Besides, it is not only the story of Mr. Savage, but innumerable incidents relating to other persons, and other affairs, which renders this a very amusing, and, withal, a very instructive and valuable performance. The author's observations are short, significant, and just, as his narrative is remarkably smooth and well disposed. His reflections open to all the recesses of the human heart; and, in a word, a more just or pleasant, a more engaging or a more improving treatise, on all the excellencies and defects of human nature, is scarce to be found in our own, or, perhaps, any other language."<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) I suspect Dr. Taylor was inaccurate in this statement. The emphasis should be equally upon *shalt* and *not*, as both concur to form the negative injunction; and *false witness*, like the other acts prohibited in the Decalogue, should not be marked by any peculiar emphasis, but only be distinctly enunciated. — BOSWELL. A moderate emphasis should be placed on *false*. — KEARNEY. [Sheridan, in his "Lectures on the Art of Reading" (p. 258.), places the emphasis wholly on *false*. — MARKLAND.]

(2) This character of the "Life of Savage" was not written

Johnson's partiality for Savage made him entertain no doubt of his story, however extraordinary and improbable. It never occurred to him to question his being the son of the Countess of Macclesfield, of whose unrelenting barbarity he so loudly complained, and the particulars of which are related in so strong and affecting a manner in Johnson's Life of him. Johnson was certainly well warranted in publishing his narrative, however offensive it might be to the lady and her relations; because her alleged unnatural and cruel conduct to her son, and shameful avowal of guilt, were stated in a Life of Savage now lying before me, which came out so early as 1727, and no attempt had been made to confute it, or to punish the author or printer as a libeller: but for the honour of human nature, we should be glad to find the shocking tale not true; and from a respectable gentleman<sup>(2)</sup> connected with the lady's family, I have received such information and remarks, as, joined to my own inquiries, will, I think, render it at least somewhat doubtful, especially when we consider that it must have originated from the person himself who went by the name of Richard Savage.

If the maxim, *falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus*, were to be received without qualification, the credit of Savage's narrative, as conveyed to us, would be

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by Fielding, as has been supposed, but most probably by Ralph, who, as appears from the minutes of the partners of "The Champion," in the possession of Mr. Reed of Staple-Inn, succeeded Fielding in his share of the paper, before the date of that eulogium.

(2) The late Francis Cockayne Cust, Esq., one of his Majesty's counsel. [He died Nov. 30. 1791.]

annihilated; for it contains some assertions which, beyond a question, are not true.

1. In order to induce a belief that the Earl Rivers, — on account of a criminal connection with whom, Lady Macclesfield is said to have been divorced from her husband, by act of parliament [1697] — had a peculiar anxiety about the child which she bore to him, it is alleged, that his Lordship gave him his own name, and had it duly recorded in the register of St. Andrew's, Holborn. I have carefully inspected that register, but no such entry is to be found. (1)

(1) Mr. Cust's reasoning, with respect to the filiation of Richard Savage, always appeared to me extremely unsatisfactory; and is entirely overturned by the following decisive observations, for which the reader is indebted to the unwearied researches of Mr. Bindley. — The story on which Mr. Cust so much relies, that Savage was a supposititious child, not the son of Lord Rivers and Lady Macclesfield, but the offspring of a shoemaker, introduced in consequence of her real son's death, was, without doubt, grounded on the circumstance of Lady Macclesfield having, in 1696, previously to the birth of Savage, had a daughter by the Earl Rivers, who died in her infancy; a fact, which, as the same gentleman observes to me, was proved in the course of the proceedings on Lord Macclesfield's Bill of Divorce. Most fictions of this kind have some admixture of truth in them. — MALONE.

From "the Earl of Macclesfield's Case," which, in 1697-8, was presented to the Lords, in order to procure an act of divorce, it appears, that "Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, under the name of Madam Smith, was delivered of a male child in Fox Court, near Brook Street, Holborn, by Mrs. Wright, a midwife, on Saturday, the 16th of January, 1696-7, at six o'clock in the morning, who was baptised on the Monday following, and registered by the name of Richard, the son of John Smith, by Mr. Burbridge, assistant to Dr. Manningham's curate for St. Andrew's, Holborn: that the child was christened on Monday, the 18th of January, in Fox Court; and, from the privacy, was supposed by Mr. Burbridge to be "a by-blow or bastard." It also appears, that during her delivery, the lady wore a mask; and

2. It is stated, that “Lady Macclesfield, having lived for some time upon very uneasy terms with her husband, thought a public confession of adultery the most obvious and expeditious method of obtaining her liberty;” and Johnson, assuming this to be true, stigmatises her with indignation, as “the wretch who had, without scruple, proclaimed herself an adulteress.” (1) But I have perused the Journals of both houses of Parliament at the period of her divorce, and there find it authentically ascertained, that so far from voluntarily submitting to the ignominious charge of adultery, she made a strenuous defence by her Counsel; the bill having been first moved the 15th of January, 1697-8, in the House of Lords, and proceeded on, (with various applications for time to bring up witnesses at a distance, &c.) at intervals, till the 3d of March, when it passed. It was brought to the Commons, by a message from the Lords, the 5th of March, proceeded on the 7th, 10th, 11th, 14th, and 15th, on which day, after a full examination of witnesses on

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that Mary Pegler on the next day after the baptism (Tuesday) took a male child, whose mother was called Madam Smith, from the house of Mrs. Pheasant, in Fox Court [running from Brook Street into Gray’s Inn Lane], who went by the name of Mrs. Lee.

Conformable to this statement is the entry in the Register of St. Andrew’s, Holborn, which is as follows, and which unquestionably records the baptism of Richard Savage, to whom Lord Rivers gave his own Christian name, prefixed to the assumed surname of his mother: — “Jan. 1696-7. Richard, son of John Smith and Mary, in Fox Court, in Gray’s Inn Lane, baptized the 18th.” — BINDLEY.

(1) No divorce can be obtained in the Courts, on confession of the party. There must be proofs. — KEARNEY.

both sides, and hearing of Counsel, it was reported without amendments, passed, and carried to the Lords.

That Lady Macclesfield was convicted of the crime of which she was accused, cannot be denied; but the question now is, whether the person calling himself Richard Savage was her son.

It has been said <sup>(1)</sup>, that when Earl Rivers was dying, and anxious to provide for all his natural children, he was informed by Lady Macclesfield, that her son by him was dead. Whether, then, shall we believe that this was a malignant lie, invented by a mother to prevent her own child from receiving the bounty of his father, which was accordingly the consequence, if the person whose life Johnson wrote, was her son; or shall we not rather believe that the person who then assumed the name of Richard Savage was an impostor, being in reality the son of the shoemaker, under whose wife's care <sup>(2)</sup> Lady Macclesfield's child was placed; that after the death of the real Richard Savage, he attempted to personate him; and that the fraud being known to Lady Macclesfield, he was therefore repulsed by her with just resentment.

There is a strong circumstance in support of the last supposition; though it has been mentioned as an aggravation of Lady Macclesfield's unnatural con-

(1) By Johnson, in his *Life of Savage*. — MALONE.

(2) This, as an accurate friend remarks to me, is not correctly stated. The shoemaker under whose care Savage was placed, with a view to his becoming his apprentice, was not the husband of his nurse. See Johnson's *Life of Savage*. — J. BOSWELL, jun.

duct, and that is, her having prevented him from obtaining the benefit of a legacy left to him by Mrs. Lloyd, his godmother. For if there was such a legacy left, his not being able to obtain payment of it, must be imputed to his consciousness that he was not the real person. The just inference should be, that by the death of Lady Macclesfield's child before its godmother, the legacy became lapsed, and therefore that Johnson's Richard Savage was an impostor.

If he had a title to the legacy, he could not have found any difficulty in recovering it; for had the executors resisted his claim, the whole costs, as well as the legacy, must have been paid by them, if he had been the child to whom it was given. <sup>(1)</sup>

The talents of Savage, and the mingled fire, rudeness, pride, meanness, and ferocity of his character <sup>(2)</sup>, concur in making it credible that he was fit to plan and carry on an ambitious and daring scheme of imposture, similar instances of which have not been wanting in higher spheres, in the history of

(1) This reasoning is decisive: if Savage were what he represented himself to be, nothing could have prevented his recovering his legacy. — CROKER.

(2) Johnson's companion appears to have persuaded that lofty minded man, that he resembled him in having a noble pride; for Johnson, after painting in strong colours the quarrel between Lord Tyrconnel and Savage, asserts that "the spirit of Mr. Savage, indeed, never suffered him to solicit a reconciliation: he returned reproach for reproach, and insult for insult." But the respectable gentleman to whom I have alluded, has in his possession a letter from Savage, after Lord Tyrconnel had discarded him, addressed to the Rev. Mr. Gilbert, his Lordship's chaplain, in which he requests him, in the humblest manner, to represent his case to the Viscount.



different countries, and have had a considerable degree of success.

Yet, on the other hand, to the companion of Johnson, (who, through whatever medium he was conveyed into this world, be it ever so doubtful, "to whom related, or by whom begot," was, unquestionably, a man of no common endowments,) we must allow the weight of general repute as to his *Status* or parentage, though illicit; and supposing him to be an impostor, it seems strange that Lord Tyrconnel, the nephew of Lady Macclesfield, should patronise him, and even admit him as a guest in his family. (1) Lastly, it must ever appear very suspicious, that three different accounts of the Life of Richard Savage, — one published in "The Plain Dealer," in 1724, another in 1727, and another by the powerful pen of Johnson, in 1744, — and all of

(1) Trusting to Savage's information, Johnson represents this unhappy man's being received as a companion by Lord Tyrconnel, and pensioned by his Lordship, as posterior to Savage's conviction and pardon. But I am assured, that Savage had received the voluntary bounty of Lord Tyrconnel, and had been dismissed by him long before the murder was committed, and that his Lordship was very instrumental in procuring Savage's pardon, by his intercession with the Queen, through Lady Hertford. If, therefore, he had been desirous of preventing the publication by Savage, he would have left him to his fate. Indeed, I must observe, that although Johnson mentions that Lord Tyrconnel's patronage of Savage was "upon his promise to lay aside his design of exposing the cruelty of his mother," the great biographer has forgotten that he himself has mentioned, that Savage's story had been told several years before in "The Plain Dealer?" from which he quotes this strong saying of the generous Sir Richard Steele, that the "inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his father." At the same time it must be acknowledged, that Lady Macclesfield and her relations might still wish that her story should not be brought into more conspicuous notice by the satirical pen of Savage.

them while Lady Macclesfield was alive (1), should, notwithstanding the severe attacks upon her, have been suffered to pass without any public and effectual contradiction. (2)

I have thus endeavoured to sum up the evidence upon the case, as fairly as I can; and the result seems to be, that the world must vibrate in a state of uncertainty as to what was the truth.

(1) Miss Mason, after having forfeited the title of Lady Macclesfield by divorce, was married to Colonel Brett, and, it is said, was well known in all the polite circles. Colley Cibber, I am informed, had so high an opinion of her taste and judgment as to genteel life and manners, that he submitted every scene of his "Careless Husband" to Mrs. Brett's revisal and correction. Colonel Brett was reported to be free in his gallantry with his lady's maid. Mrs. Brett came into a room one day in her own house, and found the Colonel and her maid both fast asleep in two chairs. She tied a white handkerchief round her husband's neck, which was a sufficient proof that she had discovered his intrigue; but she never at any time took notice of it to him. This incident, as I am told, gave occasion to the well-wrought scene of Sir Charles and Lady Easy, and Edging. — BOSWELL.

[Colonel Brett was a particularly handsome man. The Countess, looking out of her window, on a great disturbance in the street, saw the Colonel assaulted by some bailiffs, who were going to arrest him. She paid his debt, released him from their pursuit, and soon after married him. When she died, she left him more than he expected; with which he bought an estate in the country, built a very handsome house upon it, went down to see the finishing of it, returned to London in hot weather, and in too much hurry; got a fever by it; and died. Nobody had a better taste of what could please the town, and his opinion was much regarded by the actors and dramatic poets. — SPENCE.]

(2) It should, however, be recollected, before we draw any conclusion from Lady Macclesfield's forbearance to prosecute a libeller, that however innocent she might be as to Savage, she was undeniably and inexcusably guilty in other respects, and would have been naturally reluctant to drag her frailties again before the public. If it had not been for the accident of Johnson having, near twenty years after, happened to write Savage's Life, the original libel would never have been heard of. — CROKER.

This digression, I trust, will not be censured, as it relates to a matter exceedingly curious, and very intimately connected with Johnson, both as a man and an author.

He this year wrote the "Preface to the Harleian Miscellany."\* The selection of the pamphlets of which it was composed was made by Mr. Oldys, a man of eager curiosity, and indefatigable diligence, who first exerted that spirit of inquiry into the literature of the old English writers, by which the works of our great dramatic poet have of late been so signally illustrated.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) [William Oldys was born in 1696. In 1737, he published "The British Librarian; exhibiting a compendious Review or Abstract of our most scarce, useful, and valuable Books in all Sciences, as well in Manuscript as in Print;" and, in 1738, a Life of Sir Walter Raleigh. He also contributed several articles to the General Dictionary, and the Biographia Britannica. "He had," says Grose, in his Olio, "a number of small parchment bags inscribed with the names of the persons whose Lives he intended to write, into which he put every circumstance and anecdote he could collect, and from thence drew up his history." His bibliographical talents were not eclipsed by those of any contemporary. He died in 1761, leaving a copy of Langbaine's Lives, &c. filled with MS. notes, now in the British Museum.]

## CHAPTER VIII.

1745—1749.

“*Miscellaneous Observations on Macbeth,*” and “*Proposals for a new Edition of Shakspeare.*” — “*Prologue, spoken by Garrick, on the opening of Drury Lane Theatre.*” — *Prospectus of the Dictionary of the English Language. — Progress of the Work. — King’s Head Club in Ivy Lane. — Visit to Tunbridge Wells. — “Life of Roscommon.” — “Preface to Dodsley’s Preceptor.” — “Vision of Theodore the Hermit.” — “The Vanity of Human Wishes.” — “Irene” acted at Drury Lane.*

IN 1745, he published a pamphlet entitled, “*Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir T. H.’s (Sir Thomas Hanmer’s) Edition of Shakspeare.*” \* (1) To which he affixed, *Proposals for a new edition of that poet.*

As we do not trace any thing else published by him during the course of this year, we may conjecture that he was occupied entirely with that work. But the little encouragement which was given by the public to his anonymous proposals for the execution of a task which Warburton was known to have undertaken, probably damped his ardour. His pam-

(1) [Sir Thomas Hanmer was born in 1676. He was Speaker of the House of Commons in Queen Anne’s last parliament, and died May 5. 1746. His splendid but inaccurate edition of Shakspeare, in six volumes quarto, was published in 1744.]

phlet, however, was highly esteemed, and was fortunate enough to obtain the approbation even of the supercilious Warburton himself, who, in the Preface to his Shakspeare, published two years afterwards, thus mentioned it: "As to all those things which have been published under the titles of *Essays, Remarks, Observations, &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."

Of this flattering distinction shown to him by Warburton, a very grateful remembrance was ever entertained by Johnson, who said, "He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me."

In 1746, it is probable that he was still employed upon his Shakspeare, which perhaps he laid aside for a time, upon account of the high expectations which were formed of Warburton's edition of that great poet. It is somewhat curious, that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House, is well known; and some may fancifully imagine, that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers <sup>(1)</sup>:

(1) [In the Garrick Correspondence, there is a letter from Gilbert Walmesley, dated Nov. 3. 1746, which contains this passage:—"When you see Mr. Johnson, pray give my compliments, and tell him I esteem him as a great genius—*quite lost, both to himself and the world.*" Upon which the Editor ob-

but I am inclined to think, that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work.

None of his letters during those years are extant, so far as I can discover. This is much to be regretted. It might afford some entertainment to see how he then expressed himself to his private friends concerning state affairs. Dr. Adams informs me, that "at this time a favourite object which he had in contemplation was 'The Life of Alfred;' in which, from the warmth with which he spoke about it, he would, I believe, had he been master of his own will, have engaged himself, rather than on any other subject."

In 1747, it is supposed that the Gentleman's Magazine for May was enriched by him with five short poetical pieces distinguished by three asterisks. The first is a translation, or rather a paraphrase, of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer. Whether the Latin was his, or not, I have never heard, though I should think it probably was, if it be certain that he wrote the English; as to which my only cause of doubt is, that his slighting character of Hanmer as an editor, in his "Observations on Macbeth," is very different from that in the Epitaph. It may be said, that there is the same contrariety between the character in the Observations, and that in his own Preface to Shakspeare; but a considerable time elapsed between the one publication and the other,

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serves, "It is obvious that Walmsley had been anxiously expecting from his friend, performances adequate to his powers, but at length almost despaired, that he could ever be roused to useful strenuous exertion of his time." — G. C., vol. i. p. 45.]

whereas, the Observations and the Epitaph came close together. The others are, "To Miss ——, on her giving the Author a gold and silk net-work Purse of her own weaving;" "Stella in Mourning;" "The Winter's Walk;" "An Ode;" and, "To Lyce, an elderly Lady." I am not positive that all these were his productions (1); but as "The Winter's Walk" has never been controverted to be his, and all of them have the same mark, it is reasonable to conclude that they are all written by the same hand. Yet to the Ode, in which we find a passage very characteristic of him, being a learned description of the gout,

" Unhappy, whom to beds of pain  
*Arthritick* tyranny consigns ;

there is the following note, "The author being ill

(1) In the "Universal Visiter," to which Johnson contributed, the mark which is affixed to some pieces unquestionably his, is also found subjoined to others, of which he certainly was not the author. The mark, therefore, will not ascertain the poems in question to have been written by him. Some of them were probably the productions of Hawkesworth, who, it is believed, was afflicted with the gout. The verses on a Purse were inserted afterwards in Mrs. Williams's Miscellanies, and are, unquestionably, Johnson's." — MALONE.

There is no evidence whatever that *any* of these were Johnson's, and every reason to suppose that they are Hawkesworth's. The ode which Boswell doubts about, on internal evidence, is the ode to *Spring*, which, with those on *Summer*, *Autumn*, and *Winter*, have been of late published as Johnson's, and are, no doubt, all by the *same* hand. We see that *Spring* bears internal marks of being Hawkesworth's. *Winter* and *Summer*, Mr. Chalmers asserts to be his also; and the index to the *Gent. Mag.* for 1748 attributes *Summer* to Mr. Greville, a name known to have been assumed by Hawkesworth. The verses on the "Purse," and to "Stella in Mourning," are certainly, by the same hand as the four odes. The whole must therefore be assigned to Hawkesworth, and should be removed from their place in Johnson's works. — CROKER.

of the gout:" but Johnson was not attacked with that distemper till a very late period of his life. May not this, however, be a poetical fiction? Why may not a poet suppose himself to have the gout, as well as suppose himself to be in love, of which we have innumerable instances, and which has been admirably ridiculed by Johnson in his "Life of Cowley?" (1) I have also some difficulty to believe that he could produce such a group of *conceits* as appear in the verses to Lyce, in which he claims for this ancient personage as good a right to be assimilated to *heaven*, as nymphs whom other poets have flattered; he therefore ironically ascribes to her the attributes of the *sky*, in such stanzas as this:—

" Her teeth the *night* with *darkness* dies,  
 She's *starr'd* with pimples o'er ;  
 Her tongue like nimble *lightning* plies,  
 And can with *thunder* roar."

But as, at a very advanced age, he could condescend to trifle in *namby-pamby* rhymes, to please Mrs. Thrale and her daughter, he may have, in his earlier years, composed such a piece as this.

It is remarkable, that in this first edition of "The Winter's Walk," the concluding line is much more Johnsonian than it was afterwards printed; for in subsequent editions, after praying Stella to "snatch him to her arms," he says,

" And *shield* me from the *ills* of life."

(1) ["Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion," &c. &c. — JOHNSON, Life of Cowley.]



Whereas in the first edition it is

“ And *hide* me from the *sight* of life.”

A horror at life in general is more consonant with Johnson's habitual gloomy cast of thought. (1)

I have heard him repeat with great energy the following verses, which appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for April this year; but I have no authority to say they were his own. Indeed, one of the best critics of our age suggests to me, that “ the word *indifferently* being used in the sense of *without concern*, and being also very unpoetical, renders it improbable that they should have been his composition.”

ON LORD LOVAT'S EXECUTION.

“ Pitied by *gentle minds* KILMARNOCK died ;  
 The *brave*, BALMERINO, were on thy side ;  
 RADCLIFFE, unhappy in his crimes of youth,  
 Steady in what he still mistook for truth,  
 Beheld his death so decently unmoved,  
 The *soft* lamented, and the *brave* approved.  
 But LOVAT's fate indifferently we view,  
 True to no *king*, to no *religion* true :  
 No *fair* forgets the *ruin* he has done ;  
 No *child* laments the *tyrant* of his *son* ;  
 No *Tory* pities, thinking what he was ;  
 No *Whig* compassions, for he left the *cause* ;  
 The *brave* regret not, for he was not brave ;  
 The *honest* mourn not, knowing him a knave !” (2)

(1) Johnson's habitual horror was not of *life*, but of *death*. — CROKER.

(2) These verses are somewhat too severe on the extraordinary person who is the chief figure in them; for he was, undoubtedly, brave. His pleasantry during his solemn trial (in

This year his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury Lane theatre, Johnson honoured his opening of it with a Prologue, \* which, for just and manly dramatic criticism on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetical excellence, is unrivalled. Like the celebrated Epilogue to the "Distressed Mother (1)," it was, during the season, often called for by the audience. The most striking and brilliant passages of it have been so often repeated, and are so well recollected by all the lovers of the drama and of poetry, that it would be superfluous to point

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which, by the way, I have heard Mr. David Hume observe, that we have one of the very few speeches of Mr. Murray, now Earl of Mansfield, authentically given) was very remarkable. When asked if he had any questions to put to Sir Everard Fawkener, who was one of the strongest witnesses against him, he answered "I only wish him joy of his young wife." And after sentence of death, in the horrible terms in such cases of treason, was pronounced upon him, as he was retiring from the bar, he said, "Fare you well, my lords, we shall not all meet again in one place." He behaved with perfect composure at his execution, and called out, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori.*" — BOSWELL.

He was a profligate villain, and deserved death for his moral, at least, as much as for his political, offences. There is, in the Gentleman's Magazine for April, an account of the behaviour of Lord Lovat at his execution, the latter part of which, censuring pleasantry *in articulo mortis*, bears strong internal evidence, both in matter and manner, of having been written by Johnson. — CROKER.

(1) ["In 1712, Ambrose Philips brought upon the stage 'The Distressed Mother,' almost a translation of Racine's 'Andromaque.' It was concluded by the most successful epilogue that was ever yet spoken on the English theatre. The three first nights it was recited twice, and continued to be demanded through the run, as it is termed, of the play." — JOHNSON, Life of A. Philips.]

them out. (1) In the Gentleman's Magazine for December this year, he inserted an "Ode on Winter," which is, I think, an admirable specimen of his genius for lyric poetry.

But the year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch when Johnson's arduous and important work, his "DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE," was announced to the world, by the publication of its Plan or *Prospectus*.

How long this immense undertaking had been the object of his contemplation, I do not know. I once asked him by what means he had attained to that astonishing knowledge of our language, by which he was enabled to realise a design of such extent and accumulated difficulty. He told me, that "it was not the effect of particular study; but that it had grown up in his mind insensibly." I have been informed by Mr. James Dodsley, that several years before this period, when Johnson was one day sitting in his brother Robert's shop, he heard his brother suggest to him, that a Dictionary of the English Language would be a work that would be well received by the public; that Johnson seemed at first to catch at the proposition, but, after a pause, said, in his abrupt decisive manner, "I believe I shall not undertake it." That he, however, had bestowed much thought upon the subject, before he published

(1) ["There are but two decent prologues in our tongue, — Pope's to Cato — Johnson's to Drury Lane. These, with the epilogue to the 'Distressed Mother,' and, I think, one of Goldsmith's, and a prologue of old Colman's to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*, are the best things of the kind we have." — BYRON, vol. ii. p. 165.]

his "Plan," is evident from the enlarged, clear, and accurate views which it exhibits; and we find him mentioning in that tract, that many of the writers whose testimonies were to be produced as authorities, were selected by Pope; which proves that he had been furnished, probably by Mr. Robert Dodsley, with whatever hints that eminent poet had contributed towards a great literary project, that had been the subject of important consideration in a former reign.

