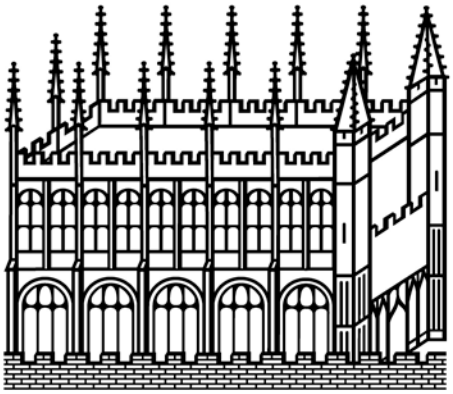

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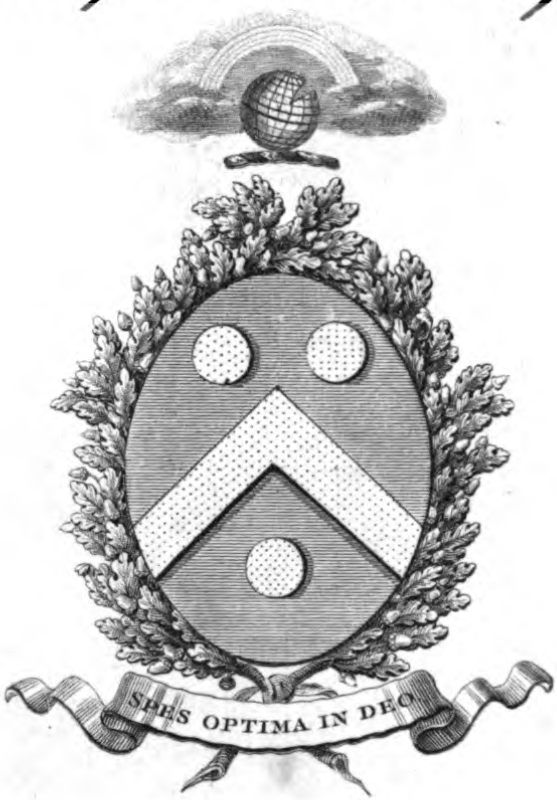

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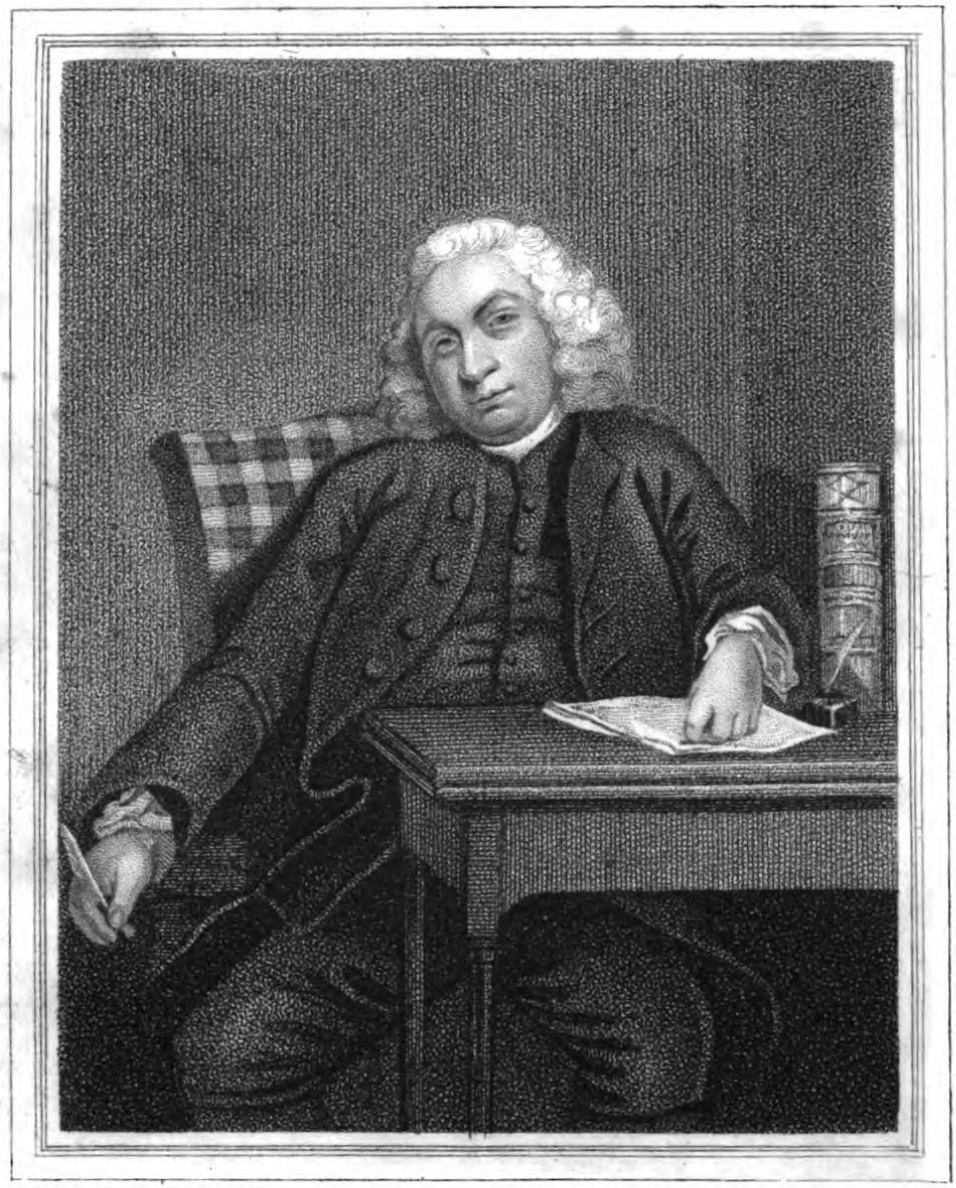

Sir Joshua Reynolds pinxt. *H. Meyer sculpt.*

SAMUEL JOHNSON L.L.D.

London Published Oct.r 1808. by J. Cuthead, 249. High Holborn.

THE

TABLE TALK

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

COMPRISING HIS

MOST INTERESTING REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS.

COLLECTED BY

JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ. F.R.S.

—" From his cradle
" He was a Scholar, and a ripe and good one:
" And to add greater honours to his age
" Than man could give him, he died fearing Heaven.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. COXHEAD, 249, HIGH HOLBORN.

1818.

London: Printed by B. M'Millan,
Bow Street, Covent Garden.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE approbation bestowed on Boswell's Life of Johnson, suggested the propriety of the Selection now offered to the Public. The sentiments of that great moralist and judge of human nature, on various interesting topics, are here arranged and digested in a manner which, it is hoped, will prove agreeable to a numerous class of readers; those, namely, who seek for instruction from works which they may take up or lay down at pleasure, without interrupting the chain of an argument, or the circumstances of a narration.

Dr. Johnson's conversation possessed precisely that excellence so well described by Lord Verulam: —"It is good in discourse and speech of conversation (says his Lordship, in the quaint but expressive language of his age), to vary and intermingle speech of the present occasion with arguments; tales with reasons; asking of questions with telling of opinions; and jest with earnest."

In this compilation, are contained several authentic anecdotes of distinguished Literary Characters; rules for the conduct of life in the most serious and delicate conjunctures; and those sound remarks on works of genius and learning, which, in a peculiar manner, distinguished Dr. Johnson.

SKETCH OF THE

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, who has been *justly styled* the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century, was born in the city of Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the eighteenth of September, 1709. His father, Michael, was a bookseller; and must have had some reputation in the city, as he more than once bore the office of chief magistrate. By what casuistical reasoning he reconciled his conscience to the oaths required to be taken by all who occupy such stations, cannot now be known; but it is certain, that he was zealously attached to the exiled family, and instilled the same principles into the youthful mind of his son. So much was he in earnest in this work, and at so early a period did he commence it, that when Dr. Sacheverel, in his memorable tour through England, came to Lichfield, Mr. Johnson carried his son, not then quite three years old, to the cathedral, and placed him on his shoulders, that he might see as well as hear that far-famed preacher.

But political prejudices were not the only bad

things which young Sam inherited from his father: he derived from the same source a morbid melancholy, which, though it neither depressed his imagination, nor clouded his perpicuity, filled him with dreadful apprehensions of insanity, and rendered him wretched through life. From his nurse he contracted the *scrofula*, or king's evil, which made its appearance at a very early period, disfigured a face naturally well-formed, and deprived him of the sight of one of his eyes.

Johnson was initiated in classical learning at the free-school of his native city, under the tuition of Mr. Hunter, and having afterwards resided some time at the house of his cousin Cornelius Ford, a minister, who assisted him in the classics, he was, by his advice, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master, whom he has described as "a very able man, but an idle man; and to him unreasonably severe."

On the 31st of October, 1728, he was entered a Commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford, being then in his nineteenth year. Of his tutor, Mr. Jourden, he gave the following account: "He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instruction; indeed I did not attend him much." He had, however, a love and respect for Jourden, not for his literature, but for his worth. "Whenever," said he, "a young man becomes Jourden's pupil, he becomes his son."

In the year 1730, Mr. Corbet, a young gentleman whom Johnson had accompanied to Oxford as a companion, left the University, and his father, to whom, according to the account of Sir John Hawkins, Johnson trusted for support, declined contributing any farther to that purpose; and as his father's business was by no means lucrative, his remittances were consequently too small to supply even the decencies of external appearance. Thus unfortunately situated, he was under the necessity of quitting the University without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years. This was a circumstance which, in the subsequent part of his life, he had occasion to regret, as an obstacle to his obtaining a settlement, whence he might have derived that subsistence which he could not procure by any other means.

In December, 1731, his father died, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, in very narrow circumstances, so that for present support, he condescended to accept the employment of usher, in the free grammar-school at Market-Bosworth in Leicestershire, which he relinquished in a short time, and went to reside at Birmingham, with his school-fellow Mr. Hector, where he derived considerable benefit from several of his literary productions. In this place he translated Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia, and only received *5l. 5s.* for it.

In 1735 he became the warm admirer of Mrs. Porter, widow of Mr. Henry Porter, mercer in Birmingham. "It was," he said, "a love match on

both sides," and judging from a description of their persons, we must suppose that the passion was not inspired by the beauties of form or graces of manner; but by a mutual admiration of each other's minds. Johnson's appearance is described as 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, and separated behind; and he had seemingly convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended at once to excite surprise and ridicule." Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manners, as described by Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others. It was beyond a doubt, however, that whatever her real charms might have been, in the eye of her husband she was extremely beautiful, for in her epitaph he has recorded her as such, and given many instances in his writings, of a sincere and permanent affection.

With the property he acquired with his wife, which is supposed to have amounted to about 800*l.* he attempted to establish a boarding-school for young gentlemen at Edial, near Lichfield; but the plan proved abortive, the only pupils put under his care were Garrick, the celebrated English Roscius, his brother George, and a Mr. Offeley, a young gentleman of good fortune, who died early*. Disappointed in his expectation of deriving a subsistence from the

* About this time he was assiduously engaged in his tragedy called 'Irene.'

establishment of a boarding school, he set out on the 2d of March, 1737, being then in the 28th year of his age, for London; and it is a memorable circumstance, that his pupil Garrick went there at the same time, with an intention to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law. They were recommended to Mr. Colson, master of the mathematical school at Rochester, by a letter from a friend.

In three months after he came to London, his tragedy of 'Irene' being as he thought completely finished and fit for the stage, he solicited Mr. Fleetwood, the manager of Drury-lane Theatre, to bring it out at his house; but Mr. Fleetwood declined receiving it. Soon after he was employed by Mr. Cave, as a coadjutor in his magazine, which for some years was his principal resource for support.

In May, 1738, he published 'London, a Poem,' written in imitation of the third Satire of Juvenal. It has been generally said, that he offered it to several booksellers, none of whom would purchase it. Mr. Cave at length communicated it to Dodsley, who had judgment enough to discern its intrinsic merit, and thought it creditable to be concerned in it. Dodsley gave him ten pounds for the copy. It is remarkable, that it came out on the same morning with Pope's Satire, entitled, 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-eight.' Pope was so struck with its merit, that he sought to discover the author, and prophesied his future fame; and from his note

to Lord Gower, it seems that he was successful in his enquiries.

He derived, however, so little emolument from his literary productions, that notwithstanding the success of his 'London,' he was willing to accept of an offer made him, of becoming master of a free-school, at a salary of sixty pounds a year; but as the statutes of the school required that he should be a Master of Arts, he was under the necessity of declining it.

In the years 1740, 41, 42, and 43, he furnished for the 'Gentleman's Magazine' a variety of publications, besides the Parliamentary Debates. Among these were the lives of several eminent men; an essay on the account of the conduct of the Duke of Marlborough, then the popular topic of conversation; and an advertisement for Osborne, concerning the 'Bibliotheca Harleiana, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford.'—This was afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the Catalogue, in which the Latin account of books was written by him. Mr. Osborne 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, yet 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 knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. Johnson himself relates it dif-

ferently to Mr. Boswell: "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him; but it was not in his shop, it was in my own chamber." In 1744, he produced the Life of Savage, which he had announced his intention of writing in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for August 1743. This work did him infinite honour.

In 1746 he formed and digested the plan of his great philological work, which might then be well esteemed one of the desiderata of English literature: it was announced to the public in 1747, in a pamphlet entitled, 'The plan of a *Dictionary* of the English Language, addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State." The hint of undertaking this work is said to have been first suggested to Johnson by Dodsley, who contracted with him for the execution of it in conjunction with Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messrs. Longman, and the two Messrs. Knapton. The price stipulated was 1,575*l.* The cause of its being inscribed to Lord Chesterfield is thus related: "I had neglected," said Johnson, "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 the delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire."

His fortunate pupil Garrick having in the course of this year become joint patentee and manager of Drury-lane Theatre, Johnson furnished him with a

prologue at the opening of it, which for just and manly criticism, as well as poetical excellence, is unrivalled in that species of composition.

In 1748, he formed a Club that met at a chop-house in Ivy-lane every Tuesday evening, with a view to enjoy literary discussion, and the pleasure of animated relaxation.—In the year 1749, he published 'The Vanity of Human Wishes, being the tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated,' with his name.—The same year his tragedy of 'Irene,' which had long been kept back for want of encouragement, appeared upon the stage at Drury-lane, through the kindness of his friend Garrick.—On the 20th of March, 1750, he published the first paper of the 'Rambler,' and continued it without interruption every Tuesday and Friday till the 17th of March, 1752, when it closed. In carrying on this periodical publication, he seems neither to have courted, nor to have met with much assistance; the papers contributed by others amounting only to five in number. Soon after the first folio edition was concluded, it was published in four octavo volumes, and the author lived to see a just tribute of approbation paid to its merit in the extensiveness of its sale, ten numerous editions of it having been printed in London, before his death, besides those in Ireland and Scotland.

Sir John Hawkins relates, that in the spring of 1751, he indulged himself in a frolic of midnight revelling. This was to celebrate the birth-day of

Mrs. Lennox's first literary child, the novel of 'Harriet Stewart.' He drew the members of the Ivy-lane club, and others, to the number of twenty, to the Devil tavern, where Mrs. Lennox and her husband met them. Johnson, after an invocation of the Muses, and some other ceremonies of his own invention, invested the authoress with a laurel crown. The festivity was protracted till morning, and Johnson throughout the night was a Bacchanalian without the use of wine.

Though his circumstances at that time were far from being easy, he received, as a constant visitor, at his house, Miss Anna Williams, daughter of a Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, who had just lost her sight. She had contracted a close intimacy with his wife, and after her death, she had an apartment from him at all times when he had a house. In 1755, Garrick gave her a benefit, which produced 200*l.* She afterwards published a quarto volume of miscellanies, and thereby increased her little stock to 300*l.* This, and Johnson's protection, supported her during the rest of her life.

In 1752, he lost his wife, after a cohabitation of seventeen years, and in this melancholy event felt the most poignant distress.—Soon after the 'Rambler' ceased, Dr. Hawkesworth projected the 'Adventurer,' in conjunction with Bonnel Thornton, Dr. Bathurst, and others. The first number was published 7th November, 1752, and the paper conti-

nued twice a-week till March 9th, 1754. Thornton's assistance was soon withdrawn, and he set up a new paper, in conjunction with Colman, called the 'Connoisseur.' Johnson was zealous for the success of the 'Adventurer,' which was at first rather more popular than the 'Rambler.' He engaged the assistance of Dr. Warton, whose admirable essays were well known. Johnson began to write in the 'Adventurer,' April 10th, 1753, marking his papers with the signature T. His price was two guineas for each paper. Of all the papers he wrote he gave both the fame and the profit to Dr. Bathurst. Indeed the latter wrote them, while Johnson dictated; though he considered it as a point of honour not to own them. He even used to say he did not *write* them, on the pretext that he *dictated* them only, allowing himself, by this casuistry, to be accessary to the propagation of falsehood, though his conscience had been hurt by even the appearance of imposition in writing the Parliamentary Debates. This year he wrote for Mrs. Lennox, the 'Dedication to the Earl of Orrery,' of her 'Shakspeare Illustrated,' in two duodecimo volumes.

The death of Mr. Cave, January the 10th, 1754, afforded Johnson an opportunity of shewing his regard for his early patron, by writing his life, which was published in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for February.—As the arduous work of the Dictionary drew towards a conclusion, Lord Chesterfield, who had treated Johnson with great contempt, now

meanly condescended to court a reconciliation with him, in hopes of being immortalized in a dedication. With this view, he wrote two essays in the 'World,' in praise of the Dictionary, and, according to Sir John Hawkins, sent Sir Thomas Robinson to him for the same purpose. But Johnson rejected the advances of the noble Lord, and spurned his proffered patronage.

Though he failed in an attempt, at an early period of life, to obtain the degree of Master of Arts, the University of Oxford, a short time before the publication of his Dictionary, in anticipation of the excellence of the Work, and at the solicitation of his friend Mr. Warton, unanimously presented it to him; and it was considered as an honour of considerable importance, in the introduction of the work to the notice of the public.

At length, in the month of May, 1754, appeared his 'Dictionary of the English Language, with a History of the Language, and an English Grammar,' in two volumes, folio. It was received by the learned world, who had long wished for its appearance, with a degree of applause, proportionable to the impatience which the promise of it had excited. Though we may believe him, in the declaration at the end of his preface, that he dismissed it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise; there cannot be a doubt but that he was highly gratified by the reputation it acquired both at home and abroad. The Earl of Cork and Orrery, be-

ing at Florence, presented it to the Academia della Crusca. The Academy sent Johnson their 'Vocabulario,' and the French Academy sent him their 'Dictionaire,' by Mr. Langton.

Mr. Millar, who was a principal proprietor of the work, had found many difficulties in urging Johnson forward with the laborious task of compilation. —On receiving the last sheet of manuscript, he sent the following acknowledgment: "Andrew Millar, sends his compliments to Mr. Samuel Johnson, with the money for the last sheet of copy of the Dictionary, and thanks God he has done with him."—To which Johnson returned this good-humoured and brief answer: "Samuel Johnson returns his compliments to Mr. Andrew Millar, and is very glad to find, as he does by his note, that Andrew Millar has the grace to thank God for any thing."

He was, therefore, still entirely dependent upon the exertion of the day for its support; and it is melancholy to find that a writer, esteemed an honour to his country, was under an arrest for 5*l.* 18*s.* in the subsequent year. It is no wonder that his constitutional melancholy should at this time have exerted peculiar sway over his mind.

In April, 1758, he began the 'Idler,' which appeared statedly in a weekly newspaper, called 'The Universal Chronicle,' and was continued till April, 1760. The 'Idler' evidently appeared to be the production of the same genius as the 'Rambler;' but it has more of real life, as well as ease of language.

Soon after the death of his mother, which happened in the beginning of 1759, he wrote his 'Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia;' that with the profits he might defray the expence of her funeral, and pay some little debts which he had contracted. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions, as it was written, and had never since read it over. He received for the copy 100*l.*; and 25*l.* when it came to a second edition. The applause with which this work was received, bore ample testimony to its merit; indeed, its reception was such, that it has been translated into various modern languages, and admitted into the politest libraries of Europe.

In 1762, Fortune, which had hitherto left our author to struggle with the inconveniences of a precarious subsistence, arising entirely from his own labours, gave him that independence which his literary talents certainly deserved. His Majesty George III., in the month of July, granted him a pension of 300*l.* per annum, as a recompense for the honour which the excellence of his writings had been to these kingdoms. He obtained it through the interference of the Earl of Bute, then First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury, upon the suggestion of Mr. Wedderburn, then Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, at the instance of Mr. Murphy, and the late Mr. Sheridan, eminent for his Lectures on Oratory, as well as Dictionary of the English Language. Johnson, from this circumstance, was censured by some as

an apostate, and ridiculed by others, for becoming a pensioner. The 'North Briton' was furnished with arguments against the Minister, for rewarding a Tory and a Jacobite; and Churchill satirized his political versatility with the most poignant severity, in the four following lines:

> "How to all principles untrue,
> Not fix'd to old friends nor to new,
> He damns the pension which he takes,
> And loves the Stuart he forsakes."

In 1763, Mr. Boswell, from whose account the principal circumstances in these memoirs are taken, was introduced to our author, and continued to live in great intimacy with him from that time till his death.

In February, 1764, to enlarge the circle of his literary acquaintance, and afford opportunities for conversation, he founded a Society, which afterwards became distinguished by the title of the Literary Club, and Sir Joshua Reynolds was the first proposer, to which Johnson acceded, and the original members were, besides himself, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Sir John Hawkins, and Goldsmith. They met at the Turk's Head, in Gerrard-street, Soho, on every Monday throughout the year.

The year 1765 was remarkable, for the commencement of his acquaintance with Mr. Thrale; one of the most eminent brewers in England, and Member of Parliament for Southwark. Mr. Murphy, who

was intimate with Mr. Thrale, having spoken very highly of Johnson's conversation, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted of an invitation to dinner at Mr. Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they were so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house became more and more frequent, till, in course of time, he ranked as one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house at Southwark, and at their villa at Streatham. Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connexion. He had, at the house of his friend, all the comforts and even luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened, by association with an agreeable and well ordered family, by whom he was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection; and it is recorded, to the honour of his worthy friend, that the patron of literature and talents, of which Johnson sought in vain for the traces in Chesterfield, he found realized in Thrale.