The booksellers who contracted with Johnson, single and unaided, for the execution of a work, which in other countries has not been effected but by the co-operating exertions of many, were Mr. Robert Dodsley, Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two Messieurs Knapton. The price stipulated was fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds.

The "Plan" was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, then one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State; a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. There is, perhaps, in every thing of any consequence, a secret history which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated. Johnson told me (Sept. 22. 1777), "Sir, the way in which the plan of my Dictionary came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid

hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr. Bathurst, ‘ Now, if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness.’ ” (1)

It is worthy of observation, that the “ Plan ” has not only the substantial merit of comprehension, perspicuity, and precision, but that the language of it is unexceptionably excellent ; it being altogether free from that inflation of style, and those uncommon but apt and energetic words, which, in some of his writings, have been censured, with more petulance than justice ; and never was there a more dignified strain of compliment than that in which he courts the attention of one who, he had been persuaded to believe, would be a respectable patron.

“ With regard to questions of purity or propriety,” says he, “ I was once in doubt whether I should not attribute to myself too much in attempting to decide them, and whether my province was to extend beyond the proposition of the question, and the display of the suffrages on each side ; but I have been since determined by your lordship’s opinion, to interpose my own judgment, and shall therefore endeavour to support what appears to me most consonant to grammar and

(1) The reader will see, in the very next page, that this account of the affair was, to say the best of it, inaccurate ; but if it were correct, would it not invalidate Johnson’s subsequent complaint of Lord Chesterfield’s inattention and ingratitude ? for, even if his lordship *had* neglected what was dedicated to him only by laziness and accident, he could not justly be charged with ingratitude ; a dedicator who means no compliment, has no reason to complain if he be not rewarded : but more of this hereafter. — CROKER.

reason. Ausonius thought that modesty forbade him to plead inability for a task to which Cæsar had judged him equal :

*‘ Cur me posse negem, posse quod ille putat ? ’*

And I may hope, my lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction ; and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim, will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your lordship.”

This passage proves, that Johnson’s addressing his “ Plan ” to Lord Chesterfield was not merely in consequence of the result of a report by means of Dodsley, that the earl favoured the design ; but that there had been a particular communication with his lordship concerning it. Dr. Taylor told me, that Johnson sent his “ Plan ” to him in manuscript, for his perusal ; and that when it was lying upon his table, Mr. William Whitehead (1) happened to pay him a visit, and being shewn it, was highly pleased with such parts of it as he had time to read, and begged to take it home with him, which he was allowed to do ; that from him it got into the hands of a noble lord, who carried it to Lord Chesterfield. (2) When Taylor observed this might be an advantage, Johnson replied, “ No, sir, it would have come out with more bloom, if it had not been seen before by any body.”

(1) [William Whitehead was born at Cambridge in 1715, succeeded Cibber as poet laureate in 1757, and died, April 14. 1785.]

(2) This also must be inaccurate, for the plan contains nu-

The opinion conceived of it by another noble author, appears from the following extract of a letter from the Earl of Orrery <sup>(1)</sup> to Dr. Birch :

“ Caledon, Dec. 30. 1747.

“ I have just now seen the specimen of Mr. Johnson's Dictionary, addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I am much pleased with the plan, and I think the specimen is one of the best that I have ever read. <sup>(2)</sup> Most specimens disgust, rather than prejudice us in favour of the work to follow ; but the language of Mr. Johnson's is good, and the arguments are properly and modestly expressed. However, some expressions may be cavilled at, but they are trifles. I'll mention one : the *barren* laurel. The laurel is not barren, in any sense whatever ; it bears fruits and flowers. *Sed hæc sunt nugæ*, and I have great expectations from the performance.” <sup>(3)</sup>

merous allusions and references to Lord Chesterfield's opinions ; and there is the evidence both of Lord Chesterfield and Johnson, that Dodsley was the person who communicated with his lordship on the subject. — CROKER.

(1) John Boyle, born in 1707 ; educated first under the private tuition of Fenton the poet, and afterwards at Westminster School and Christ Church College, Oxford ; succeeded his father as fifth Earl of Orrery in 1737 ; D.C.L. of Oxford in 1743 ; F.R.S. in 1750 ; and, on the death of his cousin, in 1753, fifth Earl of Corke. He published several works, but the only original one of any note is his “ Life of Swift,” written with great professions of friendship, but, in fact, with considerable severity towards the dean. Lord Orrery's acquaintance may have tended to increase Johnson's aversion to Swift. — CROKER.

(2) [The Dictionary of the French Academy is vastly superior, however, to Johnson's in definition and illustration, though it wants the derivations and authorities ; and it is remarkable, that Johnson's obligations to Bailey should have been so little noticed. It would, surely, have been a much more formidable task to write Bailey's Dictionary without assistance, than Johnson's with the assistance of Bailey's. — FONNEREAU.]

(3) Birch MSS. Brit. Mus. 4903.

That he was fully aware of the arduous nature of the undertaking, he acknowledges; and shows himself perfectly sensible of it in the conclusion of his "Plan;" but he had a noble consciousness of his own abilities, which enabled him to go on with undaunted spirit.

Dr. Adams found him one day busy at his Dictionary, when the following dialogue ensued:—"ADAMS. This is a great work, sir. How are you to get all the etymologies? JOHNSON. Why, sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner, and others; and there is a Welch gentleman who has published a collection of Welch proverbs, who will help me with the Welch. ADAMS. But, sir, how can you do this in three years? JOHNSON. Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years. ADAMS. But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary. JOHNSON. Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman." With so much ease and pleasantry could he talk of that prodigious labour which he had undertaken to execute.

The public has had, from another pen<sup>(1)</sup>, a long detail of what had been done in this country by prior Lexicographers; and no doubt Johnson was wise to avail himself of them, so far as they went: but the learned yet judicious research of

(1) Sir John Hawkins's List of former English Dictionaries is, however, by no means complete. — MALONE.



etymology, the various, yet accurate display of definition, and the rich collection of authorities, were reserved for the superior mind of our great philologist. For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses; and let it be remembered by the natives of North-Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country. There were two Messieurs Macbean; Mr. Shiels, who, we shall hereafter see [April 10. 1776], partly wrote the Lives of the Poets to which the name of Cibber is affixed; Mr. Stewart, son of Mr. George Stewart, bookseller at Edinburgh; and a Mr. Maitland. The sixth of these humble assistants was Mr. Peyton, who, I believe, taught French, and published some elementary tracts.

To all these painful labourers, Johnson showed a never-ceasing kindness, so far as they stood in need of it. The elder Mr. Macbean had afterwards the honour of being Librarian to Archibald, Duke of Argyle, for many years, but was left without a shilling. Johnson wrote for him a Preface to, "A System of Ancient Geography;" and, by the favour of Lord Thurlow, got him admitted a poor brother of the Charter-house. For Shiels, who died of a consumption, he had much tenderness; and it has been thought that some choice sentences in the Lives of the Poets were supplied by him. Peyton, when reduced to penury, had frequent aid from the bounty of Johnson; who at last was at the expense of burying him and his wife.

While the Dictionary was going forward, Johnson

lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough Square, Fleet Street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations.<sup>(1)</sup> The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil<sup>(2)</sup>, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable, that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words were authorised, that one may read page after page of his Dictionary with improvement and pleasure; and it

(1) [Boswell's account of the manner in which Johnson compiled his Dictionary is confused and erroneous. He began his task (as he himself expressly described to me), by devoting his first care to a diligent perusal of all such English writers as were most correct in their language, and under every sentence which he meant to quote he drew a line, and noted in the margin the first letter of the word under which it was to occur. He then delivered these books to his clerks, who transcribed each sentence on a separate slip of paper, and arranged the same under the word referred to. By these means he collected the several words and their different significations; and when the whole arrangement was alphabetically formed, he gave the definitions of their meanings, and collected their etymologies from Skinner, Junius, and other writers on the subject.—PERCY.]

(2) [Johnson's copy of Hudibras, 1726, with the passages thus marked on every page, is now in Mr. Upcott's collection. It has Johnson's signature, dated Aug. 1747.]

should not pass unobserved, that he has quoted no author whose writings had a tendency to hurt sound religion and morality.

The necessary expense of preparing a work of such magnitude for the press, must have been a considerable deduction from the price stipulated to be paid for the copyright. I understand that nothing was allowed by the booksellers on that account; and I remember his telling me, that a large portion of it having, by mistake, been written upon both sides of the paper, so as to be inconvenient for the compositor, it cost him twenty pounds to have it transcribed upon one side only.

He is now to be considered as "tugging at his oar," as engaged in a steady continued course of occupation, sufficient to employ all his time for some years; and which was the best preventive of that constitutional melancholy which was ever lurking about him, ready to trouble his quiet. But his enlarged and lively mind could not be satisfied without more diversity of employment, and the pleasure of animated relaxation. (1) He therefore not only exerted his talents in occasional composition, very different from Lexicography, but formed a club in

(1) For the sake of relaxation from his literary labours, and probably also for Mrs. Johnson's health, he this summer visited Tunbridge Wells, then a place of much greater resort than it is at present. Here he met Mr. Cibber, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Samuel Richardson, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Onslow (the Speaker), Mr. Pitt, Mr. Lyttelton, and several other distinguished persons. In a print, representing some of "the remarkable characters" who were at Tunbridge Wells in 1748 (see Richardson's Correspondence), Dr. Johnson stands the first figure. — MALONE.

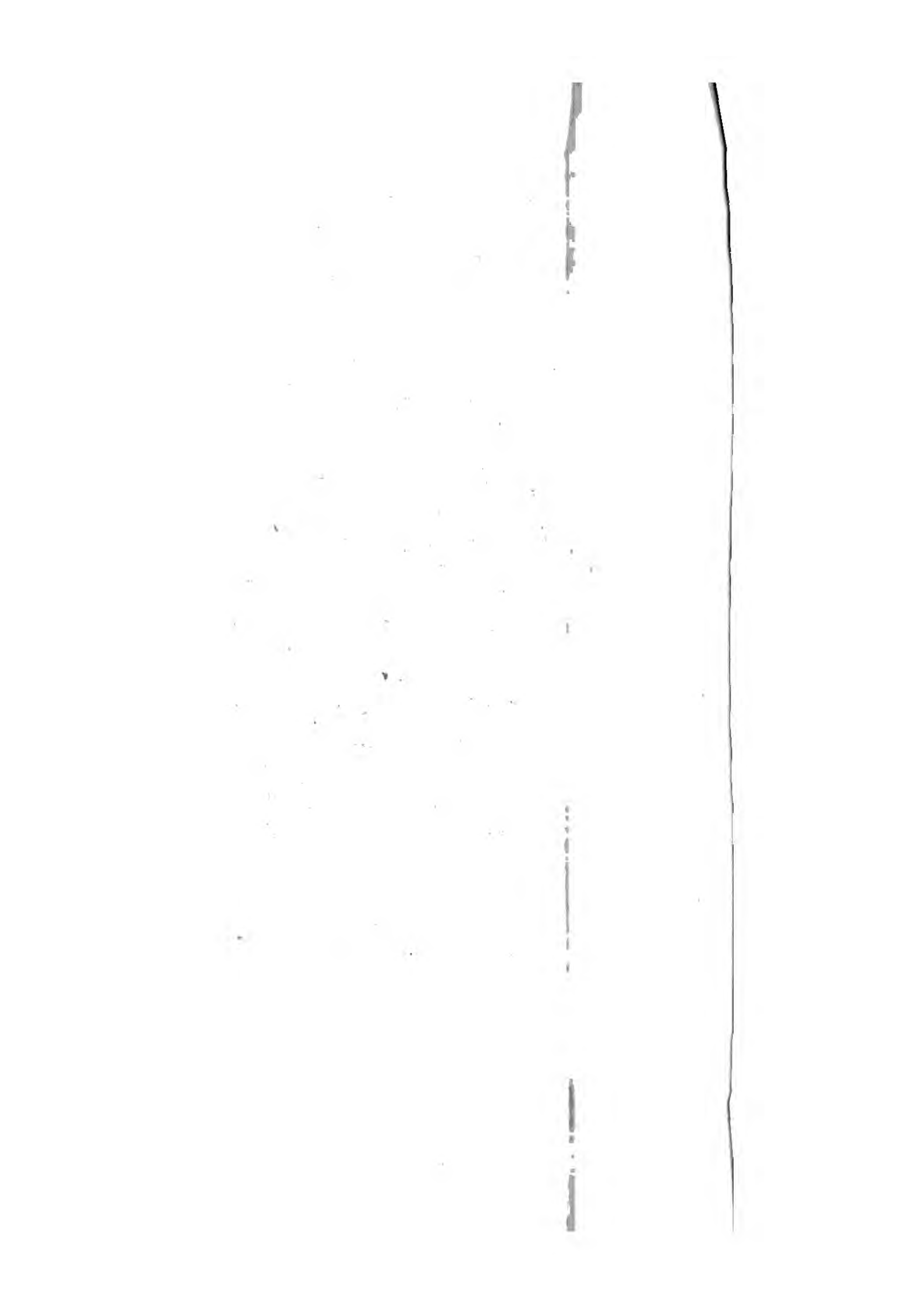


15 16 17 18 19 20 21

Verfolk

- 16 The Baron (A German Gamester)
- 17 Anonym. (Mr. Richardson)
- 18 Mrs. Onslow
- 19 Miss Onslow
- 20 Mrs. Johnson (The Duke's Wife)
- 21 Mr. Whiston.

(Afterwards Lord Lyttleton)



Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, with a view to enjoy literary discussion; and amuse his evening hours. The members associated with him in this little society were his beloved friend Dr. Richard Bathurst, Mr. Hawkesworth, afterwards well known by his writings, Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney <sup>(1)</sup>, and a few others of different professions. <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) He was afterwards, for several years chairman of the Middlesex Justices, and upon occasion of presenting an address to the king, accepted the usual offer of knighthood. He is author of "A History of Music," in five volumes in quarto. By assiduous attendance upon Johnson in his last illness, he obtained the office of one of his executors; in consequence of which, the booksellers of London employed him to publish an edition of Dr. Johnson's Works, and to write his Life.

(2) [Sir John Hawkins says: — "The club met weekly at the King's Head, a famous beef-steak house, in Ivy Lane, every Tuesday evening. Thither Johnson constantly resorted, and, with a disposition to please and be pleased, would pass those hours in a free and unrestrained interchange of sentiments, which otherwise had been spent at home in painful reflection. The persons who composed this little society were — the Rev. Dr. Salter, father of the late Master of the Charter House; Dr. Hawkesworth; Mr. Ryland, a merchant; Mr. John Payne, then a bookseller; Mr. Samuel Dyer, a learned young man intended for the dissenting ministry; Dr. William M'Ghie, a Scots physician; Dr. Edmund Barker, a young physician; Dr. Richard Bathurst, also a young physician; and myself. — At these meetings I had opportunities of observing, not only that in conversation Johnson made it a rule to talk his best, but that on many subjects he was not uniform in his opinions, contending as often for victory as for truth. At one time *good*, at another *evil*, was predominant in the moral constitution of the world. Upon one occasion, he would deplore the non-observance of Good Friday, and on another deny that among us of the present age there is any decline of public worship. He would sometimes contradict self-evident propositions, such as, that the luxury of this country has increased with its riches; and that the practice of card-playing is more general than heretofore. At this versatility of temper none, however, took offence: as Alexander and Cæsar were born for conquest, so was Johnson for the office of a symposiarch, to preside in all conversations; and I never yet saw the man who would venture to contest his right. — Let it not, however, be imagined, that the

In the Gentleman's Magazine for May of this year he wrote a "Life of Roscommon,"\* with Notes; which he afterwards much improved, (indenting the notes into text,) and inserted amongst his Lives of the English Poets.

Mr. Dodsley this year brought out his "Preceptor," one of the most valuable books for the im-

members of this our club met together with the temper of gladiators, or that there was wanting among them a disposition to yield to each other in all diversities of opinion: and, indeed, disputation was not, as in many associations of this kind, the purpose of the meeting; nor were their conversations, like those of the Rota club, restrained to particular topics. On the contrary, it may be said, that with the gravest discourses was intermingled "mirth, that after no repenting draws" (Milton); for not only in Johnson's melancholy there were lucid intervals, but he was a great contributor to the mirth of conversation, by the many witty sayings he uttered, and the many excellent stories which his memory had treasured up, and he would on occasion relate; so that those are greatly mistaken who infer, either from the general tendency of his writings, or that appearance of hebetude which marked his countenance when living, and is discernible in the pictures and prints of him, that he could only reason and discuss, dictate and control. In the talent of *humour* † there hardly ever was his equal, except, perhaps, among the old comedians, such as Tarleton, and a few others mentioned by Cibber. By means of this he was enabled to give to any relation that required it, the graces and aids of expression, and to discriminate, with the nicest exactness, the characters of those whom it concerned. In aping this faculty, I have seen Warburton disconcerted, and when he would fain have been thought a man of pleasantry, not a little out of countenance." ]

† Mr. Murphy, a better judge than Sir J. Hawkins, tells us, to the same effect, that "Johnson was surprised to be told, but it was certainly true, that with all his great powers of mind, wit and *humour* were his most shining talents;" and Mrs. Piozzi says, that "his vein of humour was rich and apparently inexhaustible — to such a degree, that Mr. Murphy used to say he was incomparable at buffonery." This should be borne in mind in reading Johnson's conversations, because much of that peculiarity called *humour* cannot be adequately conveyed in words, and many things may appear trite, dull, or offensively rude in mere narration, which were enlivened or softened by the air and style of the delivery. — CROKER.

provement of young minds that has appeared in any language; and to this meritorious work Johnson furnished "The Preface,"\* containing a general sketch of the book, with a short and perspicuous recommendation of each article; as also, "The Vision of Theodore, the Hermit, found in his Cell,"\* a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the mountain of Existence. The Bishop of Dromore heard Dr. Johnson say, that he thought this was the best thing he ever wrote. (1)

IN January, 1749, he published "THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES, being the Tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated."\* He, I believe, composed it the preceding year. (2) Mrs. Johnson, for the sake of country air, had lodgings at Hampstead, to which he resorted occasionally, and there the greatest part, if not the whole, of this Imitation was written. The fervid rapidity with which it was produced, is scarcely credible. I have heard him say, that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished. (3) I remember when I once regretted to him that he had not given us more of Juvenal's

(1) [The bishop told me, that Johnson composed it, in one night, after finishing an evening at Holborn. — TYERS.]

(2) Sir John Hawkins, with solemn inaccuracy, represents this poem as a consequence of the indifferent reception of his tragedy. But the fact is, that the poem was published on the 9th of January, and the tragedy was not acted till the 6th of the February following.

(3) This was Johnson's general habit of composing: his defect of sight rendered writing and written corrections troublesome, and he therefore exercised his memory where others would have employed pen and paper. — CROKER.



Satires, he said he probably should give more, for he had them all in his head: by which I understood, that he had the originals and correspondent allusions floating in his mind, which he could, when he pleased, embody and render permanent without much labour. (1) Some of them, however, he observed, were too gross for imitation.

The profits of a single poem, however excellent, appear to have been very small in the last reign, compared with what a publication of the same size has since been known to yield. I have mentioned, upon Johnson's own authority, that for his "London" he had only ten guineas; and now, after his fame was established, he got for his "Vanity of Human Wishes" but five guineas more, as is proved by an authentic document in my possession. (2)

It will be observed, that he reserves to himself the right of printing one edition of this satire, which was his practice upon occasion of the sale of all his writings; it being his fixed intention to publish at

(1) [Johnson knew Juvenal well. "His peculiarity," he says, "is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur." A good idea of it may be formed from Johnson's own beautiful Imitation of the Third Satire. His Imitation of the Tenth (still more beautiful as a poem) has scarcely a trait of the author's manner; — that is to say, of that "mixture of gaiety and stateliness," which, according to his own definition, constitutes the "peculiarity of Juvenal." The "Vanity of Human Wishes" is uniformly stately and severe, and without those light and popular strokes of sarcasm, which abound so much in the "London." — GIFFORD'S *Juvenal*, vol. i. p. lxxiii.]

(2) "Nov. 25. 1748, I received of Mr. Dodsley fifteen guineas, for which I assign to him the right of copy of an Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, written by me, reserving to myself the right of printing one edition. SAM. JOHNSON."

some period, for his own profit, a complete collection of his works.

His "Vanity of Human Wishes" has less of common life, but more of a philosophic dignity, than his "London." More readers, therefore, will be delighted with the pointed spirit of "London," than with the profound reflection of "The Vanity of Human Wishes." (1) Garrick, for instance, observed, in his sprightly manner, with more vivacity than regard to just discrimination, as is usual with wits, "When Johnson lived much with the Herveys, and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his 'London,' which is lively and easy: when he became more retired he gave us his 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' which is as hard as Greek: had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew.'" (2)

(1) [Jan. 9. 1821. Read Johnson's "Vanity of Human Wishes,"—all the examples and mode of giving them sublime, as well as the latter part, with the exception of an occasional couplet. I do not so much admire the opening. I remember an observation of Sharp's\* (the *Conversationist*, as he was called in London, and a very clever man), that the first line of this poem was superfluous, and that Pope would have begun at once:—

"Survey mankind from China to Peru."

The former line, "Let observation," &c. is certainly heavy and useless. But 'tis a grand poem—and so *true!*—true as the Tenth of Juvenal himself. The lapse of ages *changes* all things—time—language—the earth—the bounds of the sea—the stars of the sky, and every thing "about, around, and underneath" man, *except man himself*. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death, and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment.—BYRON, vol. v. p. 66.]

(2) From Mr. Langton.—BOSWELL. Garrick's criticism (if it deserves the name) and his facts are both unfounded.

\* [Richard Sharp, Esq., author of "Letters and Essays, in Prose and Verse." Moxon, 1834.]

But "The Vanity of Human Wishes" is, in the opinion of the best judges, as high an effort of ethic poetry as any language can show. The instances of variety of disappointment are chosen so judiciously, and painted so strongly, that, the moment they are read, they bring conviction to every thinking mind. That of the scholar (1) must have depressed the too

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"The Vanity of Human Wishes" is in a graver and higher tone than the "London," but not *harder* to be understood. On the contrary, some classical allusions, inconsistent with modern manners, obscure passages of the latter; while all the illustrations, sentiments, and expressions of the former are, though wonderfully noble and dignified, yet perfectly intelligible, and almost familiar. Moreover, we have seen that when Johnson wrote "London," he was not living the gay and fashionable life which Mr. Garrick is represented as mentioning. Alas! he was starving in obscure lodgings on eight-pence, and sometimes even four-pence a day (see *antè*, p. 112.); and there is, in "London," nothing to show any intimacy with the great or fashionable world. As to the *Hervey's*, it may be here observed — contrary to Mr. Boswell's (as well as Mr. Garrick's) supposition — that he was intimate with that family previous to the publication of "London:" — that the sneer in that poem at "*Clodio's jest*," stood, in the first edition, "*H——y's jest*," and was probably aimed at Lord Hervey, who was a favourite theme of satire with the opposition writers of the day. — CROKER.

(1) When Dr. Johnson, one day, read his own Satire, in which the life of a scholar is painted, with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fortune and to fame, he burst into a passion of tears: Mr. Thrale's family and Mr. Scott\* only were present, who, in a jocosé way, clapped him on the back, and said, "What's all this, my dear sir? Why you, and I, and *Hercules* †, you know, were all troubled with *melancholy*." He was a very large man, and made out the triumvirate with Johnson and *Hercules* comically enough. — PIZZI.

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\* George Lewis Scott, F.R.S., an amiable and learned man, formerly sub-preceptor to George the Third, and afterwards a *Commissioner of Excise*, whom it seems Johnson did not now reckon as "one of the lowest of all human beings." See *antè*, p. 31. — CROKER.

† In allusion to the madness of *Hercules* on Mount Oeta. — CROKER.

sanguine expectations of many an ambitious student.<sup>(1)</sup> That of the warrior, Charles of Sweden, is, I think, as highly finished a picture as can possibly be conceived.

Were all the other excellencies of this poem annihilated, it must ever have our grateful reverence from its noble conclusion; in which we are consoled with the assurance that happiness may be attained, if we "apply our hearts" to piety :—

(1) In this poem one of the instances mentioned of unfortunate learned men is *Lydiat* :—

"Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end."

The history of Lydiat being little known, the following account of him may be acceptable to many of my readers. It appeared as a note in the Supplement to the Gentleman's Magazine for 1748, in which some passages extracted from Johnson's poem were inserted, and it should have been added in the subsequent editions :—

"A very learned divine and mathematician, Fellow of New College, Oxon, and Rector of Okerton, near Banbury. He wrote, among many others, a Latin treatise '*De natura cæli, &c.*' in which he attacked the sentiments of Scaliger and Aristotle, not bearing to hear it urged, *that some things are true in philosophy, and false in divinity.* He made above 600 Sermons on the harmony of the Evangelists. Being unsuccessful in publishing his works, he lay in the prison of Bocardo at Oxford, and in the King's Bench, till Bishop Usher, Dr. Laud, Sir William Boswell, and Dr. Pink, released him by paying his debts. He petitioned King Charles I. to be sent into Ethiopia, &c. to procure MSS. Having spoken in favour of monarchy and bishops, he was plundered by the parliament forces, and twice carried away prisoner from his rectory; and afterwards had not a shirt to shift him in three months, without he borrowed it, and died very poor in 1646."—**BOSWELL.**

In 1609 Lydiat accompanied Usher into Ireland, and obtained (probably by his interest) the office of chapel-reader in Trinity College, Dublin, at a salary of 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* per quarter: he was resident there about two years: and in March, 1612, it appears, that he had from the college, "5*l.* to furnish him for his journey to England." The remembrance of Lydiat was traditionally preserved in Dublin College; and I recollect to have heard, about 1797, that, in some ancient buildings, then recently removed, Lydiat had resided—evidence, either that he had left a high reputation behind him, or, more probably, that Johnson's mention of him had revived the memory of his sojourn in that university. — **CROKER.**

" Where then shall hope and fear their objects find ?  
 Shall dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind ?  
 Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
 Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate ?  
 Shall no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
 No cries attempt the mercy of the skies ?  
 Inquirer, cease ; petitions yet remain,  
 Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem Religion vain.  
 Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
 But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.  
 Safe in His hand, whose eye discerns afar  
 The secret ambush of a specious pray'r ;  
 Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,  
 Secure, whate'er He gives, He gives the best :  
 Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,  
 And strong devotion to the skies aspires,  
 Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,  
 Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;  
 For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;  
 For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill ;  
 For faith, which panting for a happier seat,  
 Counts death kind Nature's signal for retreat :  
 These goods for man the laws of Heaven ordain,  
 These goods He grants, who grants the power to gain ;  
 With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,  
 And makes the happiness she does not find." (1)

(1) In this poem, a line in which the danger attending on female beauty is mentioned, has very generally, I believe, been misunderstood : —

" Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring,  
 And Scdley cursed the form that pleased a king."

The lady mentioned in the first of these verses, was not the celebrated Lady Vane, whose Memoirs were given to the public by Dr. Smollett, but Ann Vane, who was mistress to Frederick, Prince of Wales, and died in 1736, not long before Johnson settled in London. Some account of this lady was published, under the title of "The Secret History of Vanella," 8vo. 1732. See also, "Vanella in the Straw," 4to. 1732. — BOSWELL. — [See *post*, Aug. 17. 1773, some observations on the lines in question.]

Garrick being now vested with theatrical power by being manager of Drury Lane theatre, he kindly and generously made use of it to bring out Johnson's tragedy, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement. But in this benevolent purpose he met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama which he had formed with much study, and had been obliged to keep more than the nine years of Horace, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor. Yet Garrick knew well, that without some alterations it would not be fit for the stage. A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to the Reverend Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. " Sir," said he, " the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels." (1) He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes ; but still there were not enough.

Dr. Adams was present the first night of the representation of IRENE, and gave me the following account :— " Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience (2), and the play

(1) Mahomet was in fact played by Mr. Barry, and Demetrius by Mr. Garrick: but probably at this time the parts were not yet cast.

(2) The expression used by Dr. Adams was " soothed." I should rather think the audience was *awed* by the extraordinary spirit and dignity of the following lines: —

went off tolerably, till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bowstring round her neck. The audience cried out ‘*Murder! murder!*’<sup>(1)</sup> She several times attempted to speak; but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive.” This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it. The Epilogue, as Johnson informed me, was written by Sir William Yonge. I know not how his play came to be thus graced by the pen of a person then so eminent in the political world.

Notwithstanding all the support of such performers as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy

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“ Be this at least his praise, be this his pride,  
 To force applause no modern arts are tried :  
 Should partial catcalls all his hopes confound,  
 He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound ;  
 Should welcome sleep relieve the weary wit,  
 He rolls no thunders o’er the drowsy pit :  
 No snares to captivate the judgment spreads,  
 Nor bribes your eyes, to prejudice your heads.  
 Unmoved, though witlings sneer and rivals rail,  
 Studious to please, yet not ashamed to fail,  
 He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain,  
 With merit needless, and without it vain ;  
 In Reason, Nature, Truth, he dares to trust ;  
 Ye fops be silent, and ye wits be just ! ”

(1) This shows how ready modern audiences are to condemn in a new play what they have frequently endured very quietly in an old one. Rowe has made Moneses, in *Tamerlane*, die by the bowstring, without offence. — MALONE. — Davies tells us, in his “*Life of Garrick*,” vol. i. p. 128., that the strangling Irene, contrary to Horace’s rule, *coram populo*, was suggested by Garrick. — CROKER.

of Irene did not please the public. (1) Mr. Garrick's zeal carried it through for nine nights, so that the author had his three nights' profits; and from a receipt signed by him, now in the hands of Mr. James Dodsley, it appears that his friend, Mr. Robert Dodsley, gave him one hundred pounds for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition. (2)

IRENE, considered as a poem, is entitled to the praise of superior excellence. Analysed into parts, it will furnish a rich store of noble sentiments, fine imagery, and beautiful language; but it is deficient in pathos, in that delicate power of touching the human feelings, which is the principal end of the

(1) I know not what Sir John Hawkins means by the *cold reception* of Irene. I was at the first representation, and most of the subsequent. It was much applauded the first night, particularly the speech on *to-morrow*. It ran nine nights at least. It did not, indeed, become a stock-play; but there was not the least opposition during the representation, except the first night, in the last act, where Irene was to be strangled on the stage, which *John [Bull]* could not bear, though a dramatic poet may stab or slay by hundreds. The bowstring was not a Christian nor an ancient Greek or Roman death. But this offence was removed after the first night, and Irene went off the stage to be strangled. Many stories were circulated at the time, of the author's being observed at the representation to be dissatisfied with some of the speeches and conduct of the play, himself; and, like La Fontaine, expressing his disapprobation aloud. — BURNBY.

(2) The amount of the three benefit nights, it is to be feared, was not very considerable, as the profit, that stimulating motive, never invited the author to another dramatic attempt. — MURPHY, *Life of Johnson*, p. 53. — [It appears, by a MS. note, in Mr. Isaac Reed's copy of that *Life*, that the receipts of the third, sixth, and ninth nights, after deducting sixty guineas a night for the expenses of the house, amounted to 195*l.* 17*s.*; Johnson cleared, therefore, in all, very nearly 300*l.*]



drama. (1) Indeed, Garrick has complained to me, that Johnson not only had not the faculty of producing the impressions of tragedy, but that he had not the sensibility to perceive them. His great friend Mr. Walmesley's prediction, that he would "turn out a fine tragedy writer," was, therefore, ill-founded. Johnson was wise enough to be convinced that he had not the talents necessary to write successfully for the stage, and never made another attempt in that species of composition.

When asked how he felt upon the ill success of his tragedy, he replied, "Like the Monument;" meaning that he continued firm and unmoved as that column. And let it be remembered, as an admonition to the *genus irritabile* of dramatic writers, that this great man, instead of previously complaining of the bad taste of the town, submitted to its decision without a murmur. He had, indeed, upon all occasions, a great deference for the general opinion: "A man," said he, "who writes a book thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the public to whom he appeals must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions."

On occasion of this play being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy that, as a dramatic author, his dress should be more gay than what he

(1) Aaron Hill (vol. ii. p. 355.), in a letter to Mr. Mallet, gives the following account of "Irene:" — "I was at the anomalous Mr. Johnson's benefit, and found the play his proper representative; strong sense ungraced by sweetness or decorum."

ordinarily wore: he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humorously observed to Mr. Langton, "that when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes." Dress, indeed, we must allow, has more effect, even upon strong minds, than one should suppose, without having had the experience of it. His necessary attendance while his play was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him acquainted with many of the performers of both sexes, which produced a more favourable opinion of their profession, than he had harshly expressed in his *Life of Savage*.<sup>(1)</sup> With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to show them acts of kindness. He, for a considerable time, used to frequent the *Green-Room*, and seemed to take delight in dissipating his gloom, by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there. Mr. David Hume related to me from Mr. Garrick, that Johnson at last denied himself this amusement, from considerations of rigid virtue; saying, "I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

(1) This appears to have been by no means the case. His most acrimonious attacks on Garrick, and Sheridan, and players in general, were subsequent to this period. — CROKER.

## [LETTER 16. TO MISS LUCY PORTER. (1)]

“ Goff Square, July 12. 1749. ”

“ DEAR MISS, — I am extremely obliged to you for your letter, which I would have answered last post, but that illness prevented me. I have been often out of order of late, and have very much neglected my affairs. You have acted very prudently with regard to Levett’s affair, which will, I think, not at all embarrass me, for you may promise him, that the mortgage shall be taken up at Michaelmas, or, at least, some time between that and Christmas ; and if he requires to have it done sooner, I will endeavour it. I make no doubt, by that time, of either doing it myself, or persuading some of my friends to do it for me.

“ Please to acquaint him with it, and let me know if he be satisfied. When he once called on me, his name was mistaken, and therefore I did not see him ; but, finding the mistake, wrote to him the same day, but never heard more of him, though I entreated him to let me know where to wait on him. You frightened me, you little gipsy, with your black wafer, for I had forgot you were in mourning, and was afraid your letter had brought me ill news of my mother, whose death is one of the few calamities on which I think with terror. I long to know how she does, and how you all do. Your poor mamma is come home, but very weak ; yet I hope she will grow better, else she shall go into the country. She is now up stairs, and knows not of my writing. I am, dear miss, your most humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.” ]

(1) [This is one of Johnson’s letters to his step-daughter, which Mr. Croker received from the Rev. Dr. Harwood, the historian of Lichfield. See Preface, *antè*.]

## CHAPTER IX.

1750—1751.

*Johnson begins "The Rambler." — His Prayer on commencing the Undertaking. — Obligations to Correspondents. — Adversaria. — Success of the Rambler. — Collected into Volumes. — "Beauties" of the Rambler. — Writes a Prologue, to be spoken by Garrick, for the Benefit of Milton's Grand-daughter. — "Life of Cheynel." — Lauder's Forgery against Milton. — Mrs. Anna Williams.*

IN 1750 Johnson came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. The Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, were the last of the kind published in England, which had stood the test of a long trial; and such an interval had now elapsed since their publication, as made him justly think that, to many of his readers, this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the advantage of novelty. A few days before the first of his Essays came out, there started another competitor for fame in the same form, under the title of "The Tatler Revived," which, I believe, was "born but to die." John-

son was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title,—“The Rambler;” which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses; which the Italians have literally, but ludicrously, translated by *Il Vagabondo*; and which has been lately assumed as the denomination of a vehicle of licentious tales, “The Rambler’s Magazine.” He gave Sir Joshua Reynolds the following account of its getting this name: “What *must* be done, Sir, *will* be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. *The Rambler* seemed the best that occurred, and I took it.” (1)

With what devout and conscientious sentiments this paper was undertaken, is evidenced by the following prayer, which he composed and offered up on the occasion:—

“Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly: grant, I beseech Thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others: grant

(1) I have heard Dr. Warton mention, that he was at Mr. Robert Dodsley’s with the late Mr. Moore, and several of his friends, considering what should be the name of the periodical paper which Moore had undertaken. Garrick proposed the *Salad*, which, by a curious coincidence, was afterwards applied to himself by Goldsmith:—

“Our Garrick’s a salad, for in him we see  
Oil, vinegar, sugar, and saltness agree!”

At last, the company having separated, without any thing of which they approved having been offered, Dodsley himself thought of *The World*.

this, O Lord, for the sake of thy son, JESUS CHRIST. Amen." (1)

The first paper of the Rambler was published on Tuesday the 20th of March, 1749-50; and its author was enabled to continue it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Saturday, till Saturday the 14th of March, 1752, on which day it closed. This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, which I have had occasion to quote elsewhere [Aug. 16. 1773], that "a man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it;" for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his Dictionary, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind during all that time; having received no assistance, except four billets in No. 10., by Miss Mulso, now Mrs. Chapone; No. 30., by Mrs. Catherine Talbot; No. 97., by Mr. Samuel Richardson, whom he describes in an introductory note, as "an author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue;" (2)

(1) Prayers and Meditations, p. 9. In the Pemb. MS. the last sentence runs — "the salvation *both* of myself and others: grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ." — HALL.

(2) Lady Bradshaigh, one of Mr. Richardson's female sycophants, thus addresses him on the subject of this letter: — "A few days ago I was pleased with hearing a very sensible lady greatly pleased with the Rambler, No. 97. She happened to be in town when it was published; and I asked if she knew who was the author? She said, it was supposed to be one who was concerned in the Spectators, it being much better written than any of the Ramblers. I wanted to say who was really the author, but durst not without your permission." — Rich. Cor., vol. vi. p. 108. It was probably on some such authority that

and Numbers 44. and 100., by Mrs. Elizabeth Carter. (1)

Posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed. (2) It can be accounted for only in this way; that, by reading and meditation, and a very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge, which, by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever ready at his call, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most apt and energetic expression. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him, by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company: to impart whatever he knew

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Mr. Payne told Mr. Chalmers (*Brit. Ess.* vol. xix. p. 14.), that No. 97. was "the only paper which had a prosperous sale, and was popular." The flatteries which Richardson's coterie lavished on him and all his works were quite extravagant: the paper is rather a poor one. — CROKER.

(1) The papers contributed by Mrs. Carter had much of Johnson's esteem, though he always blamed me for preferring the letter signed Chariessa (No. 100.) to the allegory (No. 45.) where religion and superstition are, indeed, most masterly delineated. — PIOZZI.

(2) The fine Rambler on Procrastination [No. 134.] was hastily composed in Sir Joshua Reynolds's parlour, while the boy waited to carry it to the press, and numberless are the instances of his writing under the immediate pressure of opportunity or distress. — PIOZZI.

in the most forcible language he could put it in ; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him. (1)

Yet, he was not altogether unprepared as a periodical writer : for I have in my possession a small duodecimo volume, in which he has written, in the form of Mr. Locke's Common-Place Book, a variety of hints for essays on different subjects. He has marked upon the first blank leaf of it, "To the 128th page, collections for the RAMBLER ;" and in another place, "In fifty-two there were seventeen provided ; in 97—21 ; in 190—25." At a subsequent period (probably after the work was finished) he added, "In all, taken of provided materials, 30." (2)

Sir John Hawkins, who is unlucky upon all occasions, tells us, that "this method of accumulating intelligence had been practised by Mr. Addison, and is humorously described in one of the Spectators [No. 46.], wherein he feigns to have dropped his paper of *notanda*, consisting of a diverting medley of broken sentences and loose hints, which

(1) The rule which Dr. Johnson observed is sanctioned by the authority of two great writers of antiquity : — "Ne id quidem tacendum est, quod eidem Ciceroni placet, nullum nostrum usquam negligentem esse sermonem : *quicquid loquimur, ubicunque, — sit pro sua scilicet portione perfectum.*" — Quinctil. x. 7. — MALONE.

(2) This, no doubt, means, 'that, of the first 52 Ramblers, 17 had been prepared, and so on, till, at the completion of the whole 208 numbers, he found that only 30 had been formed of materials previously provided. — CROKER.



he tells us he had collected, and meant to make use of. Much of the same kind is Johnson's *Adversaria*." (1) But the truth is, that there is no resemblance at all between them. Addison's note was a fiction, in which unconnected fragments of his lucubrations were purposely jumbled together, in as odd a manner as he could, in order to produce a laughable effect: whereas, Johnson's abbreviations are all distinct, and applicable to each subject of which the head is mentioned.

For instance, there is the following specimen:—

*Youth's Entry, &c.*

“ Baxter's account of things in which he had changed his mind as he grew up. Voluminous. — No wonder. — If every man was to tell, or mark, on how many subjects he has changed, it would make vols. but the changes not always observed by man's self. — From pleasure to bus. [*business*] to quiet; from thoughtfulness to reflect. to piety; from dissipation to domestic. by impercept. gradat. but the change is certain. *Dial non progredi, progress. esse conspicimus.* Look back, consider. what was thought at some dist. period.

“ *Hope predom. in youth. Mind not willingly indulges unpleasing thoughts.* The world lies all enamelled before him, as a distant prospect sun-gilt (2); —

(1) In this instance Mr. Boswell is more unlucky than Hawkins, whose account is by no means incorrect. He knew very well, and distinctly states, that Addison's published “*Notanda*” were a mere pleasantry, consisting of topics drolly selected and arranged; but he infers, rationally enough, that Addison had taken the idea from his own real practice of collecting *notanda*; and he is quite justified in adding, “*much of the same kind are Johnson's Adversaria.*” — CROKER.

(2) This most beautiful image of the enchanting delusion of youthful prospect has not been used in any of Johnson's essays.

inequalities only found by coming to it. *Love is to be all joy — children excellent* — Fame to be constant — caresses of the great — applauses of the learned — smiles of Beauty.

“ *Fear of disgrace — Bashfulness* — Finds things of less importance. Miscarriages forgot like excellencies ; — if remembered, of no import. Danger of sinking into negligence of reputation ; — lest the fear of disgrace destroy activity.

“ *Confidence in himself*. Long tract of life before him. — No thought of sickness. — Embarrassment of affairs. — Distraction of family. Public calamities. — No sense of the prevalence of bad habits. Negligent of time — ready to undertake — careless to pursue — all changed by time.

“ *Confident of others* — unsuspecting as unexperienced — imagining himself secure against neglect, never imagines they will venture to treat him ill. Ready to trust ; expecting to be trusted. Convinced by time of the selfishness, the meanness, the cowardice, the treachery of men.

“ Youth ambitious, as thinking honours easy to be had.

“ Different kinds of praise pursued at different periods. Of the gay in youth. — dang. hurt, &c. despised.

“ Of the fancy in manhood. *Ambit.* — stocks — bargains. — Of the wise and sober in old age — seriousness — formality — maxims, but general — only of the rich, otherwise age is happy — but at last every thing referred to riches — no having fame, honour, influence, without subjection to caprice.

“ Horace.

“ Hard it would be if men entered life with the same views with which they leave it, or left as they enter it. — No hope — no undertaking — no regard to benevolence — no fear of disgrace, &c.

“ Youth to be taught the piety of age — age to retain the honour of youth.”

This, it will be observed, is the sketch of Number 196. of the Rambler. I shall gratify my readers with another specimen :—

“ *Confederacies difficult ; why.*

“ Seldom in war a match for single persons — nor in peace ; therefore kings make themselves absolute. Confederacies in learning — every great work the work of one. *Bruy.* Scholars’ friendship like ladies. *Scribamus, &c. Mart.*(<sup>1</sup>) The apple of discord — the laurel of discord — the poverty of criticism. Swift’s opinion of the power of six geniuses united. That union scarce possible. His remarks just ;—man a social, not steady nature. Drawn to man by words, repelled by passions. Orb drawn by attraction, rep. [*repelled*] by centrifugal.

“ Common danger unites by crushing other passions. — but they return. Equality hinders compliance. Superiority produces insolence and envy. Too much regard in each to private interest ; — too little.

“ The mischiefs of private and exclusive societies — The fitness of social attraction diffused through the whole. The mischiefs of too partial love of our country. Contraction of moral duties. — *Oi φιλοι, ου φιλος.*

“ Every man moves upon his own centre, and therefore repels others from too near a contact, though he may comply with some general laws.

“ Of confederacy with superiors every one knows the inconvenience. With equals, no authority ; — every man his own opinion — his own interest.

“ Man and wife hardly united ; — scarce ever with-

(1) Lib. xii. 96. “ In Tuccam æmulum omnium suorum studiorum.” — MALONE.

out children. Computation, if two to one against two, how many against five? If confederacies were easy — useless; — many oppresses many. — If possible only to some, dangerous. *Principum amicitias.*”

Here we see the embryo of Number 45. of the Adventurer; and it is a confirmation of what I shall presently have occasion to mention, that the papers in that collection marked T. were written by Johnson.

This scanty preparation of materials will not, however, much diminish our wonder at the extraordinary fertility of his mind; for the proportion which they bear to the number of essays which he wrote, is very small; and it is remarkable, that those for which he had made no preparation, are as rich and as highly finished, as those for which the hints were lying by him. It is also to be observed, that the papers formed from his hints are worked up with such strength and elegance, that we almost lose sight of the hints, which become like “drops in the bucket.” Indeed, in several instances, he has made a very slender use of them, so that many of them remain still unapplied. (1)

(1) Sir John Hawkins has selected from this little collection of materials, what he calls the “Rudiments of two of the papers of the Rambler.” But he has not been able to read the manuscript distinctly. Thus he writes, p. 266., “Sailor’s fate any mansion;” whereas the original is “Sailor’s life my aversion.” He has also transcribed the unappropriated hints on *Writers for bread*, in which he decyphers these notable passages, one in Latin, *fatui non famæ*, instead of *fami non famæ*; Johnson having in his mind what Thuanus says of the learned German antiquary and linguist, Xylander, who, he tells us, lived in such poverty, that he was supposed *fami non famæ scribere*; and another in French, *Degenté de fate et affamé*

As the Rambler was entirely the work of one man, there was, of course, such a uniformity in its texture, as very much to exclude the charm of variety; and the grave and often solemn cast of thinking, which distinguished it from other periodical papers, made it, for some time, not generally liked. So slowly did this excellent work, of which twelve editions have now issued from the press, gain upon the world at large, that even in the closing number the author says, "I have never been much a favourite of the public."<sup>(1)</sup>

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*d'argent*, instead of *Degouté de fame* (an old word for *renommée*), et *affamé d'argent*. The manuscript, being written in an exceedingly small hand, is, indeed, very hard to read; but it would have been better to have left blanks than to write nonsense.

(1) The Ramblers, certainly, were little noticed at first. Smart, the poet, first mentioned them to me as excellent papers, before I had heard any one else speak of them. When I went into Norfolk, in the autumn of 1751, I found but one person (the Rev. Mr. Squires, a man of learning, and a general purchaser of new books) who knew any thing of them. But he had been misinformed concerning the true author; for he had been told they were written by a Mr. Johnson of Canterbury, the son of a clergyman who had had a controversy with Bentley, and who had changed the readings of the old ballad entitled *Norton Falgate*, in Bentley's bold style (*meo periculo*), till not a single word of the original song was left. Before I left Norfolk, in the year 1760, the Ramblers were in high favour among persons of learning and good taste. Others there were, devoid of both, who said that the *hard words* in the Rambler were used by the author to render his Dictionary indispensably necessary. — BURNEY.

It may not be improper to correct a slight error in the preceding note, though it does not at all affect the principal object of Dr. Burney's remark. The clergyman above alluded to, was Mr. Richard Johnson, schoolmaster at Nottingham, who, in 1717, published an octavo volume in Latin, against Bentley's edition of Horace, entitled "Aristarchus Anti-Bentleianus." In the middle of this Latin work (as Mr. Bindley observes to me) he has introduced four pages of English criticism, in which

Yet, very soon after its commencement, there were who felt and acknowledged its uncommon excellence. Verses in its praise appeared in the newspapers; and the editor of the Gentleman's Magazine mentions, in October, his having received several letters to the same purpose from the learned. "The Student, or Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany," in which Mr. Bonnel Thornton and Mr. Colman (1) were the principal writers, describes it as "a work that exceeds any thing of the kind ever published in this kingdom, some of the Spectators excepted,—if indeed they may be excepted." And afterwards, "May the public favours crown his merits, and may not the English, under the auspicious reign of George the Second, neglect a man, who, had he lived in the first century, would have been one of the greatest favourites of Augustus." This flattery of the monarch had no effect. It is too well known, that the second George never was an Augustus to learning or genius. (2)

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he ludicrously corrects, in Bentley's manner, one stanza, not of the ballad the hero of which lived in Norton Falgate, but of a ballad celebrating the achievements of Tom Bostock, who, in a sea-fight, performed prodigies of valour. The stanza, on which this ingenious writer has exercised his wit, is as follows:—

"Then old Tom Bostock he fell to the work,  
He pray'd like a Christian, but fought like a Turk,  
And cut 'em off all in a jerk,  
Which nobody can deny," &c. — MALONE.