In February, 1767, our author was honoured by a private conversation with the King, in the library at Buckingham-house, which, as pointedly expressed by one of his biographers, gratified his monarchic enthusiasm. His Majesty, among other things, asked the author of so many valuable works, if he intended to publish any more? Johnson modestly answered, that he thought he had written enough. "And so

should I too," replied the King, "if you had not written so well.'' Johnson was highly pleased with His Majesty's courteousness, and afterwards observed to a friend—"Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman, as we may suppose Louis XIV. or Charles II."

In the autumn of this year, he gratified a desire, which he had long entertained, of visiting the Hebrides, or Western Isles of Scotland. He was accompanied by Mr. Boswell; whose acuteness, he afterwards observed, would help his enquiry, and whose gaiety of conversation and civility of manners were sufficient to counteract the inconveniences of travel, in countries less hospitable than those they were to pass.

In the course of 1774, he published an account of his tour to the Hebrides, under the title of 'A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland,' octavo. The narrative, it must be admitted, is written with an undue prejudice against both the country and people of Scotland, which is highly reprehensible, though it abounds in extensive philosophical views of society, ingenious sentiments, and lively descriptions. Among many other disquisitions, he expresses his disbelief of the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, presented to the public as a translation from the Erse. This excited the resentment of Mr. Macpherson, who sent a threatening letter to the author, and Johnson answered him in the rough phrase of stern defiance.

In 1777, he engaged to write a concise account of the LIVES OF THE ENGLISH POETS: as a recompense

for an undertaking, as he thought, not very tedious or difficult, he bargained for *two hundred guineas*; and was afterwards presented by the proprietors with *one hundred pounds*. In the selection of the poets he had no responsible concern; but Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden, were inserted by his recommendation.—This was the last of Johnson's literary labours, and, though completed when he was in his *seventy-first year*, shews that his faculties were in as vigorous a state as ever. His judgment and his taste, his quickness in the discrimination of motives, and facility of moral reflections, shine as strongly in these narratives, as in any of his more early performances; and his style, if not so energetic, is at least more smoothed down to the taste of the generality of readers. The 'Lives of the English Poets' formed a memorable era in Johnson's life. It is a work which has contributed to immortalize his name, and has secured that rational esteem, which party or partiality could not procure, and which even the injudicious zeal of his friends has not been able to lessen.

In 1781 he lost his valuable friend Thrale, who appointed him executor, with a legacy of 200*l*. "I felt," he said, "almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon that face, that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me, but with respect and benignity." Of his departed friend he has given a true character in a Latin Epitaph, to be seen in the church-yard of Streatham.

The history of Dr. Johnson from this period is a

melancholy detail of affliction and sorrow. He began to feel the unavoidable calamities of old age. He who lives long must often feel the bitter pangs of separation. His intimate friends, Goldsmith, Beauclerk, Garrick, Dr. Levet, and others, were now no more; and these painful events were a severe trial. Numberless excursions were taken to calm his anxiety, and soothe his apprehensions of the terrors of death, by flying as it were from himself. In the beginning of 1784, he was seized with a spasmodic asthma, which was soon accompanied with some degree of dropsy. From the latter of these complaints, however, he was greatly relieved by a course of medicine.

Having expressed a desire of going to Italy for the recovery of his health, and his friends not deeming his pension adequate to the support of the expences incidental to the journey; application was made to the Minister, by Mr. Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds, unknown to Johnson, through Lord Chancellor Thurlow, for an augmentation of it by 200*l.* The application for it was unsuccessful; but the Lord Chancellor offered to let him have 500*l.* out of his own purse, under the appellation of a loan, but with the intention of conferring it as a present. It is also recorded to the honour of Dr. Brocklesby, that he offered to contribute 100*l.* per annum, during his residence abroad; but Johnson declined the offer with becoming gratitude; indeed he was now approaching fast to a state in which money could be of no avail.

During his illness he experienced the steady and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Warren, and Mr. Cruikshank, generously attended him without accepting any fees; but his constitution was decayed beyond the restorative powers of the medical art. Previous to his dissolution he burned indiscriminately large masses of paper, and amongst the rest, two quarto volumes, containing a full and most particular account of his own life, the loss of which is much to be regretted. He expired on the 13th of December, 1784, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, and was buried on the 20th in Westminster Abbey, near the foot of Shakspeare's monument, and close to the coffin of his friend Garrick. Agreeably to his own request, a large blue flag-stone was placed over his grave, with this inscription:

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
OBIIT XIII. DIE DECEMBRIS,
ANNO DOMINI
M,DCC,LXXXV,
ÆTATIS SUÆ LXXV.

The monument erected to his memory in 1795, in St. Paul's Cathedral, cost 1100 guineas. It consists of a colossal figure leaning against a column. The Epitaph, which is in Latin, was written by the Rev. Dr. Parr.

Having no near relations, he left the bulk of his property, amounting to 1500*l.*, to his faithful black servant, Francis Barber; whom he looked upon as

particularly under his protection, and whom he had long treated as a humble friend. He appointed Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. (Sir William) Scott, his executors. His death attracted the public attention in an uncommon degree, and was followed by an unprecedented accumulation of literary honours, in the various forms of sermons, elegies, memoirs, lives, essays, and anecdotes.

For a just character of this great man, we must content ourselves with laying before our readers this short sketch:—His stature was tall, his limbs were large, his strength was more than common, and his activity in early life had been greater than such a form gave reason to expect: but he was subject to an infirmity of the convulsive kind, resembling the distemper called St. Vitus's dance; and he had the seeds of so many diseases sown in his constitution, that, a short time before his death, he declared, that he hardly remembered to have passed one day wholly free from pain. He possessed very extraordinary powers of understanding, which were much cultivated by reading; and still more by meditation and reflection. His memory was remarkably retentive, his imagination uncommonly vigorous, and his judgment keen and penetrating. He read with great rapidity, retained with wonderful exactness what he so easily collected, and possessed the power of reducing to order and system, the scattered hints on any subject, which he had gathered from different books. It would not, perhaps, be safe to claim for

him the highest place, among his contemporaries, in any *single* department of literature; but, to use one of his own expressions, he brought more *mind* to every subject, and had a greater variety of knowledge *ready* for all occasions, than any other man that could be easily named. Though prone to superstition, he was in all other respects so remarkably incredulous, that Hogarth said, while Johnson firmly believed the Bible, he seemed determined to believe nothing but the Bible. Of the importance of religion he had a strong sense, and his zeal for its interest was always awake; so that profaneness of every kind was abashed in his presence. The same energy which was displayed in his literary productions, was exhibited also in his *conversation*, which was various, striking, and instructive: like the sage in 'Rasselas,' he spoke, and attention watched his lips; he reasoned, and conviction closed his periods: when he pleased, he could be the greatest sophist that ever contended in the list of declamation; and, perhaps, no man ever equalled him in nervous and pointed repartees. His *veracity*, from the most trivial to the most solemn occasions, was strict, even to severity: he scorned to embellish a story with fictitious circumstances; for what is not a representation of reality, he used to say, is not worthy of our attention. As his purse and his house were ever open to the indigent, so was his heart tender to those who wanted relief, and his soul was susceptible of gratitude and every kind impression. He had a roughness in his manner

which subdued the saucy, and terrified the weak: but it was *only* in his *manner*; for no man was more beloved than Johnson was, by those who knew him; and his works will be read with veneration for their author, as long as the language in which they are written shall be understood!

CONTENTS

OF

VOL. I.

TABLE TALK.

CONVERSATION.

JOHNSON's usual phrase for conversation was *talk;* yet he made a distinction; for having once dined at a friend's house with what he termed "a very pretty company," and being asked if there was good conversation, he answered, "No, Sir; we had *talk* enough, but no *conversation;* there was nothing *discussed.*"

He had a great aversion to gesticulation in company, and called once to a gentleman who offended him in that point, "Don't *attitude-nise.*" When another gentleman thought he was giving additional force to what he uttered, by expressive movements of his hands, Johnson fairly seized them, and held them down.

He also disapproved of introducing scripture phrases into secular discourse.

Mr. Boswell having on some occasion observed, that he thought it right to tell one man of a handsome thing which had been said of him by another, as tending to increase benevolence, Johnson answered, "Undoubtedly it is right, Sir."

He thus defined the difference between physical and moral truth: "Physical truth is, when you tell a thing as it actually is. Moral truth is, when you tell a thing sincerely, and precisely as it appears to you. I say such a one walked across the street; if he really did so, I told a physical truth. If I thought so, though I should have been mistaken, I told a moral truth."

"A man (he said) should be careful never to tell tales of himself to his own disadvantage. People may be amused, and laugh at the time; but they will be remembered, and brought out against him upon some subsequent occasion."

At another time he observed, "A man cannot with propriety speak of himself, except he relates simple facts—as, 'I was at Richmond;' or what depends on mensuration—as, 'I am six feet high.' He is sure he has been at Richmond; he is sure he is six feet high: but he cannot be sure he is wise, or that he has any other excellence. Then, all censure of a man's self is oblique praise. It is in order to shew how

much he can spare. It has all the invidiousness of self-praise, and all the reproach of falsehood." Mr. Boswell however remarks, that this may sometimes proceed from a man's strong consciousness of his faults being observed. He knows that others would throw him down, and therefore he had better lie down softly of his own accord.

Johnson used also to say, that if a man *talked* of his misfortunes, we might depend upon it there was something in them not disagreeable to him—for where there was nothing but pure misery, there never was any recourse to the mention of it.

Talking of an acquaintance, whose narratives, which abounded in curious and interesting topics, were unhappily found to be very fabulous, Mr. B. mentioned Lord Mansfield's having said, "Suppose we believe one *half* of what he tells." —"Aye, (said Johnson), but we don't know *which* half to believe. By his lying we lose not only our reverence for him, but all comfort in his conversation."

Speaking of conversation, he said, "There must, in the first place, be knowledge, and there must be materials; in the second place, there must be a command of words; in the third place, there must be imagination, to place

things in such views as they are not commonly seen in; and in the fourth place, there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that is not to be overcome by failures: this last is an essential requisite; for want of it, many people do not excel in conversation. Now I want it: I throw up the game upon losing a trick."

Of Charles Fox, Johnson said, "Fox never talks in private company; not from any determination not to talk, but because he has not the first motion. A man who is used to the applause of the House of Commons, has no wish for that of a private company. A man accustomed to throw for a thousand pounds, if set down to throw for sixpence, would not be at the pains to count his dice. Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full."

After musing for some time one day, Johnson said, "I wonder how I should have any enemies, for I do harm to nobody."—*B.* "In the first place, Sir, you will be pleased to recollect, that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies."—*J.* "Why, I own, that by my definition of *oats*, I meant to vex them."—*B.* "Pray, Sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the

Scotch?"—*J.* "I can not, Sir."—*B.* "Old Mr. Sheridan says, it was because they sold Charles the First."—*J.* "Then, Sir, old Mr. Sheridan found out a very good reason."

He once took occasion to enlarge on the advantages of reading, and combated the idle superficial notion, that knowledge enough may be acquired in conversation. "The foundation (said he) must be laid by reading. General principles must be had from books, which, however, must be brought to the test of real life. In conversation you never get a system. What is said upon a subject, is to be gathered from a hundred people. The parts of a truth which a man gets thus, are at such a distance from each other, that he never attains to a full view."

His acute observation of human life made him remark, "that there was nothing by which a man exasperated most people more, than by displaying a superior ability or brilliancy in conversation. They seem pleased at the time; but their envy makes them curse him in their hearts."

"Having once visited him on a Good Friday, (says Mr. B.), and finding that we insensibly fell into a train of ridicule upon the foibles of one of our friends, a very worthy man, I, by way of a check, quoted some good admonition

from "The Government of the Tongue," that very pious book. It happened also remarkably enough, that the subject of the sermon preached to us by Dr. Burrows, the rector of St. Clement Danes, was, the certainty that at the last day we must give an account of "the deeds done in the body;" and amongst various acts of culpability, he mentioned evil-speaking. As we were moving slowly along in the crowd from church, Johnson jogged my elbow, and said, "Did you attend to the sermon?"—"Yes, Sir, (said I), it was very applicable to *us*." He, however stood upon the defensive. "Why, Sir, the sense of ridicule is given us, and may be lawfully used. The author of 'The Government of the Tongue' would have us treat all men alike."

"To be contradicted, (he observed), in order to force you to talk, is mighty unpleasing. You *shine* indeed; but it is by being *ground*."

Mr. Boswell one day unguardedly said to Dr. J. "I wish I could see you and Mrs. Macaulay together." He grew very angry; and, after a pause, while a cloud gathered on his brow, he burst out, "No, Sir; you would not see us quarrel to make you sport. Don't you know that it is very uncivil to *pit* two people against one another?" Then checking himself, and wishing to be more gentle, he added, "I do not

say you should be hanged or drowned for this, but it *is* very uncivil." Dr. Taylor, who was present, thought him in the wrong, and spoke to him privately of it; "yet (says Mr. B.) I afterwards acknowledged to Johnson that I was to blame; for I candidly owned, that I meant to express a desire to see a contest between Mrs. Macaulay and him; but then I knew how the contest would end; so that I was to see him triumph."—*Johnson:* "Sir, you cannot be sure how a contest will end; and no man has a right to engage two people in a dispute by which their passions may be inflamed, and they may part with bitter resentment against each other. I would sooner keep company with a man from whom I must guard my pockets, than with a man who contrives to bring me into a dispute with somebody, that he may hear it. This is the great fault of ——, (naming one of our friends), endeavouring to introduce a subject upon which he knows two people in the company differ."—*B.* "But he told me, Sir, he does it for instruction."—*J.* "Whatever the motive be, Sir, the man who does so, does very wrong. He has no more right to instruct himself at such risk, than he has to make two people fight a duel, that he may learn how to defend himself."

Mr. B. ventured to mention a ludicrous para-

graph in the newspapers, that Dr. J. was learning to dance of Vestris. Lord Charlemont, wishing to excite him to talk, proposed in a whisper, that he should be asked, whether it was true. "Shall I ask him?" said his Lordship. A great majority were for making the experiment. Upon which his Lordship very gravely, and with a courteous air, said, "Pray, Sir, is it true that you are taking lessons of Vestris?" This was risking a good deal, and required the boldness of a General of Irish Volunteers to make the attempt. Johnson was at first startled, and in some heat answered, "How can your Lordship ask so simple a question?" But immediately recovering himself, whether from unwillingness to be deceived, or to appear deceived, or whether from real good humour, he kept up the joke: "Nay, but if any body were to answer the paragraph, and contradict it, I'd have a reply, and would say, that he who contradicted it was no friend either to Vestris or me. For why should not Dr. Johnson add to his other powers a little corporeal agility? Socrates learned to dance at an advanced age, and Cato learnt Greek at an advanced age. Then it might proceed to say, that this Johnson, not content with dancing on the ground, might dance on the rope; and they might introduce the ele-

phant dancing on the rope. A nobleman wrote a play, called 'Love in a Hollow Tree.' He found out that it was a bad one, and therefore wished to buy up all the copies, and burn them. The Duchess of Marlborough had kept one; and when he was against her at an election, she had a new edition of it printed, and prefixed to it, as a frontispiece, an elephant dancing on a rope; to shew that his Lordship's writing comedy was as awkward as an elephant dancing on a rope."

Johnson was, at a certain period of his life, a good deal with the Earl of Shelburne, now Marquis of Lansdown.

Maurice Morgan, Esq. author of the "Essay on the Character of Falstaff," being a particular friend of his Lordship, had once an opportunity of entertaining Johnson for a day or two at Wickham, when its Lord was absent. One night, pretty late, Mr. Morgan and he had a dispute, in which Johnson would not give up, though he had the wrong side, and in short both kept the field. Next morning when they met in the breakfasting-room, Dr. J. with great candour, accosted Mr. Morgan thus: "Sir, I have been thinking on our dispute last night—*You were in the right.*"

Sir Joshua Reynolds once observed to him,

that he had talked above the capacity of some people with whom they had been in company together. "No matter, Sir, (said Johnson), they consider it as a compliment to be talked to as if they were wiser than they are."

"There is nothing more likely to betray a man into absurdity than *condescension;* when he seems to suppose his understanding too powerful for his company."

"No man (he used to say) speaks concerning another, even supposing it to be in his praise, if he thinks he does not hear him, exactly as he would if he thought he was within hearing."

"Never (said he) speak of a man in his own presence. It is always indelicate, and may be offensive."

Johnson could not brook appearing to be worsted in argument, even when, to show the force and dexterity of his talents, he had taken the wrong side. When, therefore, he perceived that his opponent gained ground, he had recourse to some sudden mode of robust sophistry. Once when Mr. B. was pressing upon him with visible advantage, he stopped him thus: "My dear B. let's have no more of this: you'll make nothing of it. I'd rather have you whistle a Scotch tune."

Care, however, must be taken to distinguish

between Johnson when he "talked for victory," and Johnson when he had no desire but to inform and illustrate. "One of his principal talents (says an eminent friend of his) was shown in maintaining the wrong side of an argument, and in a splendid perversion of the truth. If you could contrive to have his fair opinion on a subject, and without any bias from personal prejudice, or from a wish to be victorious in argument, it was wisdom itself, not only convincing, but overpowering."

He had, however, all his life habituated himself to consider conversation as a trial of intellectual vigour and skill; and to this may perhaps be ascribed that unexampled richness and brilliancy which appeared in his own. As a proof at once of his eagerness for colloquial distinction, and his high notion of this eminent friend, he once addressed him thus: "We now have been several hours together, and you have said but one thing for which I envied you."

He disliked much all speculative desponding considerations, which tended to discourage men from diligence and exertion. He was in this like Dr. Shaw, the great traveller, who used to say, "I hate a *cui bono* man." Upon being asked by a friend what he should think of a man who was apt to say *non est tanti?* "That he's

a stupid fellow, Sir (answered Johnson). What would these *tanti* men be doing the while?" When one, in a low spirited fit, was talking to him with indifference, of the pursuits which generally engage us in a course of action, and inquiring a *reason* for taking so much trouble; "Sir, (said he in an animated tone), it is driving on the system of life."

Of his fellow collegian Mr. Edwards, with whom he had accidentally met after many years separation, he said, "Here is a man who has passed through life without experience: yet I would rather have him with me than a more sensible man who will not talk readily. This man is always willing to say what he has to say." Yet (says Mr. B.) Dr. J. had himself by no means that willingness which he praised so much and so justly; for who has not felt the painful effect of the dreary void, when there is a total silence in a company for any length of time; or, which is as bad, or perhaps worse, when the conversation is with difficulty kept up by a perpetual effort?

He related, that he had once in a dream a contest of wit with some other person, and that he was very much mortified by imagining that his opponent had the better of him. "Now (said he) one may mark here the effect of sleep

in weakening the power of reflection; for had not my judgment failed me, I should have seen, that the wit of this supposed antagonist, by whose superiority I felt myself depressed, was as much furnished by me, as that which I thought I had been uttering in my own character."

Of a certain player he remarked, that his conversation usually threatened and announced more than it performed; that he fed you with a continual renovation of hope, to end in a constant succession of disappointment.

When exasperated by contradiction, he was apt to treat his opponents with too much acrimony; as, "Sir, you don't see your way through that question:"—"Sir, you talk the language of ignorance." On its being observed to him, that a certain gentleman had remained silent the whole evening in the midst of a very brilliant and learned society, "Sir, (said he), the conversation overflowed and drowned him."

His philosophy, though austere and solemn, was by no means morose and cynical, and never blunted the laudable sensibilities of his character, or exempted him from the influence of the tender passions. Want of tenderness, he always alledged, was want of parts, and was no less a proof of stupidity than depravity.

Of Goldsmith he said, "He is so much afraid

of being unnoticed, that he often talks merely lest you should forget that he is in company."—*B.* "Yes, he stands forward."—*J.* "True, Sir; but if a man is to stand forward, he should wish to do it not in an awkward posture, not in rags, not so as that he shall only be exposed to ridicule."—*B.* "For my part, I like very well to hear honest Goldsmith talk away carelessly."—*J.* "Why, yes, Sir; but he should not like to hear himself."

At another time he said, "Goldsmith should not be for ever attempting to shine in conversation: he has not temper for it; he is so much mortified when he fails. A game of Jokes is composed partly of skill, partly of chance; a man may be beat at times by one who has not the tenth part of his wit. Now Goldsmith's putting himself against another, is like a man laying a hundred to one, who cannot spare the hundred. It is not worth a man's while. A man should not lay a hundred to one, unless he can easily spare it, though he has a hundred chances for him: he can get but a guinea, and he may lose a hundred. Goldsmith is in this state. When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary reputation: if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed. The misfortune

of Goldsmith in conversation is this: he goes on without knowing how he is to get off. His genius is great, but his knowledge is small. As they say of a generous man, it is a pity he is not rich, we may say of Goldsmith, it is a pity he is not knowing. He would not keep his knowledge to himself."

Goldsmith said once to Dr. Johnson, that he wished for some additional members to the *Literary Club*, to give it an agreeable variety; "for (said he) there can now be nothing new among us: we have travelled over one another's minds." Johnson seemed a little angry, and said, "Sir, you have not travelled over *my* mind, I promise you." Sir Joshua Reynolds, however, thought Goldsmith right; observing, that "when people have lived a great deal together, they know what each of them will say on every subject. A new understanding, therefore, is desirable; because, though it may only furnish the same sense upon a question, which would have been furnished by those with whom we are accustomed to live, yet this sense will have a different colouring; and colouring is of much effect in every thing else as well as in painting."

Mr. Berrenger visited Johnson one day, and they talked of an evening society for conversation at a house in town, of which (says Mr. B.)

we were all members. but of which Johnson said, " It will never do, Sir. There is nothing served about there, neither tea, nor coffee, nor lemonade, nor any thing whatever; and depend upon it, Sir, a man does not like to go to a place from whence he comes out exactly as he went in." Mr. B. endeavoured, for argument's sake, to maintain, that men of learning and talents might have very good intellectual society, without the aid of any little gratifications of the senses. Berrenger joined with Johnson, and said, that without these any meeting would be dull and insipid. He would therefore have all the slight refreshments; nay, it would not be amiss to have some cold meat and a bottle of wine upon a side-board. " Sir, (said Johnson, with an air of triumph), Mr. Berrenger knows the world. Every body loves to have good things furnished to them without any trouble. I told Mrs. Thrale once, that as she did not choose to have card-tables, she should have a profusion of the best sweetmeats, and she would be sure to have company enough come to her."