(1) [I doubt if Colman wrote in this work. Smart was the principal contributor, and T. Warton a very considerable one. — CHALMERS.]

(2) Richardson, the author of *Clarissa*, to whom Cave had sent the first five numbers of the *Rambler*, became, as they proceeded, "so inexpressibly pleased with them," that he wrote

Johnson told me, with an amiable fondness, a little pleasing circumstance relative to this work. Mrs. Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of the *Rambler* had come out, "I thought very well of you before ; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this." Distant praise, from whatever quarter, is not so delightful as that of a wife whom a man loves and esteems. Her approbation may be said to "come home to his *bosom* ;"

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to Cave in strong commendation, and intimated his conviction (the name of the author being still a secret), that Johnson was the only man who could write them. Cave, in his answer, dated "St. John's Gate, August 23. 1750," says : —

"Excuse this ramble from the purpose of your letter. I return to answer, that Mr. Johnson is the *Great Rambler*, being, as you observe, the only man who can furnish two such papers in a week, besides his other great business, and has not been assisted with above three. I may discover to you, that the world is not so kind to itself as you wish it. The encouragement, as to sale, is not in proportion to the high character given to the work by the judicious, not to say the raptures expressed by the few that do read it ; but its being thus relished in numbers gives hope that the sets must go off, as it is a fine paper, and, considering the late hour of having the copy, tolerably printed.

"When the author was to be kept private (which was the first scheme), two gentlemen, belonging to the Prince's court, came to me to inquire his name, in order to do him service ; and also brought a list of seven gentlemen to be served with the *Rambler*. As I was not at liberty, an inference was drawn, that I was desirous to keep to myself so excellent a writer. Soon after, Mr. Doddington sent a letter directed to *the Rambler*, inviting him to his house, when he should be disposed to enlarge his acquaintance. In a subsequent number a kind of excuse was made, with a hint that a good writer might not appear to advantage in conversation. Since that time several circumstances, and Mr. Garrick and others, who knew the author's powers and style from the first, unadvisedly asserting their (but) suspicions, overturned the scheme of secrecy. (About which there is also one paper.)

"I have had letters of approbation from Dr. Young, Dr. Hartley, Dr. Sharp, Miss Carter, &c. &c., most of them, like you, setting them in a rank equal, and some superior, to the *Spectators* (of which I have not read many, for the reasons which you assign) : but, notwithstanding such recommendation, whether the price of *twopence*, or the unfavourable season of their first publication, hinders the demand, no boast can be made of it.

"The author (who thinks highly of your writings) is obliged to you for contributing your endeavours ; and so is, for several marks of your friendship, good sir, your admirer, and very humble servant, &c. &c. —  
CROKER.

and being so near, its effect is most sensible and permanent.

Mr. James Elphinston<sup>(1)</sup>, who has since published various works, and who was ever esteemed by Johnson as a worthy man, happened to be in Scotland while the *Rambler* was coming out in single papers at London. With a laudable zeal at once for the improvement of his countrymen, and the reputation of his friend, he suggested and took the charge of an edition of those *Essays* at Edinburgh, which followed progressively the London publication.<sup>(2)</sup>

The following letter written at this time, though not dated, will show how much pleased Johnson was with this publication, and what kindness and regard he had for Mr. Elphinston.

(1) Mr. James Elphinston was born in Edinburgh, in 1721. He, when very young, was a private tutor in two or three eminent families: but about 1752 set up a boarding-school at Kensington, where Dr. Johnson sometimes visited him. He died at Hammersmith in 1809. His works are forgotten or remembered for their absurdity. He translated Martial, of which Dr. Beattie says, "It is truly an unique — the specimens formerly published did very well to laugh at; but a whole quarto of nonsense and gibberish is too much. It is strange that a man not wholly illiterate should have lived so long in England without learning the language." — *Biog. Dict.* And it was, no doubt, of this strange work that Mrs. Piozzi relates (p. 47.), that "of a modern Martial, when it came out, Dr. Johnson said there are in these verses too much folly for madness, I think, and too much madness for folly." — CROKER.

(2) It was executed in the printing-office of Sands, Murray, and Cochran, with uncommon elegance, upon writing-paper, of a duodecimo size, and with the greatest correctness: and Mr. Elphinston enriched it with translations of the mottos. When completed, it made eight handsome volumes. It is, unquestionably, the most accurate and beautiful edition of this work; and there being but a small impression, it is now become scarce, and sells at a very high price.



## LETTER 17. TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON.

[No date.]

“DEAR SIR, — I cannot but confess the failures of my correspondence; but hope the same regard which you express for me on every other occasion, will incline you to forgive me. I am often, very often, ill; and, when I am well, am obliged to work: and, indeed, have never much used myself to punctuality. You are, however, not to make unkind inferences, when I forbear to reply to your kindness; for, be assured, I never receive a letter from you without great pleasure, and a very warm sense of your generosity and friendship, which I heartily blame myself for not cultivating with more care. In this, as in many other cases, I go wrong, in opposition to conviction; for I think scarce any temporal good equally to be desired with the regard and familiarity of worthy men. I hope we shall be some time nearer to each other, and have a more ready way of pouring out our hearts.

“I am glad that you still find encouragement to proceed in your publication; and shall beg the favour of six more volumes to add to my former six, when you can, with any convenience, send them me. Please to present a set, in my name, to Mr. Ruddiman (1), of whom, I hear, that his learning is not his highest excellence. I have transcribed the mottos, and returned them, I hope not too late, of which I think many very happily performed. Mr. Cave has put the

(1) Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, the learned grammarian of Scotland, well known for his various excellent works, and for his accurate editions of several authors. He was also a man of the most worthy private character. His zeal for the Royal House of Stuart did not render him less estimable in Dr. Johnson's eye. — BOSWELL. — [Ruddiman was born in 1674, and died at Edinburgh in 1757. A Life of him, with Anecdotes of Buchanan, was published by Mr. George Chalmers, in 1794.]

last in the Magazine (1), in which I think he did well. I beg of you to write soon, and to write often, and to write long letters, which I hope in time to repay you ; but you must be a patient creditor. I have, however, this of gratitude, that I think of you with regard, when I do not, perhaps, give the proofs which I ought, of being, Sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

This year he wrote to the same gentleman another letter upon a mournful occasion.

LETTER 18. TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON.

“ September 25. 1750.

“ DEAR SIR, — You have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother (2) ; and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please God that she should rather mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother’s death to Mrs. Strahan (3), and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears ; but tears are neither to *you* nor to *me* of any further use, when once the tribute of nature has been paid. The business of life summons

(1) See *Gent. Mag.* vol. xx. p. 406. This letter was probably written in Oct. 1750 ; in which case it should have followed the one of the 25th of September. — MALONE.

(2) [Elphinston’s mother’s maiden name was Honeyman. She was the daughter of the minister of Kinef, and the niece of Dr. Horneyman, bishop of Orkney.]

(3) [The wife of William Strahan, Esq., the King’s printer ; who, on his death in 1785, bequeathed Elphinston 100*l.* a year, 200*l.* in money, and 20 guineas for mourning ; to which Mrs. Strahan, who died a month after her husband, added 200*l.* a year more.]

us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another is to guard, and excite, and elevate his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death : a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent ; and a death resigned, peaceful, and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope, that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts ; and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. <sup>(1)</sup> Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God ; yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal ; and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

“ There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come ; for all comfort and all satisfaction is

(1) This letter may be read as a commentary on the celebrated passages in Johnson's *Meditations*, relative to the intermediate state of departed friends. — *Gent. Mag.* vol. lv. p. 755.

sincerely wished you by, dear Sir, your most obliged,  
most obedient, and most humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

The Rambler has increased in fame as in age. Soon after its first folio edition was concluded, it was published in six duodecimo volumes<sup>(1)</sup>; and its author lived to see ten numerous editions of it in London, beside those of Ireland and Scotland.

I profess myself to have ever entertained a profound veneration for the astonishing force and vivacity of mind, which the Rambler exhibits. That Johnson had penetration enough to see, and, seeing, would not disguise, the general misery of man in this state of being, may have given rise to the superficial notion of his being too stern a philosopher. But men of reflection will be sensible that he has given a true representation of human existence, and that he has, at the same time, with a generous benevolence, displayed every consolation which our state affords us; not only those arising from the hopes of futurity, but such as may be attained in the immediate progress through life. He has not depressed the soul to

(1) This is not quite accurate. In the *Gent. Mag.* for Nov. 1751, while the work was yet proceeding, is an advertisement, announcing that *four* volumes of the Rambler would speedily be published; and it is believed that they were published in the next month. The fifth and sixth volumes, with tables of contents and translations of the mottos, were published in July, 1752, by Payne (the original publisher), three months after the close of the work. When the Rambler was collected into volumes, Johnson revised and corrected it throughout. The original octavo edition not having fallen into Mr. Boswell's hands, he was not aware of this circumstance, which has lately been pointed out by Mr. Alexander Chalmers in his edition of the *British Essayists*. — MALONE.

despondency and indifference. He has every where inculcated study, labour, and exertion. Nay, he has shown, in a very odious light, a man, whose practice is to go about darkening the views of others, by perpetual complaints of evil, and awakening those considerations of danger and distress, which are, for the most part, lulled into a quiet oblivion. This he has done very strongly in his character of *Suspirius* (No. 55.), from which Goldsmith took that of *Croaker*, in his comedy of "The Good-natured Man," as Johnson told me he acknowledged to him, and which is, indeed, very obvious.

To point out the numerous subjects which the *Rambler* treats, with a dignity and perspicuity which are there united in a manner which we shall in vain look for any where else, would take up too large a portion of my book, and would, I trust, be superfluous, considering how universally those volumes are now disseminated. Even the most condensed and brilliant sentences which they contain, and which have very properly been selected under the name of "*BEAUTIES* (1)," are of considerable bulk. But I may shortly observe, that the *Rambler* furnishes such an assemblage of discourses on practical religion and moral duty, of critical investigations, and allegorical and oriental tales, that no mind can be thought very deficient that has, by constant study

(1) Dr. Johnson was gratified by seeing this selection, and wrote to Mr. Kearsley, bookseller in Fleet Street, the following note: —

"Mr. Johnson sends compliments to Mr. Kearsley, and begs the favour of seeing him as soon as he can. Mr. Kearsley is desired to bring with him the last edition of what he has honoured with the name of *BEAUTIES*. May 20. 1782."

and meditation, assimilated to itself all that may be found there. No. 7., written in Passion-week, on abstraction and self-examination, and No. 110., on penitence and the placability of the Divine Nature, cannot be too often read. No. 54., on the effect which the death of a friend should have upon us, though rather too dispiriting, may be occasionally very medicinal to the mind. Every one must suppose the writer to have been deeply impressed by a real scene ; but he told me that was not the case ; which shows how well his fancy could conduct him to the “house of mourning.” Some of these more solemn papers, I doubt not, particularly attracted the notice of Dr. Young, the author of “The Night Thoughts,” of whom my estimation is such, as to reckon his applause an honour even to Johnson. I have seen volumes of Dr. Young’s copy of the Rambler, in which he has marked the passages which he thought particularly excellent, by folding down a corner of the page ; and such as he rated in a super-eminent degree, are marked by double folds. I am sorry that some of the volumes are lost. Johnson was pleased when told of the minute attention with which Young had signified his approbation of his essays.

I will venture to say, that in no writings whatever can be found more *bark and steel for the mind*, if I may use the expression ; more that can brace and invigorate every manly and noble sentiment. No. 32., on patience, even under extreme misery, is wonderfully lofty, and as much above the rant of stoicism, as the sun of Revelation is brighter than the

twilight of Pagan philosophy. I never read the following sentence without feeling my frame thrill:—  
“I think there is some reason for questioning whether the body and mind are not so proportioned, that the one can bear all which can be inflicted on the other; whether virtue cannot stand its ground as long as life, and whether a soul well principled will not be sooner separated than subdued.”

Though instruction be the predominant purpose of the Rambler, yet it is enlivened with a considerable portion of amusement. Nothing can be more erroneous than the notion which some persons have entertained, that Johnson was then a retired author, ignorant of the world; and, of consequence, that he wrote only from his imagination, when he described characters and manners. He said to me that, before he wrote that work, he had been “running about the world,” as he expressed it, more than almost any body; and I have heard him relate, with much satisfaction, that several of the characters in the Rambler were drawn so naturally, that when it first circulated in numbers, a club in one of the towns in Essex<sup>(1)</sup> imagined themselves to be severally exhibit-

(1) I have heard Mr. Murphy relate a very singular story, while Dr. Johnson was present. When first the *Ramblers* came out, they attracted the notice of a society who met every Saturday evening during the summer, at Rumford in Essex, and were known by the name of the Bowling-green Club. These men, seeing one day the character of *Leviculus*, the fortune-hunter, or *Tetrica*, the old maid; another day, some account of a person who spent his life in hoping for a legacy, or of him who is always prying into other folks' affairs; began sure enough to think they were betrayed, and that one of the *côterie* sat down to divert himself by giving to the public the portrait of all the rest. Filled with wrath against the traitor of Rumford, one of them resolved to write to the printer, and inquire the author's name: *Samuel Johnson* was the reply. No

ed in it, and were much incensed against a person who, they suspected, had thus made them objects of public notice; nor were they quieted till authentic assurance was given them, that the Rambler was written by a person who had never heard of any one of them. Some of the characters are believed to have been actually drawn from the life<sup>(1)</sup>, particularly that of Prospero from Garrick<sup>(2)</sup>, who never entirely forgave its pointed satire.<sup>(3)</sup>

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more was necessary; *Samuel Johnson* was the name of the curate, and soon did each begin to load him with reproaches for turning his friends into ridicule in a manner so cruel and unprovoked. In vain did the guiltless curate protest his innocence; one was sure that Aliger meant Mr. Twigg, and that Cupidus was but another name for neighbour Baggs: till the poor parson, unable to contend any longer, rode to London, and brought them full satisfaction concerning the writer. — PIOZZI.

(1) That of Gelidus, in No. 24., from Professor Colson, and that of Euphues in the same paper, which, with many others, was doubtless drawn from the life. Euphues, I once thought, might have been intended to represent either Lord Chesterfield or Soame Jenyns; but Mr. Bindley, with more probability, thinks, that George Bubb Doddington, who was remarkable for the homeliness of his person, and the finery of his dress, was the person meant under that character. — MALONE.

See *antè*, p. 111., reasons for doubting that Gelidus could be meant for Professor Colson. The folly of such *guesses* at characters is forcibly exemplified in Mr. Malone's producing three such different candidates for that of Euphues, as Lord Chesterfield, Soame Jenyns, and Bubb Doddington! — CROKER.

(2) [In No. 200. Prospero is described as "a man lately raised to wealth by a lucky project, and too much intoxicated by sudden elevation, or too little polished by thought and conversation, to enjoy his present fortune with elegance and decency." Boswell, Piozzi, and Murphy concur in considering this as a satire on Garrick. Mr. Croker, however, says: — "Hawkins, who seldom missed an opportunity of displaying Johnson's faults or frailties, does not, even when censuring his conduct towards Garrick, allude to this offence. (See *Life*, p. 421.) Let us therefore hope, that the other biographers made an application of the character of Prospero which Johnson did not intend."]

(3) Sophron was likewise a picture drawn from reality. The man immortalised for purring like a cat was, as he told me, one



For instances of fertility of fancy, and accurate description of real life, I appeal to No. 19., a man who wanders from one profession to another, with most plausible reasons for every change : No. 34., female fastidiousness and timorous refinement : No. 82., a Virtuoso who has collected curiosities : No. 88., petty modes of entertaining a company, and conciliating kindness : No. 182., fortune-hunting : No. 194, 195., a tutor's account of the follies of his pupil : No. 197, 198, legacy-hunting. He has given a specimen of his nice observation of the mere external appearances of life, in the following passage in No. 179., against affectation, that frequent and most disgusting quality :—" He that stands to contemplate the crowds that fill the streets of a populous city, will see many passengers, whose air and motions it will be difficult to behold without contempt and laughter ; but if he examine what are the appearances that thus powerfully excite his risibility, he will find among them neither poverty nor disease, nor any involuntary or painful defect. The disposition to derision and insult is awakened by the

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Busby, a proctor in the Commons. He who barked so ingeniously, and then called the drawer to drive away the dog, was father to Dr. Salter, of the Charterhouse. He who sung a song, and, by correspondent motions of his arm, chalked out a giant on the wall, was one Richardson, an attorney.—  
PIOZZI.

These characters are alluded to in the conclusion of the 188th Rambler, but so slightly that it seems hardly worth while to inquire whether the hints were furnished by observation or invention. As to the anecdote told of the elder Dr. Salter, it could have only been, as Mr. Chalmers observes, the repetition of some story of his youthful days ; for he was 70 years of age before he became a member of the Ivy Lane Club.—  
CROKER.

softness of foppery, the swell of insolence, the liveliness of levity, or the solemnity of grandeur ; by the sprightly trip, the stately stalk, the formal strut, and the lofty mien ; by gestures intended to catch the eye, and by looks elaborately formed as evidences of importance." (1)

Every page of the Rambler shows a mind teeming with classical allusion and poetical imagery : illustrations from other writers are, upon all occasions, so ready, and mingle so easily in his periods, that the whole appears of one uniform vivid texture.

The style of this work has been censured by some shallow critics as involved and turgid, and abounding with antiquated and hard words. So ill-founded is the first part of this objection, that I will challenge all who may honour this book with a perusal, to point out any English writer whose language conveys his meaning with equal force and perspicuity. (2) It must, indeed, be allowed, that the structure of his sentences is expanded, and often has somewhat of the inversion of Latin ; and that he delighted to

(1) Of the allegorical papers in the Rambler, *Labour and Rest* (No. 33.) was Johnson's favourite ; but *Serotinus* (No. 165.), the man who returns late in life to receive honours in his native country, and meets with mortification instead of respect, was considered by him as a masterpiece in the science of life and manners. — PIZZI.

(2) Yet his style did not escape the harmless shafts of pleasant humour ; for the ingenious Bonnel Thornton published a mock Rambler in the *Drury Lane Journal*. — BOSWELL.

And Mr. Murphy, in commenting on this passage, quotes the witty observation of Dryden : — "If so many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed not to assist the natives, but to conquer them." *Life*, p. 157. — CROKER.

express familiar thoughts in philosophical language ; being in this the reverse of Socrates, who, it is said, reduced philosophy to the simplicity of common life. But let us attend to what he himself says in his concluding paper:—"When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarised the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas." And, as to the second part of this objection, upon a late careful revision of the work, I can with confidence say, that it is amazing how few of those words, for which it has been unjustly characterised, are actually to be found in it; I am sure, not the proportion of one to each paper. (1) This idle charge has been

(1) Mr. Boswell's zeal carries him too far: Johnson's style, especially in the Rambler, is frequently turgid, even to ridicule; but he has been too often censured with a malicious flippancy, which Boswell may be excused for resenting; and even graver critics have sometimes treated him with inconsiderate injustice; for instance, — The Rev. Dr. Burrowes (now Dean of Cork), in an "Essay on the Style of Dr. Johnson," published in the first volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy (1787), observes: —

"Johnson says, that he has rarely admitted any word 'not authorised by former writers; but where are we to seek authorities for 'resuscitation, orbity, volant, fatuity, divaricate, asinine, narcotic, vulnerary, empireumatic, papilionaceous,' and innumerable others of the same stamp, which abound in and disgrace his pages? — for 'obtund, disruption, sensory, or panoply,' all occurring in the short compass of a single essay in the Rambler; — or for 'cremation, horticulture, germination, and decussation,' within a few pages in his Life of Browne? They may be found, perhaps, in the works of former writers, but they make no part of the English language. They are the illegitimate offspring of learning by vanity." It is wonderful, that, instead of asking where these words were to be found, Dr. Burrowes did not think of referring to Johnson's own Dictionary. He would have found good authorities for almost every one of them; for instance, for *resuscitation*, Milton and Bacon are quoted; for *volant*, Milton and Phillips; for *fatuity*, Arbuthnot; for *asinine*,

echoed from one babbler to another, who have confounded Johnson's Essays with Johnson's Dictionary; and because he thought it right in a lexicon of our language to collect many words which had fallen into disuse, but were supported by great authorities, it has been imagined that all of these have been interwoven into his own compositions. That some of them have been adopted by him unnecessarily, may, perhaps, be allowed: but, in general, they are evidently an advantage; for without them his stately ideas would be confined and cramped. "He that thinks with more extent than another, will want words of larger meaning." [Idler, No. 70.] (1) He

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Milton; for *narcotic* and *vulnerary*, Browne; for *germination*, Bacon, and so on. But although these authorities, which Dr. Burrowes might have found in the Dictionary, are a sufficient answer to his question, let it be also observed, that many of these words were in use in more familiar authors than Johnson chose to quote, and that the majority of them are now become familiar, which is a sufficient proof that the English language has not considered them as *illegitimate*. — CROKER.

(1) This is a truism in the disguise of a sophism. "He that thinks with more extent will," no doubt, "want words of a larger meaning," but the words themselves may be plain and simple; the number of syllables, and *oro-rotundity* (if one may venture to use the expression) of the sound of a word can never add much, and may, in some cases, do injury to the meaning. What words were ever written of a larger meaning than the following, which, however, are the most simple and elementary that can be found: — "God said, *Let there be light, and there was light!*" If we were to convert the proposition in the Idler, and say, that "he who thinks feebly needs bigger words to cover his inanity," we should be nearer the truth. But it must be admitted (as Mr. Boswell soon after observes) that Johnson (though he, in some of his works, pushed his peculiarities to an absurd extent) has been, on the whole, a benefactor to our language; he has introduced more dignity into our style, more regularity into our grammatical construction, and given a fuller and more sonorous sound to the march of our sentences and the cadence of our periods. — CROKER.

once told me, that he had formed his style upon that of Sir William Temple, and upon Chambers's Proposal for his Dictionary. (1) He certainly was mistaken; or if he imagined at first that he was imitating Temple, he was very unsuccessful (2); for nothing can be more unlike than the simplicity of Temple, and the richness of Johnson. Their styles differ as plain cloth and brocade. Temple, indeed, seems equally erroneous in supposing that he himself had formed his style upon Sandys's View of the State of Religion in the Western Parts of the World.

The style of Johnson was, undoubtedly, much formed upon that of the great writers in the last century, Hooker, Bacon, Sanderson, Hakewill, and others; those "GIANTS," as they were well characterised by A GREAT PERSONAGE (3), whose authority, were I to name him, would stamp a reverence on the opinion. (4)

(1) Chambers's Proposal for a second edition of his Dictionary, was probably in circulation when Johnson first came to London. — MALONE.

(2) See under April 9. 1778; where, in a conversation at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, Johnson himself mentions the particular improvements which Temple made in the English style. — MALONE.

(3) [Mr. Croker here says, "We guess that George III. was the great personage; but all my inquiries (and some of his Majesty's illustrious family have condescended to permit these inquiries to extend even to them) have failed to ascertain to what person or on what occasion that happy expression was used."]

(4) Hooker he admired for his logical precision, Sanderson for his acuteness, and Taylor for his amazing erudition; Sir Thomas Browne for his penetration, and Cowley for the ease and unaffected structure of his periods. The tinsel of Sprat disgusted him, and he could but just endure the smooth verbosity

We may, with the utmost propriety, apply to his learned style that passage of Horace, a part of which he has taken as the motto to his Dictionary:—

“ *Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti ;  
Audebit quæcumque parùm splendoris habebunt,  
Et sine pondere erunt, et honore indigna ferentur,  
Verba movere loco, quamvis invita recedant,  
Et versentur adhuc intra penetralia Vestæ.  
Obscurata diu populo bonus eruet, atque  
Proferet in lucem speciosa vocabula rerum,  
Quæ priscis memorata Catonibus atque Cethegis,  
Nunc situs informis premit et deserta vetustas :  
Adsciscet nova, quæ genitor produxerit usus :  
Vehemens, et liquidus, puroque simillimus amni,  
Fundet opes Latiumque beabit divite linguâ.”*

Epist. lib. ii. ep. 2. (1)

of Tillotson. Hammond and Barrow he thought involved; and of the latter that he was unnecessarily prolix.—HAWKINS.

It is not easy to conceive how the erudition of Taylor or the penetration of Browne could have improved Johnson's *style*; nor is it likely that Johnson would have celebrated the eloquent and subtile Taylor for erudition alone, or the pious and learned Browne for mere penetration. Johnson's friend, Mr. Fitzherbert, said (see *post*, April 8. 1775), that “it was not every man who could *carry a bon mot* ;” certainly Hawkins was not a man likely to convey adequately Dr. Johnson's critical opinion of Jeremy Taylor.—CROKER.