One evening, in fine spirits, at the Essex-Head-Club, he said, " I dined yesterday at Mrs. Garrick's, with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney. Three such women are not to be found; I know not where

I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all."—*Boswell:* "What! had you them all to yourself, Sir?"—*Johnson:* "I had them all, as much as they were had; but it might have been better had there been more company there."—*B.* "Might not Mrs. Montagu have been a fourth?"—*J.* "Sir, Mrs. Montagu does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montagu is a very extraordinary woman, she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning."—*B.* "Mr. Burke has a constant stream of conversation."—*J.* "Yes, Sir: if a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say this is an extraordinary man. If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse drest, the ostler would say, we have had an extraordinary man here."—*Boswell:* "Foote was a man who never failed in conversation. If he had gone into a stable—"—*Johnson:* "Sir, if he had gone into a stable, the ostler would have said, here has been a comical fellow; but he would not have respected him."—*B.* "And, Sir, the ostler would have answered him, would have given him as good as he brought, as the common saying is."—*J.* "Yes, Sir; and Foote would have answered the ostler."

Mr. Boswell gave him an account of the excellent mimickry of a friend of his in Scotland; observing, at the same time, that some people thought it a very mean thing.—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, it is making a very mean use of a man's power. But to be a good mimick requires great powers; great acuteness of observation, great retention of what is observed, and great pliancy of organs, to represent what is observed. I remember a lady of quality in this town, who was a wonderful mimick, and used to make me laugh immoderately. I have heard she is now gone mad."—*Boswell:* "It is amazing how a mimick can not only give you the gestures and voice of a person whom he represents, but even what a person would say on any particular subject."—*J.* "Why, Sir, you are to consider that the manner, and some particular phrases of a person, do much to impress you with an idea of him, and you are not sure that he would say what the mimick says in his character."—*B.* "I don't think Foote a good mimick, Sir."—*J.* "No, Sir; his imitations are not like. He gives you something different from himself, but not the character which he means to assume. He goes out of himself, without going into other people. He cannot take off any person unless he is strongly marked, such as George

Faulkner. He is like a painter who can draw the portrait of a man who has a wen upon his face, and who, therefore, is easily known. If a man hops upon one leg, Foote can hop upon one leg. But he has not that nice discrimination which your friend seems to possess. Foote is, however, very entertaining, with a kind of conversation between wit and buffoonery."

At another time he said, "Garrick's gaiety of conversation has delicacy and elegance: Foote makes you laugh more; but Foote has the air of a buffoon paid for entertaining the company. He indeed, well deserves his hire."

Of Mr. Wilkes, Johnson one day said, "Did we not hear so much said of Jack Wilkes, we should think more highly of his conversation. Jack has great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. But after hearing his name sounded from pole to pole, as the phœnix of convivial felicity, we are disappointed in his company. He has always been *at me;* but I would do Jack a kindness rather than not. The contest is now over."

"The value of every story (he said) depended on its being true. A story is a picture either of an individual or of human nature in general: if it be false it is a picture of nothing. For instance: suppose a man should tell that Johnson,

before setting out for Italy, as he had to cross the Alps, sat down to make himself wings. This many people would believe; but it would be a picture of nothing. ******* (naming a worthy friend of ours) used to think a story a story, till I shewed him that truth was essential to it."

"Questioning (he once remarked) is not the mode of conversation among gentlemen. It is assuming a superiority, and it is particularly wrong to question a man concerning himself. There may be parts of his former life which he may not wish to be made known to other persons, or even brought to his own recollection."

Mr. Langton having repeated the anecdote of Addison having distinguished between his powers in conversation and in writing, by saying, "I have only nine-pence in my pocket; but I can draw for a thousand pounds," Johnson said, "He had not that retort ready, Sir; he had prepared it before-hand."—*Langton:* (turning to Mr. Boswell) "A fine surmise. Set a thief to catch a thief."

A gentleman who introduced his brother to Dr. Johnson, was earnest to recommend him to the Doctor's notice, which he did by saying, "When we have sat together some time, you'll find my brother grow very entertaining."—"Sir, (said Johnson), I can wait."

Mrs. Thrale one day gave high praise to a *Mr. Long.—Johnson:* "Nay, my dear Lady, don't talk so. Mr. Long's character is very *short*. It is nothing. He fills a chair. He is a man of genteel appearance, and that is all. I know nobody who blasts by praise as you do; for whenever there is exaggerated praise, every body is set against a character. They are provoked to attack it. Now there is *****; you praised that man with so much disproportion, that I was incited to lessen him, perhaps more than he deserves. His blood is upon your head. By the same principle, your malice defeats itself; for your censure is too violent. And yet (looking to her with a leering smile) she is the first woman in the world, could she but restrain that wicked tongue of hers;—she would be the only woman, could she but command that little whirligig."

Mrs. Thrale mentioned a gentleman who had acquired a fortune of four thousand a year in trade, but was absolutely miserable because he could not talk in company. "I am a most unhappy man (said he). I am invited to conversations; I go to conversations; but, alas! I have no conversation."—*Johnson:* "Man commonly cannot be successful in different ways. This gentleman has spent, in getting four thou-

sand pounds a year, the time in which he might have learned to talk; and now he cannot talk." Mr. Perkins made a droll remark: "If he had got his four thousand a year as a mountebank, he might have learnt to talk at the same time that he was getting his fortune."

Some other gentlemen came in. The conversation concerning the person whose character Dr. Johnson had treated so slightingly, as he did not know his merit, was resumed. Mrs. Thrale said—"You think so of him, Sir, because he is quiet, and does not exert himself with force.—You'll be saying the same thing of Mr. ***** there, who sits as quiet—" This was not well bred; and Johnson did not let it pass without correction. "Nay, Madam, (said he), what right have you to talk thus? Both Mr. ***** and I have reason to take it ill. *You* may talk so of Mr. *****, but why do you make *me* do it? Have I said any thing against Mr. *****? You have *set* him, that I might shoot him: but I have not shot him."

Mr. 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, ap-

plying 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 sayest the other." At another time he said to him, "Thy body is all vice, and thy mind all virtue."

"Demosthenes Taylor, as he was called, (that is, the Editor of Demosthenes)," said Johnson, "was the most silent man, the merest statue of a man, that I have ever seen. I once dined in company with him, and all he said during the whole time was no more than *Richard*. How a man should say only Richard, it is not easy to imagine. But it was thus: Dr. Douglas was talking of Dr. Zachary Grey, and ascribing to him something that was written by Dr. Richard Grey; so to correct him, Taylor said, (imitating his affected sententious emphasis and nod), *Richard*."

At another time, talking of oratory, Mr. Wilkes, who was of the party, described it as accompanied with all the charms of poetical expression.—*Johnson:* "No, Sir; oratory is the power of beating down your adversary's arguments, and putting better in their place."—*Wilkes:* "But this does not move the passions."—*Johnson:* "He must be a weak man who is to be so moved."—*Wilkes* (naming a

celebrated orator): "Amidst all the brilliancy of ——'s imagination, and the exuberance of his wit, there is a strange want of *taste*. It was observed of Apelles's Venus, that her flesh seemed as if she had been nourished by roses: his oratory would sometimes make one suspect that he eats potatoes and drinks whisky."

"A celebrated wit being mentioned, Johnson said, "One may say of him as was said of a French wit, *Il n'a de l'esprit que contre Dieu.* I have been several times in company with him, but never perceived any strong power of wit. He produces a general effect by various means; he has a cheerful countenance, and a gay voice. Besides, his trade is wit. It would be as wild in him to come into company without merriment, as for a highwayman to take the road without his pistols."—"Has not ——— a great deal of wit, Sir?"—*Johnson:* "I do not think so, Sir. He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails. And I have no more pleasure in hearing a man attempting wit, and failing, than in seeing a man trying to leap over a ditch and tumbling into it."

A writer of deserved eminence being mentioned, Johnson said, "Why, Sir, he is a man of good parts; but being originally poor, he has got a love of mean company and low jocu-

larity; a very bad thing, Sir. To laugh is good, as to talk is good. But you ought no more to think it enough if you laugh, than you are to think it enough if you talk. You may laugh in as many ways as you talk; and surely *every* way of talking that is practised cannot be esteemed."

One being named as a very learned man.—"Yes, Sir, (said Johnson), he has a great deal of learning; but it never lies straight. There is never one idea by the side of another; 'tis all entangled; and then he drives it awkwardly upon conversation."

"People (he remarked) may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than other men. Uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertion. In barbarous society, superiority of parts is of real consequence. Great strength, or great wisdom, is of much value to an individual. But in more polished times there are people to do every thing for money: and then there are a number of other superiorities, such as those of birth, and fortune, and rank, that dissipate men's attention, and leave no extraordinary share of respect for personal and intellectual superiority. This is wisely ordered by Providence, to preserve some equality among mankind.

When Mr. B. one day complained of having dined at a splendid table without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy of being remembered, he said, "Sir, there seldom is any such conversation."—*Boswell:* "Why then meet at table?"—*Johnson:* "Why, to eat and drink together, and promote kindness; and, Sir, this is better done when there is no solid conversation; for when there is, people differ in opinion, and get into bad humour, or some of the company, who are not capable of such conversation, are left out, and feel themselves uneasy."

An author of considerable eminence having engrossed a good share of a conversation, and having said nothing but what was trifling and insignificant, Johnson, when he was gone, observed, "It is wonderful what a difference there sometimes is between a man's powers of writing and of talking. ******* writes with great spirit, but is a poor talker; had he held his tongue we might have supposed him to have been restrained by modesty: but he has spoken a great deal to-day, and you have heard what stuff it was."

Talking of an acquaintance distinguished for knowing an uncommon variety of miscellaneous articles both in antiquities and polite literature, he observed, "You know, Sir, he runs about

with little weight upon his mind." And talking of another very ingenious gentleman, who from the warmth of his temper was at variance with many of his acquaintance, and wished to avoid them, he said, "Sir, he leads the life of an outlaw."

Being irritated by hearing a gentleman ask Mr. Levett a variety of questions concerning him when he was sitting by, he broke out, "Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both."—"A man (said he) should not talk of himself, nor much of any particular person. He should take care not to be made a proverb; and therefore should avoid having any one topic of which people can say, 'We shall hear him upon it.' There was a Dr. Oldfield, who was always talking of the Duke of Marlborough; he came into a coffee-house one day, and told that his Grace had spoken in the House of Lords for half an hour. 'Did he indeed speak for half an hour?' (said Belchier, the surgeon); 'Yes.' 'And what did he say of Dr. Oldfield?' 'Nothing.' 'Why then, Sir, he was very ungrateful; for Dr. Oldfield could not have spoken for a quarter of an hour without saying something of him.'"

One evening, in company, an ingenious and learned gentleman read a letter of compliment

which he had received from one of the Professors of a Foreign University. Johnson, in an irritable fit, thinking there was too much ostentation, said, "I never receive any of these tributes of applause from abroad. One instance I recollect of a foreign publication, in which mention is made of *l'illustre Lockman.*"

A learned gentleman, who in the course of conversation wished to inform the company of this simple fact, that the Counsel upon the circuit at Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. He in a plentitude of phrase told, that large bales of woollen-cloth were lodged in the town-hall; that, by reason of this fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the Counsel were near the town-hall; and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility.—Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out (playfully however), "It is a pity, Sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth."

A dull country magistrate once gave Johnson a long tedious account of his exercising his criminal jurisdiction, the result of which was his

having sentenced four convicts to transportation. Johnson, in an agony of impatience to get rid of such a companion, exclaimed, "I heartily wish, Sir, that I were a fifth."

At another time, having argued at some length with a pertinacious gentleman, his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, happened to say, "I don't understand you, Sir;" upon which Johnson observed, "Sir, I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding."

He used to say, that he made it a constant rule to talk as *well* as he could, both as to sentiment and expression; by which means, what had been originally effort became familiar and easy.

Mr. Boswell being about to embark for Holland, and taking leave of Johnson at Harwich, happened to say that it would be terrible if he should not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined to so dull a place.—*Johnson:* "Don't, Sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would *not* be *terrible* though I *were* to be detained some time here."

He found fault with one for using the phrase to *make* money. "Don't you see (said he) the impropriety of it? To *make* money, is to coin

it: you should say *get* money." The phrase, however, is pretty current. But Johnson was at all times jealous of infractions upon the genuine English language, and prompt to repress colloquial barbarisms; such as *pledging myself* for *undertaking; line* for *department*, or *branch*, as the *civil line*, the *banking line*. He was particularly indignant against the almost universal use of the word *idea* in the sense of *notion* or *opinion*, when it is clear that *idea* can only signify something of which an image can be formed in the mind. We may have an *idea* or *image* of a mountain, a tree, a building; but we cannot surely have an *idea* or *image* of an *argument* or *proposition*. Yet we hear the sages of the law "delivering their *ideas* upon the question under consideration;" and the first speakers in parliament "entirely coinciding in the *idea* which has been ably stated by an honourable member;" or "reprobating an *idea* unconstitutional, and fraught with the most dangerous consequences to a great and free country." Johnson called this "modern cant."

He pronounced the word *heard* as if spelt with a double *e*, *heerd*, instead of sounding it *herd*, as it is most usually done. He said his reason was, that if it was pronounced *herd*, there would be a single exception from the English pronun-

ciation of the syllable *ear*, and he thought it better not to have that exception.

Sir Joshua Reynolds having one day said, that he took the altitude of a man's taste by his stories and his wit, and of his understanding by the remarks which he repeated; being always sure that he must be a weak man who quotes common things with an emphasis as if they were oracles; Johnson agreed with him; and Sir Joshua having also observed, that the real character of a man was found out by his amusements, Johnson added, "Yes, Sir; no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures."

Johnson had a kind of general aversion to a pun. "He once, however, (says Mr. B.), endured one of mine. When we were talking of a numerous company in which he had distinguished himself highly, I said, 'Sir, you were a COD surrounded by smelts. Is not this enough for you? at a time too when you were not *fishing* for a compliment?' He laughed at this with a complacent approbation. Old Mr. Sheridan observed, upon my mentioning it to him, 'He liked your compliment so well, he was willing to take it with *pun sauce*.' For my own part, (adds Mr. B.), I think no innocent species of wit or pleasantry should be suppressed; and that a good pun may be admitted among the smaller excellences of lively conversation."

CHILDREN.

TALKING of the common remark, that affection descends, a gentleman said, that "this was wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind, for which it was not so necessary that there should be affection from children to parents, as from parents to children; nay there would be no harm in that view, though children should at a certain age eat their parents."—*Johnson*: "But, Sir, if this were known generally to be the case, parents would not have affection for children."—*Boswell*: "True, Sir; for it is in expectation of return that parents are so attentive to their children; and I know a very pretty instance of a little girl of whom her father was very fond, who once, when he was in a melancholy fit, and had gone to bed, persuaded him to rise in good humour, by saying, 'My dear papa, please to get up, and let me help you on with your clothes, that I may learn to do it when you are an old man.'"

I know not (says Mr. B.) how so whimsical a thought came into my mind; but I asked, "If,

Sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a new-born child with you, what would you do?"—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, I should not much like my company."—*B.* "But would you take the trouble of rearing it?" He seemed, as may well be supposed, unwilling to pursue the subject; but upon my persevering in my question, replied, "Why, yes, Sir, I would; but I must have all conveniences. If I had no garden, I would make a shed on the roof, and take it there for fresh air. I should feed it, and wash it much, and with warm water to please it, not with cold water to give it pain."—*B.* "But, Sir, does not heat relax?"—*J.* "Sir, you are not to imagine the water is to be very hot. I would not *coddle* the child. No, Sir, the hardy method of treating children does no good. I'll take you five children from London, who shall cuff five Highland children. Sir, a man bred in London will carry a burthen, or run, or wrestle, as well as a man brought up in the hardiest manner in the country."—*B.* "Good living, I suppose, makes the Londoners strong."—*J.* "Why, Sir, I don't know that it does. Our chairmen from Ireland, who are as strong men as any, have been brought up upon potatoes. Quantity makes up for quality."—*B.* "Would you teach this child that I have furnished you, with any thing?"

—*J.* "No, I would not be apt to teach it."—*B.* "Would not you have a pleasure in teaching it?"—*J.* "No, Sir, I should *not* have a pleasure in teaching it."—*B.* "Have you not a pleasure in teaching men? *There* I have you. You have the same pleasure in teaching men that I should have in teaching children."—*J.* "Why, something about that."—*B.* "Do you think, Sir, that what is called natural affection, is born with us? It seems to me to be the effect of habit, or of gratitude for kindness. No child has it for a parent whom it has not seen."—*J.* "Why, Sir, I think there is an instinctive natural affection in parents toward their children."

CONDUCT.

"I BELIEVE, (said Johnson), it is best to throw life into a method, that every hour may bring its employment, and every employment have its hour. Xenophon observes, in his 'Treatise of Œconomy,' that if every thing be kept in a certain place, when any thing is worn out or consumed, the vacuity which it leaves will shew what is wanting; so if every part of

time has its duty, the hour will call into remembrance its proper engagement."

He observed, that "it was a most mortifying reflection for any man to consider *what he had done*, compared with what *he might have done*."

He would allow no settled indulgence of idleness upon principle, and always repelled every attempt to urge excuses for it. A friend one day suggested, that it was not wholesome to study soon after dinner. "Ah, Sir, (said Johnson), don't give way to such a fancy. At one time of my life, I had taken it into my head that it was not wholesome to study between breakfast and dinner."

Mr. Boswell one day told him, that he had been to see a man ride upon three horses. "Such a man, Sir, (said he), should be encouraged; for his performances shew the extent of the human powers in one instance, and thus tend to raise our opinion of the faculties of man. He shews what may be attained by persevering application; so that every man may hope, that by giving as much application, although perhaps he may never ride three horses at a time, or dance upon a wire, yet he may be equally expert in whatever profession he has chosen to pursue."

At one time he said, "The more a man extends and varies his acquaintance the better." This, however, was meant with a just restriction; for on another occasion he observed, "A man may be so much of every thing, that he is nothing of any thing."

At a late period of his life he said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, "If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in *constant repair.*"

During a visit at Oxford, the following conversation passed between the Doctor and Mr. Boswell, on the subject of Mr. B.'s trying his fortune at the English bar. Being asked whether a very extensive acquaintance in London, which was very valuable, and of great advantage to a man at large, might not be prejudicial to a lawyer, by preventing him from giving sufficient attention to his business, Johnson said, "Sir, you will attend to business as business lays hold of you. When not actually employed, you may see your friends as much as you do now. You may dine at a club every day, and sup with one of the members every night; and you may be as much at public places as one who has seen them all would

wish to be. But you must take care to attend constantly in Westminster Hall; both to mind your business, as it is almost all learnt there (for nobody reads now); and to shew that you want to have business. And you must not be too often seen at public places, that competitors may not have it to say, 'He is always at the Playhouse or at Ranelagh, and never to be found at his chambers.' And, Sir, there must be a kind of solemnity in the manner of a professional man."

Concerning a private transaction, on which his opinion was asked, he made the following reflections, which are applicable on other occasions: "Nothing deserves more compassion than wrong conduct with good meaning; than loss or obloquy suffered by one who, as he is conscious only of good intentions, wonders why he loses that kindness which he wishes to preserve; and not knowing his own fault, if, as may sometimes happen, nobody will tell him, goes on to offend by his endeavours to please."

At another time he said, "Never impose tasks upon mortals. To require two things is the way to have them both undone. In the correspondence of your friends do not fancy that an intermission of writing is a decay of kindness. No man is always in a disposition to write;

nor has any man at all times something to say."

Being asked whether a man's being forward to make himself known to eminent people, and seeing as much of life, and getting as much information as he could in every way, was not lessening himself by his forwardness, he said, "No, Sir, a man always makes himself greater as he increases his knowledge."

Talking of a court-martial that was sitting upon a very momentous public occasion, he expressed much doubt of an enlightened decision; and said, "That perhaps there was not a member of it who, in the whole course of his life, had ever spent an hour by himself in balancing probabilities."

He observed, that "A principal source of erroneous judgment was viewing things partially, and only on *one side;* as for instance, *fortune-hunters*, when they contemplated the fortunes *singly* and *separately*, it was a dazzling and tempting object; but when they came to possess the wives and their fortunes *together*, they began to suspect that they had not made quite so good a bargain."

He one day maintained, that a father had no right to controul the inclinations of his daughters in marriage.

Talking of divorces, Mr. Boswell asked if Othello's doctrine was not plausible?

" He that is robb'd, not wanting what is stolen,
" Let him not know it, and he's not robb'd at all."

Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale joined against this.—*Johnson:* " Ask any man if he'd wish not to know of such an injury."—*Boswell:* " Would you tell your friend, to make him unhappy?"—*J.* " Perhaps, Sir, I should not; but that would be from prudence on my own account. A man would tell his father."—*B.* " Yes, because he would not have spurious children to get any share of the family inheritance."—*Mrs. Thrale:* " Or he would tell his brother."—*B.* " Certainly his *elder* brother."—*J.* " You would tell your friend of a woman's infamy, to prevent his marrying a prostitute: there is the same reason to tell him of the wife's infidelity when he is married, to prevent the consequences of imposition. It is a breach of confidence not to tell a friend."

Talking of a point of delicate scrupulosity of moral conduct, he said to Mr. Langton, " Men of harder minds than ours, will do many things from which you and I would shrink; yet, Sir, they will perhaps do more good in life than we. But let us try to help one another. If there be

a wrong twist it may be set right. It is not probable that two people can be wrong the same way."

He thus characterised the Duke of Devonshire, grandfather of the present representative of that very respectable family: "He was not a man of superior abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse; he would have sent to Denmark for it. So unconditional was he in keeping his word; so high as to the point of honour."—"This (says Mr. Boswell) was a liberal testimony from the Tory Johnson to the virtue of a great Whig nobleman."

The conflict of opposite principles he described as "The contention between pleasure and virtue, a struggle which will always be continued while the present system of nature shall subsist: nor can history or poetry exhibit more than pleasure triumphing over virtue, and virtue subjugating pleasure."

Speaking of a certain prelate who exerted himself very laudably in building churches and parsonage-houses, he said, "I do not, however, find that he is esteemed a man of much

professional learning, or a liberal patron of it; yet it is well where a man possesses any strong positive excellence. Few have all kinds of merit belonging to their character. We must not examine matters too deeply.—No, Sir, *a fallible being will fail somewhere.*"

"Colley Cibber (he said) was by no means a blockhead; but by arrogating to himself too much, he was in danger of losing that degree of estimation to which he was entitled."

In a party at Mr. Thrale's, a gentleman attacked Garrick for being vain:—*J.* "No wonder, Sir, that he is vain; a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived. So many bellows have blown the fire, that one wonders he is not by this time become a cinder."—*B.* "And such bellows too. Lord Mansfield with his cheeks like to burst: Lord Chatham like an Æolus. I have read such notes from them to him as were enough to turn his head."—*J.* "True. When he whom every body else flatters, flatters me, I then am truly happy."—*Mrs. Thrale:* "The sentiment is in Congreve, I think."—*J.* "Yes, Madam, in 'The Way of the World:'

"If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
"That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me."

To a lady who endeavoured to vindicate herself from blame, for neglecting social attention to worthy neighbours by saying, "I would go to them if it would do them any good;" he said "What good, Madam, do you expect to have in your power to do them? It is shewing them respect, and that is doing them good."

Dr. Taylor once commended a physician who was known to him and Dr. Johnson, and said, "I fight many battles for him, as many people in the country dislike him."—*J.* "But you should consider, Sir, that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for every man of whom you get the better will be very angry, and resolve not to employ him; whereas, if people get the better of you in argument about him, they'll think, 'We'll send for Dr. ****** nevertheless.'" This was an observation deep and sure in human nature.

On a certain occasion Johnson made a remark, "That the law against usury is for the protection of creditors as well as of debtors; for if there were no such check, people would be apt, from the temptation of great interest, to lend to desperate persons, by whom they would lose their money. Accordingly there are instances of ladies being ruined, by having injudiciously sunk their fortunes for high annuities,

which, after a few years, ceased to be paid, in consequence of the ruined circumstances of the borrower."

To Mr. B. (who had thoughts of binding himself to some practice by the obligation of a voluntary vow), he said, "Do not accustom yourself to enchain your volatility by vows; they will sometime leave a thorn in your mind which you will, perhaps, never be able to extract or eject. Take this warning, it is of great importance."

"The applause of a single human being is of great consequence."—"This (says Mr. B.) he observed to me with great earnestness of manner, very near the time of his decease, on occasion of having desired me to read a letter addressed to him from some person in the North of England; which, when I had done, and he asked me what the contents were; as I thought being particular upon it might fatigue him, it being of great length, I only told him in general, that it was highly to his praise; and then he expressed himself as above."

He said of one of his friends—"He is ruining himself without pleasure. A man who loses at play, or who runs out his fortune at court, makes his estate less, in hopes of making it bigger: but it is a sad thing to pass through the quagmire of parsimony to the gulph of ruin.

To pass over the flowery path of extravagance is very well."

Upon the question, whether a man who had been guilty of vicious actions would do well to force himself into solitude and sadness, Johnson said, "No, Sir, unless it prevent him from being vicious again. With some people, gloomy penitence is only madness turned upside down. A man may be gloomy, till, in order to be relieved from gloom, he has recourse again to criminal indulgences."

Mr. Boswell once confessed an excess of which he had very seldom been guilty, namely, that he had spent a whole night in playing at cards, and that he could not look back on it with satisfaction. Instead of a harsh animadversion, Johnson mildly said, "Alas, Sir! on how few things can we look back with satisfaction!"—*B.* "By associating with you, Sir, I am always getting an accession of wisdom. But perhaps a man, after knowing his own character—the limited strength of his own mind, should not be desirous of having too much wisdom, considering, *quid valeant humeri*, how little he can carry."—*J.* "Sir, be as wise as you can; let a man be *aliis lætus, sapiens sibi:*

"Though pleas'd to see the dolphins play,
"I mind my compass and my way."

You may be wise in your study in the morning, and gay in company at a tavern in the evening. Every man is to take care of his own wisdom and his own virtue, without minding too much what others think."

Talking of the great consequence which a man acquired by being employed in his profession, "I suggested (says Mr. B.) a doubt of the justice of the general opinion, that it is improper in a lawyer to solicit employment; for why, I urged, should it not be equally allowable to solicit that as the means of consequence as it to solicit votes to be elected a Member of Parliament? Mr. Strahan had told me, that a countryman of his and mine, who had risen to eminence in the law, had, when first making his way, solicited him to get him employed in city causes."—*J.* "Sir, it is wrong to stir up lawsuits; but when once it is certain that a lawsuit is to go on, there is nothing wrong in a lawyer's endeavouring that he shall have the benefit rather than another."—*B.* "You would not solicit employment, Sir, if you were a lawyer."—*J.* "No, Sir; but not because I should think it wrong, but because I should disdain it." —This was a good distinction, which will be felt by men of just pride.—He proceeded: "However, I would not have a lawyer to be wanting

to himself in using fair means. I would have him to inject a little hint now and then, to prevent his being overlooked."

Against melancholy, he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said, melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed, that labouring men who work hard, and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits.

On Mr. Boswell's succeeding to his paternal inheritance, it was not to be supposed that the great moralist would omit the opportunity of advising his friend. Accordingly, we find him thus addressing Mr. B.: "You have now a new station, and have therefore new cares and new employments. Life, as Cowley seems to say, ought to resemble a well-ordered poem, of which one rule generally received is, that the exordium should be simple, and should promise little. Begin your new course of life with the least show and the least expence possible; you may at your pleasure increase both, but you cannot easily diminish them. Do not think your estate your own while any man can call upon you for money which you cannot pay; therefore, begin

with timorous parsimony. Let it be your first care not to be in any man's debt.

" When the thoughts are extended to a future state, the present life seems hardly worthy of all those principles of conduct and maxims of prudence which one generation of men has transmitted to another; but upon a closer view, when it is perceived how much evil is produced, and how much good is impeded, by embarrassment and distress, and how little room the expedients of poverty leave for the exercise of virtue, it grows manifest, that the boundless importance of the next life enforces some attention to the interests of this.

" Be kind to old servants, and secure the kindness of the agents and factors: do not disgust them by asperity, or unwelcome gaiety, or apparent suspicion. From them you must learn the real state of your affairs, the characters of your tenants, and the value of your lands.

" You have now a new character and new duties; think on them, and practise them.

" Make an impartial estimate of your revenue; and whatever it is, live upon less. Resolve never to be poor. Frugality is not only the basis of quiet, but of beneficence. No man can help others that wants help himself; we must have enough, before we have to spare.

"Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable, and others extremely difficult."

Upon its being mentioned, that an opulent and very indolent Scotch nobleman, who totally resigned the management of his affairs to a man of knowledge and abilities, had claimed some merit by saying, "The next best thing to managing a man's own affairs well, is being sensible of incapacity, and not attempting it, but having full confidence in one who can do it," Johnson said, "Nay, Sir, this is paltry. There is a middle course. Let a man give application; and depend upon it, he will soon get above a despicable state of helplessness, and attain the power of acting for himself."

DEATH.

Mr. Boswell tells us, that he once, in a conversation with Johnson, and other company, expressed a horror at the thoughts of death. Mrs. Knowles the Quaker, who was of the party,

said, "Nay, thou should'st not have a horror for what is the gate of life."—Johnson (standing upon the hearth, rolling about with a serious, solemn, and somewhat gloomy air) observed, "that no rational man could die without uneasy apprehension."—*Mrs. K.* "The Scriptures tell us, 'The righteous shall have hope in his death.'" —*J.* "Yes, Madam; that is, he shall not have despair. But consider, his hope of salvation must be founded on the terms on which it is promised, that the mediation of our Saviour shall be applied to us, namely, obedience; and where obedience has failed, then, as suppletory to it, repentance. But what man can say, that his obedience has been such as he would approve of in another, or even in himself, upon close examination; or that his repentance has not been such as to require being repented of? No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation."—*Mrs. K.* "But divine intimation of acceptance may be made to the soul."—*J.* "Madam, it may; but I should not think the better of a man who should tell me on his death-bed he was sure of salvation. A man cannot be sure himself that he has divine intimation of acceptance; much less can he make others sure that he has it."—*B.* "Then, Sir, we must be contented to ac-

knowledge that death is a terrible thing."—*J.* "Yes, Sir. I have made no approaches to a state which can look on it as not terrible."—*Mrs. K.* (seeming to enjoy a pleasing serenity, in the persuasion of benignant divine light), "Does not St. Paul say, 'I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of life?'" —*J.* "Yes, Madam; but here was a man inspired, a man who had been converted by supernatural interposition."—*B.* "In prospect, death is dreadful; but in fact, we find that people die easy."—*J.* "Why, Sir, most people have not *thought* much of the matter, so cannot *say* much, and it is supposed they die easy. Few believe it certain they are then to die; and those who do, set themselves to behave with resolution, as a man does who is going to be hanged. He is not the less unwilling to be hanged."—*Miss Seward:* "There is one mode of the fear of death, which is certainly absurd; and that is the dread of annihilation, which is only a pleasing sleep without a dream."—*J.* "It is neither pleasing nor sleep; it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing, that one would rather exist even in pain, than not exist."—*B.* "If annihilation be nothing, then existing in pain is not a comparative

state, but is a positive evil, which I cannot think we should choose. I must be allowed to differ here; and it would lessen the hope of a future state, founded on the argument that the Supreme Being, who is good as he is great, will hereafter compensate for our present sufferings in this life. For if existence, such as we have it here, be comparatively a good, we have no reason to complain, though no more of it should be given to us. But if our only state of existence were in this world, then we might with some reason complain that we are so dissatisfied with our enjoyments, compared with our desires."—*J.* "The lady confounds annihilation, which is nothing, with the apprehension of it, which is dreadful. It is in the apprehension of it that the horror of annihilation consists."

"When we were alone, (says Mr. B.), I again introduced the subject of death, and endeavoured to maintain, that the fear of it might be got over. I told him, that David Hume had said to me, that he was no more uneasy to think he should *not be* after this life, than, that he *had not been* before he began to exist."—"Sir, (said Johnson), if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed: he is mad: if he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you, he holds his finger in the flame of a candle, without feeling

pain ; would you believe him ? When he dies, he at least gives up all he has."—*B.* " Foote, Sir, told me, that when he was very ill, he was not afraid to die."—*J.* " It is not true, Sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave."—*B.* " But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death ?"—To this question he answered, in a passion, " No, Sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time." He added (with an earnest look), " A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine."

This subject being resumed on another occasion, Johnson said, " Some people are not afraid of death, because they look upon salvation as the effect of an absolute decree, and think they feel in themselves the marks of sanctification. Others, and those the most rational in my opinion, look upon salvation as conditional ; and as they never can be sure that they have complied with the conditions, they are afraid."

A gentleman was mentioned to him as having been formerly gloomy from low spirits, and much distressed by the fear of death, but as being now uniformly placid, and contemplating

his dissolution without any perturbation.—" Sir, (said Johnson), this is only a disordered imagination taking a different turn."

To Mrs. Williams, a little before her death, he said, " Oh! my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is in vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived to-day may live to-morrow. But let us learn to derive our hope only from God."

Mr. Boswell and Johnson having one day fallen into a very serious frame of mind, in which mutual expressions of kindness passed between them, the former talked with regret of the sad inevitable certainty that one of them must survive the other.—" Yes, Sir, (said Johnson), that is an affecting consideration. I remember Swift, in one of his letters to Pope, says, 'I intend to come over, that we may meet once more; and when we must part, it is what happens to all human beings.'"—*B.* "The hope that we shall see our departed friends again, must support the mind."—*J.* "Why, yes, Sir."—*B.* "There is a strange unwillingness to part with life, independent of serious fears as to futurity. A reverend friend of ours (naming him)

tells me, that he feels an uneasiness at the thoughts of leaving his house, his study, his books."—*J.* "This is foolish in ————. A man need not be uneasy on these grounds; for, as he will retain his consciousness, he may say with the philosopher, *Omnia mea mecum porto.*"

The horror of death, which had always been observable in Dr. Johnson, appeared remarkably strong one evening. "I ventured to tell him (says Mr. B.) that I had been, for moments of my life, not afraid of death; therefore I could suppose another man in that state of mind for a considerable space of time. He said, he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him. He added, that it had been observed, that scarcely any man dies in public but with apparent resolution, from that desire of praise which never quits us." It was observed, that Dr. Dodd seemed to be willing to die, and full of hopes and happiness. "Sir, (said he), Dr. Dodd would have given both his hands and both his legs to have lived. The better a man is, the more afraid is he of death, having a clearer view of infinite purity."—He owned, that our being in an unhappy uncertainty as to our salvation, was mysterious; and said, "Ah! we must wait till we are in another state of being, to have many things explained to us."—

Even the powerful mind of Johnson seemed foiled by futurity. "But I thought, (adds Mr. Boswell), that the gloom of uncertainty in solemn religious speculation, being mingled with hope, was yet more consolatory than the emptiness of infidelity. A man can live in thick air, but perishes in an exhausted receiver."

Dr. Johnson was once much pleased with a remark made by General Paoli, "That it is impossible not to be afraid of death; and that those who at the time of dying are not afraid, are not thinking of death, but of applause, or something else, which keeps death out of their sight: so that all men are equally afraid of death when they see it; only some have a power of turning their sight away from it better than others."

Johnson's own account of his views of futurity will appear truly rational; and may, perhaps, impress the unthinking with seriousness:

"I never thought confidence with respect to futurity, any part of the character of a brave, a wise, or a good man. Bravery has no place where it can avail nothing; wisdom impresses strongly the consciousness of those faults of which it is, perhaps, itself an aggravation; and goodness, always wishing to be better, and imputing every deficiency to criminal negligence, and every fault to voluntary corruption, never

dares to suppose the condition of forgiveness fulfilled, nor what is wanting in the crime supplied by penitence.

"This is the state of the best; but what must be the condition of him whose heart will not suffer him to rank himself among the best, or among the good? Such must be his dread of the approaching trial, as will leave him little attention to the opinion of those whom he is leaving for ever; and the serenity that is not felt, it can be no virtue to feign."

The subject of grief for the loss of relations and friends being one day introduced, Mr. B. observed, that it was strange to consider how soon it in general wears away. Dr. Taylor mentioned a gentleman of the neighbourhood, as the only instance he had ever known of a person who had endeavoured to *retain* grief.—He told Dr. Taylor, that after his Lady's death, which affected him deeply, he *resolved* that the grief which he cherished with a kind of sacred fondness, should be lasting; but that he found he could not keep it long.—"All grief (said Johnson) for what cannot in the course of nature be helped, soon wears away; in some sooner, indeed, in some later; but it never continues very long, unless where there is madness, such as will make a man have pride so fixed in his mind,

as to imagine himself a king, or any other passion in an unreasonable way: for all unnecessary grief is unwise, and therefore will not be long retained by a sound mind. If, indeed, the cause of our grief is occasioned by our own misconduct, if grief is mingled with remorse of conscience, it should be lasting."—*B.* "But, Sir, we do not approve of a man who very soon forgets the loss of a wife or a friend."—*J.* "Sir, we disapprove of him, not because he soon forgets his grief; for the sooner it is forgotten the better; but because we suppose, that if he forgets his wife or his friend soon, he has not had much affection for them."

To one who had recently lost a wife, Johnson observed, "The loss which you have lately suffered I felt many years ago, and know therefore how much has been taken from you, and how little help can be had from consolation. He that outlives a wife whom he has long loved, sees himself disjoined from the only mind that has the same hopes, and fears, and interest; from the only companion with whom he has shared much good or evil; and with whom he could set his mind at liberty, to retrace the past, or anticipate the future. The continuity of being is lacerated; the settled course of sentiment and action is stopped; and life stands suspended,

and motionless, till it is driven by external causes into a new channel. But the time of suspense is dreadful.

"Our first recourse in this distressed solitude is, perhaps, from want of habitual piety, to a gloomy acquiescence in necessity. Of two mortal beings, one must lose the other; but surely there is a higher and better comfort to be drawn from the consideration of that Providence which watches over all, and a belief that the living and the dead are equally in the hands of God, who will re-unite those whom he has separated, or who sees that it is best not to re-unite."

Johnson himself was very much affected by the death of his mother, and sent to Mr. Boswell to come and assist him to compose his mind, which indeed was extremely agitated.—He lamented that all serious and religious conversation was banished from the society of men, though great advantages might be derived from it. All acknowledged, he said, what hardly any body practised, the obligation we were under of making the concerns of eternity the governing principles of our lives. Every man, he observed, at last wishes for retreat: he sees his expectations frustrated in the world, and begins to wean himself from it, and to prepare for everlasting separation.

Mr. B. one day mentioned to him, that he had seen the execution of several convicts at Tyburn, and that none of them seemed to be under any concern.—" Most of them, Sir, (said Johnson), have never thought at all."—*B.* "But is not the fear of death natural to man?"—*J.* " So much so, Sir, that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it." He then, in a low and earnest tone, talked of his meditating upon the awful hour of his own dissolution, and in what manner he should conduct himself upon that occasion: " I know not (said he) whether I should wish to have a friend by me, or have it all between God and myself."

They afterwards talked of the melancholy end of a gentleman who had destroyed himself.—Johnson observed, " It was owing to imaginary difficulties in his affairs, which, had he talked with any friend, would soon have vanished."—*B.* " Do you think, Sir, that all who commit suicide are mad?"—*J.* " Sir, they are often not universally disordered in their intellects, but one passion presses so upon them, that they yield to it, and commit suicide, as a passionate man will stab another." He added, " I have often thought, that after a man has taken the resolution to kill himself, it is not courage in him to do any thing, however desperate, because he has nothing to

fear."—Goldsmith (who was in the room) said, "I don't see that."—*J.* "Nay, why should not you see what every one else sees?"—*G.* "It is for fear of something that he has resolved to kill himself; and will not that timid disposition restrain him?"—*J.* "It does not signify that the fear of something made him resolve; it is upon the state of his mind after the resolution is taken, that I argue. Suppose a man, either from fear, or pride, or conscience, or whatever motive, has resolved to kill himself, when once the resolution is taken he has nothing to fear. He may then go and take the King of Prussia by the nose at the head of his army. He cannot fear the rack, who is resolved to kill himself. When Eustace Budgel was walking down to the Thames, determined to drown himself, he might, if he pleased, without any apprehension of danger, have turned aside, and first set fire to St. James's palace."

The subject at another time turning on the belief in ghosts, Johnson said, "Sir, I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination, and what imagination cannot possibly produce.—Thus, suppose I should think that I saw a form and heard a voice cry, 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow, and unless you repent you

will certainly be punished;' my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might *imagine* I thus saw and heard, and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me that a particular man had died at a particular place, and a particular hour, a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing, and this fact with all its circumstances should afterwards be unquestionably proved, I should, in that case, be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me."

Mr. Boswell gives us what he declares to be a true and fair statement of Johnson's way of thinking upon the question, whether departed spirits are ever permitted to appear in this world, or in any way to operate upon human life. "He has, (says Mr. B.), been ignorantly misrepresented as weakly credulous upon that subject; and, therefore, though I feel an inclination to disdain, and treat with silent contempt, so foolish a notion concerning my illustrious friend, yet, as I find it has gained ground, it is necessary to refute it. The real fact then is, that Johnson had a very philosophical mind, and such a rational respect for testimony, as to make him submit his understanding to what was

authentically proved, though he could not comprehend why it was so. Being thus disposed, he was willing to enquire into the truth of any relation of supernatural agency, a general belief of which has prevailed in all nations and ages. But so far was he from being the dupe of implicit faith, that he examined the matter with a jealous attention, and no man was more ready to refute its falsehood when he had discovered it."

Of apparitions he once took occasion to observe, "A total disbelief of them is adverse to the opinion of the existence of the soul between death and the last day; the question simply is, Whether departed spirits ever have the power of making themselves perceptible to us? A man who thinks he has seen an apparition can only be convinced himself; his authority will not convince another; and his conviction, if rational, must be founded on being told something which cannot be known but by supernatural means."

Johnson mentioned a thing as not unfrequent, namely, the being *called*, that is, hearing one's name pronounced by the voice of a known person at a great distance, far beyond the possibility of being reached by any sound uttered by human organs. "An acquaintance, (says Mr. B.), on

whose veracity I can depend, told me, that walking home one evening to Kilmarnock, he heard himself called from a wood, by the voice of a brother who had gone to America; and the next packet brought accounts of that brother's death." Mr. Macbean asserted, that this inexplicable calling was a thing very well known.—Dr. Johnson said, that one day at Oxford, as he was turning the key of his chamber, he heard his mother distinctly call *Sam.* She was then at Litchfield; but nothing ensued.

Mr. Boswell one day said, "I do not know whether there are any well-attested stories of the appearance of ghosts. You know there is a famous account of the apparition of Mrs. Veal, prefixed to "Drelincourt on Death."—*Johnson:* "I believe, Sir, that is given up. I think the woman declared upon her death-bed that it was a lie."—*B.* "This objection is made against the truth of ghosts appearing: that if they are in a state of happiness, it would be a punishment to them to return to this world; and if they are in a state of misery, it would be giving them a respite."—*J.* "Why, Sir, as the happiness or misery of unembodied spirits does not depend upon place, but is intellectual, we cannot say that they are less happy or less miserable by appearing upon earth. It is wonderful, however,

that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it."

On the subject of our situation in a future state, he said, "The happiness of an unembodied spirit will consist in a consciousness of the favour of GOD, in the contemplation of truth, and in the possession of felicitating ideas." "But, Sir, (said Mr. Boswell), is there any harm in our forming to ourselves conjectures as to the particulars of our happiness, though the Scripture has said but very little on the subject? 'We know not what we shall be.'"—*J.* "Sir, there is no harm. What philosophy suggests to us on this topic is probable, what Scripture tells us is certain. Dr. Henry More has carried it as far as philosophy can. You may buy both his theological and philosophical works in two volumes folio, for about eight shillings."—*B.* "One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again."—*J.* "Yes, Sir; but you must consider, that when we are become purely rational, many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual pleasures: all these will be cut off. We form many friend-

ships with bad men, because they have agreeable qualities, and they can be useful to us.—We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are. After death, we shall see every one in a true light. Then, Sir, they talk of our meeting our relations; but then all relationship is dissolved; and we shall have no regard for one person more than another, but for their real value. However, we shall have either the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them."—*B.* "Yet, Sir, we see in Scripture, that Dives still retained an anxious concern about his brethren."—*J.* "Why, Sir, we must either suppose that passage to be metaphorical, or hold with many divines, and all the Purgatorians, that departed souls do not all at once arrive at the utmost perfection of which they are capable."—*B.* "I think, Sir, that is a very rational supposition."—*J.* "Why, yes, Sir; but we do not know it is a true one. There is no harm in believing it: but you must not compel others to make it an article of faith; for it is not revealed."—*B.* "Do you think, Sir, it is wrong in a man who holds the doctrine of purgatory, to pray for the souls of his deceased friends?"—*J.* "Why, no, Sir."—*B.* "I have been told, that in the Liturgy of the

Episcopal Church of Scotland, there was a form of prayer for the dead."—*J.* "Sir, it is not in the Liturgy which Laud framed for the Episcopal Church of Scotland: if there is a Liturgy older than that, I should be glad to see it."—*B.* "As to our employment in a future state, the sacred writings say little. The Revelation, however, of St. John, gives us many ideas, and particularly mentions music."—*J.* "Why, Sir, ideas must be given you by means of something which you know: and as to music, there are some philosophers and divines who have maintained that we shall not be spiritualized to such a degree, but that something of matter, very much refined, will remain. In that case, music may make a part of our future felicity."