- (1) [“ But how severely with themselves proceed  
The men, who wrote such verse as we can read!  
Their own strict judges, not a word they spare  
That wants or force, or light, or weight, or care,  
Howe'er unwillingly it quits its place—  
Nay, though at court (perhaps) it may find grace—  
Such they'll degrade; and sometimes, in its stead,  
In downright charity revive the dead;  
Mark where a bold expressive phrase appears,  
Bright through the rubbish of some hundred years;  
Command old words that long have slept to wake,  
Words that wise Bacon or brave Raleigh spake;  
Or bid the new be English, ages hence,  
(For Use will father what's begot by Sense;)

To so great a master of thinking, to one of such vast and various knowledge as Johnson, might have been allowed a liberal indulgence of that licence which Horace claims in another place :—

— “ *Si fortè necesse est  
Indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum,  
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis  
Continget ; dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter :  
Et nova fictaque nuper habebunt verba fidem, si  
Græco fonte cadant, parcè detorta. Quid autem  
Cæcilio Plautoque dabit Romanus, ademptum  
Virgilio Varioque ? Ego cur, acquirere pauca  
Si possum, invideor ; cum lingua Catonis et Ennî  
Sermonem patrium ditaverit, et nova rerum  
Nomina protulerit ? Licuit, semperque licebit  
Signatum præsentè notâ producere nomen.*”

De Arte Poet. (1)

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Pour the full tide of eloquence along,  
Serenely pure, and yet divinely strong,  
Rich with the treasures of each foreign tongue.”

POPE, Imit.]

- (1) [“ Words must be chosen and be placed with skill :  
You gain your point, when, by the noble art  
Of good connection, an unusual word  
Is made at first familiar to the ear :  
But if you write of things abstruse or new,  
Some of your own inventing may be used,  
So it be seldom and discreetly done ;  
But he that hopes to have new words allow'd,  
Must so derive them from the Grecian spring,  
As they may seem to flow without constraint.  
Can an impartial reader discommend  
In Varius or in Virgil, what he likes  
In Plautus or Cæcilius ? Why should I  
Be envied for the little I invent,  
When Ennius and Cato's copious style  
Have so enrich'd and so adorn'd our tongue ?  
Men ever had, and ever will have, leave  
To coin new words well suited to the age.”

ROSCOMMON.]

Yet Johnson assured me, that he had not taken upon him to add more than four or five words to the English language, of his own formation; and he was very much offended at the general licence by no means “modestly taken” in his time, not only to coin new words, but to use many words in senses quite different from their established meaning, and those frequently very fantastical.

Sir Thomas Browne, whose Life Johnson wrote, was remarkably fond of Anglo-Latin diction; and to his example we are to ascribe Johnson’s sometimes indulging himself in this kind of phraseology. <sup>(1)</sup> Johnson’s comprehension of mind was the mould for his language. Had his conceptions been narrower, his expression would have been easier. His sentences have a dignified march; and it is certain that his example has given a general elevation to the language of his country, for many of our best writers have approached very near to him; and, from the influence which he has had upon our composition, scarcely any thing is written now that is not better expressed than was usual before he appeared to lead the national taste. <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) The observation of his having imitated Sir Thomas Browne has been made by many people; and lately it has been insisted on, and illustrated by a variety of quotations from Browne, in one of the popular Essays written by the Rev. Mr. Knox, master of Tunbridge School, whom I have set down in my list as one of those who have sometimes not unsuccessfully imitated Dr. Johnson’s style.

(2) [The distinguishing excellence of Johnson’s *manner*, both in speaking and writing, consists in the apt and lively illustrations by example, with which, in his vigorous sallies, he enforces his just and acute remarks on human life and manners,



This circumstance, the truth of which must strike every critical reader, has been so happily enforced by Mr. Courtenay, in his "Moral and Literary Character of Dr. Johnson," that I cannot prevail on myself to withhold it, notwithstanding his, perhaps, too great partiality for one of his friends :—

“ By nature’s gifts ordain’d mankind to rule,  
 He, like a Titian, form’d his brilliant school ;  
 And taught congenial spirits to excel,  
 While from his lips impressive wisdom fell.  
 Our boasted GOLDSMITH felt the sovereign sway :  
 From him derived the sweet, yet nervous lay.  
 To Fame’s proud cliff he bade our Raffaele rise :  
 Hence REYNOLDS’ pen with REYNOLDS’ pencil vies.  
 With Johnson’s flame melodious BURNEY glows,  
 While the grand strain in smoother cadence flows.  
 And you, MALONE, to critic learning dear,  
 Correct and elegant, refined though clear,  
 By studying him, acquired that classic taste,  
 Which high in Shakspeare’s fane thy statue placed.  
 Near Johnson STEEVENS stands on scenic ground,  
 Acute, laborious, fertile, and profound.  
 Ingenious HAWKESWORTH to this school we owe,  
 And scarce the pupil from the tutor know.  
 Here early parts accomplish’d JONES sublimes,  
 And science blends with Asia’s lofty rhymes :  
 Harmonious JONES ! who in his splendid strains  
 Sings Camdeo’s sports, on Agra’s flowery plains,  
 In Hindu fictions while we fondly trace  
 Love and the Muses, deck’d with Attic grace.

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in all their modes and representations: the character and charm of his *style*, in a happy choice of dignified and appropriate expressions, and that masterly *involution* of phrase, by which he contrives to bolt the prominent idea strongly on the mind. — [GREEN, *Diary of a Lover of Literature*, p. 9.]

Amid these names can BOSWELL be forgot,  
 Scarce by North Britons now esteem'd a Scot? (1)  
 Who to the sage devoted from his youth,  
 Imbibed from him the sacred love of truth;  
 The keen research, the exercise of mind,  
 And that best art, the art to know mankind. —  
 Nor was his energy confined alone  
 To friends around his philosophic throne;  
*Its influence wide improved our letter'd isle,*  
*And lucid vigour mark'd the general style:*  
 As Nile's proud waves, swoln from their oozy bed,  
 First o'er the neighbouring meads majestic spread;  
 Till gathering force, they more and more expand,  
 And with new virtue fertilise the land."

Johnson's language, however, must be allowed to be too masculine for the delicate gentleness of female writing. His ladies, therefore, seem strangely formal, even to ridicule; and are well denominated by the names which he has given them, as Misella, Zozima, Properantia, Rhodoclia. (2)

(1) The following observation in Mr. Boswell's "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides" may sufficiently account for that gentleman's being "now scarcely esteemed a Scot" by many of his countrymen: — "If he (Dr. Johnson) was particularly prejudiced against the Scots, it was because they were more in his way; because he thought their success in England rather exceeded the due proportion of their real merit; and because he could not but see in them that nationality which, I believe, no liberal-minded Scotchman will deny." Mr. Boswell, indeed, is so free from national prejudices, that he might with equal propriety have been described as —

"Scarce by *South* Britons now esteem'd a Scot. — COURTENAY."

(2) Mr. Burke said pleasantly, that "his ladies were all *Johnsons in petticoats*." Mr. Murphy (*Life*, p. 159.) seems to pass somewhat of the same censure on the letter in the 12th Rambler, from a young woman that wants a place: yet — such is the uncertainty of criticism — this is the paper quoted by Mr. Chalmers, as an example of such ease and familiarity of

It has of late been the fashion to compare the style of Addison and Johnson, and to depreciate, I think very unjustly, the style of Addison as nerveless and feeble, because it has not the strength and energy of that of Johnson. Their prose may be balanced like the poetry of Dryden and Pope. Both are excellent, though in different ways. Addison writes with the ease of a gentleman. His readers fancy that a wise and accomplished companion is talking to them ; so that he insinuates his sentiments and tastes into their minds by an imperceptible influence. Johnson writes like a teacher. He dictates to his readers as if from an academical chair. They attend with awe and admiration ; and his precepts are impressed upon them by his commanding eloquence. Addison's style, like a light wine, pleases every body from the first. Johnson's, like a liquor of more body, seems too strong at first, but, by degrees, is highly relished ; and such is the melody of his periods, so much do they captivate the ear, and seize upon the attention, that there is scarcely any writer, however inconsiderable, who does not aim, in some degree, at the same species of excellence. But let us not ungratefully undervalue that beautiful style, which has pleasingly conveyed to us much instruction and entertainment.<sup>(1)</sup> Though

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style, which made him almost doubt whether it was Johnson's. *Brit. Ess.* vol. xix. p. 44. — CROKER.

(1) [“By the judicious advice of Mr. Mallet, I was directed to the writings of Swift and Addison : wit and simplicity are their common attributes, but the style of Swift is supported by manly original vigour ; that of Addison is adorned by the female graces of elegance and mildness.” — GIBBON, *Memoirs*, 4to. p. 86.]

comparatively weak, opposed to Johnson's Herculean vigour, let us not call it positively feeble. Let us remember the character of his style, as given by Johnson himself: "What he attempted, he performed; he is *never feeble*, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy.<sup>(1)</sup> Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must

(1) When Johnson showed me a proof sheet of the character of Addison, in which he so highly extols his style, I could not help observing, that it had not been his own model, as no two styles could differ more from each other. "Sir, Addison had his style, and I have mine." When I ventured to ask him, whether the difference did not consist in this, that Addison's style was full of idioms, colloquial phrases, and proverbs; and his own more strictly grammatical, and free from such phraseology and modes of speech as can never be literally translated or understood by foreigners; he allowed the discrimination to be just. Let any one who doubts it, try to translate one of Addison's Spectators into Latin, French, or Italian; and though so easy, familiar, and elegant, to an Englishman, as to give the intellect no trouble; yet he would find the transfusion into another language extremely difficult if not impossible. But a Rambler, Adventurer, or Idler, of Johnson, would fall into any classical or European language, as easily as if it had been originally conceived in it. — BURNEY.

His manner of criticising and commending Addison's prose was the same in conversation as we read it in the printed strictures, and many of the expressions used have been heard to fall from him on common occasions. It was, notwithstanding, observable enough (or I fancied so), that he did never like, though he always thought fit to praise, it; and his praises resembled those of a man who extols the superior elegance of high-painted porcelain, while he himself always chooses to eat off *plate*. I told him so one day, and he neither denied it nor appeared displeased. — P10ZZI.

give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." (1)

Though the Rambler was not concluded till the year 1752, I shall, under this year, say all that I have to observe upon it. Some of the translations of the mottos by himself, are admirably done. He acknowledges to have received "elegant translations" of many of them from Mr. James Elphinston; and some are very happily translated by a Mr. F. Lewis, of whom I never heard more, except that Johnson thus described him to Mr. Malone: "Sir, he lived in London, and hung loose upon society." (2) The concluding paper of his Rambler is at once dignified and pathetic. I cannot, however, but wish, that he had not ended it with an unnecessary Greek verse, translated also into an English couplet. (3) It is too much like the conceit of those dramatic poets, who used to conclude each act with a rhyme; and the expression in the first line of his couplet, "*Celestial powers*," though proper in Pagan poetry, is ill suited to Christianity, with "a conformity" to which he consoles himself. How much better would it have been, to have ended with the prose sentence, "I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning

(1) I shall probably, in another work, maintain the merit of Addison's poetry, which has been very unjustly depreciated. [Mr. Boswell, it is believed, never executed this intention.]

(2) In the Gentleman's Magazine, for October 1752, p. 468., he is styled "the Rev. Francis Lewis, of Chiswick."

(3) [Αὐτῶν ἐκ μακάρων ἀντάξιός ἐστι ἀμοιβή.  
Celestial powers! that piety regard,  
From you my labours wait their last reward."]

obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth.”

His friend, Dr. Birch, being now engaged in preparing an edition of Raleigh’s smaller pieces, Dr. Johnson wrote the following letter to that gentleman :—

LETTER 19. TO DR. BIRCH.

“ Gough-square, May 12. 1750. 1

“ SIR, — Knowing that you are now preparing to favour the public with a new edition of Raleigh’s miscellaneous pieces, I have taken the liberty to send you a manuscript, which fell by chance within my notice. I perceive no proofs of forgery in my examination of it; and the owner tells me, that as *he* has heard, the hand-writing is Sir Walter’s. If you should find reason to conclude it genuine, it will be a kindness to the owner, a blind person <sup>(1)</sup>, to recommend it to the booksellers. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,  
“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

His just abhorrence of Milton’s political notions was ever strong. But this did not prevent his warm admiration of Milton’s great poetical merit, to which he has done illustrious justice, beyond all who have written upon the subject. And this year he not only wrote a Prologue, which was spoken by Mr. Garrick before the acting of *Comus* at Drury Lane Theatre, for the benefit of Milton’s grand-daughter, but took a very zealous interest in the success of the charity. On the day preceding the performance, he published

(1) Mrs. Williams is probably the person meant.

the following letter in the "General Advertiser," addressed to the printer of that paper:—

"SIR, — That a certain degree of reputation is acquired merely by approving the works of genius, and testifying a regard to the memory of authours, is a truth too evident to be denied; and therefore to ensure a participation of fame with a celebrated poet, many, who would, perhaps, have contributed to starve him when alive, have heaped expensive pageants upon his grave. (1)

"It must, indeed, be confessed, that this method of becoming known to posterity with honour, is peculiar to the great, or at least to the wealthy; but an opportunity now offers for almost every individual to secure the praise of paying a just regard to the illustrious dead, united with the pleasure of doing good to the living. To assist industrious indigence, struggling with distress and debilitated by age, is a display of virtue, and an acquisition of happiness and honour.

"Whoever, then, 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 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 pleasing 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 (2), and the only surviving branch of his family.

(1) Alluding probably to Mr. Auditor Benson,—[who, in 1737, erected a monument to Milton in Westminster Abbey, and did not omit to inscribe his own name on it.] See *Dunciad*, b. iii. and iv. — MALONE.

(2) Mrs. Elizabeth Foster died May 9. 1754.

“ N. B. There will be a new prologue on the occasion, written by the authour of Irene, and spoken by Mr. Garrick ; and, by particular desire, there will be added to the Masque a dramatic satire, called Lethe, in which Mr. Garrick will perform.” (1)

In 1751 we are to consider him as carrying on both his Dictionary and Rambler. But he also wrote “ The Life of Cheynel,”\* in the miscellany called “ The Student ;” and the Rev. Dr. Douglas having with uncommon acuteness clearly detected a gross forgery and imposition upon the public by William Lauder, a Scotch schoolmaster, who had, with equal impudence and ingenuity, represented Milton as a plagiarist from certain modern Latin poets, Johnson, who had been so far imposed upon as to furnish a Preface and Postscript to his work, now dictated a letter for Lauder, addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of suitable contrition. (2)

(1) [For the honour of letters, the dignity of sacred poetry, the spirit of the English nation, and the glory of human nature, it is to be regretted that we do not find a more liberal assistance. Tonson, the bookseller, whose family had been enriched by the sale of the poet’s writings, gave 20*l.*, and Bishop Newton, his biographer, brought a large contribution ; but all their efforts, joined to the allurements of Johnson’s pen and Garrick’s performance, procured only 130*l.* — ANDERSON.]

(2) Lest there should be any person, at any future period, absurd enough to suspect that Johnson was a partaker in Lauder’s fraud, or had any knowledge of it, when he assisted him with his masterly pen, it is proper here to quote the words of Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, at the time when he detected the imposition. “ It is to be hoped, nay it is *expected*, that the elegant and nervous writer, whose judicious sentiments and inimitable style point out the author of Lauder’s Preface and Postscript, will no longer allow one to *plume himself with his feathers*, who appeareth so little to deserve assistance : an assistance which I am persuaded would never have been communi-



This extraordinary attempt of Lauder was no sudden effort. He had brooded over it for many years: and to this hour it is uncertain what his principal motive was, unless it were a vain notion of his superiority, in being able, by whatever means, to deceive mankind. To effect this, he produced certain passages from Grotius, Masenius, and others, which had a faint resemblance to some parts of the "Paradise Lost." In these he interpolated some fragments of Hog's Latin translation of that poem, alleging that the mass thus fabricated was the archetype from which Milton copied. These fabrications he published from time to time in the Gentleman's Magazine; and, exulting in his fancied success, he in 1750 ventured to collect them into a pamphlet, entitled "An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his Paradise Lost." To this pamphlet Johnson wrote a Preface, in full persuasion

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cated, had there been the least suspicion of those facts which I have been the instrument of conveying to the world in these sheets." Milton no Plagiary, 2d edit. p. 78. And his Lordship has been pleased now to authorise me to say, in the strongest manner, that there is no ground whatever for any unfavourable reflection against Dr. Johnson, who expressed the strongest indignation against Lauder.—BOSWELL.

In the Gent. Mag. for 1754, is a short account of a renewed attack by Lauder on Milton's character, in a pamphlet entitled "The Grand Impostor detected, or Milton convicted of Forgery against King Charles I." Mr. Chalmers thinks that this review was probably written by Johnson; but it is, on every account, very unlikely. The article is trivial, and seems to be written neither in the style nor sentiments of Johnson.—CROKER.

[Lauder afterwards went to Barbadoes, where he some time taught school. His behaviour there was mean and despicable, and he passed the remainder of his life in universal contempt. He died about the year 1771.—NICHOLS.]

of Lauder's honesty, and a Postscript recommending, in the most persuasive terms, a subscription for the relief of a grand-daughter of Milton, of whom he thus speaks:—

“ It is yet in the power of a great people to reward the poet whose name they boast, and from their alliance to whose genius they claim some kind of superiority to every other nation of the earth ; that poet, whose works may possibly be read when every other monument of British greatness shall be obliterated ; to reward him, not with pictures or with medals, which, if he sees, he sees with contempt, but with tokens of gratitude, which he, perhaps, may even now consider as not unworthy the regard of an immortal spirit.”

Surely this is inconsistent with “ enmity towards Milton,” which Sir John Hawkins imputes to Johnson upon this occasion, adding,

“ I could all along observe that Johnson seemed to approve not only of the design, but of the argument ; and seemed to exult in a persuasion, that the reputation of Milton was likely to suffer by this discovery. That he was not privy to the imposture, I am well persuaded ; that he wished well to the argument, may be inferred from the Preface, which indubitably was written by Johnson.”

Is it possible for any man of clear judgment to suppose that Johnson, who so nobly praised the poetical excellence of Milton in a Postscript to this very “ discovery,” as he then supposed it, could, at the same time, exult in a persuasion that the great poet's reputation was likely to suffer by it? This is an inconsistency of which Johnson was incapable ; nor can any thing more be fairly inferred from the

Preface, than that Johnson, who was alike distinguished for ardent curiosity and love of truth, was pleased with an investigation by which both were gratified. That he was actuated by these motives, and certainly by no unworthy desire to depreciate our great epic poet, is evident from his own words; for, after mentioning the general zeal of men of genius and literature, "to advance the honour, and distinguish the beauties of *Paradise Lost*," he says,

"Among the inquiries to which this ardour of criticism has naturally given occasion, none is more obscure in itself, or more worthy of rational curiosity, than a retrospect 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 in the skies; to trace back the structure through all its varieties to the simplicity of its first plan; to find what was first projected, whence the scheme was taken, how it was improved, by what assistance it was executed, and from what stores the materials were collected; whether its founder dug them from the quarries of Nature, or demolished other buildings to embellish his own. (1)

Is this the language of one who wished to blast the laurels of Milton? (2)

(1) "Proposals [written evidently by Johnson] for printing the *Adamus Exul* of Grotius, with a Translation and Notes by Wm. Lauder, A.M." *Gent. Mag.* 1747, p. 404. — MALONE.

(2) But is it not extraordinary that Johnson, who had himself meditated a history of modern Latin poetry (see *antè*, p. 94.) should not have shown his *curiosity and love of truth*, by, at least, comparing Lauder's quotations with the original authors? It was, we might say, his duty to have done so, before he so far

## [LETTER 20. TO MR. RICHARDSON.

" March 9. 1750-1.

" DEAR SIR, — Though Clarissa wants no help from external splendour, I was glad to see her improved in her appearance, but more glad to find that she was now got above all fears of prolixity, and confident enough of success to supply whatever had been hitherto suppressed. I never indeed found a hint of any such defalcation, but I regretted it ; for though the story is long, every letter is short.

" I wish you would add an *index rerum* (1), that when the reader recollects any incident, he may easily find it, which at present he cannot do, unless he knows in which volume it is told ; for Clarissa is not a performance to be read with eagerness, and laid aside for ever ; but will be occasionally consulted by the busy, the aged, and the studious ; and therefore I beg that this edition, by which I suppose posterity is to abide, may want nothing that can facilitate its use.

" I am, SIR, yours, &amp;c.

" S. JOHNSON." ]

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pronounced his judgment as to assist Lauder ; and had he attempted but to verify a single quotation, he must have immediately discovered the fraud. — CROKER.

(1) This proposition of an *index rerum* to a novel will appear extraordinary, but Johnson at this time appears to have been very anxious to cultivate the acquaintance of Richardson, who lived in an atmosphere of flattery, and Johnson found it necessary to fall into the fashion of the society. Mr. Northcote relates, that Johnson introduced Sir Joshua Reynolds and his sister to Richardson, but hinted to them, at the same time, that if they wished to see the latter in good humour, they must expatiate on the excellencies of Clarissa ; and Mrs. Piozzi tells us, that when talking of Richardson he once said, " You think I love flattery — and so I do ; but a little too much always disgusts me : that fellow, Richardson, on the contrary, could not be contented to sail quietly down the stream of reputation without longing to taste the froth from every stroke of the oar." — CROKER.

Though Johnson's circumstances were at this time far from being easy, his humane and charitable disposition was constantly exerting itself. Mrs. Anna Williams, daughter of a very ingenious Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, having come to London in hopes of being cured of a cataract in both her eyes, which afterwards ended in total blindness, was kindly received as a constant visiter at his house while Mrs. Johnson lived; and, after her death, having come under his roof in order to have an operation upon her eyes performed with more comfort to her than in lodgings, she had an apartment from him during the rest of her life, at all times when he had a house. (1)

(1) Before the calamity of total deprivation of sight befell Mrs. Williams, she, with the assistance of her father, had acquired a knowledge of the French and Italian languages, and had made great improvements in literature, which, together with the exercise of her needle, at which she was very dexterous, as well after the loss of her sight as before, contributed to support her under her affliction, till a time when it was thought by her friends, that relief might be obtained from the hand of an operating surgeon. At the request of Dr. Johnson, I went with her to a friend of mine, Mr. Samuel Sharp, senior surgeon of Guy's Hospital, who before had given me to understand that he would couch her gratis if the cataract was ripe; but upon making the experiment it was found otherwise, and that the crystalline humour was not sufficiently inspissated for the needle to take effect. She had been almost a constant companion of Mrs. Johnson for some time before her decease, but had never resided in the house; afterwards, for the convenience of performing the intended operation, Johnson took her home; and, upon the failure of that, kept her as the partner of his dwelling till he removed into chambers. Afterward, in 1766, upon his taking a house in Johnson's Court, in Fleet Street, he invited her thither, and in that, and his last house, in Bolt Court, she successively dwelt for the remainder of her life. The loss of her sight made but a small abatement of her cheerfulness, and was scarce any interruption of her studies. With the assistance of two female

friends, she translated from the French of Père La Bletrie "the Life of the Emperor Julian," and, in 1766, she published, by subscription, a quarto volume of Miscellanies, in prose and verse, and thereby increased her little fund to three hundred pounds, which, being prudently invested, yielded an income that, under such protection as she experienced from Dr. Johnson, was sufficient for her support. She was a woman of an enlightened understanding; plain, as it is called, in her person, and easily provoked to anger, but possessing, nevertheless, some excellent moral qualities, among which no one was more conspicuous than her desire to promote the welfare and happiness of others, and of this she gave a signal proof, by her solicitude in favour of an institution for the maintenance and education of poor deserted females in the parish of St. Sepulchre, London, supported by the voluntary contributions of ladies; and, as the foundation-stone of a fund for its future subsistence, she bequeathed to it the whole of the little which she had been able to accumulate. To the endowments and qualities here ascribed to her, may be added a larger share of experimental prudence than is the lot of most of her sex. Johnson, in many exigences, found her an able counsellor, and seldom showed his wisdom more than when he hearkened to her advice. In return, she received from his conversation the advantages of religious and moral improvement, which she cultivated so, as in a great measure to smooth the constitutional asperity of her temper. When these particulars are known, this intimacy, which began with compassion, and terminated in a friendship that subsisted till death dissolved it, will be easily accounted for. — HAWKINS, p. 322.