In another conversation, Mr. Boswell mentioned a kind of religious Robinhood Society, which met every Sunday evening at Coachmakers' Hall, for free debate; and that the subject for that night was the text which relates, with other miracles, that which happened at our SAVIOUR's death, 'And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.'—Mrs. Hall observed, that it was a very curious subject, and she should like

to hear it discussed. Johnson (somewhat warmly) said, "One would not go to such a place to hear it,—one would not be seen in such a place —to give countenance to such a meeting."— "But, Sir, (said she to Johnson), I should like to hear *you* discuss it." He seemed reluctant to engage in it. She talked of the resurrection of the human race in general, and maintained that we shall be raised with the same bodies.— "Nay, Madam, (returned Johnson), we see that it is not to be the same body; for the Scripture uses the illustration of grain sown, and we know that the grain which grows is not the same with what is sown. You cannot suppose that we shall rise with a diseased body; it is enough if there be such a sameness as to distinguish identity of person."

The reader will, no doubt, be desirous of learning how Johnson supported that awful crisis, of which he, through life, expressed so much dread.

In his last illness, with that native fortitude which amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings never forsook him, he asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly, whether he could recover. "Give me (said he) a direct answer." The Doctor having first asked him, if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might

lead, and being answered that he could, declared, that in his opinion he could not recover without a miracle. "Then (said Johnson) I will take no more physic, not even my opiates: for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." In this resolution he persevered; and at the same time used only the weakest kinds of sustenance.

For some time before his death, all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and propitiation of our Redeemer. He talked often about the necessity of faith in the sacrifice of the Redeemer, as necessary, beyond all good works whatever, for the salvation of mankind.

The Doctor, from the time that he was certain his death was near, appeared to be perfectly resigned, was seldom or never fretful or out of temper, and often said to his faithful servant, Francis Barber, who gave this account, "Attend, Francis, to the salvation of your soul, which is the object of greatest importance." He also explained to him passages in the Scripture, and seemed to have pleasure in talking upon religious subjects.

On Monday, the thirteenth of December, 1784, the day on which he died, a Miss Morris, daughter to a particular friend of his, called, and said to Francis, that she begged to be per-

mitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing. Francis went into the room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned himself in the bed, and said,— "God bless you, my dear!" These were the last words he spoke. His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when Francis and Mrs. Desmoulins, who were sitting in the room, observing that the noise he made in breathing had ceased, went to the bed side, and found that he was dead.

About two days after his death, the following account was communicated to Mr. Malone, in a letter by the Hon. John Byng:

"I have had a long conversation with Cawston, who sat up with Dr. Johnson from nine o'clock on Sunday evening till ten o'clock on Monday morning. And from what I can gather from him, it should seem, that Dr. Johnson was perfectly composed; steady in hope, and resigned to death. At the interval of each hour, they assisted him to sit up in his bed, and move his legs, which were in much pain, when he regularly addressed himself to fervent prayer: and though sometimes his voice failed him, his senses never did during that time. The only sustenance he received was cyder and water. He

said his mind was prepared, and the time to his dissolution seemed long. At six in the morning he enquired the hour, and on being informed, said that all went on regularly, and he felt he had but a few hours to live.

"At ten o'clock in the morning he parted from Cawston, saying, 'You should not detain Mr. Windham's servant.—I thank you; bear my remembrance to your master.' Cawston says, that no man could appear more collected, more devout, or less terrified at the thoughts of the approaching minute."

DUELLING.

Mr. Boswell, in a conversation with Gen. Oglethorpe, Johnson, and Goldsmith, started the question, whether duelling was consistent with moral duty? The brave old General fired at this, and said, with a lofty air, "Undoubtedly a man has a right to defend his honour. —*Goldsmith*, (turning to Mr. B.) "I ask you first, Sir, what would you do if you were affronted?" He answered, that he should think

it necessary to fight.—"Why then, (replied Goldsmith), that solves the question."—*Johnson:* "No, Sir, it does not solve the question. It does not follow, that what a man would do is therefore right."—Mr. *B.* "I wished to have it settled, whether duelling was contrary to the laws of Christianity." Johnson immediately entered on the subject, and treated it in a masterly manner. His thoughts were these: "As men become in a high degree refined, various causes of offence arise, which are considered to be of such importance, that life must be staked to atone for them, though in reality they are not so. A body that has received a very fine polish may be easily hurt. Before men arrive at this artificial refinement, if one tells his neighbour he lies, his neighbour tells him he lies; if one gives his neighbour a blow, his neighbour gives him a blow: but in a state of highly-polished society, an affront is held to be a serious injury. It must, therefore, be resented, or rather a duel must be fought upon it; as men have agreed to banish from their society one who puts up with an affront without fighting a duel. Now, Sir, it is never unlawful to fight in self-defence. He, then, who fights a duel, does not fight from passion against his antagonist, but out of self-defence, to avert the stig-

ma of the world, and to prevent himself from being driven out of society. I could wish there was not that superfluity of refinement; but while such notions prevail, no doubt a man may lawfully fight a duel."

This justification is applicable only to the person who *receives* an affront. All mankind must condemn the aggressor.

The General said, that when he was a very young man, only fifteen, serving under Prince Eugene of Savoy, he was sitting in a company at table with a Prince of Wirtemburg. The Prince took up a glass of wine, and, by a fillip, made some of it fly in Oglethorpe's face. Here was a nice dilemma. To have challenged him instantly might have fixed a quarrelsome character upon the young soldier: to have taken no notice might have been considered as cowardice. Oglethorpe therefore, keeping his eye upon the Prince, and smiling all the time, as if he took what his Highness had done in jest, said, in French, "That's a good joke; but we do it much better in England;" and threw a whole glass of wine in the Prince's face. An old General who sat by, said, '*Il a bien fait; mon Prince, vous l'avez commencé;*' and thus all ended in good humour.

At another time Johnson defended duelling,

and put his argument upon what is perhaps the most solid basis; namely, that if public war be allowed to be consistent with morality, private war must be equally so.

EDUCATION.

In a conversation on the educating of children, Mr. Boswell asked Johnson what he thought was best to teach them first.—"Sir, (said he), it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the mean time your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both."

Johnson himself 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 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 upon 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."

Johnson, however, was very sensible how much he owed to Mr. Hunter. Mr. Langton one day asked him how he acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which he was thought not to be exceeded by any man of his time. He said, "My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing." He also 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. "I would rather (said he) have the rod the general terror of 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, 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."

Johnson's opinion of the most proper course to be pursued in the instruction of youth, is ascertained by the following paper in his own hand-writing, given 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. Clark, 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.

" Practice in the Latin rules till they are perfect in them ; afterwards in Mr. Leeds's 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.

" 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.	Attick.
" Ælian.	
" Lucian by Leeds.	
" Xenophon.	
" Homer.	Ionick.
" Theocritus.	Dorick.
" Euripides.	Attic and Dorick.

" Thus you will be tolerably skilled in all the dialects, beginning with the Attick, 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 or 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."

Dr. Johnson and I (says Mr. B.) one day took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages

an essential requisite to a good education.—*Johnson:* "Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people, even in the common intercourse of life, which which does not appear to be much connected with it."—"And yet (said Mr. B.) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning."—*J.* "Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors." He then called to the boy, "What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?"—"Sir, (said the boy), I would give what I have." Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. The Doctor then turning to Mr. B. said, "Sir, a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge."

To Mr. Langton, when about to establish a school upon his estate, it had been suggested, that it might have a tendency to make the peo-

ple less industrious. "No, Sir, (said Johnson); while learning to read and write is a distinction, the few who have that distinction may be the less inclined to work; but when every body learns to read and write, it is no longer a distinction. A man who has a laced waistcoat is too fine a man to work; but if every body had laced waistcoats, we should have people working in laced waistcoats. There are no people whatever more industrious, none who work more than our manufacturers; yet they have all learnt to read and write. Sir, you must not neglect doing a thing immediately good, from fear of remote evil, from fear of its being abused. A man who has candles may sit up too late, which he would not do if he had not candles; but nobody will deny that the art of making candles, by which light is continued to us beyond the time that the sun gives us light, is a valuable art, and ought to be preserved."—*Boswell:* "But, Sir, would it not be better to follow Nature, and go to bed and rise just as Nature gives us light or withholds it?"—*Johnson:* "No, Sir; for then we should have no kind of equality in the partition of our time between sleeping and waking. It would be very different in different seasons and in different places. In some

of the northern parts of Scotland how little light is there in the depth of winter !"

Of education at great schools, Johnson displayed the advantages and disadvantages in a luminous manner ; but his arguments preponderated much in favour of the benefit which a boy of good parts might receive at one of them.

At another time he 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."—Yet more, he observed, was learned in public than in private schools, from emulation; " there is (said he) the collision of mind with mind, or the radiation of many minds pointing to one centre. Though few boys make their own exercises, yet if a good exercise is given up, out of a great number of boys, it is made by somebody. I hate by-roads in education. Education is as well known, and has long been as well known as ever it can be. Endeavouring to make children prematurely wise is useless labour. Suppose they have more knowledge at five or six years than other children, what use can be made of it ? It will be lost before it is wanted, and the waste of so much time and labour of the teacher can never be repaid. Too much is expected from preco-

city, and too little performed. Miss ——— was an instance of early cultivation; but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is,

'To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer!'

She tells the children, 'this is a cat, and that is a dog with four legs and a tail;—see there! you are much better than a cat or a dog, for you can speak.' I am always for getting a boy forward in his learning; for that is a sure good. I would let him at first read *any* English book which happens to engage his attention; because you have done a great deal when you have brought him to have entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards."

Johnson advised Mr. Boswell not to *refine* in the education of his children. "Life (said he) will not bear refinement; you must do as other people do. Above all, accustom your children constantly to tell the truth; if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end."—*Boswell:* "It may come to the door, and when

once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened." A Lady in the company, whose fancy was impatient of the rein, fidgetted at this, and ventured to say, "Nay, this is too much. If Mr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a day; but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day, if one is not perpetually watching."—*Johnson :* "Well, Madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world."

Talking of instruction, "People have now-a-days (said he) got a strange opinion that every thing should be taught by lectures. Now I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken. I know nothing that can be best taught by lectures except where experiments are to be shewn. You may teach chemistry by lectures; you might teach making of shoes by lectures!"

He allowed very great influence to education. "I do not (he said) deny but there is some original difference in minds; but it is nothing in comparison of what is formed by

education. We may instance the science of *numbers*, which all minds are equally capable of attaining; yet we find a prodigious difference in the powers of different men, in that respect, after they are grown up, because their minds have been more or less exercised in it; and I think the same cause will explain the difference of excellence in other things, gradations admitting always some difference in the first principles."

He often took occasion to enlarge upon the wretchedness of a sea life. "A ship (said he) is worse than a jail. There is in a jail better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea life, they are not fit to live on land."—"Then (said Mr. B.) it would be cruel in a father to breed his son to the sea."—*Johnson:* "It would be cruel in a father who thinks as I do. Men go to sea before they know the unhappiness of that way of life; and when they have come to know it, they cannot escape from it, because it is then too late to choose another profession; as indeed is generally the case with men, when they have once engaged in any particular way of life."

In one of Mr. Dilly's literary parties, some-

body was mentioned as having wished that Milton's 'Tractate on Education' should be printed along with his Poems, in the edition of the English Poets then going on. Johnson said, "It would be breaking in upon the plan; but would be of no great consequence. So far as it would be any thing, it would be wrong. Education in England has been in danger of being hurt by two of its greatest men, Milton and Locke. Milton's plan is impracticable, and I suppose has never been tried; Locke's, I fancy, has been tried often enough, but is very imperfect; it gives too much to one side, and too little to the other: it gives too little to literature."

On another occasion he said, "Where there is no education, as in savage countries, men will have the upper hand of women. Bodily strength no doubt contributes to this; but it would be so, exclusive of that; for it is mind that always governs. When it comes to dry understanding, man has the better."

Mr. Boswell observed, that he was well assured that the people of Otaheite, who have the bread tree, the fruit of which serves them for bread, laughed heartily when they were informed of the tedious process necessary with us to have bread:—ploughing, sowing, harrowing,

reaping, threshing, grinding, baking."—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, all ignorant savages will laugh when they are told of the advantages of civilized life. Were you to tell men who live without houses, how we pile brick upon brick, and rafter upon rafter, and that after a house is raised to a certain height, a man tumbles off a scaffold and breaks his neck, he would laugh heartily at our folly in building; but it does not follow that men are better without houses. No, Sir, (holding up a slice of a good loaf), this is better than the bread tree."

He repeated an argument, which is to be found in his "Rambler," against the notion that the brute creation is endowed with the faculty of reason: "birds build by instinct; they never improve; they build their first nest as well as any one that they ever build." Goldsmith said, "Yet we see if you take away a bird's nest with the eggs in it, she will make a slighter nest, and lay again."—*Johnson:* "Sir, that is because at first she has full time, and makes her nest deliberately. In the case you mention she is pressed to lay, and must therefore make her nest quickly, and consequently it will be slight."—*G.* "The nidification of birds is what is least known in natural history, though one of the most curious things in it."

The master of a public school at Campbell-town, in Scotland, had been suspended from his office, on a charge against him of having used immoderate and cruel correction. Mr. Boswell was engaged to plead the cause of the master, and consulted Dr. Johnson on the subject, who made the following observations: "The charge is, that he has used immoderate and cruel correction. Correction, in itself, is not cruel; children, being not reasonable, can be governed only by fear. To impress this fear, is therefore one of the first duties of those who have the care of children. It is the duty of a parent, and has never been thought inconsistent with parental tenderness. It is the duty of a master, who is in the highest exaltation when he is *loco parentis*. Yet, as good things become evil by excess, correction, by being immoderate, may become cruel. But when is correction immoderate? When it is more frequent or more severe than is required *ad monendum et docendum*, for reformation and instruction. No severity is cruel which obstinacy makes necessary; for the greatest cruelty would be to desist, and leave the scholar too careless for instruction, and too much hardened for reproof. Locke, in his Treatise of Education, mentions a mother with applause, who whipped an infant

eight times before she had subdued it; for had she stopped at the seventh act of correction, her daughter, says he, would have been ruined. The degrees of obstinacy in young minds are very different; as different must be the degrees of persevering severity. A stubborn scholar must be corrected till he is subdued. The discipline of a school is military. There must either be unbounded license or absolute authority. The master who punishes, not only consults the future happiness of him who is the immediate subject of correction, but he propagates obedience through the whole school, and establishes regularity by exemplary justice. The victorious obstinacy of a single boy would make his future endeavours of reformation or instruction totally ineffectual: obstinacy therefore must never be victorious. Yet it is well known, that there sometimes occurs a sullen and hardy resolution, that laughs at all common punishment, and bids defiance to all common degrees of pain. Correction must be proportioned to occasions. The flexible will be reformed by gentle discipline, and the refractory must be subdued by harsher methods. The degrees of scholastick, as of military punishment, no stated rules can ascertain. It must be enforced till it overpowers temptation;

till stubbornness becomes flexible, and perverseness regular. Custom and reason have, indeed, set some bounds to scholastick penalties: the schoolmaster inflicts no capital punishments, nor enforces his edicts by either death or mutilation. The civil law has wisely determined, that a master who strikes at a scholar's eye shall be considered as criminal. But punishments, however severe, that produce no lasting evil, may be just and reasonable, because they may be necessary. Such have been the punishments used by the schoolmaster accused. No scholar has gone from him either blind or lame, or with any of his limbs or powers injured or impaired. They were irregular, and he punished them; they were obstinate, and he enforced his punishment. But, however provoked, he never exceeded the limits of moderation, for he inflicted nothing beyond present pain; and how much of that was required, no man is so little able to determine as those who have determined against him—the parents of the offenders. It has been said, that he used unprecedented and improper instruments of correction. Of this accusation the meaning is not very easy to be found. No instrument of correction is more proper than another, but as it is better adapted to produce present pain

without lasting mischief. Whatever were his instruments, no lasting mischief has ensued; and therefore, however unusual, in hands so cautious they were proper. It has been objected, that he admits the charge of cruelty, by producing no evidence to confute it. Let it be considered, that his scholars are either dispersed at large in the world, or continue to inhabit the place in which they were bred. Those who are dispersed cannot be found; those who remain are the sons of his persecutors, and are not likely to support a man to whom their fathers are enemies. If it be supposed that the enmity of their fathers proves the justice of the charge, it must be considered how often experience shows us, that men who are angry on one ground will accuse on another; with how little kindness, in a town of low trade, a man who lives by learning is regarded; and how implicitly, where the inhabitants are not very rich, a rich man is hearkened to and followed. In a place like Campbell-town it is easy for one of the principal inhabitants to make a party. It is easy for that party to heat themselves with imaginary grievances. It is easy for them to oppress a man poorer than themselves; and natural to assert the dignity of riches, by persisting in oppression."

Upon the same subject, Mr. Boswell also observed, "It is a very delicate matter to interfere between a master and his scholars; nor do I see how you can fix the degree of severity that a master may use."—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, till you can fix the degree of obstinacy and negligence of the scholars, you cannot fix the degree of severity of the master. Severity must be continued until obstinacy be subdued and negligence be cured."

A young man being mentioned, who was uneasy, from thinking that he was very deficient in learning and knowledge, *J.* said, "A man has no reason to complain who holds a middle place, and has many below him; and perhaps he has not six of his years above him; perhaps not one. Though he may not know any thing perfectly, the general mass of knowledge that he has acquired is considerable. Time will do for him all that is wanting."

"Idleness (said Johnson) is a disease which must be combated; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A young man

should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge."

Goldsmith once attempted to maintain, perhaps from an affectation of paradox, "that knowledge was not desirable on its own account, for it often was a source of unhappiness." "Why, Sir, (said Johnson), that knowledge may in some cases produce unhappiness, I allow; but upon the whole, knowledge, *per se*, is certainly an object which every man would wish to attain, although, perhaps, he may not take the trouble necessary for attaining it. Much might be done if a man would put his whole mind to a particular object. By doing so, Norton made himself the great lawyer that he was allowed to be."

He one day observed, "All knowledge is of itself of some value. There is nothing so minute or inconsiderable, that I would not rather know it than not. In the same manner, all power, of whatever sort, is of itself desirable. A man would not submit to hem a ruffle of his wife, or his wife's maid; but if a mere wish could obtain it, he would rather wish to be able to hem a ruffle."

To Mr. Boswell (while studying at Utrecht) he gave the following advice:

"You will perhaps, wish to ask what study

I would recommend. I shall not speak of theology, because it ought not to be considered as a question, whether you shall endeavour to know the will of God. I shall, therefore, consider only such studies as we are at liberty to pursue or to neglect; and of these I know not how you will make a better choice, than by studying the civil law, as your father advises, and the ancient languages, as you had determined for yourself; at least resolve, while you remain in any settled residence, to spend a certain number of hours every day amongst your books. The dissipation of thought of which you complain, is nothing more than the vacillation of a mind suspended between different motives, and changing its direction as any motive gains or loses strength. If you can but kindle in your mind any strong desire, if you can but keep predominant any wish for some particular excellence or attainment, the gusts of imagination will break away without any effect upon your conduct, and commonly without any traces left upon the memory.

"There lurks, perhaps in every human heart, a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that Nature has given him something peculiar to himself. This vanity makes one mind nurse

aversions, and another actuate desires, till they rise by art much above their original state of power; and as affectation in time, improves to habit, they at last tyrannise over him who at first encouraged them only for show. Every desire is a viper in the bosom, who, while he was chill, was harmless; but when warmth gave him strength, exerted it in poison. You know a gentleman, who, when first he set his foot in the gay world, as he prepared himself to whirl in the vortex of pleasure, imagined a total indifference and universal negligence to be the most agreeable concomitants of youth, and the strongest indication of an airy temper and a quick apprehension. Vacant to every object, and sensible of every impulse, he thought that all appearance of diligence would deduct something from the reputation of genius; and hoped that he should appear to attain, amidst all the ease of carelessness, and all the tumult of diversion, that knowledge and those accomplishments which mortals of the common fabrick obtain only by mute abstraction and solitary drudgery. He tried this scheme of life awhile, was made weary of it by his sense and his virtue; he then wished to return to his studies; and finding his long habits of idleness and pleasure harder to be cured than he expected, still willing to retain

his claim to some extraordinary prerogatives, resolved the common consequences of irregularity into an unalterable decree of destiny, and concluded that Nature had originally formed him incapable of rational employment.

" Let all such fancies, illusive and destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts for ever. Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study to-morrow; not that you are to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted; but let no accidental surprise or deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incident to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavour to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before."

INDULGENCE IN WINE.

Mr. Boswell one evening ventured to undertake the defence of convivial indulgence in wine. After urging the common plausible topicks, he at last had recourse to the maxim, *in vino veritas;* a man who is well warmed with wine will speak truth. "Why, Sir, (said Johnson), that may be an argument for drinking, if you suppose men in general to be liars. But, Sir, I would not keep company with a fellow who lies as long as he is sober, and whom you must make drunk before you can get a word of truth out of him."

He said, few people had intellectual resources sufficient to forego the pleasures of wine. They could not otherwise contrive how to fill the interval between dinner and supper.