Mrs. Williams was a person extremely interesting. She had uncommon firmness of mind, a boundless curiosity, retentive memory, and strong judgment. She had various powers of pleasing. Her personal afflictions and slender fortune she seemed to forget, when she had the power of doing an act of kindness: she was social, cheerful, and active, in a state of body that was truly deplorable. Her regard to Dr. Johnson was formed with such strength of judgment and firm esteem, that her voice never hesitated when she repeated his maxims, or recited his good deeds; though upon many other occasions her want of sight led her to make so much use of her ear, as to affect her speech. Mrs. Williams was blind before she was acquainted with Dr. Johnson. She had many resources, though none very great. With the Miss Wilkinsons she generally passed a part of the year, and received from them presents, and from the first who died, a legacy of clothes and money. The last of them, Mrs. Jane, left her an annual rent; but from the blundering manner of the will, I fear she never reaped the benefit of it. The lady left money to erect a hospital for ancient maids; but the number she had allotted being too great for

the donation, the Doctor (Johnson) said, it would be better to expunge the word *maintain*, and put in to *starve* such a number of old maids. They asked him what name should be given it: he replied, 'Let it be called JENNY'S WHIM.' [The name of a well-known tavern near Chelsea in former days.] — "Lady Philips made her a small annual allowance, and some other Welsh ladies, to all of whom she was related. Mrs. Montague, on the death of Mr. Montague, settled upon her (by deed) ten pounds per annum. As near as I can calculate, Mrs. Williams had about thirty-five or forty pounds a year. The furniture she used [in her apartment in Dr. Johnson's house] was her own; her expenses were small, tea and bread and butter being at least half of her nourishment. Sometimes she had a servant or charwoman to do the ruder offices of the house; but she was herself active and industrious. I have frequently seen her at work. Upon remarking one day her facility in moving about the house, searching into drawers, and finding books, without the help of sight, 'Believe me (said she), persons who cannot do these common offices without sight, did but little while they enjoyed that blessing.' Scanty circumstances, bad health, and blindness, are surely a sufficient apology for her being sometimes impatient: her natural disposition was good, friendly, and humane." — LADY KNIGHT.

I see her now — a pale, shrunken old lady, dressed in scarlet, made in the handsome French fashion of the time (1775), with a lace cap, with two stiffened projecting wings on the temples, and a black lace hood over it. Her temper has been recorded as marked with Welsh fire, and this might be excited by some of the meaner inmates of the upper floors [of Dr. Johnson's house]; but her gentle kindness to me I never shall forget, or think consistent with a bad temper. I know nobody from whose discourse there was a better chance of deriving high ideas of moral rectitude. — Miss HAWKINS, *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 152.

## CHAPTER X.

1752—1753.

*Progress of the Dictionary.—Conclusion of the Rambler. — Death of Mrs. Johnson. —Prayer on that Occasion.—Inscription.—Epitaph.—Francis Barber.—Robert Levett.—Sir Joshua Reynolds.—Bernal Layton — Topham Beauclerk.—Johnson assists Hawkesworth in “The Adventurer.”*

IN 1752 Johnson was almost entirely occupied with his Dictionary. The last paper of his Rambler was published March 14. this year; after which, there was a cessation for some time of any exertion of his talents as an essayist. But, in the same year, Dr. Hawkesworth, who was his warm admirer, and a studious imitator of his style, and then lived in great intimacy with him, began a periodical paper, entitled, “THE ADVENTURER,” in connection with other gentlemen<sup>(1)</sup>, one of whom was Johnson’s

(1) The curiosity of the reader as to the several writers of the Adventurer is, to a small degree, gratified by the last paper, which assigns to Dr. Joseph Warton such as have the signature Z, and leaves to Dr. Hawkesworth himself the praise of such as are without any. To the information there given, I add, that the papers marked A, which are said to have come from a source that soon failed, were supplied by Dr. Bathurst, an original associate in the work, and those distinguished by the letter T (the first of which is dated 3d March, 1753,) by Johnson, who received two guineas for every number that he wrote; a rate of payment which he had before adjusted in his stipulation for the Rambler, and was probably the measure of reward to his fellow-labourers.  
— HAWKINS.



much-loved friend, Dr. Bathurst; and, without doubt, they received many valuable hints from his conversation, most of his friends having been so assisted in the course of their works.

That there should be a suspension of his literary labours during a part of the year 1752, will not seem strange, when it is considered that soon after closing his *Rambler*, he suffered a loss which, there can be no doubt, affected him with the deepest distress. For on the 17th of March O. S. his wife died. Why Sir John Hawkins should unwarrantably take upon him even to *suppose* that Johnson's fondness for her was *dissembled* (meaning simulated or assumed), and to assert, that if it was not the case, "it was a lesson he had learned by rote," I cannot conceive; unless it proceeded from a want of similar feelings in his own breast. To argue from her being much older than Johnson, or any other circumstances, that he could not really love her, is absurd; for love is not a subject of reasoning, but of feeling, and therefore there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. Every man feels for himself, and knows how he is affected by particular qualities in the person he admires, the impressions of which are too minute and delicate to be substantiated in language.

The following very solemn and affecting prayer was found after Dr. Johnson's decease, by his servant, Mr. Francis Barber, who delivered it to my worthy friend the Reverend Mr. Strahan, Vicar of Islington, who at my earnest request has obligingly favoured me with a copy of it, which he and I compared with

the original. I present it to the world as an undoubted proof of a circumstance in the character of my illustrious friend, which, though some, whose hard minds I never shall envy, may attack as superstitious, will I am sure endear him more to numbers of good men. I have an additional, and that a personal motive for presenting it, because it sanctions what I myself have always maintained and am fond to indulge.

“ April 26. 1752, being after 12 at Night of the 25th.

“ O Lord! Governor of heaven and earth, in whose hands are embodied and departed spirits, if thou hast ordained the souls of the dead to minister to the living, and appointed my departed wife to have care of me, grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy government. Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

What actually followed upon this most interesting piece of devotion by Johnson, we are not informed; but I, whom it has pleased GOD to afflict in a similar manner to that which occasioned it, have certain experience of benignant communication by dreams. (1)

That his love for his wife was of the most ardent kind, and, during the long period of fifty years, was

(1) [Mr. Boswell's wife died in June, 1790; his *Life of Johnson* was first published in April, 1791.]

unimpaired by the lapse of time, is evident from various passages in the series of his Prayers and Meditations<sup>(1)</sup>, published by the Reverend Mr. Strahan, as well as from other memorials, two of which I select, as strongly marking the tenderness and sensibility of his mind.

“ March 28. 1753. I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty’s death, with prayer and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful.”

“ April 23. 1753. I know not whether I do not too much indulge the vain longings of affection ; but I hope they intenerate my heart, and that when I die like my Tetty, this affection will be acknowledged in a happy interview, and that in the mean time I am incited by it to piety. I will, however, not deviate too much from common and received methods of devotion.”<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) The originals of this publication are now deposited in Pembroke College. It is to be observed, that they consist of a few little memorandum books, and a great number of separate scraps of paper, and bear no marks of having been arranged or intended for publication by Dr. Johnson. Each *prayer* is on a separate piece of paper, generally a sheet (but sometimes a fragment) of note paper. The *memoranda* and *observations* are generally in little books of a few leaves sewed together. This subject will be referred to hereafter ; but it is even now important that the reader should recollect that Mr. Strahan’s publication was not *prepared* by Dr. Johnson himself, but formed by the reverend gentleman out of the loose materials above mentioned. — CROKER.

(2) Miss Seward, with equal truth and taste, thus expresses herself concerning these and similar passages : — “ Those pharisaic meditations, with their *popish* prayers for old Tetty’s soul ; their contrite *parade* about lying in bed on a morning ; drinking creamed tea on a fast day ; snoring at sermons ; and having omitted to ponder well *Bel and the Dragon*, and *Tobit and his Dog*.” And in another letter she does not scruple to say, that Mr. Boswell confessed to her his idea that Johnson was “ a Roman Catholic in his heart.” Miss Seward’s credit is by this time so low that it is hardly necessary to observe how improbable

Her wedding-ring, when she became his wife, was, after her death, preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box, in the inside of which he pasted a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters, as follows:—

“ Eheu !  
 “ Eliz. Johnson,  
 “ Nupta Jul. 9<sup>o</sup> 1736,  
 “ Mortua, eheu !  
 “ Mart. 17<sup>o</sup> 1752.” (1) —

After his death, Mr. Francis Barber, his faithful servant, and residuary legatee, offered this memorial of tenderness to Mrs. Lucy Porter, Mrs. Johnson's

it is that Mr. Boswell could have made any such confession. Dr. Johnson thought charitably of the Roman Catholics, and defended their religion from the coarse language of our political tests, which call it impious and idolatrous (*post*, Oct. 26. 1769); but he strenuously disclaimed all participation in the doctrines of that church (see *post*, May 3. 1773; April 5. 1776; Oct. 10. 1779; June 3. 1784). Mrs. Piozzi says, “ Though beloved by all his Roman Catholic acquaintance, yet was Mr. Johnson a most unshaken *Church-of-England* man; and I think, or at least I once *did* think, that a letter written by him to Mr. Barnard, the king's librarian, when he was in Italy collecting books, contained some very particular advice to his friend to be on his guard against the seductions of the Church of Rome.” And finally— which may perhaps be thought more likely to express his real sentiments than even a more formal assertion— when it was proposed (see *post*, April 30. 1773), that monuments of eminent men should in future be erected in St. Paul's, and when some one in conversation suggested to begin with Pope, Johnson observed, “ Why, sir, as Pope was a Roman Catholic, I would not have his to be first.” — CROKER.

(1) It seems as if Dr. Johnson had been a little ashamed of the disproportion between his age and that of his wife, for neither in this inscription nor that over her grave, written thirty years later, does he mention her *age*, which was at her death *sixty three*. — CROKER.

daughter; but she having declined (1) to accept of it, he had it enamelled as a mourning ring for his old master, and presented it to his wife, Mrs. Barber, who now has it.

The state of mind in which a man must be upon the death of a woman whom he sincerely loves, had been in his contemplation many years before. In his *IRENE*, we find the following fervent and tender speech of Demetrius, addressed to his Aspasia:—

“ From those bright regions of eternal day,  
Where now thou shin’st amongst thy fellow saints,  
Array’d in purer light, look down on me!  
In pleasing visions and assuasive dreams,  
O! sooth my soul, and teach me how to lose thee.”

I have, indeed, been told by Mrs. Desmoulins, who, before her marriage, lived for some time with Mrs. Johnson at Hampstead, that she indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London, and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife. (2) But all this is perfectly

(1) Offended perhaps, and not unreasonably, that she was not mentioned in Johnson’s will. — CROKER.

(2) I asked him, if he ever disputed with his wife (I had heard that he loved her passionately). “Perpetually,” said he: “my wife had a particular reverence for cleanliness, and desired the praise of neatness in her dress and furniture, as many ladies do, till they become troublesome to their best friends, slaves to their own besoms, and only sigh for the hour of sweeping their husbands out of the house as dirt and useless lumber: a clean floor is so comfortable, she would say sometimes, by way of twitting; till at last I told her, that I thought we had had talk enough about the *floor*, we would now have a touch at the

compatible with his fondness for her, especially when it is remembered that he had a high opinion of her understanding, and that the impressions which her beauty, real or imaginary, had originally made upon his fancy, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was doubtless much altered for the worse. (1) The dreadful shock of separation took place in the night; and he immediately despatched a letter to his friend, the Reverend Dr. Taylor, which, as Taylor told me, expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read; so that it is much to be regretted it has not been preserved. (2) The letter was brought to

*ceiling.*" On another occasion I have heard him blame her for a fault many people have, of setting the miseries of their neighbours, half unintentionally, half wantonly, before their eyes, showing them the bad side of their profession, situation, &c. He said, "She would lament the dependence of pupilage to a young heir, &c. and once told a waterman who rowed her along the Thames in a wherry, that he was no happier than a galley-slave, one being chained to the oar by authority, the other by want. I had, however (said he, laughing), the wit to get her daughter on my side always before we began the dispute." She read comedy better than any body he ever heard (he said); in tragedy she mouthed too much. — PIOZZI.

(1) Garrick told Mr. Thrale, however, that she was a little painted puppet, of no value at all, and quite disguised with affectation, full of odd airs of rural elegance; and he made out some comical scenes, by mimicking her in a dialogue he pretended to have overheard. Mr. Johnson has told me that her hair was eminently beautiful, quite *blonde* like that of a baby; but that she fretted about the colour, and was always desirous to dye it black, which he very judiciously hindered her from doing. The picture I found of her at Lichfield was very pretty, and her daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, said it was like. The intelligence I gained of her from old Levett, was only *perpetual illness and perpetual opium.* — PIOZZI.

(2) In the Gentleman's Magazine for February, 1794, p. 100., was printed a letter pretending to be that written by Johnson on

Dr. Taylor, at his house in the Cloisters, Westminster, about three in the morning; and as it signified an earnest desire to see him, he got up, and went to Johnson as soon as he was dressed, and found him in tears and in extreme agitation. After being a little while together, Johnson requested him to join with him in prayer. He then prayed extempore, as did Dr. Taylor; and thus by means of that piety which was ever his primary object, his troubled mind was, in some degree, soothed and composed.

The next day he wrote as follows:—

LETTER 21. TO THE REV. DR. TAYLOR.

“ March 18. 1752.

“ DEAR SIR, — Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

“ Pray desire Mrs. Taylor to inform me what mourning I should buy for my mother and Miss Porter, and bring a note in writing with you.

“ Remember me in your prayers, for vain is the help of man. I am, dear Sir, &c.

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

That his sufferings upon the death of his wife were severe, beyond what are commonly endured, I have no doubt, from the information of many who were then about him, to none of whom I give more credit than to Mr. Francis Barber, his faithful negro

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the death of his wife: but it is merely a transcript of the 41st number of “The Idler,” on the death of a friend. A fictitious date, March 17. 1751, O. S., was added, to give a colour to this deception. — MALONE.

servant (1), who came into his family about a fortnight after the dismal event. These sufferings were aggravated by the melancholy inherent in his constitution; and although he probably was not oftener in the wrong than she was, in the little disagreements which sometimes troubled his married state, during which, he owned to me, that the gloomy irritability of his existence was more painful to him than ever, he might very naturally, after her death, be tenderly disposed to charge himself with slight omissions and offences, the sense of which would give him much uneasiness. (2) Accordingly we find, about a year after her decease, that he thus addressed the Supreme Being: — “ O LORD, who givest the

(1) Francis Barber was born in Jamaica, and was brought to England in 1750 by Colonel Bathurst, father of Johnson's very intimate friend Dr. Bathurst. He was sent, for some time, to the Reverend Mr. Jackson's school, at Barton, in Yorkshire. The Colonel by his will left him his freedom, and Dr. Bathurst was willing that he should enter into Johnson's service, in which he continued from 1752 till Johnson's death, with the exception of two intervals; in one of which, upon some difference with his master, he went and served an apothecary in Cheapside, but still visited Dr. Johnson occasionally; in another, he took a fancy to go to sea. Part of the time, indeed, he was, by the kindness of his master, at a school in Northamptonshire, that he might have the advantage of some learning. So early and so lasting a connection was there between Dr. Johnson and this humble friend.

— BOSWELL.

The uses for which Francis was intended to serve Johnson were not very apparent, for Diogenes himself never wanted a servant less than he seemed to do. The great bushy wig which, throughout his life, he affected to wear, by that closeness of texture which it had contracted and been suffered to retain, was ever nearly as impenetrable by a comb as a quickset hedge; and little of the dust that had once settled on his outer garments was ever known to have been disturbed by the brush.

— HAWKINS.

(2) See his beautiful and affecting Rambler, No. 54. — MALONE.



grace of repentance, and hearest the prayers of the penitent, grant that by true contrition I may obtain forgiveness of all the sins committed, and of all duties neglected, in my union with the wife whom thou hast taken from me; for the neglect of joint devotion, patient exhortation, and mild instruction." [Pr. and Med. p. 19.] The kindness of his heart, notwithstanding the impetuosity of his temper, is well known to his friends; and I cannot trace the smallest foundation for the following dark and uncharitable assertion by Sir John Hawkins:—"The apparition of his departed wife was altogether of the terrific kind, and hardly afforded him a hope that she was in a state of happiness." That he, in conformity with the opinion of many of the most able, learned, and pious Christians in all ages, supposed that there was a middle state after death, previous to the time at which departed souls are finally received to eternal felicity, appears, I think, unquestionably from his devotions:—"And, O LORD, so far as it may be lawful in me, I commend to thy fatherly goodness *the soul of my departed wife*; beseeching thee to *grant* her whatever is best in her *present state*, and *finally to receive her to eternal happiness.*"<sup>(1)</sup> [Pr. and Med. p. 20.] But this state

(1) It does not appear that Johnson was fully persuaded that there was a middle state: his prayers being only *conditional*, i.e. if such a state existed. — MALONE. This is not an exact view of the matter: the *condition* was that *it should be lawful to him* so to intercede; and in all his prayers of this nature he scrupulously introduces the humble limitation of "as far as it is lawful," or "as far as may be permitted, I recommend," &c.; but it is also to be observed, that he *sometimes* prays that "the Almighty may *have had* mercy" on the departed, as if he believed the sentence to have been already pronounced. — CROKER.

has not been looked upon with horror, but only as less gracious.

He deposited the remains of Mrs. Johnson in the church of Bromley in Kent <sup>(1)</sup>, to which he was probably led by the residence of his friend Hawkesworth at that place. The funeral sermon which he composed for her, which was never preached, but, having been given to Dr. Taylor, has been published since his death, is a performance of uncommon excellence, and full of rational and pious comfort to such as are depressed by that severe affliction which Johnson felt when he wrote it. When it is considered that it was written in such an agitation of mind, and in the short interval between her death and burial, it cannot be read without wonder.

From Mr. Francis Barber I have had the following authentic and artless account of the situation in which he found him recently after his wife's death: —“ He was in great affliction. Mrs. Williams was then living in his house, which was in Gough Square.

(1) A few months before his death, Johnson honoured her memory by the following epitaph, which was inscribed on her tombstone, in the church of Bromley: —

Hic conduntur reliquiæ  
 ELIZABETHÆ  
 Antiquâ Jarvisiorum gente,  
 Peatlingæ, apud Leicestrienses, ortæ;  
 Formosæ, cultæ, ingeniosæ, piæ;  
 Uxoris, primis nuptiis, HENRICI PORTER,  
 Secundis, SAMUELIS JOHNSON;  
 Qui multum amatam, diuque defletam  
 Hoc lapide contextit.  
 Obiit Londini, Mense Mart.  
 A. D. MDCCLII.

He was busy with the Dictionary. Mr. Shiels, and some others of the gentlemen who had formerly written for him, used to come about him. He had then little for himself, but frequently sent money to Mr. Shiels when in distress. The friends who visited him at that time, were chiefly Dr. Bathurst<sup>(1)</sup>, and Mr. Diamond, an apothecary in Cork Street Burlington-gardens, with whom he and Mrs. Williams gene-

(1) Dr. Bathurst, though a physician of no inconsiderable merit, had not the good fortune to get much practice in London. He was, therefore, willing to accept of employment abroad, and, to the regret of all who knew him, fell a sacrifice to the destructive climate, in the expedition against the Havannah. Mr. Langton recollects the following passage in a letter from Dr. Johnson to Mr. Beauclerk: — "The Havannah is taken: a conquest too dearly obtained; for, Bathurst died before it; *Vix Priamus tanti totaque Troja fuit.*" — BOSWELL.

Dr. Johnson told Mrs. Piozzi that he loved "Dear, dear Bathurst, better than he ever loved any human creature;" and it was on him that he bestowed the singular eulogy of being a *good hater*. "Dear Bathurst," said he, "was a man to my very heart's content; he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig: *he was a very good hater!*" — CROKER.

[Mr. Croker inserted in his edition of Boswell, two letters from Bathurst to Johnson, dated Barbadoes, Jan. 13., and Jamaica, March 18. 1757; from which, as he observes, "It would seem that Bathurst left London, and returned to the West Indies some years before the expedition against the Havannah; nor is his name to be found in the list of medical officers who accompanied the army from England; he probably, therefore, joined the expedition in the West Indies." The first of these letters has this passage: —

"The many acts of friendship and affection you have conferred upon me, so fully convince me of your being interested in my welfare, that even my present stupidity will not prevent my taking a pen in my hand to acquaint you that I am this instant arrived safe at Barbadoes, and I hope I may add, without having forgot all your lessons; and I am confident not without praying most fervently that the Supreme Being will enable me to deserve the approbation and friendship of so great and so good a man: alas! you little know how undeserving I am of the favours I have received from you. May health and happiness for ever attend you. Excuse my dropping my pen, for it is impossible that it should express the gratitude that is due to you, from your most affectionate friend, and most obliged servant, RICHARD BATHURST."]

rally dined every Sunday. There was a talk of his going to Iceland with him, which would probably have happened, had he lived. There were also Mr. Cave, Dr. Hawkesworth, Mr. Ryland, merchant on Tower-hill, Mrs. Masters <sup>(1)</sup>, the poetess, who lived with Mr. Cave, Mrs. Carter, and sometimes Mrs. Macaulay <sup>(2)</sup>; also, Mrs. Gardiner, wife of a tallow-chandler on Snow-hill, not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman <sup>(3)</sup>; Mr. (now Sir Joshua) Reynolds; Mr. Miller, Mr. Dodsley, Mr. Bouquet, Mr. Payne, of Paternoster-row, booksellers; Mr. Strahan, the printer; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell <sup>(4)</sup>, Mr. Garrick."

Many are, no doubt, omitted in this catalogue of his friends, and in particular, his humble friend Mr. Robert Levett, an obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people, his fees being sometimes

(1) Mary Masters published a small volume of poems about 1738, and, in 1755, "Familiar Letters and Poems," in octavo. She is supposed to have died about 1759. — CROKER.

(2) Catherine Sawbridge, sister of Mrs. Alderman Sawbridge, was born in 1733; but it was not till 1760 that she was married to Dr. Macaulay, a physician; so that Barber's account was, in respect to her, incorrect, either in date or name. She was married a second time, in 1778, to a Mr. Graham, with no increase of respectability. She died in 1791. — CROKER. [In Wilkes's Letters to his Daughter, there are many particulars of, and allusions to, this eccentric woman. See also Mrs. Carter's Letters to Mrs. Montagu, and Polwhele's Recollections, vol. i. — MARKHAM.]

(3) With this good woman, who was introduced to him by Mrs. Masters, he kept up a constant intercourse, and remembered her in his will, by the bequest of a book. See *post*, Nov. 1783. — CROKER.

(4) [Thomas, second Lord Southwell, F. R. S., born 1698, succeeded his father in 1720, and died in 1766.]

very small sums, sometimes whatever provisions his patients could afford him; but of such extensive practice in that way, that Mrs. Williams has told me, his walk was from Houndsditch to Marybone. It appears, from Johnson's diary, that their acquaintance commenced about the year 1746; and such was Johnson's predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that I have heard him say he should not be satisfied, though attended by all the College of Physicians, unless he had Mr. Levett with him. Ever since I was acquainted with Dr. Johnson, and many years before, as I have been assured by those who knew him earlier, Mr. Levett had an apartment in his house, or his chambers, and waited upon him every morning, through the whole course of his late and tedious breakfast. He was of a strange grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manner, and seldom said a word while any company was present. (1)

The circle of his friends, indeed, at this time was extensive and various, far beyond what has been generally imagined. (2) To trace his acquaintance

(1) [Robert Levett, though an Englishman by birth, became early in life a waiter at a coffee-house in Paris; where the surgeons who frequented it, finding him of an inquisitive turn, and attentive to their conversation, made a purse for him, and gave him some instructions in their art. They afterwards furnished him with the means of other knowledge, by procuring him free admission to such lectures in pharmacy and anatomy as were read by the ablest professors of that period. Where the middle part of his life was spent is uncertain. He resided above twenty years under Johnson's hospitable roof, who never wished him to be regarded as an inferior, or treated him like a dependant. — STEEVENS.]