A gentleman having to some of the usual arguments for drinking added this: "You know, Sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?"—"Yes,

Sir, (said Johnson, with perhaps unnecessary severity), f he sat next *you.*"

In a party at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, the question was discussed, whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence. Sir Joshua maintained it did.—*J.* "No, Sir: before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding; and those who are conscious of their inferiority have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows impudent and vociferous: but he is not improved; he is only not sensible of his defects." Sir Joshua said, the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine; but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind, by giving a proper circulation to the blood. "I am (said he) in very good spirits when I get up in the morning. By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up; and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better."—*J.* "No, Sir; wine gives not light, gay, ideal hilarity; but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken,—nay drunken is a coarse word,—none of those *vinous* flights."—*Sir Joshua:* "Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were

drinking."—*J.* "Perhaps contempt: And, Sir, it is not necessary to be drunk one's self, to relish the wit of drunkenness. Do we not judge of the drunken wit of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio, the most excellent in its kind, when we are quite sober? Wit is wit, by whatever means it is produced; and if good, will appear so at all times. I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking, as by the common participation of any pleasure: cock-fighting, or bear-baiting, will raise the spirits of a company, as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit, that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking; as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten. There are such men, but they are medlars. I indeed allow that there have been very few men of talents who were improved by drinking; but I maintain that I am right as to the effects of drinking in general; and let it be considered, that there is no position, however false in its universality, which is not true of some particular man."—Sir William Forbes said, "Might not a man warmed with wine be like a bottle of beer, which is made brisker by being set before the fire?"—"Nay, (said Johnson, laughing), I cannot answer that—that is too much for me."—Mr. Boswell observed,

"that wine did some people harm, by inflaming, confusing, and irritating their minds; but that the experience of mankind had declared in favour of moderate drinking."—*J.* "Sir, I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind. When I drank wine, I scorned to drink it when in company. I have drunk many a bottle by myself; in the first place, because I had need of it to raise my spirits; in the second place, because I would have nobody to witness its effects upon me."

On another occasion, talking of the effects of drinking, he said, "Drinking may be practised with great prudence; a man who exposes himself when he is intoxicated has not the art of getting drunk; a sober man, who happens occasionally to get drunk, readily enough goes into a new company, which a man who has been drinking should never do. Such a man will undertake any thing; he is without skill in inebriation. I used to slink home when I had drunk too much. A man accustomed to self-examination will be conscious when he is drunk, though an habitual drunkard will not be conscious of it. I knew a physician who for twenty years was not sober; yet in a pamphlet which he wrote upon fevers, he appealed to Garrick and

me for his vindication from a charge of drunkenness. A bookseller (naming him) who got a large fortune by trade, was so habitually and equably drunk, that his most intimate friends never perceived that he was more sober at one time than another."

He once gave the following very judicious practical advice upon the subject: "A man who has been drinking wine at all freely, should never go into a new company. With those who have partaken of wine with him, he may be pretty well in unison; but he will probably be offensive, or appear ridiculous, to other people."

At another time being at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, Johnson harangued upon the qualities of different liquors; and spoke with great contempt of claret, as so weak, "that a man would be drowned by it before it made him drunk." He was persuaded to drink one glass of it, that he might judge, not from recollection, which might be dim, but from immediate sensation. He shook his head, and said, "Poor stuff! No Sir, claret is the liquor for boys; port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero (smiling) must drink brandy. In the first place, the flavour of brandy is most grateful to the palate; and then brandy will do soonest for a man what drinking *can* do for him. There are, indeed, few who

are able to drink brandy. That is a power rather to be wished for than attained. And yet (proceeded he) as in all pleasure hope is a considerable part, I know not but fruition comes too quick by brandy. Florence wine I think the worst; it is wine only to the eye; it is wine neither while you are drinking it, nor after you have drunk it; it neither pleases the taste, nor exhilarates the spirit."—"I reminded him (says Mr. B.) how heartily he and I used to drink wine together when we were first acquainted, and how I used to have a head-ache after sitting up with him. He did not like to have this recalled; or perhaps thinking that I boasted improperly, resolved to have a witty stroke at me. —*J.* "Nay, Sir, it was not the *wine* that made your head ache, but the *sense* that I put into it."—*B.* "What, Sir, will sense make the head ache?"—*J.* "Yes, Sir, (with a smile), when it is not used to it."—"No man (adds Mr. B.) who has a true relish of pleasantry could be offended at this; especially if Johnson, in a long intimacy, had given him repeated proofs of his regard and good estimation. I used to say, that as he had given me a thousand pounds in praise, he had a good right now and then to take a guinea from me."—*J.* "I require wine only when I am alone. I have then often wished for it,

and often taken it."—"What, (said Mr. Spottiswoode, the Solicitor, who was present), by by way of a companion, Sir?"—*J.* "To get rid of myself, to send myself away. Wine gives great pleasure; and every pleasure is of itself a good. It is a good, unless counterbalanced by evil. A man may have a strong reason not to drink wine; and that may be greater than the pleasure. Wine makes a man better pleased with himself. I do not say that it makes him more pleasing to others. Sometimes it does. But the danger is, that while a man grows better pleased with himself, he may be growing less pleasing to others. Wine gives a man nothing. It neither gives him knowledge nor wit; it only animates a man, and enables him to bring out what a dread of the company has repressed. It only puts in motion what has been locked up in frost. But this may be good, or it may be bad."—*Spottiswoode:* "So, Sir, wine is a key which opens a box; but this box may be either full or empty."—*Johnson:* "Nay, Sir, conversation is the key: wine is a pick-lock which forces open the box and injures it. A man should cultivate his mind, so as to have that confidence and readiness without wine, which wine gives."—*B.* "The great difficulty of resisting wine is from benevolence. For instance, a good worthy man asks you to taste his wine, which he

has had twenty years in his cellar."—*J.* "Sir, all this notion about benevolence arises from a man's imagining himself to be of more importance to others than he really is. They don't care a farthing whether he drinks wine or not."—*Sir Joshua Reynolds:* "Yes, they do for the time." —*J.* "For the time! If they care this minute they forget it the next. And as for the good worthy man; how do you know he is good and worthy? No good and worthy man will insist upon another man's drinking wine. As to the wine twenty years in the cellar—of ten men, three say this merely because they must say something; three are telling a lie, when they say they have had the wine twenty years; three would rather save the wine; one perhaps cares. I allow, it is something to please one's company, and people are always pleased with those who partake pleasure with them. But after a man has brought himself to relinquish the great personal pleasure which arises from drinking wine, any other consideration is a trifle. To please others by drinking wine, is something only if there be nothing against it. I should, however, be sorry to offend worthy men:

"Curst be the verse, how well so e'er it flow,
"That tends to make one worthy man my foe."

—*B.* "Curst be the *spring*, the *water*."—

J. "But let us consider what a sad thing it would be, if we were obliged to drink, or do any thing else that may happen to be agreeable to the company where we are."—*Langton:* "By the same rule you must join with a gang of cut-purses."—*J.* "Yes, Sir: but yet we must do justice to wine; we must allow it the power it possesses. To make a man pleased with himself, let me tell you, is doing a very great thing."

Some time after this Johnson again harangued against drinking wine: "A man (said he) may choose whether he will have abstemiousness and knowledge, or claret and ignorance."—Dr. Robertson (who was very companionable) was beginning to dissent as to the proscription of claret.—*J.* (with a placid smile), "Nay, Sir, you shall not differ with me; as I have said that the man is most perfect who takes in the most things, I am for knowledge and claret."

"Mr. Eliot (says Mr. B.) mentioned a curious liquor peculiar to his country, which the Cornish fishermen drink. They call it *mahogany;* and it is made of two parts gin and one part treacle, well beaten together. I begged to have some of it made, which was done with proper skill by Mr. Eliot. I thought it very good liquor; and said it was a counterpart of what is called *Athol porridge* in the Highlands of Scot-

land, which is a mixture of whisky and honey."—*J.* said, "that must be a better liquor than the Cornish, for both its component parts are better." He also observed, "*Mahogany* must be a modern name, for it is not long since the wood called mahogany was known in this country."—I mentioned his scale of liquors: claret for boys—port for men—brandy for heroes.—"Then (said Mr. Burke) let me have claret: I love to be a boy; to have the careless gaiety of boyish days."—*J.* "I should drink claret too, if it would give me that—but it does not; it neither makes boys men, nor men boys. You'll be drowned by it before it has any effect upon you."

Talking of a man's resolving to deny himself the use of wine, from moral and religious considerations, he said, "He must not doubt about it. When one doubts as to pleasure, we know what will be the conclusion. I now no more think of drinking wine than a horse does. The wine upon the table is no more for me than for the dog that is under the table. Yet (added he) I did not leave off wine because I could not bear it; I have drunk three bottles of port without being the worse for it.—University College has witnessed this."—*B.* "Why, then, Sir, did you leave it off?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, because it is so

much better for a man to be sure that he is never to be intoxicated, never to lose the power over himself. I shall not begin to drink wine again till I grow old and want it."—*B.* "I think, Sir, you once said to me, that not to drink wine was a great deduction from life."—*J.* "It is a diminution of pleasure, to be sure; but I do not say a diminution of happiness. There is more happiness in being rational."—*B.* "But if we could have pleasure always, should not we be happy?—the greatest part of men would compound for pleasure."—*J.* "Supposing we could have pleasure always, an intellectual man would not compound for it. The greatest part of men would compound, because the greatest part of men are gross."—*B.* "I allow there may be greater pleasure than from wine. I have had more pleasure from your conversation. I have indeed. I assure you I have."—*J.* "When we talk of pleasure, we mean sensual pleasure. Philosophers tell you, that pleasure is *contrary* to happiness. Gross men prefer animal pleasure: So there are men who have preferred living among savages. Now what a wretch must he be, who is content with such conversation as can be had among savages!"

"Dr. Johnson (says Mr. B.) recommended me to drink water only: "For (said he) you

are then sure not to get drunk; whereas if you drink wine you are never sure." He however owned, that in his opinion a free use of wine did not shorten life; and said, he would not give less for the life of a certain Scotch lord (whom he named) celebrated for hard drinking, than for that of a sober man. "But stay, (said he with his usual intelligence and accuracy of enquiry), does it take much wine to make him drunk?"—I answered, "a great deal either of wine or strong punch."—"Then (said he) that is the worse." Mr. Boswell illustrates his friend's observation thus: "A fortress which soon surrenders, has its walls less shattered than when a long and obstinate resistance is made."

Finding him still persevering in his abstinence from wine, a friend ventured to speak to him of it.—*J.* "Sir, I have no objection to a man's drinking wine if he can do it in moderation. I found myself apt to go to excess in it, and therefore, after having been for some time without it on account of illness, I thought it better not to return to it. Every man is to judge for himself, according to the effects which he experiences. One of the fathers tells us, he found fasting made him so peevish, that he did not practise it."

Though he often enlarged upon the evil of intoxication, he was by no means harsh and unforgiving to those who indulged in occasional excess in wine. One of his friends came to sup at a tavern with him and some other gentlemen, and too plainly discovered that he had drunk too much at dinner. When one who loved mischief, thinking to produce a severe censure, asked Johnson, a few days afterwards, "Well, Sir, what did your friend say to you, as an apology for being in such a situation?"—Johnson answered, "Sir, he said all that a man *should* say—he said he was sorry for it."

"I was at one time (says Mr. B.) myself a water-drinker upon trial, by Johnson's recommendation; and my friend observed, "Boswell is a bolder combatant than Sir Joshua: he argues for wine without the help of wine; but Sir Joshua with it."—*Sir Joshua Reynolds* (who was of the party: "But to please one's company is a strong motive."—*J.* (who from drinking only water, supposed every body who drank wine to be elevated), "I won't argue any more with you, Sir; you are too far gone."—*Sir Joshua:* "I should have thought so indeed, Sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done."—*Johnson:* (drawing himself in, and blushing), "Nay, don't be angry. I did not

mean to offend you."—*Sir J.* "At first the taste of wine was disagreeable to me; but I brought myself to drink it, that I might be like other people. The pleasure of drinking wine is so connected with pleasing your company, that altogether there is something of social goodness in it."—*J.* "Sir, this is only saying the same thing over again."—*Sir J.* "No, this is new."—*J.* "You put it in new words, but it is an old thought. This is one of the disadvantages of wine. It makes a man mistake words for thoughts."—*B.* "I think it is a new thought, at least it is in a new attitude."—*J.* "Nay, Sir, it is only in a new coat; or an old coat with a new facing. It is *(laughing heartily)*, the old dog in a new doublet. An extraordinary instance, however, may occur, where a man's patron will do nothing for him unless he will drink: *there* may be a good reason for drinking."

Mr. Boswell mentioned a nobleman who he believed was really uneasy if his company would not drink hard.—*Johnson:* "That is from having had people about him whom he has been accustomed to command."—*Boswell:* "Supposing I should be *téte-à-téte* with him at table."—*J.* "Sir, there is no more reason for your drinking with *him*, than his being sober with

you."—*B.* "Why, that is true; for it would do him less hurt to be sober than it would do me to get drunk."—*J.* "Yes, Sir; and from what I have heard of him, one would not wish to sacrifice himself to such a man. If he must always have somebody to drink with him he should buy a slave, and then he would be sure to have it. They who submit to drink as another pleases, make themselves his slaves."—*B.* "But, Sir, you will surely make allowance for the duty of hospitality.—A gentleman who loves drinking comes to visit me."—*J.* "Sir, a man knows whom he visits; he comes to the table of a sober man."—*B.* "But, Sir, you and I should not have been so well received in the Highlands and Hebrides, if I had not drunk with our worthy friends. Had I drunk water only, as you did, they would not have been so cordial."—*J.* "Sir William Temple mentions, that in his travels through the Netherlands he had two or three gentlemen with him, and when a bumper was necessary he put it on *them.* Were I to travel again through the islands I would have Sir Joshua with me to take the bumpers."—*B.* "But, Sir, let me put a case: Suppose Sir Joshua should take a jaunt into Scotland; he does me the honour to pay me a visit at my house in the country; I am overjoyed at seeing

him; we are quite by ourselves; shall I unsociably and churlishly let him sit drinking by himself? No, no, my dear Sir Joshua, you shall not be treated so; I *will* take a bottle with you."

INEQUALITIES OF RANK.

JOHNSON insisted much on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank.—"Sir, (said he), I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect, than of his money, I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman, and he Sam Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay in this town, a great republican. One day, when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, 'Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I

am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us.' I thus, Sir, shewed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling *up* to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?"—A certain author was mentioned, who disgusted by his forwardness, and by shewing no deference to noblemen into whose company he was admitted. Johnson said, "Suppose a shoemaker should claim an equality with him, as he does with a lord, how would he stare!—'Why, Sir, do you stare (says the shoemaker)? I do great service to society. 'Tis true, I am paid for doing it, but so are you, Sir: and I am sorry to say it, better paid than I am, for doing something not so necessary; for mankind could do better without your books, than without my shoes.' Thus there would be a perpetual struggle for precedence, were there no fixed invariable rules for the distinction of rank, which creates no jealousy, as it is allowed to be accidental."

On another occasion (says Mr. B.) we had talked of old families, and the respect due to

them. Johnson said, "Sir, you have a right to that kind of respect, and are arguing for yourself. I am for supporting the principle, and am disinterested in doing it, as I have no such right."—*B.* "Why, Sir, it is one more incitement to a man to do well."—*J.* "Yes, Sir, and it is a matter of opinion very necessary to keep society together. What is it but opinion by which we have a respect for authority, that prevents us, who are the rabble, from rising up and pulling down you who are gentlemen, from your places, and saying, 'We will be gentlemen in our turn!' Now, Sir, that respect for authority is much more easily granted to a man whose father has had it, than to an upstart; and so society is more easily supported."—*B.* "Perhaps, Sir, it might be done by the respect belonging to office, as among the Romans, where the dress, the *toga*, inspired reverence."—*J.* "Why, we know very little about the Romans. But, surely, it is much easier to respect a man who has always had respect, than to respect a man who we know was last year no better than ourselves, and will be no better next year. In republics there is not a respect for authority, but a fear of power."—*B.* "At present, Sir, I think riches seem to gain most respect."—*J.* "No, Sir, riches do not gain hearty respect;

they only procure external attention. A very rich man, from low beginnings, may buy his election in a borough; but, *cæteris paribus*, a man of family will be preferred. People will prefer a man for whose father their fathers have voted, though they should get no more money, or even less. This shews that the respect for family is not merely fanciful, but has an actual operation. If gentlemen of family would allow the rich upstarts to spend their money profusely, which they are ready enough to do, and not vie with them in expence, the upstarts would soon be at an end, and the gentlemen would remain; but if the gentlemen will vie in expence with the upstarts, which is very foolish, they must be ruined."

Johnson, indeed, though of no high extraction himself, had much respect for birth and family, especially among ladies. "Adventitious accomplishments (said he) may be possessed by all ranks; but one may easily distinguish the *born gentlewoman*."

One evening at Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Chambers's in the Temple, he talked with a noble enthusiasm of keeping up the representation of respectable families. His zeal on this subject was a circumstance in his character exceedingly remarkable, when it is considered that he had no pretensions to blood. He himself once

said, "I have great merit in being zealous for subordination and the honours of birth; for I can hardly tell who was my grandfather." He maintained the dignity and propriety of male succession, in opposition to the opinion of one who had that day employed Mr. Chambers to draw his will, devising his estate to his three sisters, in preference to a remote heir male. Johnson called them 'three *dowdies*,' and said, with as high a spirit as the boldest Baron in the most perfect days of the feudal system, 'An ancient estate should always go to males. It is mighty foolish to let a stranger have it because he marries your daughter, and takes your name. As for an estate newly acquired by trade, you may give it, if you will, to the dog *Towser*, and let him keep his *own* name."

"Providence (he observed at another time) has wisely ordered that the more numerous men are, the more difficult it is for them to agree in any thing; and so they are governed. There is no doubt, that if the poor should reason,—'We'll be the poor no longer, we'll make the rich take their turn,' they could easily do it, were it not that they can't agree. So the common soldiers, though so much more numerous than their officers, are governed by them for the same reason."

Some one told him, that Mrs. Macaulay

wondered how he could reconcile his political principles with his moral; his notions of inequality and subordination with wishing well to the happiness of all mankind, who might live so agreeably, had they all their portions of land, and none to domineer over another. "Why, Sir, (said he), I reconcile my principles very well, because mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination. Were they to be in this pretty state of equality, they would soon degenerate into brutes;—they would become Monboddo's nation; their tails would grow. Sir, all would be losers, were all to work for all:—they would have no intellectual improvement. All intellectual improvement arises from leisure: all leisure arises from one working for another."

On another occasion he said, "So far is it from being true that men are naturally equal, that no two people can be half an hour together, but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other."

"Mrs. Williams (said he one day) was angry that Thrale's family did not send regularly to her every time they heard from me, while I was in the Hebrides. Little people are apt to be jealous; but they should not be jealous; for they ought to consider, that superior attention

will necessarily be paid to superior fortune or rank. Two persons may have equal merit, and on that account may have an equal claim to attention; but one of them may have also fortune and rank, and so may have a double claim."

When Rousseau's treatise on the inequality of mankind was a fashionable topick, it gave rise to an observation of Mr. Dempster, in a conversation with Johnson, that the advantages of fortune and rank were nothing to a wise man, who ought to value only merit.—"If man (said Johnson) were a savage, living in the woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilized society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, Sir, in civilized society, external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one. Sir, you may analyse this, and say what is there in it? But that will avail you nothing; for it is part of a general system. Pound St. Paul's church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing: but put all these atoms together, and you have St. Paul's church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shewn to be

very insignificant. In civilized society, personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street, and give one man a lecture on morality, and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most. If you wish only to support nature, Sir William Petty fixes your allowance at three pounds a year; but as times are much altered, let us call it six pounds. This sum will fill your belly, shelter you from the weather, and even get you a strong lasting coat, supposing it to be made of good bull's hide. Now, Sir, all beyond this is artificial, and is desired in order to obtain a greater degree of respect from our fellow creatures. And, Sir, if six hundred pounds a year procure a man more consequence, and, of course more happiness, than six pounds a year, the same proportion will hold as to six thousand, and so on, as far as opulence can be carried. Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one; but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune: for, *cæteris paribus*, he who is rich in a civilized society, must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used (and it is a man's own fault if they are not), must be productive of the highest advantages. Money, to be sure, of

itself is of no use; for its only use is to part with it. Rousseau, and all those who deal in paradoxes, are led away by a childish desire of novelty. When I was a boy, I used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it. Sir, there is nothing for which you may not muster up more plausible arguments than those which are urged against wealth and other external advantages. Why now, there is stealing; why should it be thought a crime? When we consider by what unjust methods property has been often acquired, and that what was unjustly got it must be unjust to keep, where is the harm in one man's taking the property of another from him? Besides, Sir, when we consider the bad use that many people make of their property, and how much better use the thief may make of it, it may be defended as a very allowable practice. Yet, Sir, the experience of mankind has discovered stealing to be so very bad a thing, that they make no scruple to hang a man for it.— When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no

evil, shew it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily on a plentiful fortune. So you hear people talking how miserable a king must be; and yet they all wish to be in his place."

It was suggested, that kings must be unhappy, because they are deprived of the greatest of all satisfactions, easy and unreserved society. Johnson said, "That is an ill-founded notion. Being a king does not exclude a man from such society. Great kings have always been social. The King of Prussia, the only great king at present, is very social. Charles the Second, the last King of England who was a man of parts, was social; and our Henrys and Edwards were all social."

Mr. Dempster having endeavoured to maintain, that intrinsic merit ought to make the only distinction amongst mankind, Johnson observed, "Why, Sir, mankind have found that this cannot be. How shall we determine the proportion of intrinsic merit? Were that to be the only distinction amongst mankind, we should soon quarrel about the degrees of it.—Were all distinctions abolished, the strongest would not long acquiesce, but would endeavour to obtain a superiority by their bodily

strength. But, Sir, as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, mankind, that is to say, all civilized nations, have settled it upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank; or his being appointed to certain offices gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality, we should have no other enjoyment than mere animal pleasure."

Mr. Boswell said, he considered distinction of rank to be of so much importance in civilized society, that if he were asked on the same day to dine with the first duke in England, and with the first man in Britain for genius, he should hesitate which to prefer.—" To be sure, Sir, (said Johnson), if you were to dine only once, and it were never to be known where you dined, you would choose rather to dine with the first man for genius; but to gain most respect, you should dine with the first duke in England. For nine people in ten that you meet with, would have a higher opinion of you for having dined with a duke; and the great genius himself would receive you better, because you had been with the great duke."

He took care to guard himself against any possible suspicion that his settled principles of

reverence for rank and respect for wealth were at all owing to mean or interested motives; for he asserted his own independence as a literary man. "No man (said he) who ever lived by literature, has lived more independently than I have done." He said he had taken longer time than he needed to have done in composing his Dictionary.

In an eloquent argument, he maintained that the situation of Prince of Wales was the happiest of any person's in the kingdom, even beyond that of the Sovereign. Among other things, he mentioned the enjoyment of hope, —the high superiority of rank, without the anxious cares of government,—a great degree of power, both from natural influence wisely used, and from the sanguine expectations of those who look forward to the chance of future favour.

LAW.