(2) Mr. Murphy, who is, as to this period, better authority than Mr. Boswell, says, "It was late in life before he had the habit of

with each particular person, if it could be done, would be a task, of which the labour would not be repaid by the advantage. But exceptions are to be made; one of which must be a friend so eminent as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was truly his *dulce decus*, and with whom he maintained an uninterrupted intimacy to the last hour of his life. When Johnson lived in Castle Street, Cavendish Square, he used frequently to visit two ladies who lived opposite to him, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. <sup>(1)</sup> Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. <sup>(2)</sup>

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mixing, otherwise than occasionally, with polite company;” and Dr. Harwood has favoured me with the following memorandum, in Johnson’s writing, made about this time, of certain visits which he was to make (perhaps on his return from Oxford in 1754); and which, as it contains the names of some of the highest and lowest of his acquaintance, is probably a list of nearly all his friends: — “Visits to Brodie, Fowke, Taylor, Elphinston, Osborne, Garden[er], Richardson, Strahan, Millar, Tonson, Dodsley, Reynolds, Lenox, Gully, Hawkesworth, Gardiner, Drew, Lawrence, Garrick, Robinson, sen., Boyle, Wilson, Henry, Tyers, Hawkins, Ryland, Payne, Newberry, Bathurst, Grainger, Baker, Weston, Millar, Craster, Simpson, Rose, Giffard, Gregory, Desmoulins, Lloyd, Sherrard. — CROKER.

(1) Captain Charles Cotterell retired totally from the service in July, 1747, being put on the superannuated list, with the rank and pay of a rear-admiral. He died in August, 1754. — CROKER.

(2) It would be naturally inferred from Mr. Boswell’s account, that the acquaintance between Johnson and Sir Joshua took place so early as at the time when the former resided in Castle Street. This can hardly have been the case. Reynolds, then a youth under age, passed the years 1741 and 1742 in London, but did not again revisit the metropolis till the end of 1752. (See Northcote’s Life, pp. 12. 31, and 32.) That the acquaintance did not commence on the first visit, is proved by its having occurred *after* the publication of the Life of Savage, which was in 1744. Barber also must have been in error when he described Reynolds as one of Johnson’s intimates at the period of his wife’s death. — CROKER.

Mr. Reynolds, as I have observed above, had, from the first reading of his *Life of Savage*, conceived a very high admiration of Johnson's powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him; and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement. Sir Joshua, indeed, was lucky enough, at their very first meeting, to make a remark, which was so much above the common-place style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations; upon which Reynolds observed, "You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from a burthen of gratitude." They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion, as too selfish; but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the *mind*, the fair view of human nature<sup>(1)</sup>, which it exhibited, like some of the reflections of Rochefaucault. The consequence was, that he went home with Reynolds, and supped with him.

Sir Joshua told me a pleasant characteristical anecdote of Johnson about the time of their first

(1) Johnson himself has a sentiment somewhat similar in his 87th Rambler: — "There are minds so impatient of inferiority, that their gratitude is a species of revenge, and they return benefits, not because recompense is a pleasure, but because obligation is a pain." — J. BOSWELL, jun. This is, no doubt, "a somewhat similar sentiment;" but in the Rambler, Johnson mentions it with the censure it deserves; whereas, in the text, he is represented as applauding it. Such an observation is very little like the usual good manners, good nature, and good sense of Sir Joshua; and we cannot but suspect the authority, whatever it was, on which Boswell admitted this anecdote. — CROKER.

acquaintance. When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells', the then Duchess of Argyle (1) and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson, thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, by making their great visitors imagine that his friend and he were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying, "How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard* as we could?" — as if they had been common mechanics.(2)

(1) Jane Warburton, second wife of John second Duke of Argyle. His Grace died in 1743. She survived till 1767. — CROKER.

(2) [Mrs. Chapone, in one of her letters to Miss Carter, gives the following account of her meeting Johnson and Miss Williams at Richardson's country-house, near Fulham, about this time: —

"10th July, 1752.

"We had a visit, whilst at Northend, from your friend Mr. Johnson and poor Mrs. Williams. I was charmed with his behaviour to her, which was like that of a fond father to his daughter. She seemed much pleased with her visit; showed very good sense, with a great deal of modesty and humility; and so much patience and cheerfulness under her misfortune, that it doubled my concern for her. Mr. Johnson was very communicative and entertaining, and did me the honour to address most of his discourse to me. I had the assurance to dispute with him on the subject of human malignity, and wondered to hear a man, who, by his actions, shows so much benevolence, maintain that the human heart is naturally malevolent, and that all the benevolence we see in the few who are good is acquired by reason and religion. You may believe I entirely disagreed with him, being, as you know, fully persuaded that benevolence, or the love of our fellow-creatures, is as much a part of our natures as self-love; and that it cannot be suppressed or extinguished without great violence from the force of other passions. I told him, I suspected him of these bad notions from some of his Ramblers, and had accused him to you; but that you had persuaded me I had mistaken his sense. To which he answered, that if he had betrayed such sentiments in the Ramblers, it was without design; for that he believed that the doctrine of human malevolence, though a true one, is not a useful one, and ought not to be published to the world. Is there any truth



His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq. of Langton, in Lincolnshire, another much valued friend, commenced soon after the conclusion of his *Rambler*; which that gentleman, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that he came to London chiefly with a view of endeavouring to be introduced to its author. <sup>(1)</sup> By a fortunate chance, he happened to take lodgings in a house where Mr. Levett frequently visited; and having mentioned his wish to his landlady, she introduced him to Mr. Levett, who readily obtained Johnson's permission to bring Mr. Langton to him; as, indeed, Johnson, during the whole course of his life, had no shyness,

that would not be useful, or that should not be known?" — Works, vol. i. p. 72.]

(1) Mr. Langton was born about 1737, and entered, as Dr. Hall informs me, of Trinity College, Oxford, July 7. 1757. So much of his history is told with that of Dr. Johnson's, that it is unnecessary to say more in this place, except that he was remarkable for his knowledge of Greek, and that he seems, at one time of his life, to have practised engineering as a profession. On Dr. Johnson's death, he succeeded him as professor of ancient literature in the Royal Academy. He died on the 10th of December, 1801, and was buried at Southampton. The following description of his person and appearance later in life may be amusing: — "O! that we could sketch him with his mild countenance, his elegant features, and his sweet smile, sitting with one leg twisted round the other, as if fearing to occupy more space than was equitable; his person inclining forward, as if wanting strength to support his height, and his arms crossed over his bosom, or his hands locked together on his knee; his oblong gold-mounted snuff-box, taken from the waistcoat pocket opposite his hand, and either remaining between his fingers or set by him on the table, but which was never used but when his mind was occupied on conversation; so soon as conversation began, the box was produced." Miss Hawkins's *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 282. — CROKER.

real or affected, but was easy of access to all who were properly recommended, and even wished to see numbers at his *levée*, as his morning circle of company might, with strict propriety, be called. Mr. Langton was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest intimation of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well-drest, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher. Instead of which, down from his bed-chamber, about noon, came, as newly risen, a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him. But his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political notions so congenial with those in which Langton had been educated, that he conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever preserved. Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr. Langton, for his being of a very ancient family; for I have heard him say, with pleasure, “Langton, Sir, has a grant of free-warren from Henry the Second; and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John’s reign, was of this family.” (1)

Mr. Langton afterwards went to pursue his studies at Trinity College, Oxford, where he formed an

(1) It is to be wondered that he did not also mention Bishop Langton, a distinguished benefactor to the cathedral of *Lichfield*, and who also had a grant of free-warren over his patrimonial inheritance, from Edward I.; the relationship might probably be as clearly traced in the one case as in the other. See Harwood’s *History of Lichfield*, p. 139. — CROKER.

acquaintance with his fellow-student, Mr. Topham Beauclerk (<sup>1</sup>); who, though their opinions and modes of life were so different, that it seemed utterly improbable that they should at all agree, had so ardent a love of literature, so acute an understanding, such elegance of manners, and so well discerned the excellent qualities of Mr. Langton, a gentleman eminent not only for worth and learning, but for an inexhaustible fund of entertaining conversation, that they became intimate friends.

Johnson, soon after this acquaintance began, passed a considerable time at Oxford. He at first thought it strange that Langton should associate so much with one who had the character of being loose, both in his principles and practice; but, by degrees, he himself was fascinated. Mr. Beauclerk's being of the St. Alban's family, and having, in some particulars, a resemblance to Charles the Second, contributed, in Johnson's imagination, to throw a lustre upon his other qualities; and, in a short time, the moral, pious Johnson, and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk, were companions. "What a coalition! (said Garrick, when he heard of this :) I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round-house." But I can bear testimony that it was a very agreeable association. Beauclerk was too polite, and valued learning and wit too much, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity or licentiousness; and Johnson delighted in

(1) Topham Beauclerk, only son of Lord Sidney Beauclerk, third son of the first Duke of St. Albans, was born in 1739, and entered Trinity College, Oxford, in Nov. 1757.

the good qualities of Beauclerk, and hoped to correct the evil. Innumerable were the scenes in which Johnson was amused by these young men. Beauclerk could take more liberty with him than any body with whom I ever saw him ; but, on the other hand, Beauclerk was not spared by his respectable companion, when reproof was proper. Beauclerk had such a propensity to satire, that at one time Johnson said to him, " You never open your mouth but with intention to give pain ; and you have often given me pain, not from the power of what you said, but from seeing your intention." At another time applying to him, with a slight alteration, a line of Pope, he said, —

" Thy love of folly, and thy scorn of fools —

Every thing thou dost shews the one, and every thing thou say'st the other." At another time he said to him, " Thy body is all vice, and thy mind all virtue." Beauclerk not seeming to relish the compliment, Johnson said, " Nay, Sir, Alexander the Great, marching in triumph into Babylon, could not have desired to have had more said to him."

Johnson was some time with Beauclerk at his house at Windsor, where he was entertained with experiments in natural philosophy.<sup>(1)</sup> One Sunday, when the weather was very fine, Beauclerk enticed him, insensibly, to saunter about all the morning. They

(1) Probably some experiments in electricity, which was, at one time, a fashionable curiosity: it cannot be supposed that the natural philosophy of Mr. Beauclerk's country-house went very deep. — CROKER.

went into a churchyard, in the time of divine service, and Johnson laid himself down at his ease upon one of the tomb-stones. "Now, Sir, (said Beauclerk) you are like Hogarth's Idle Apprentice." When Johnson got his pension, Beauclerk said to him, in the humorous phrase of Falstaff, "I hope you'll now purge and live cleanly, like a gentleman."

One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good-humour agreed to their proposal: "What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you." (1) He was soon drest, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the

(1) Johnson, as Mr. Kemble observes to me, might here have had in his thoughts the words of Sir John Brute (a character which, doubtless, he had seen represented by Garrick), who uses nearly the same expression in "The Provoked Wife," Act iii. sc. 1. — MALONE.

neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked : while, in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

“ Short, O short then be thy reign,  
And give us to the world again !” (1)

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day : but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for “ leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls.” Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, “ I heard of your frolic t’other night. You’ll be in the Chronicle.” (2) Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, “ *He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not *let* him !”

He entered upon this year, 1753, with his usual piety, as appears from the following prayer, which

(1) Mr. Langton has recollected, or Dr. Johnson repeated, the passage wrong. The lines are in Lord Lansdowne’s Drinking Song to Sleep, and run thus : —

“ Short, very short be then thy reign,  
For I’m in haste to laugh and drink again.”

(2) As Johnson’s companions in this frolic were both thirty years younger than he, it is no wonder that Garrick should be a little alarmed at such extravagances. Nor can we help smiling at the philosopher of fifty scolding a young man of twenty for having the *bad taste* to prefer the company of a set of *wretched un-idea’d* girls. — CROKER. [See Johnson’s reasons for liking the society of men much younger than himself, *post*, July 21. 1763.]

I transcribed from that part of his diary which he burnt a few days before his death :—

“ Jan. 1. 1753, N. S. which I shall use for the future.

“ Almighty God, who hast continued my life to this day, grant that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may improve the time which thou shalt grant me, to my eternal salvation. Make me to remember, to thy glory, thy judgments and thy mercies. Make me so to consider the loss of my wife, whom thou hast taken from me, that it may dispose me, by thy grace, to lead the residue of my life in thy fear. Grant this, O LORD, for JESUS CHRIST’S sake. *Amen.*” (1)

He now relieved the drudgery of his Dictionary, and the melancholy of his grief, by taking an active part in the composition of “The Adventurer,” in which he began to write April 10., marking his essays with the signature T., by which most of his papers in that collection are distinguished : those, however, which have that signature, and also that of *Mysargyrus*, were not written by him, but, as I suppose, by Dr. Bathurst. Indeed, Johnson’s energy of thought and richness of language, are still more decisive marks than any signature. As a proof of this, my readers, I imagine, will not doubt that No. 39., on Sleep, is his ; for it not only has the general texture and colour of his style, but the authors with whom he

(1) [“ We may learn from Dr. Johnson’s devotional pieces the proper use to be made of the beginning of a new year (as suggesting useful and appropriate topics of meditation), and by the example of that excellent person, how much a pious mind is wont to be affected by this memorial of the lapse of life.” — PALEY, Sermons and Tracts, p. 124. ]

was peculiarly conversant are readily introduced in it in cursory allusion. The translation of a passage in Statius<sup>(1)</sup> quoted in that paper, and marked C. B. has been erroneously ascribed to Dr. Bathurst, whose Christian name was Richard. How much this amiable man actually contributed to "The Adventurer," cannot be known. Let me add, that Hawkesworth's imitations of Johnson are sometimes so happy, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish them with certainty, from the composition of his great archetype. Hawkesworth was his closest imitator, a circumstance of which that writer would once have been proud to be told; though, when he had become elated by having risen into some degree of consequence, he, in a conversation with me, had the provoking effrontery<sup>(2)</sup> to say he was not sensible of it.

Johnson was truly zealous for the success of "The Adventurer;" and very soon after his engaging in it, he wrote the following letter:

(1) This is a slight inaccuracy. The Latin Sapphics translated by C. B. in that paper were written by Cowley, and are in his fourth book on Plants. — MALONE.

(2) This is not a tone in which Mr. Boswell should have allowed himself to speak of Dr. Hawkesworth on such an occasion; the improved style of Dr. Johnson in the *Idler* might as well be said to be borrowed from the *Adventurer*, as that of the *Adventurer* from the *Rambler*. Johnson and Hawkesworth may have influenced each other, and yet either might say, without *effrontery*, that he was not conscious of it. Boswell had the mania of imagining, that every eminent writer of the day owed his fame to being an imitator of Johnson; we shall see several instances of it in the course of the work. — CROKER.



## LETTER 22. TO THE REV. DR. JOSEPH WARTON.

“ 8th March, 1753.

“ DEAR SIR,—I ought to have written to you before now, but I ought to do many things which I do not; nor can I, indeed, claim any merit from this letter; for being desired by the authors and proprietor of the *Adventurer* to look out for another hand, my thoughts necessarily fixed upon you, whose fund of literature will enable you to assist them, with very little interruption of your studies.

“ They desire you to engage to furnish one paper a month, at two guineas a paper, which you may very readily perform. We have considered that a paper should consist of pieces of imagination, pictures of life, and disquisitions of literature. The part which depends on the imagination is very well supplied, as you will find when you read the paper; for descriptions of life, there is now a treaty almost made with an author and an authoress; and the province of criticism and literature they are very desirous to assign to the commentator on *Virgil*.

“ I hope this proposal will not be rejected, and that the next post will bring us your compliance. I speak as one of the fraternity, though I have no part in the paper, beyond now and then a motto; but two of the writers are my particular friends, and I hope the pleasure of seeing a third united to them, will not be denied to, dear Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

The consequence of this letter was, Dr. Warton's enriching the collection with several admirable essays. <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) [In this place, though rather out of date, may be given Johnson's letter to Warton on the conclusion of the *Adventurer*:—

Johnson's saying, "I have no part in the paper beyond now and then a motto," may seem inconsistent with his being the author of the papers marked T. But he had, at this time, written only one number; and besides, even at any after period, he might have used the same expression, considering it as a point of honour not to own them; for Mrs. Williams told me that, "as he had *given* those Essays to Dr. Bathurst, who sold them at two guineas each, he never would own them; nay, he used to say he did not *write* them: but the fact was,

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LETTER 23. TO THE REV. DR. JOSEPH WARTON.

"8th March, 1754.

"DEAR SIR, — I cannot but congratulate you upon the conclusion of a work, in which you have borne so great a part with so much reputation. I immediately determined that your name should be mentioned, but the paper having been some time written, Mr. Hawkesworth, I suppose, did not care to disorder its text, and therefore put your eulogy in a note. He and every other man mentions your papers of criticism with great commendation, though not with greater than they deserve.

"But how little can we venture to exult in any intellectual powers or literary attainments, when we consider the condition of poor Collins. I knew him a few years ago full of hopes and full of projects, versed in many languages, high in fancy, and strong in retention. This busy and forcible mind is now under the government of those who lately would not have been able to comprehend the least and most narrow of its designs. What do you hear of him? are there hopes of his recovery? or is he to pass the remainder of his life in misery and degradation — perhaps with complete consciousness of his calamity?

"You have flattered us, dear Sir, for some time with hopes of seeing you; when you come you will find your reputation increased, and with it the kindness of those friends who do not envy you; for success always produces either love or hatred. I enter my name among those that love, and love you more and more in proportion as by writing more you are more known; and believe, that as you continue to diffuse among us your integrity and learning, I shall be still with greater esteem and affection, dear Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."]

that he *dictated* them, while Bathurst wrote." I read to him Mrs. Williams's account; he smiled, and said nothing.

I am not quite satisfied with the casuistry by which the productions of one person are thus passed upon the world for the productions of another. I allow that not only knowledge, but powers and qualities of mind may be communicated; but the actual effect of individual exertion never can be transferred, with truth, to any other than its own original cause. One person's child may be made the child of another person by adoption, as among the Romans, or by the ancient Jewish mode of a wife having children born to her upon her knees, by her handmaid. But these were children in a different sense from that of nature. It was clearly understood that they were not of the blood of their nominal parents. So in literary children, an author may give the profits and fame of his composition to another man, but cannot make that other the real author. A Highland gentleman, a younger branch of a family, once consulted me if he could not validly purchase the Chieftainship of his family, from the Chief who was willing to sell it. I told him it was impossible for him to acquire, by purchase, a right to be a different person from what he really was: for that the right of Chieftainship attached to the blood of primogeniture, and, therefore, was incapable of being transferred. I added, that though Esau sold his birthright, or the advantages belonging to it, he still remained the first-born of his parents; and that whatever agreement a Chief might make with any of the clan, the Heralds'

Office could not admit of the metamorphosis, or with any decency attest that the younger was the elder ; but I did not convince the worthy gentleman.

Johnson's papers in the *Adventurer* are very similar to those of the *Rambler* ; but, being rather more varied in their subjects (<sup>1</sup>), and being mixed with essays by other writers, upon topics more generally attractive than even the most elegant ethical discourses, the sale of the work, at first, was more extensive. Without meaning, however, to depreciate the *Adventurer*, I must observe, that as the value of the *Rambler* came, in the progress of time, to be better known, it grew upon the public estimation, and that its sale has far exceeded that of any other periodical papers since the reign of Queen Anne.

In one of the books of his diary I find the following entry :

“ Apr. 3. 1753. I began the second vol. of my Dictionary, room being left in the first for Preface, Grammar, and History, none of them yet begun.

“ O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state ; that when I shall render up, at the

(1) Dr. Johnson lowered and somewhat disguised his style, in writing the *Adventurers*, in order that his papers might pass for those of Dr. Bathurst, to whom he consigned the profits. This was Hawkesworth's opinion. — BURNEY.

This seems very improbable : it is much more likely that, observing and feeling that a lighter style was better suited to such essays, he, with his natural good sense, fell a little into the easier manner of his colleagues. — CROKER.

last day, an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Amen."

[LETTER 24. TO MR. RICHARDSON.

" 26th Sept. 1753.

" DEAR SIR, — I return you my sincerest thanks for the volumes of your new work (1); but it is a kind of tyrannical kindness to give only so much at a time, as makes more longed for; but that will probably be thought, even of the whole, when you have given it.

" I have no objection but to the preface, in which you first mention the letters as fallen by some chance into your hands, and afterwards mention your health as such, that you almost despaired of going through your plan. If you were to require my opinion which part should be changed, I should be inclined to the suppression of that part which seems to disclaim the composition. What is modesty, if it deserts from truth? Of what use is the disguise by which nothing is concealed?

" You must forgive this, because it is meant well.

" I thank you once more, dear Sir, for your books; but cannot I prevail this time for an index? — such I wished, and shall wish, to *Clarissa*. (2) Suppose that in one volume an accurate index was made to the three

(1) "*Sir Charles Grandison*," which was originally published in successive volumes. This relates to the sixth and seventh volumes. — CROKER.

(2) Richardson adopted Johnson's hint; for, in 1755, he published in octavo, "*A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections, contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison, digested under proper heads.*" It is remarkable, that both to this book, and to the first two volumes of *Clarissa*, is prefixed a *Preface by a friend*. The "friend," in this latter instance, was the celebrated Dr. Warburton. — MALONE.

works — but while I am writing an objection arises — such an index to the three would look like the preclusion of a fourth, to which I will never contribute; for if I cannot benefit mankind, I hope never to injure them. I am, SIR, your most obliged and most humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”]

He this year favoured Mrs. Lenox with a Dedication\* to the Earl of Orrery, of her “Shakspeare Illustrated.” (1)

(1) Johnson’s acquaintance was now sought by persons of the first eminence in literature, and his house, in respect of the conversations there, became an academy. Many persons were desirous of adding him to the number of their friends. Invitations to dine with such of those as he liked, he so seldom declined, that, to a friend of his, he said, “I never but once, upon a resolution to employ myself in study, balked an invitation out to dinner, and then I stayed at home and did nothing.” Little, however, did that laxity of temper, which this confession seems to imply, retard the progress of the great work in which he was employed: the conclusion, and also the perfection of his dictionary, were objects from which his attention was not to be diverted. The avocations he gave way to were such only as, when complied with, served to invigorate his mind to the performance of his engagements to his employers and the public, and hasten the approach of the day that was to reward his labour with applause.

Mrs. Lenox, a lady now well known in the literary world, had written a novel, entitled “The Life of Harriot Stuart,” which in the spring of 1751 was ready for publication. One evening at the [Ivy-Lane] Club, Johnson proposed to us the celebrating the birth of Mrs. Lenox’s first literary child, as he called her book, by a whole night spent in festivity. Upon his mentioning it to me, I told him I had never sat up a whole night in my life; but he continuing to press me, and saying, that I should find great delight in it, I, as did all the rest of our company, consented. The place appointed was the Devil Tavern, and there, about the hour of eight, Mrs. Lenox and her husband, and a lady of her acquaintance, still [1785] living, as also the club, and friends to the number of near twenty, assembled. The supper was elegant, and Johnson had directed that a magnificent hot apple-pie should make a part of it, and this he would have stuck with bay leaves,

because, forsooth, Mrs. Lenox was an authoress, and had written verses; and further, he had prepared for her a crown of laurel, with which, but not till he had invoked the muses by some ceremonies of his own invention, he encircled her brows. The night passed, as must be imagined, in pleasant conversation and harmless mirth, intermingled, at different periods, with the refreshments of coffee and tea. About five, Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade; but the far greater part of the company had deserted the colours of Bacchus, and were with difficulty rallied to partake of a second refreshment of coffee, which was scarcely ended when the day began to dawn. This phenomenon began to put us in mind of our reckoning; but the waiters were all so overcome with sleep, that it was two hours before a bill could be had, and it was not till near eight that the creaking of the street door gave the signal for our departure. — HAWKINS.

Mrs. Charlotte Lenox was born in 1720. Her father, Colonel Ramsay, Lieutenant-Governor of New York, sent her over to England at the age of fifteen; but, unfortunately, the relative to whose care she was consigned was either dead or in a state of insanity on Miss Ramsay's arrival. A lady who heard of, and pitied so extraordinary a disappointment, interested Lady Rockingham in the fate of Miss Ramsay; and the result was, that she was received into her ladyship's family, where she remained till she fancied that a gentleman who visited at the house had become enamoured of her; though she is said to have been very plain in her person. This fancied passion led her into some extravagances of vanity and jealousy, which terminated her residence with Lady Rockingham. Her moral character, however, was never impeached, and she obtained some countenance and protection from the Duchess of Newcastle; but was chiefly dependant for a livelihood on her own literary exertions. In 1747, she published a volume of poems, and became, probably about that time, known to Mr. Strahan, the printer, in consequence of which she became acquainted with and married a Mr. Lenox, who was in Mr. Strahan's employ, but in what capacity is not known. She next published, in 1751, the novel of Harriot Stuart, in which it is supposed she gave her own history. The Duchess of Newcastle honoured her by standing godmother to her first child, who was called Henrietta Holles, and did her the more substantial benefits of procuring for Mr. Lenox the place of tidewaiter in the Customs, and for herself an apartment in Somerset House. Nothing more is remembered of Mr. Lenox, except that he, at a later period of life, put forward some claim to a Scottish peerage. Mrs. Lenox lost her apartments by the pulling down of Somerset House; and, in the latter part of her life, was reduced to great distress. Besides her acquaintance with Dr. Johnson (who was always extremely kind to her), and other

literary characters, she had the good fortune to become acquainted, at Mr. Strahan's, with the late Right Hon. George Rose, who liberally assisted her in the latter years of her life — particularly in her last illness, and was at the expense of her burial in the beginning of January, 1804. — For most of the foregoing details, I am indebted to my friend the Right Hon. Sir George Rose, whose venerable mother still remembers Mrs. LENOX. — CROKER.



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# A P P E N D I X.

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## No. I.

### MICHAEL JOHNSON.

(See *antè*, p. 29.)

*Extract from Mrs. Piozzi.*

MICHAEL JOHNSON, the father of Samuel, was a bookseller at Lichfield; a very pious and worthy man, but wrong-headed, positive, and afflicted with melancholy, as his son, from whom alone I had the information, once told me: his business, however, leading him to be much on horseback, contributed to the preservation of his bodily health, and mental sanity; which, when he stayed long at home, would sometimes be about to give way; and Mr. Johnson said, that when his workshop, a detached building, had fallen half down for want of money to repair it, his father was not less diligent to lock the door every night, though he saw that any body might walk in at the back part, and knew that there was no security obtained by barring the front door. “*This* (said his son) was madness, you may see, and would have been discoverable in other instances of the prevalence of imagination, but that poverty prevented it from playing such tricks as riches and leisure encourage.” Michael was a man of still larger size and greater strength than his son, who was reckoned very like him, but did not delight in talking much of his family — “One has (says he) *so* little pleasure in reciting the anecdotes of beggary!” One day, however, hear-

ing me praise a favourite friend with partial tenderness and true esteem : " Why do you like that man's acquaintance so ? " said he : " Because," replied I, " he is open and confiding, and tells me stories of his uncles and cousins ; I love the light parts of a solid character."—" Nay, if you are for family history (says Mr. Johnson, good-humouredly), I can fit you : I had an uncle, Cornelius Ford, who, upon a journey, stopped and read an inscription written on a stone he saw standing by the way-side, set up, as it proved, in honour of a man who had leaped a certain leap thereabouts, the extent of which was specified upon the stone : Why now, says my uncle, I could leap it in my boots ; and he did leap it in his boots. I had likewise another uncle, Andrew (continued he), my father's brother, who kept the ring in Smithfield (where they wrestled and boxed), for a whole year, and never was thrown or conquered. Here now are uncles for you, *mistress*, if that's the way to your heart."

Michael Johnson was past fifty years old when he married his wife, who was upwards of forty ; yet, I think her son told me she remained three years childless before he was born into the world, who so greatly contributed to improve it. In three years more she brought another son, Nathaniel, who lived to be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old<sup>(1)</sup>, and of whose manly spirit I have heard his brother speak with pride and pleasure, mentioning one circumstance, particular enough, that when the company were one day lamenting the badness of the roads, he inquired where they could be, as he travelled the country more than most people, and had never seen a bad road in his life. The two brothers did not, however, much delight in each other's company, being always rivals for the mother's fondness ; and many of the severe reflections on domestic life in *Rasselas*, took their source from its author's keen recollec-

(1) Nathaniel was born in 1712, and died in 1737. Their father, Michael Johnson, was born at Cubley in Derbyshire, in 1656, and died at Lichfield, in 1731, at the age of seventy six. Sarah Ford, his wife, was born at King's Norton, in the county of Worcester, in 1669, and died at Lichfield, in January, 1759, in her ninetieth year. King's Norton Dr. Johnson supposed to be in Warwickshire (see his inscription for his mother's tomb), but it is in Worcestershire, probably on the confines of the county of Warwick.—MALONE.

tions of the time passed in his early years. Their father Michael died of an inflammatory fever, at the age of seventy-six, as Mr. Johnson told me: their mother at eighty-nine, of a gradual decay. She was slight in her person, he said, and rather below than above the common size. So excellent was her character, and so blameless her life, that when an oppressive neighbour once endeavoured to take from her a little field she possessed, he could persuade no attorney to undertake the cause against a woman so beloved in her narrow circle; and it is this incident he alludes to in the line of his "Vanity of Human Wishes," calling her

"The general favourite as the general friend."

*Note by Mr. Croker.*

There seems some difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory opinion as to Michael Johnson's real condition and circumstances. That in the latter years of his life he was poor, is certain; and Doctor Johnson (in the "Account of his early Life") not only admits the general fact of *poverty*, but gives several instances of what may be called *indigence*: yet, on the other hand, there is evidence that for near fifty years he occupied a respectable rank amongst his fellow-citizens, and appears in the annals of Lichfield on occasions not bespeaking poverty. In 1687, a subscription for recasting the cathedral bells was set on foot, headed by the bishop, dean, &c. aided by the neighbouring gentry: Michael Johnson's name stands the twelfth in the list; and his contribution, though only 10s., was not comparatively contemptible; for no one, except the bishop and dean, gave so much as 10*l*. Baronets and knights gave a guinea or two, and the great body of the contributors gave less than Johnson. (Harwood's Lichfield, p. 69.) In 1694, we find him burying in the cathedral, and placing a marble stone over a young woman in whose fate he was interested. His house, a handsome one, and in one of the best situations in the town, was his own freehold; and he appears to have added to it, for we find in the

books of the corporation the following entry : " 1708, July 13. Agreed, that Mr. Michael Johnson, bookseller, have a lease of his encroachment of his house in Sadler's Street, for forty years, at 2s. 6d. per an." And this lease, at the expiration of the forty years, was renewed to the Doctor as a mark of the respect of his fellow-citizens. In 1709, Michael Johnson served the office of sheriff of the county of the city of Lichfield. In 1718, he was elected junior bailiff; and in 1725, senior bailiff, or chief magistrate. Thus respected and apparently thriving in Lichfield, the following extract of a letter, written by the Rev. George Plaxton, chaplain to Lord Gower, will show the high estimation in which the father of our great moralist was held in the neighbouring country : " Trentham, St. Peter's day, 1716. Johnson, the Lichfield librarian, is now here; he propagates learning all over this diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height; all the clergy here are his pupils, and suck all they have from him; Allen cannot make a warrant without his precedent, nor our quondam John Evans draw a recognizance *sine directione Michaelis*." (Gentleman's Magazine, October, 1791.) On the whole, it seems probable that the growing expenses of a family, and losses in trade, had in his latter years reduced Mr. Johnson, from the state of competency which he had before enjoyed, to very narrow circumstances.

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[The following is the title-page and address to his customers, of one of Michael Johnson's Sale Catalogues, in Mr. Upcott's collection : —

" A Catalogue of choice books, in all faculties, divinity, history, travels, law, physic, mathematics, philosophy, poetry, &c. together with bibles, common-prayers, shop-books, pocket-books, &c. Also fine French prints, for staircases and large chimney-pieces; maps, large and small. To be sold by Auction, or he who bids most, at the Talbot, in Sidbury, Worcester. The sale to begin on Friday the 21st of this instant March, 1717-18, exactly at six o'clock in the afternoon, and to continue till

all be sold. Catalogues are given out at the place of sale, or by Michael Johnson of Lichfield.

“ To all Gentlemen, Ladies, and others, in and near Worcester : —

“ I have had several auctions in your neighbourhood, as Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Evesham, &c. with success, and am now to address myself, and try my fortune with you.

“ You must not wonder that I begin every day’s sale with small and common books ; the reason is, a room is some time a filling ; and persons of address and business seldom coming first, they are entertainment till we are full : they are never the last books of the best kind of that sort, for ordinary families and young persons, &c. But in the body of the catalogue you will find law, mathematics, history ; and for the learned in divinity, there are Drs. South, Taylor, Tillotson, Beveridge, Flavel, &c., the best of that kind : and to please the Ladies, I have added store of fine pictures and paper-hangings ; and, by the way, I would desire them to take notice, that the pictures shall always be put up by the noon of that day they are to be sold, that they may be viewed by daylight.

“ I have no more, but to wish you pleased, and myself a good sale, who am your humble servant,

“ M. JOHNSON.”]

## No. II.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE EARLY LIFE OF DR.  
JOHNSON, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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[From a little volume published in 1805, and now become scarce, entitled "An Account of the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from his Birth to his Eleventh Year, written by himself: to which are added, Original Letters to Dr. Johnson, by Miss Hill Boothby: from the MSS. preserved by the Doctor, and now in possession of Richard Wright, Surgeon, of Lichfield."—"This volume (says the Editor) was among that mass of papers which were ordered to be committed to the flames a few days before Dr. Johnson's death, thirty-two pages of which were torn out by himself, and destroyed. Francis Barber, his black servant, unwilling that all the MSS. of his illustrious master should be utterly lost, preserved these relics from the flames. By purchase they came into the possession of the Editor."]

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## ANNALS.

## I. 1709-10.

SEPT. 7. (1) 1709, I was born at Lichfield. My mother had a very difficult and dangerous labour, and was assisted by George Hector, a man-midwife of great reputation. I was born almost dead (2), and could not cry for some time. When he had me in his arms, he said, "Here is a brave boy."

In a few weeks an inflammation was discovered on my buttock, which was at first, I think, taken for a burn; but soon appeared to be a natural disorder. It swelled, broke, and healed.

My Father being that year Sheriff of Lichfield, and to ride the circuit of the County next day, which was a ceremony

(1) 18. of the present style. — *Orig.*

(2) To have been born *almost dead* has been related of many eminent men; amongst others of Addison, Lord Lyttelton, and Voltaire. — CROKER.

then performed with great pomp ; he was asked by my mother, " Whom he would invite to the Riding ? " and answered, " All the town now. " He feasted the citizens with uncommon magnificence, and was the last but one that maintained the splendour of the Riding.

I was, by my father's persuasion, put to one Marclew, commonly called Bellison<sup>(1)</sup>, the servant, or wife of a servant of my father, to be nursed in George Lane, where I used to call when I was a bigger boy, and eat fruit in the garden, which was full of trees. Here it was discovered that my eyes were bad ; and an issue was cut in my left arm<sup>(2)</sup>, of which I took no great notice, as I think my mother has told me, having my little hand in a custard.

It is observable, that, having been told of this operation, I always imagined that I remembered it, but I laid the scene in the wrong house. Such confusions of memory I suspect to be common.

My mother visited me every day, and used to go different ways, that her assiduity might not expose her to ridicule ; and often left her fan or glove behind her, that she might have a pretence to come back unexpected ; but she never discovered any token of neglect. Dr. Swinfen<sup>(3)</sup> told me, that the scrofulous sores which afflicted me proceeded from the bad humours of the nurse, whose son had the same distemper, and was likewise short-sighted, but both in a less degree. My mother thought my diseases derived from her family.<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) The name of Marklew, alias Bellison, is yet common in Lichfield, and is usually so distinguished. — R. WRIGHT.

(2) How long this issue was continued I do not remember. I believe it was suffered to dry when I was about six years old. — *Orig.*

(3) Samuel Swinfen, who took a degree of Doctor of Medicine from Pembroke College in 1712. — HALL.

(4) His mother and Dr. Swinfen were both perhaps wrong in their conjecture as to the origin of the disease ; he more probably inherited it from his father, with the *morbid melancholy* which is so commonly an attendant on scrofulous habits. — CROKER.



In ten weeks I was taken home, a poor, diseased infant, almost blind.

I remember my aunt Nath. Ford told me, when I was about . . . years old, that she would not have picked such a poor creature up in the street.

In . . . 67, when I was at Lichfield, I went to look for my nurse's house; and, inquiring somewhat obscurely, was told "this is the house in which you were nursed." I saw my nurse's son, to whose milk I succeeded, reading a large Bible, which my nurse had bought, as I was then told, some time before her death.

Dr. Swinfen used to say, that he never knew any child reared with so much difficulty.

## II. 1710-11.

In the second year I knew not what happened to me. I believe it was then that my mother carried me to Trysul<sup>(1)</sup>, to consult Dr. Atwood, an oculist of Worcester. My father and Mrs. Harriots, I think, never had much kindness for each other. She was my mother's relation; and he had none so high to whom he could send any of his family. He saw her seldom himself, and willingly disgusted her, by sending his horses from home on Sunday; which she considered, and with reason, as a breach of duty. My father had much vanity, which his adversity hindered from being fully exerted. I remember, that, mentioning her legacy in the humility of distress, he called her *our good Cousin Harriots*. My mother had no value for his relations; those indeed whom we knew of were much lower than hers. This contempt began, I know not on which side, very early: but, as my father was little at home, it had not much effect.

My father and mother had not much happiness from each other. They seldom conversed; for my father could not bear to talk of his affairs; and my mother, being unacquainted with books, cared not to talk of any thing else. Had my mother

(1) Near Wolverhampton. — R. WRIGHT.

been more literate, they had been better companions. She might have sometimes introduced her unwelcome topic with more success, if she could have diversified her conversation. Of business she had no distinct conception; and therefore her discourse was composed only of complaint, fear, and suspicion. Neither of them ever tried to calculate the profits of trade, or the expenses of living. My mother concluded that we were poor, because we lost by some of our trades; but the truth was, that my father, having in the early part of his life contracted debts, never had trade sufficient to enable him to pay them, and maintain his family; he got something, but not enough.

It was not till about 1768, that I thought to calculate the returns of my father's trade, and by that estimate his probable profits. This, I believe, my parents never did.

### III. 1711-12.

This year, in Lent—12. I was taken to London, to be touched for the evil by Queen Anne. My mother was at Nicholson's, the famous bookseller, in Little Britain. (1) I always retained some memory of this journey, though I was then but thirty months old. I remembered a little dark room behind the kitchen, where the jack-weight fell through a hole in the floor, into which I once slipped my leg. (2)

I remember a boy crying at the palace when I went to be touched. Being asked, "on which side of the shop was the counter?" I answered, "on the left from the entrance," many years after, and spoke, not by guess, but by memory. We went in the stage-coach, and returned in the waggon, as my mother said, because my cough was violent. The hope of saving a few shillings was no slight motive; for she, not having

(1) My mother, then with child, concealed her pregnancy, that she might not be hindered from the journey. — *Orig.*

(2) I seem to remember, that I played with a string and a bell, which my cousin Isaac Johnson gave me; and that there was a cat with a white collar, and a dog, called Chops, that leaped over a stick: but I know not whether I remember the thing, or the talk of it. — *Orig.*

been accustomed to money, was afraid of such expenses as now seem very small. She sewed two guineas in her petticoat, lest she should be robbed.

We were troublesome to the passengers; but to suffer such inconveniences in the stage-coach was common in these days to persons in much higher rank. (1) She bought me a small silver cup and spoon, marked SAM. I., lest, if they had been marked S. I., which was her name, they should, upon her death, have been taken from me. She bought me a speckled linen frock, which I knew afterwards by the name of my London frock. The cup was one of the last pieces of plate which dear Tetty (2) sold in our distress. I have now the spoon. She bought at the same time two tea-spoons, and till my manhood she had no more.

My father considered tea as very expensive, and discouraged my mother from keeping company with the neighbours, and from paying visits or receiving them. She lived to say, many years after, that if the time were to pass again, she would not comply with such unsocial injunctions. (3)

I suppose that in this year I was first informed of a future state. I remember, that being in bed with my mother one morning, I was told by her of the two places to which the inhabitants of this world were received after death: one, a fine place filled with happiness, called Heaven; the other, a *sad* place, called Hell. That this account much affected my imagination, I do not remember. When I was risen, my mother bade me repeat what she had told me to Thomas Jackson. When I told this afterwards to my mother, she

(1) I was sick; one woman fondled me, the other was disgusted. — *Orig.*

(2) His wife, whom he called by this familiar contraction of Elizabeth. — CROKER.

(3) When Dr. Johnson, at an advanced age, recorded all these minute circumstances, he contemplated, we are told, writing the history of his own life, and probably intended to develop, from his own infant recollections, the growth and powers of the faculty of memory, which he possessed in so remarkable a degree. From the little details of his domestic history he perhaps meant also to trace the progressive change in the habits of the middle classes of society. — CROKER.

seemed to wonder that she should begin such talk so late as that the first time could be remembered.

[*Here there is a chasm of thirty-eight pages in the manuscript.*] — examination. We always considered it as a day of ease; for we made no preparation, and indeed were asked commonly such questions as we had been asked often before, and could regularly answer. But I believe it was of use at first.

On Thursday night a small portion of *Æsop* was learned by heart, and on Friday morning the lessons in *Æsop* were repeated; I believe, not those in *Helvicus*. On Friday afternoon we learned *Quæ Genus*; I suppose that other boys might say their repetition, but of this I have now no distinct remembrance. To learn *Quæ Genus* was to me always pleasing; and *As in Præsenti* was, I know not why, always disgusting.

When we learned our *Accidence* we had no parts, but, I think, two lessons. The boys that came to school untaught read the *Accidence* twice through before they learned it by heart.

When we learned *Propria quæ Maribus*, our parts were in the *Accidence*; when we learned *As in Præsenti*, our parts were in the *Accidence* and *Propria quæ Maribus*; when we learned *Syntaxis*, in the former three. *Propria quæ Maribus* I could repeat without any effort of recollection. I used to repeat it to my mother and Tom Johnson; and remember, that I once went as far as the middle of the paragraph, “*Mascula dicuntur monosyllaba,*” in a dream.

On Saturday, as on Thursday, we were examined. We were sometimes, on one of those days, asked our *Catechism* <sup>(1)</sup>, but with no regularity or constancy.

The progress of examination was this. When we learned *Propria quæ Maribus*, we were examined in the *Accidence*; particularly we formed Verbs, that is, went through the same person in all the Moods and Tenses. This was very difficult to me; and I was once very anxious about the next day, when this exercise was to be performed, in which I had failed till I

(1) G. Hector never had been taught his *Catechism*. — *Orig.*

was discouraged. My mother encouraged me, and I proceeded better. When I told her of my good escape, "We often," said she, dear mother! "come off best, when we are most afraid." She told me, that, once when she asked me about forming verbs, I said, "I did not form them in an ugly shape." "You could not," said she, "speak plain; and I was proud that I had a boy who was forming verbs." These little memorials sooth my mind. Of the parts of Corderius or Æsop, which we learned to repeat, I have not the least recollection, except of a passage in one of the *Morals*, where it is said of some man, that, when he hated another, he made him rich; this I repeated emphatically in my mother's hearing, who could never conceive that riches could bring any evil. She remarked it, as I expected.

I had the curiosity, two or three years ago, to look over Garretson's *Exercises*, Willymot's *Particles*, and Walker's *Exercises*; and found very few sentences that I should have recollected if I had found them in any other books. That which is read without pleasure is not often recollected nor infixed by conversation, and therefore in a great measure drops from the memory. Thus it happens that those who are taken early from school, commonly lose all that they had learned.

When we learned *As in Præsenti*, we parsed *Propria quæ Maribus* by Hoole's *Terminations*; and, when we learned *Syntaxis*, we parsed *As in Præsenti*; and afterwards *Quæ Genus*, by the same book; sometimes, as I remember, proceeding in order of the rules, and sometimes, particularly in *As in Præsenti*, taking words as they occurred in the Index.

The whole week before we broke up, and the part of the week in which we broke up, were spent wholly, I know not why, in examination; and were therefore easy to both us and the master. The two nights before the vacation were free from exercise.

This was the course of the school, which I remember with pleasure; for I was indulged and caressed by my master, and, I think, really excelled the rest.

I was with Hawkins but two years, and perhaps four months.

The time, till I had computed it, appeared much longer by the multitude of novelties which it supplied, and of incidents, then in my thoughts important, it produced. Perhaps it is not possible that any other period can make the same impression on the memory.

X. 1719.

In the Spring of 1719, our class consisting of eleven, the number was always fixed in my memory, but one of the names I have forgotten, was removed to the upper school, and put under Holbrook, a peevish and ill-tempered man. We were removed sooner than had been the custom; for the head-master, intent upon his boarders, left the town-boys long in the lower school. Our removal was caused by a reproof from the Town-clerk; and Hawkins complained that he had lost half his profit. At this removal I cried. The rest were indifferent. My exercise in Garretson was somewhere about the Gerunds. Our places in Æsop and Helvicus I have totally forgotten.

At Whitsuntide Mrs. Longworth brought me a "Hermes Garretsoni," of which I do not remember that I ever could make much use. It was afterwards lost, or stolen at school. My exercise was then in the end of the Syntax. Hermes furnished me with the word *inliciturus*, which I did not understand, but used it.

This task was very troublesome to me; I made all the twenty-five exercises, others made but sixteen. I never shewed all mine; five lay long after in a drawer in the shop. I made an exercise in a little time, and shewed it my mother; but the task being long upon me, she said, "Though you could make an exercise in so short a time, I thought you would find it difficult to make them all as soon as you should."

This Whitsuntide, I and my brother were sent to pass some time at Birmingham; I believe, a fortnight. Why such boys were sent to trouble other houses, I cannot tell. My mother had some opinion that much improvement was to be had by changing the mode of life. My uncle Harrison was a widower; and his house was kept by Sally Ford, a young woman of such sweetness of temper, that I used to say she had

no fault. We lived most at uncle Ford's, being much caressed by my aunt, a good-natured, coarse woman, easy of converse, but willing to find something to censure in the absent. My uncle Harrison did not much like us, nor did we like him. He was a very mean and vulgar man, drunk every night, but drunk with little drink, very peevish, very proud, very ostentatious, but, luckily, not rich. At my aunt Ford's I eat so much of a boiled leg of mutton (1), that she used to talk of it. My mother, who had lived in a narrow sphere, and was then affected by little things, told me seriously that it would hardly ever be forgotten. Her mind, I think, was afterwards much enlarged, or greater evils wore out the care of less.

I stayed after the vacation was over some days; and remember, when I wrote home, that I desired the horses to come on Thursday of the first school week; and then, and not till then, they should be welcome to go. I was much pleased with a rattle to my whip, and wrote of it to my mother.

When my father came to fetch us home, he told the ostler, that he had twelve miles home, and two boys under his care. This offended me. He had then a watch (2), which he returned when he was to pay for it.

In making, I think, the first exercise under Holbrook, I perceived the power of continuity of attention, of application not suffered to wander or to pause. I was writing at the kitchen windows, as I thought, alone, and turning my head saw Sally dancing. I went on without notice, and had finished almost without perceiving that any time had elapsed. This close attention I have seldom in my whole life obtained.

In the upper-school, I first began to point my exercise,

(1) All these trifles — since Dr. Johnson in the height of his fame (for the *Account* must have been written subsequent to 1768) thought them worth recording — appear worth quoting. His voracious love of a *leg of mutton* adhered to him through life; and the prophecy of his mother, that it *never would be forgotten*, is realised in a way the good woman could not have anticipated. — CROKER.

(2) The convenience of a watch, now so general, Dr. Johnson himself, as Sir J. Hawkins reports (p. 460.), did not possess till 1768. — CROKER.

which we made noon's business. Of the method I have not so distinct a remembrance as of the foregoing system. On Thursday morning we had a lesson, as on other mornings. On Thursday afternoon, and on Saturday morning, we commonly made examples to the Syntax.

We were soon raised from Æsop to Phædrus, and then said our repetition on Friday afternoon to Hunter. I remember the fable of the wolf and lamb, *to my draught — that I may drink*. At what time we began Phædrus, I know not. It was the only book which we learned to the end. In the latter part thirty lines were expected for a lesson. What reconciles masters to long lessons is the pleasure of tasking.

Helvicus was very difficult: the dialogue *Vestitus*, Hawkins directed us to omit, as being one of the hardest in the book. As I remember, there was another upon food, and another upon fruits, which we began, and were ordered not to pursue. In the dialogue of Fruits, we perceived that Holbrook did not know the meaning of *Uvæ Crispæ*. That lesson gave us great trouble. I observed that we learned Helvicus a long time with very little progress. We learned it in the afternoon on Monday and Wednesday.

Gladiolus Scriptorius. — A little lapse, we quitted it. I got an English Erasmus.

In Phædrus we tried to use the interpretation, but never attempted the notes. Nor do I remember that the interpretation helped us.

In Phædrus we were sent up twice to the upper master to be punished. The second time we complained that we could not get the passage. Being told that we should ask, we informed him that we had asked, and that the assistant would not tell us.



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