When Mr. Boswell meditated trying his fortune in Westminster Hall, Johnson said to him, "You must not indulge too sanguine

hopes, should you be called to our bar. I was told by a very sensible lawyer, that there are a great many chances against any man's success in the profession of the law; the candidates are so numerous, and those who get large practice so few." He said, it was by no means true, that a man of good parts and application is sure of having business, though he, indeed, allowed, that if such a man could but appear in a few causes, his merit would be known, and he would get forward; but that the great risk was, that a man might pass half a life-time in the Courts, and never have an opportunity of shewing his abilities.

"I asked him, (says Mr. Boswell on another occasion), whether, as a moralist, he did not think that the practice of the law, in some degree, hurt the nice feeling of honesty?"—*Johnson:* "Why, no, Sir, if you act properly. You are not to deceive your clients with false representations of your opinion: you are not to tell lies to a Judge."—*Boswell:* "But what do you think of supporting a cause which you know to be bad?"—*J.* "Sir, you do not know it to be good or bad till the Judge determines it. I have said that you are to state facts fairly; so that your thinking, or what you call knowing, a cause to be bad, must be from reasoning; must

be from your supposing your arguments to be weak and inconclusive. But, Sir, that is not enough. An argument which does not convince yourself, may convince the Judge to whom you urge it; and if it does convince him, why, then, Sir, you are wrong, and he is right. It is his business to judge; and you are not to be confident in your own opinion that a cause is bad, but to say all you can for your client, and then hear the Judge's opinion."—*B.* "But, Sir, does not affecting a warmth when you have no warmth, and appearing to be clearly of opinion when you are in reality of another opinion, does not such dissimulation impair one's honesty? Is there not some danger that a lawyer may put on the same mask in common life, in the intercourse with his friends?"—*J.* "Why, no, Sir; every body knows you are paid for affecting warmth for your client, and it is therefore properly no dissimulation; the moment you come from the bar you resume your usual behaviour. Sir, a man will no more carry the artifice of the bar into the common intercourse of society, than a man who is paid for tumbling upon his hands, will continue tumbling upon his hands when he should walk on his feet."

Of entails he said, "They are good, because it is good to preserve in a country a succession

of men to whom the people are accustomed to look up as to their leaders. But I am for leaving a quantity of land in commerce to excite industry, and keep money in the country; for if no land were to be bought in the country, there would be no encouragement to acquire wealth, because a family could not be founded there; or if it were acquired, it must be carried away to another country where land may be bought. And although the land in every country will remain the same, and be as fertile where there is no money, as where there is, yet all that portion of the happiness of civil life, which is produced by money circulating in a country, would be lost."—Mr. Boswell asking whether it would be for the advantage of a country that all its lands were sold at once, Johnson answered, "So far, Sir, as money produces good, it would be an advantage; for then that country would have as much money circulating in it as it is worth; but to be sure, this would be counterbalanced by the disadvantages attending a total change of proprietors."

Mr. Boswell expressed his opinion, that the power of entailing should be limited thus: "That there should be one third, or perhaps one half, of the land of a country kept free for commerce; that the proportion allowed to be

entailed should be parcelled out, so that no family could entail above a certain quantity. Let a family, according to the abilities of its representatives, be richer or poorer, in different generations, or always rich if its representatives be always wise; but let its absolute permanency be moderate. In this way we should be certain of there being always a number of established roots; and as, in the course of nature, there is in every age an extinction of some families, there would be continual openings for men ambitious of perpetuity, to plant a stock in the entail ground."—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, mankind will be better able to regulate the system of entails, when the evil of too much land being locked up by them is felt, than we can do at present, when it is not felt."

LIFE.

JOHNSON recommended to Mr. Boswell to keep a journal of his life, full and unreserved. He said, it would be a very good exercise, and would yield him great satisfaction when the particulars were faded from his remembrance. He

counselled him to keep it private, and said he might surely have a friend who would burn it in case of his death. Mr. Boswell observed, that he was afraid he should put into his journal too many little incidents.—*Johnson:* "There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible."—Yet he said it was not necessary to mention such trifles as that meat was too much or too little done, or that the weather was fair or rainy. He said, that he had twelve or fourteen times attempted to keep a journal of his life, but never could persevere. "The great thing to be recorded, (said he), is the state of your own mind; and you should write down every thing that you remember, for you cannot judge at first what is good or bad; and write immediately while the impression is fresh, for it will not be the same a week afterwards. A man may write upon a card a day all that is necessary to be written, after he has had experience of life. At first there is a great deal to be written, because there is a great deal of novelty; but when once a man has settled his opinions, there is seldom much to be set down."

"There is nothing wonderful (said he) in the

journal which we see Swift kept in London, for it contains slight topics, and it might soon be written."

"Life (he observed on another occasion) is but short; no time can be afforded but for the indulgence of real sorrow, or contests upon questions seriously momentous. Let us not throw away any of our days upon useless resentment, or contend who shall hold out longest in stubborn malignity. It is best not to be angry; and best, in the next place, to be quickly reconciled."

Again: "Life admits not of delays; when pleasure can be had, it is fit to catch it. Every hour takes away part of the things that please us, and perhaps part of our disposition to be pleased. When I came to Litchfield, (said he to Mr. Boswell), I found my old friend Harry Jackson dead. It was a loss, and a loss not to be repaired, as he was one of the companions of my childhood. I hope we may long continue to gain friends, but the friends which merit or usefulness can procure us, are not able to supply the place of old acquaintance, with whom the days of youth may be retraced, and those images revived which gave the earliest delight. If you and I live to be much older, we shall

take great delight in talking over the Hebridean Journey."

At another time he said, "Life is not long, and too much of it must not pass in idle deliberation how it shall be spent; deliberation which those who begin it by prudence, and continue it with subtilty, must, after long expence of thought, conclude by chance. To prefer one future mode of life to another, upon just reasons, requires faculties which it has not pleased our Creator to give us.

"If therefore the profession you have chosen has some unexpected inconveniences, console yourself by reflecting, that no profession is without them; and that all the importunities and perplexities of business are softness and luxury, compared with the incessant cravings of vacancy, and the unsatisfactory expedients of idleness."

The Bishop of St. Asaph once observed, that it appeared from Horace's writings that he was a cheerful contented man.—*Johnson:* "We have no reason to believe that, my Lord. Are we to think Pope was happy, because he says so in his writings? We see in his writings what he wished the state of his mind to appear. Dr. Young, who pined for preferment, talks with

contempt of it in his writings, and affects to despise every thing that he did not despise."—*Bishop of St. Asaph:* "He was, like other chaplains, looking for vacancies; but that is not peculiar to the clergy. I remember when I was in the army, after the battle of Lafeldt, the officers seriously grumbled that no general was killed."—Mr. Boswell maintained, that Horace was wrong, in placing happiness in *nil admirari;* for that he thought admiration one of the most agreeable of all our feelings, and regretted that he had lost much of his disposition to admire, which people generally do as they advance in life.—*J.* "Sir, as a man advances in life, he gets what is better than admiration—judgment to estimate things at their true value."—I still insisted (says Mr. Boswell) that admiration was more pleasing than judgment, as love is more pleasing than friendship. The feeling of friendship is like that of being comfortably filled with roast beef; love, like being enlivened with champaign.—*J.* "No, Sir; admiration and love are like being intoxicated with champaign; judgment and friendship like being enlivened. Waller has hit upon the same thought with you; but I don't believe you have borrowed from Waller. I wish you would enable yourself to borrow more."

An ingenious gentleman was mentioned, concerning whom it was observed, that he had a constant firmness of mind; for after a laborious day, and amidst a multiplicity of cares and anxieties, he would sit down with his sisters, and be quite cheerful and good-humoured. Such a disposition, it was remarked, was a happy gift of nature.—*Johnson:* "I do not think so; a man has from nature a certain portion of mind; the use he makes of it depends upon his own free will. That a man has always the same firmness of mind I do not say, because every man feels his mind less firm at one time than at another; but I think a man's being in a good or bad humour depends upon his will."

Dr. Johnson on some occasion talked with approbation of one who had attained to the state of the philosophical wise man, that is, to have no want of any thing. "Then, Sir, (said Mr. Boswell), the savage is a wise man."—"Sir, (replied Johnson), I do not mean simply being without—but not having a want."—Mr. Boswell maintained, against this proposition, that it was better to have fine clothes, for instance, than not to feel the want of them.—*Johnson:* "No, Sir; fine clothes are good only as they supply the want of other means of procuring respect. Was Charles the Twelfth,

think you, less respected for his coarse blue coat and black stock? And you find the King of Prussia dresses plain, because the dignity of his character is sufficient."

Mr. Boswell at another time talked to him of misery being "the doom of man," in this life, as displayed in his 'Vanity of Human Wishes;' yet observed, that things were done upon the supposition of happiness; grand houses were built, fine gardens were made, splendid places of public amusement were contrived, and crowded with company. "Alas, Sir, (said Johnson), these are only struggles for happiness. When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced any where else. But, as Xerxes wept when he viewed his immense army, and considered that not one of that great multitude would be alive a hundred years afterwards, so it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle, that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual there would be distressing when alone."

Mr. Boswell suggested, that being in love, and flattered with hopes of success, or having some favourite scheme in view for the next day, might prevent that wretchedness of which they had

been talking. "Why, Sir, (said Johnson), it may sometimes be as you suppose; but my conclusion is in general but too true."

Mr. Boswell tells us, that he once teized Johnson with fanciful apprehensions of unhappiness. A moth having fluttered round the candle, and burnt itself, the Doctor laid hold of this little incident to admonish him, saying with a sly look, and in a solemn but quiet tone, "That creature was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was *Boswell*."

One evening (says Mr. B.) Dr. Johnson was engaged to sup with me at my lodgings in Downing-street, Westminster. But on the preceding night my landlord having behaved very rudely to me and some company who were with me, I had resolved not to remain another night in his house. I was exceedingly uneasy at the awkward appearance I supposed I should make to Johnson and the other gentlemen whom I had invited, not being able to receive them at home, and being obliged to order supper at the Mitre. I went to Johnson in the morning, and talked of it as of a serious distress. He laughed, and said, "Consider, Sir, how insignificant this will appear a twelvemonth hence."—Were this consideration to be applied to most of the little vexatious incidents of life, by which our quiet is

too often disturbed, it would prevent many painful sensations. I have tried it frequently, with good effect.—" There is nothing (continued Johnson) in this mighty misfortune; nay, we shall be better at the Mitre."—I told him that I had been at Sir John Fielding's office, complaining of my landlord, and had been informed, that though I had taken my lodgings for a year, I might, upon proof of his bad behaviour, quit them when I pleased, without being under an obligation to pay rent for any longer time than while I possessed them. The fertility of Johnson's mind could shew itself, even upon so small a matter as this. " Why, Sir, (said he), I suppose this must be the law, since you have been told so in Bow-street. But if your landlord could hold you to your bargain, and the lodgings should be yours for a year, you may certainly use them as you think fit. So, Sir, you may quarter two life-guardsmen upon him; or you may send the greatest scoundrel you can find into your apartments; or you may say that you want to make some experiments in natural philosophy, and may burn a large quantity of assafœtida in his house."

A respectable person was one day mentioned to Johnson as of a very strong mind, but as having little of that tenderness which is common

to human nature; as an instance of which, when it was suggested to him that he should invite his son, who had been settled ten years in foreign parts, to come home and pay him a visit, his answer was, "No, no, let him mind his business." Johnson observed, "I do not agree with him, Sir, in this. Getting money is not all a man's business; to cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life."

At another time the conversation turned on the prevailing practice of going to the East Indies in quest of wealth. "A man (said Johnson) had better have ten thousand pounds at the end of ten years passed in England, than twenty thousand pounds at the end of ten years passed in India, because you must compute what you *give* for money; and a man who has lived ten years in India, has given up ten years of social comfort, and all those advantages which arise from living in England. The ingenious Mr. Brown, distinguished by the name of *Capability Brown*, told me, that he was once at the seat of Lord Clive, who had returned from India with great wealth; and that he shewed him at the door of his bed-chamber a large chest, which he said he had once had full of gold; upon which Brown observed, 'I am glad you can bear it so near your bed-chamber.'

Goldsmith one day observed to Johnson, "I think, Sir, you don't go to the theatres now. You give yourself no more concern about a new play, than if you had never had any thing to do with the stage."—"Why, Sir, (said Johnson), our tastes greatly alter. The lad does not care for the child's rattle, and the old man does not care for the young man's mistress."—*Goldsmith:* "Nay, Sir; but your muse was not a mistress." —*Johnson:* "Sir, I do not think she was. But as we advance in the journey of life, we drop some of the things which have pleased us; whether it be that we are fatigued and don't choose to carry so many things any farther, or that we find other things which we like better."—*Boswell:* "But, Sir, why don't you give us something in some other way?"—*G.* "Ay, Sir, we have a claim upon you."—*J.* "No, Sir, I am not obliged to do any more. No man is obliged to do as much as he can do. A man is to have part of his life to himself. If a soldier has fought a good many campaigns, he is not to be blamed if he retires to ease and tranquillity. A physician who has practised long in a great city may be excused if he retires to a small town, and takes less practice. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation bears the same proportion to

the good I can do by my writings, that the practice of a physician retired to a small town, does to his practice in a great city."

To Mr. Boswell (who was about to leave London with regret) he said, "I wish you would a little correct or restrain your imagination, and imagine that happiness, such as life admits, may be had at other places as well as at London. Without asserting stoicism, it may be said, that it is our business to exempt ourselves as much as we can from the power of external things. There is but one solid basis of happiness; and that is, the reasonable hope of a happy futurity. This may be had every where. I do not blame your preference of London to other places, for it is really to be preferred, if the choice is free; but few have the choice of their place, or their manner of life; and mere pleasure ought not to be the prime motive of action."

At another time he made this excellent observation: "Life, to be worthy of a rational being, must be always in progression; we must always propose to do more or better than in time past. The mind is enlarged and elevated by mere purposes, though they end, as they began, by airy contemplation. We compare and judge, though we do not practise."

Mr. Boswell having mentioned Hume's notion, that all who are happy are equally happy, a little miss with a new gown at a dancing-school ball, a general at the head of a victorious army, and an orator after having made an eloquent speech in a great assembly, Johnson said, "Sir, that all who are happy are equally happy, is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally *satisfied*, but not equally *happy*. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher." This very question was once happily illustrated in opposition to Hume, by the Reverend Mr. Robert Brown, at Utrecht. "A small drinking glass and a large one (said he) may be equally full; but the large one holds more than the small."

On another occasion we find Johnson remarking, that "Every man is to take existence on the terms on which it is given to him. To some men it is given on condition of not taking liberties which other men may take without much harm. One may drink wine, and be nothing the worse for it; on another, wine may have effects so inflammatory as to injure him both in body and mind."

A gentleman mentioned the advice given us

by philosophers, to console ourselves, when distressed or embarrassed, by thinking of those who are in a worse situation than ourselves; but this, he observed, could not apply to all, for there must be some who have nobody worse than they are. "Why to be sure, Sir, there are (said Johnson); but they don't know it. There is no being so poor and so contemptible, who does not think there is somebody still poorer and still more contemptible.

"That man is never happy for the present, is so true, that all his relief from unhappiness is only forgetting himself for a little while. Life is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment."

At another time he maintained, that a boy at school is the happiest of human beings. Mr. B. supported a different opinion, namely, that a man is happier, and enlarged upon the anxiety and sufferings which are endured at school.—"Ah! Sir, (said Johnson), a boy's being flogged is not so severe as a man's having the hiss of the world against him. Men have a solicitude about fame, and the greater share they have of it, the more afraid are they of losing it."

The modes of living in different countries, and the various views with which men travel in quest of new scenes, having been talked of, a

learned gentleman who held a considerable office in the law expatiated on the happiness of a savage life, and mentioned an instance of an officer who had actually lived for some time in the wilds of America, of whom, when in that state, he quoted this reflection with an air of admiration, as if it had been deeply philosophical :— 'Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of Nature, with this Indian woman by my side, and this gun, with which I can procure food when I want it : what more can be desired for human happiness?'—"Do not allow yourself, Sir, (said Johnson), to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity. It is sad stuff, it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim,—'Here am I with this cow and this grass; what being can enjoy greater felicity?"

Johnson once said, "A madman loves to be with people whom he fears; not as a dog fears the lash; but of whom he stands in awe." He added, "Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. They are eager for gratifications to soothe their minds, and divert their attention from the misery which they suffer; but when they grow very ill, pleasure is too weak for them, and they seek for pain. Employment, Sir, and hardships, prevent melan-

choly. I suppose in all our army in America there was not one man who went mad."

It was a frequent observation with Johnson, that there was more to be endured than enjoyed, in the general condition of human life; and he often quoted these lines of Dryden:

"Strange cozenage! none would live past years again,
"Yet all hope pleasure from what still remain."

For his part, he said, he never passed that week in his life which he would wish to repeat, were an angel to make the proposal to him.

LITERATURE.

Talking of History, Johnson said, "We may know historical facts to be true, as we may know facts in common life to be true. Motives are generally unknown. We cannot trust to the characters we find in History, unless when they are drawn by those who knew the persons; as those for instance, by Sallust and Lord Clarendon."

" Great abilities (he said) were not requisite for an historian; for in historical composition, all the great powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hands; so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower kinds of poetry. Some penetration, accuracy, and colouring will fit a man for the task, if he can give the application which is necessary."

After remarking that, " There are few writers who have gained any reputation by recording their own actions," he observed,

" We may reduce the Egotists to four classes. In the *first* we have Julius Cæsar; he relates his own transactions, but he relates them with peculiar force and dignity, and his narrative is supported by the greatness of his character and achievements. In the *second* class we have Marcus Antoninus; this writer has given us a series of reflections on his own life; but his sentiments are so noble, his morality so sublime, that his meditations are universally admired. In the *third* class we have some others of tolerable credit, who have given importance to their own private history by an intermixture of literary anecdotes, and the occurrences of their own times; the celebrated Huetius has published an

entertaining volume upon this plan, '*De rebus ad eum pertinentibus.*' In the *fourth* class we have the journalists, temporal and spiritual; Elias Ashmole, William Lilly, George Whitfield, John Wesley, and a thousand other old women and fanatic writers of memoirs and meditations."

"Lord Hailes's 'Annals of Scotland' (said he) have not that painted form which is the taste of this age; but it is a book which will always sell, it has such a stability of dates, such a certainty of facts, and such a punctuality of citation. I never before read Scotch history with certainty."

Talking of antiquarian researches, Johnson said, "All that is really *known* of the ancient state of Britain is contained in a few pages. We *can* know no more than what the old writers have told us; yet what large books have we upon it, the whole of which, excepting such parts as are taken from those old writers, is all a dream, such as Whitaker's 'Manchester.' I have heard Henry's 'History of Britain' well spoken of; I am told it is carried on in separate divisions, as the civil, the military, the religious history; I wish much to have one branch well done, and that is the history of manners; of common life."—Dr. Robertson observed, "Henry

should have applied his attention to that alone, which is enough for any man; and he might have found a great deal scattered in various books, had he read solely for that view. Henry erred in not selling his first volume at a moderate price to the booksellers, that they might have pushed him on till he had got reputation. I sold my 'History of Scotland' at a moderate price, as a work by which the booksellers might either gain or not; and Cadell has told me, that Millar and he have got six thousand pounds by it. I afterwards received a much higher price for my writings. An author should sell his work for what the booksellers will give, till it shall appear whether he is an author of merit, or, which is the same thing as to purchase-money, an author who pleases the public."

On a question, whether Martinelli should continue his History of England to the present day, Goldsmith said, "To be sure he should."—*Johnson:* "No, Sir; he would give great offence. He would have to tell of almost all the living great what they do not wish told."—*Goldsmith:* "It may, perhaps, be necessary for a native to be more cautious; but a foreigner who comes among us without prejudice, may be considered as holding the place of a Judge, and may speak his mind freely."—*J.* "Sir, a fo-

reigner, when he sends a work from the press, ought to be on his guard against catching the error and mistaken enthusiasm of the people among whom he happens to be."—*G.* "Sir, he wants only to sell his history, and to tell truth; one an honest, the other a laudable motive."—*J.* "Sir, they are both laudable motives. It is laudable in a man to wish to live by his labours; but he should write so as he may *live* by them, not so as he may be knocked on the head. I would advise him to be at Calais before he publishes his history of the present age. A foreigner, who attaches himself to a political party in this country, is in the worst state that can be imagined: he is looked upon as a mere intermeddler. A native may do it from interest."—*Boswell:* "Or principle."—*G.* "There are people who tell a hundred political lies every day, and are not hurt by it. Surely then one may tell truth with safety."—*J.* "Why, Sir, in the first place, he who tells a hundred lies has disarmed the force of his lies. But besides, a man had rather have a hundred lies told of him, than one truth which he does not wish should be told."—*G.* "For my part, I'd tell truth, and shame the devil."—*J.* "Yes, Sir; but the devil will be angry. I wish to shame the devil as much as you do, but I should choose to be

out of the reach of his claws."—*G.* "His claws can do you no harm, when you have the shield of truth."

Talking of letter-writing, Johnson observed, "It is now become so much the fashion to publish letters, that in order to avoid it, I put as little into mine as I can."—"Do what you will, Sir, (said Mr. Boswell), you cannot avoid it. Should you even write as ill as you can, your letters would be published as curiosities:

'Behold a miracle! instead of wit,
'See two dull lines with Stanhope's pencil writ.'

Johnson's attention to precision and clearness in expression was very remarkable. He disapproved of parentheses; and perhaps in all his voluminous writings not half a dozen of them will be found. He never used the phrases *the former* and *the latter*, having observed that they often occasioned obscurity; he therefore contrived to construct his sentences so as not to have occasion for them, and would even rather repeat the same words in order to avoid them. Nothing is more common than to mistake sirnames when we hear them carelessly uttered for the first time. To prevent this, he used not only to pronounce them slowly and distinctly, but to take the trouble of spelling them.

He was no admirer of blank verse, and said it always failed, unless sustained by the dignity of the subject. In blank verse, he said, the language suffered more distortion to keep it out of prose, than any inconvenience or limitation to be apprehended from the shackles and circumspection of rhyme.

Johnson one day, for sport perhaps, or from the spirit of contradiction, eagerly maintained that Derrick had merit as a writer. Mr. Morgan argued with him in vain. At length he had recourse to this device: "Pray, Sir, (said he), do you reckon Derrick or Smart the best poet?" Johnson at once felt himself roused; and answered, "Sir, there is no settling the point of precedency between a louse and a flea."

After having on some occasion made observations upon the similarity between 'Rasselas' and 'Candide,' he said, 'Candide' he thought had more power in it than any thing that Voltaire had written.

Of Horace he observed, that his lyrick poetry could never be perfectly translated; so much of the excellence is in the numbers and the expression. "Francis (said he) has done it the best; I'll take his, five out of six, against them all."

Of the Preface to Capel's Shakespear, he said,

"If the man would have come to me, I would have endeavoured to 'endow his purposes with words;' for as it is, 'he doth gabble monstrously."

Of Mr. Longley at Rochester, a gentleman of very considerable learning, whom Dr. Johnson met there, he said, "My heart warms towards him. I was surprised to find in him such a nice acquaintance with the metre in the learned languages; though I was somewhat mortified that I had it not so much to myself, as I should have thought."

He once observed, "A man should begin to write soon; for if he waits till his judgment is matured, his inability, through want of practice, to express his conceptions, will make the disproportion so great between what he sees, and what he can attain, that he will probably be discouraged from writing at all. As a proof of the justness of this remark, we may instance what is related of the great Lord Granville; that after he had written his letter, giving an account of the battle of Dettingen, he said, 'Here is a letter expressed in terms not good enough for a tallow-chandler to have used.'"

Having spent one evening at Mr. Langton's with the Rev. Dr. Parr, he was much pleased with the conversation of that learned gentle-

man; and, after he was gone, said to Mr. Langton, "Sir, I am obliged to you for having asked me this evening. Parr is a fair man. I do not know when I have had an occasion of such free controversy. It is remarkable how much of a man's life may pass without meeting with any instance of this kind of open discussion."

He thought we might fairly institute a criticism between Shakespear and Corneille, as they both had, though in a different degree, the lights of a latter age. "It is not so just between the Greek dramatic writers and Shakespear. It may be replied to what is said by one of the remarkers on Shakespear, that though Darius's shade had *prescience*, it does not necessarily follow that he had all *past* particulars revealed to him."

He once told in his lively manner the following literary anecdote: "Green and Guthrie, an Irishman and a Scotchman, undertook a translation of Duhalde's 'History of China.' Green said of Guthrie, that he knew no English; and Guthrie of Green, that he knew no French; and these two undertook to translate Duhalde's 'History of China.' In this translation there was found 'the twenty-sixth day of the new moon.' Now as the whole age of the moon is

but twenty-eight days, the moon, instead of being new, was nearly as old as it could be. Their blunder arose from their mistaking the word *neuviéme*, ninth, for *nouvelle* or *neuve*, new."

Of Guthrie, however, Johnson said, "He is a man of parts. He has no great regular fund of knowledge; but by reading so long, and writing so long, he no doubt has picked up a good deal."

Talking of Dr. Blagden's copiousness and precision of communication, Dr. Johnson said, "Blagden, Sir, is a delightful fellow."

Johnson praised the Earl of Carlisle's Poems which his Lordship had published with his name, as not disdaining to be a candidate for literary fame. He was of opinion, that when a man of rank appeared in that character, he deserved to have his merit handsomely allowed. In this he was more liberal than Mr. William Whitehead, in his 'Elegy to Lord Villiers,' in which, under the pretext of "superior toils demanding all their care," he discovers a jealousy of the great paying their court to the Muses:

"———————— to the chosen few
"Who dare excel, thy fost'ring aid afford,
"Their arts, their magic powers, with honours due
"Exalt;—but be thyself what they record."

The subject of quotation being once intro-

duced, Mr. Wilkes (who was present) censured it as pedantry. Johnson said, "No, Sir, it is a good thing; there is a community of mind in it. Classical quotation is the *parole* of literary men all over the world."—*Wilkes:* "Upon the Continent they all quote the vulgate Bible. Shakespear is chiefly quoted here; and we quote also Pope, Prior, Butler, Waller, and sometimes Cowley."

Johnson one day gave an entertaining account of *Bet Flint*, a woman of the town, who, with some eccentric talents and much effrontery, forced herself upon his acquaintance. "Bet (said he) wrote her own life in verse, which she brought to me, wishing that I would furnish her with a Preface to it (laughing). I used to say of her that she was generally slut and drunkard; —occasionally, prostitute and thief. She had, however, genteel lodgings, a spinnet on which she played, and a boy that walked before her chair. Poor Bet was taken up on a charge of stealing a counterpane, and was tried at the Old Bailey. Chief Justice *****, who loved a wench, summed up favourably, and she was acquitted. After which, Bet said, with a gay and satisfied air, "Now that the counterpane is *my own*, I shall make a petticoat of it."

Speaking of Homer, whom he venerated as

the prince of poets, Johnson remarked, that the advice given to Diomed by his father, when he sent him to the Trojan war, was the noblest exhortation that could be instanced in any heathen writer, and comprised in a single line:

Αιεν αριστευειν και υπειροχον εμμεναι αλλων,

which is translated by Dr. Clarke thus: *semper appetere præstantissima, et omnibus aliis antecellere.*

On the license jocularly allowed to historians as to the truth of their relations, Johnson said, "There are inexcusable lies, and consecrated lies. For instance, we are told that on the arrival of the news of the unfortunate battle of Fontenoy, every heart beat, and every eye was in tears. Now we know that no man eat his dinner the worse, but there *should* have been all this concern; and to say there *was* (smiling), may be reckoned a consecrated lie."

He once advised Mr. Boswell to complete a Dictionary of words peculiar to Scotland, of which he had shewn him a specimen. "Sir, (said he), Ray has made a collection of north-country words. By collecting those of your country, you will do a useful thing towards the history of the language." He bade him also

go on with collections which he was making upon the antiquities of Scotland. "Make a large book, a folio."—*Boswell:* "But of what use will it be, Sir?"—*Johnson:* "Never mind the use, do it."

At another time Johnson observed, "It is amazing what ignorance of certain points one sometimes finds in men of eminence. A wit about town asked me, how it happened that England and Scotland, which were once two kingdoms, were now one: and Sir Fletcher Norton did not seem to know that there were such publications as the Reviews."

He loved, he said, the old black letter books: they were rich in matter, though their style was inelegant.

In a conversation which took a philosophical turn, Johnson said, "Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth. A system, built upon the discoveries of a great many minds, is always of more strength than what is produced by the mere workings of any one mind, which of itself can do little. There is not so poor a book in the world, that would not be a prodigious effort were it wrought out entirely by a single mind, without the aid of prior investigators. The French writers are superficial, because they are

not scholars, and so proceed upon the mere power of their own minds; and we see how very little power they have."

He was of opinion, that the English nation cultivated both their soil and their reason better than any other people; but admitted that the French, though not the highest, perhaps in any department of literature, yet in every department were very high. Intellectual pre-eminence, he observed, was the highest superiority; and every nation derived their highest reputation from the splendour and dignity of their writers. Voltaire, he said, was a good narrator, and his principal merit consisted in a happy selection and arrangement of circumstances.

Speaking of the French novels, compared with Richardson's, he said they might be pretty baubles, but a wren was not an eagle.

In a Latin conversation with the Pere Boscovitz, at the house of Mrs. Cholmondeley, he maintained the superiority of Sir Isaac Newton over all foreign philosophers, with a dignity and eloquence that surprised that learned foreigner. It being observed to him, that a rage for every thing English prevailed much in France after Lord Chatham's glorious war, he said he did not wonder at it, for that we had drubbed those fellows into a proper reverence for us, and that

their national petulance required periodical chastisement.

Being once told that Gilbert Cowper called him the Caliban of Literature, " Well, (said he), I must dub him the Punchinello."

He spoke with much contempt of the notice taken of Woodhouse, the poetical shoemaker. He said, that it was all vanity and childishness ; and that such objects were, to those who patronised them, mere mirrors of their own superiority. " They had better (said he) furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems. He may make an excellent shoemaker, but he can never make a good poet. A school-boy's exercise may be a pretty thing for a school-boy ; but it is no treat for a man."

Speaking of the old Earl of Cork and Orrery, he said, " That man spent his life in catching at an object (literary eminence), which he had not power to grasp."

Talking of Tacitus, Mr. Boswell hazarded an opinion, that with all his merit for penetration, shrewdness of judgment, and terseness of expression, he was too compact, too much broken into hints, as it were, and therefore too difficult to be understood. Dr. Johnson sanctioned this opinion. " Tacitus, Sir, seems to me ra-

ther to have made notes for an historical work, than to have written a history."

At another time the conversation having turned on modern imitations of ancient ballads, and some one having praised their simplicity, he treated them with that ridicule which he always displayed when that subject was mentioned.

A gentleman expressing his wonder why the author of so excellent a book as 'The Whole Duty of Man,' should conceal himself, Johnson said, "There may be different reasons assigned for this, one of which would be very sufficient. He may have been a clergyman, and may have thought that his religious counsels would have less weight when known to come from a man whose profession was Theology. He may have been a man whose practice was not suitable to his principles, so that his character might injure the effect of his book, which he had written in a season of penitence; or he may have been a man of rigid self-denial, so that he would have no reward for his pious labours while in this world, but refer it all to a future state."

Talking of birds, Mr. Daines Barrington's ingenious Essay against the received notion of their migration, was mentioned. Johnson said, "I think we have as good evidence for the mi-

gration of woodcocks as can be desired. We find they disappear at a certain time of the year, and appear again at a certain time of the year; and some of them, when weary in their flight, have been known to alight on the rigging of ships far out at sea." One of the company observed, that there had been instances of some of them found in summer in Essex.—*Johnson:* "Sir, that strengthens our argument. *Exceptio probat regulam.* Some being found, shews that if all remained many would be found. A few sick or lame ones may be found."—*Goldsmith:* "There is a partial migration of the swallows; the stronger ones migrate, the others do not."

At Mr. Langton's, with Dr. Beattie and some other company, Johnson descanted on the subject of Literary Property. "There seems (said he) to be in authors a stronger right of property than that by occupancy; a metaphysical right, a right, as it were, of creation, which should from its nature be perpetual; but the consent of nations is against it, and indeed reason and the interests of learning are against it; for were it to be perpetual, no book, however useful, could be universally diffused amongst mankind, should the proprietor take it into his head to restrain the circulation. No book could have the advantage

of being edited with notes, however necessary to its elucidation, should the proprietor perversely oppose it. For the general good of the world, therefore, whatever valuable work has once been created by an author, and issued out by him, should be understood as no longer in his power, but as belonging to the public; at the same time the author is entitled to an adequate reward. This he should have, by an exclusive right to his work for a considerable number of years."

He disapproved much of mingling real facts with fiction. On this account he censured a book entitled, 'Love and Madness.'

Mr. Boswell once asked if the 'Turkish Spy' was a genuine book? Johnson replied, "No, Sir. Mrs. Manley, in her 'Life,' says that her father wrote the two first volumes; and in another book, 'Dunton's Life and Errors,' we find that the rest was written by one *Sault*, at two guineas a sheet, under the direction of Dr. Midgeley."

Speaking of one who with more than ordinary boldness attacked public measures and the royal family, he said, "I think he is safe from the law, but he is an abusive scoundrel; and instead of applying to my Lord Chief Justice to punish

him, I would send half a dozen footmen and have him well ducked."

He censured a writer of entertaining Travels for assuming a feigned character, saying (in his sense of the word), "He carries out one lie; we know not how many he brings back."

He apprehended that the delineation of *characters* in the end of the first Book of the 'Retreat of the Ten Thousand,' was the first instance of the kind that was known.

Johnson spoke unfavourably of a certain pretty voluminous author, saying, "He used to write anonymous books, and then other books commending those books; in which there was something of rascality."

Mr. Boswell one day told him he had been that morning at a meeting of the people called Quakers, where he had heard a woman preach. Johnson observed, "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

"After we came out of the church one Sunday, (says Mr. Boswell), we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal.

I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. But never shall I forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it *thus*.' This was a stout exemplification of the *first truths of Pere Bouffier*, or the *original principles* of Reid and of Beattie; without admitting which, we can no more argue in metaphysicks, than we can argue in mathematicks without axioms. To me (adds Mr. B.) it is not conceivable how Berkeley can be answered by pure reasoning; but I know that the nice and difficult task was to have been undertaken by one of the most luminous minds of the present age, had not politics 'turned him from calm philosophy aside.' What an admirable display of subtilty, united with brilliance, might his contending with Berkeley have afforded us. How must we, when we reflect on the loss of such an intellectual feast, regret that he should be characterised as the man,

"Who born for the universe, narrow'd his mind,
"And to party gave up what was meant for mankind?"

Talking of the origin of language, Johnson said, "It must have come by inspiration. A

thousand, nay a million of children could not invent a language. While the organs are pliable, there is not understanding enough to form a language; by the time that there is understanding enough, the organs are become stiff. We know that after a certain age we cannot learn to pronounce a new language. No foreigner who comes to England when advanced in life, ever pronounces English tolerably well; at least such instances are very rare. When I maintain that language must have come by inspiration, I do not mean that inspiration is required for rhetorick, and all the beauties of language; for when once man has language, we can conceive that he may gradually form modifications of it. I mean only, that inspiration seems to me to be necessary to give man the faculty of speech; to inform him that he may have speech; which I think he could no more find out without inspiration, than cows or hogs would think of such a faculty."—Mr. Walker the philologer, who was present, said, "Do you think, Sir, that there are any perfect synonimes in any language?"—*Johnson:* "Originally there were not; but by using words negligently, or in poetry, one word comes to be confounded with another."

On occasion of a proposed translation of the Bible, he observed, "I am not very willing that

any language should be totally extinguished. The similitude and derivation of languages afford the most indubitable proof of the traduction of nations, and the genealogy of mankind. They add often physical certainty to historical evidence; and often supply the only evidence of ancient migrations, and of the revolutions of ages which left no writtten monuments behind them.

"Every man's opinion, (continued he), at least his desires, are a little influenced by his favourite studies. My zeal for languages may seem, perhaps, rather over-heated, even to those by whom I desire to be well-esteemed. To those who have nothing in their thoughts but trade or policy, present power or present money, I should not think it necessary to defend my opinions; but with men of letters I would not unwillingly compound, by wishing the continuance of every language, however narrow in its extent, or however incommodious for common purposes, till it is reposited in some version of a known book, that it may be always hereafter examined and compared with other languages, and then permitting its disuse: for this purpose the translation of the Bible is most to be desired. It is not certain that the same method will not preserve the Highland language for the purposes

of learning, and abolish it from daily use. When the Highlanders read the Bible, they will naturally wish to have its obscurities cleared; and to know the history, collateral or appendant. Knowledge always desires increase; it is like fire, which must first be kindled by some external agent, but which will afterwards propagate itself. When they once desire to learn, they will naturally have recourse to the nearest language by which that desire can be gratified; and one will tell another, that if he would attain knowledge he must learn English.

"This speculation may, perhaps, be thought more subtle than the grossness of real life will easily admit. Let it however be remembered, that the efficacy of ignorance has been long tried, and has not produced the consequence expected. Let knowledge, therefore, take its turn; and let the patrons of privation stand awhile aside, and admit the operation of positive principles."

General Paoli once talked of languages being formed on the particular notions and manners of a people, without knowing which we cannot know the language. We may by allusion to other ideas.—"Sir, (said Johnson), you talk of language, as if you had never done any thing else but study it, instead of governing a nation."—The General said, "*Questo e un*

troppo gran complimento," this is too great a compliment. Johnson answered, "I should have thought so, Sir, if I had not heard you talk."

Mr. Erskine one day told Johnson, that when he was in the island of Minorca, he not only read prayers, but preached two sermons to the regiment. He seemed to object to the passage in Scripture, where we are told that the Angel of the Lord smote in one night forty thousand Assyrians. "Sir (said the Doctor), you should recollect that there was a supernatural interposition; they were destroyed by pestilence. You are not to suppose that the Angel of the Lord went about and stabbed each of them with a dagger, or knocked them on the head, man by man."

Talking on the subject of taste in the arts, he observed, that difference of taste was, in truth, difference of skill. Mr. Boswell said, "But, Sir, is there not a quality called taste, which consists merely in perception or in liking? For instance, we find people differ much as to what is the best style of English composition. Some think Swift's the best; others prefer a fuller and grander way of writing."—*Johnson:* "Sir, you must first define what you mean by style, before you can judge who has a good taste in style

and who has a bad. The two classes of persons whom you have mentioned don't differ as to good and bad. They both agree that Swift has a good neat style; but one loves a neat style, another loves a style of more splendour. In like manner, one loves a plain coat, another loves a laced coat; but neither will deny that each is good in its kind."

Speaking of reading, "Snatches of reading, (he said), will not make a Bentley or a Clarke; they are, however, in a certain degree advantageous. I would put a child into a library (where no unfit books are), and let him read at his choice. A child should not be discouraged from reading any thing that he takes a liking to, from a notion that it is above his reach. If that be the case the child will soon find it out and desist; if not, he of course gains the instruction; which is so much the more likely to come, from the inclination with which he takes up the study."

Mr. Andrew Stuart's plausible Letters to Lord Mansfield, a copy of which had been sent by the author to Dr. Johnson, becoming the subject of conversation, Johnson said, "They have not answered the end. They have not been talked of; I have never heard of them. This is owing to their not being sold. People seldom

read a book which is given to them; and few are given. The way to spread a work is to sell it at a low price. No man will send to buy a thing that costs even sixpence, without an intention to read it."—*Boswell:* "May it not be doubted, Sir, whether it be proper to publish letters, arraigning the ultimate decision of an important cause by the supreme judicature of the nation?"—*J.* "No, Sir, I do not think it was wrong to publish these letters. If they are thought to do harm, why not answer them? But they will do no harm."

Somebody found fault with writing verses in a dead language, maintaining that they were merely arrangements of so many words; and laughed at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge for sending forth collections of them not only in Greek and Latin, but even in Syriac, Arabic, and other more unknown tongues. Johnson observed, "I would have as many of these as possible; I would have verses in every language that there are the means of acquiring. Nobody imagines that an University is to have at once two hundred poets; but it should be able to shew two hundred scholars. Peiresc's death was lamented, I think, in forty languages; and I would have had at every coronation, and every death of a king, every *Gaudium*,

and every *Luctus*, University verses in as many languages as can be acquired. I would have the world to be thus told, 'Here is a school where every thing may be learnt.'"

The topick was once introduced, which is often ignorantly urged, that the Universities of England are too rich; so that learning does not flourish in them, as it would do if those who teach had smaller salaries, and depended on their assiduity for a great part of their income. Johnson said, "Sir, the very reverse of this is the truth; the English Universities are not rich enough. Our fellowships are only sufficient to support a man during his studies to fit him for the world, and accordingly in general they are held no longer than till an opportunity offers of getting away. Now and then, perhaps, there is a fellow who grows old in his college; but this is against his will, unless he be a man very indolent indeed. A hundred a year is reckoned a good fellowship, and that is no more than is necessary to keep a man decently as a scholar. We do not allow our fellows to marry, because we consider academical institutions as preparatory to a settlement in the world. It is only by being employed as a tutor, that a fellow can obtain any thing more than a livelihood. To be sure a man who has enough without teaching

will not teach; for we would all be idle if we could. In the same manner, a man who is to get nothing by teaching, will not exert himself. Gresham College was intended as a place of instruction for London; able professors were to read lectures gratis, and they contrived to have no scholars; whereas if they had been allowed to receive but sixpence a lecture from each scholar, they would have been emulous to have had many scholars. Every body will agree, that it should be the interest of those who teach to have scholars; and this is the case in our Universities. That they are rich is certainly not true; for they have nothing good enough to keep a man of eminent learning with them for his life. In the foreign Universities a professorship is a high thing. It is as much almost as a man can make by his learning; and therefore we find the most learned men abroad are in the Universities: it is not so with us. Our Universities are impoverished of learning, by the penury of their provisions. I wish there were many places of a thousand a year at Oxford to keep first-rate men of learning from quitting the University."—Undoubtedly (remarks Mr. Boswell) if this were the case, Literature would have a still greater dignity and splendour at Ox-

ford, and there would be grander living sources of instruction.

A gentleman one day mentioned Mr. Maclaurin's uneasiness on account of a degree of ridicule carelessly thrown on his deceased father, in Goldsmith's "History of Animated Nature," in which that celebrated mathematician is represented as being subject to fits of yawning so violent, as to render him incapable of proceeding in his lecture; a story altogether unfounded, but for the publication of which, the law would give no reparation. This led the company to agitate the question, whether legal redress could be obtained, even when a man's deceased relation was calumniated in a publication. Mr. Murray maintained there should be reparation, unless the author could justify himself by proving the fact.—*Johnson:* "Sir, it is of so much more consequence that truth should be told, than that individuals should not be made uneasy, that it is much better that the law does not restrain writing freely concerning the characters of the dead. Damages will be given to a man who is calumniated in his life-time, because he may be hurt in his worldly interest, or at least hurt in his mind. If a man could say nothing against a character but what he can prove, his-

tory could not be written; for a great deal is known of men, of which proof cannot be brought. A minister may be notoriously known to take bribes, and yet you may not be able to prove it."—Mr. Murray suggested, that the author should be obliged to show some sort of evidence, though he would not require a strict legal proof; but Johnson firmly and resolutely opposed any restraint whatever, as adverse to a free investigation of the characters of mankind.

Johnson mentioned Dr. Barry's 'System of Physick.'—"He was a man (said he) who had acquired a high reputation in Dublin, came over to England, and brought his reputation with him, but had no great success. His notion was, that pulsation occasions death by attrition; and that therefore the way to preserve life is to retard pulsation. But we know that pulsation is strongest in infants, and that we increase in growth while it operates in its regular course; so it cannot be the cause of destruction."

Talking of translation, one said, he could not define it, nor could he think of a similitude to illustrate it; but that it appeared to him that translation of poetry could be only imitation. Johnson observed, "You may translate books of science exactly. You may also translate history,

in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language, if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language."

A gentleman maintained that the art of printing had hurt real learning, by disseminating idle writings, Johnson said, "Sir, if it had not been for the art of printing, we should now have had no learning at all; for books would have perished faster than they could have been transcribed." This observation seems not just, considering for how many ages books were preserved by writing alone.

The same gentleman maintained, that a general diffusion of knowledge among a people was a disadvantage; for it made the vulgar rise above their humble sphere.—"Sir, (said Johnson), while knowledge is a distinction, those who are possessed of it will naturally rise above those who are not. Merely to read and write, was a distinction at first; but we see, when reading and writing have become general, the common people keep their stations. And so,

were higher attainments to become general, the effect would be the same."

He said, that for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though, to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, "what we read with inclination, makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read." He said, he read Fielding's 'Amelia' through without stopping.—"If a man (said he) begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it to go to the beginning. He may perhaps not feel again the inclination."

It having been mentioned, that a certain female political writer, whose doctrines he disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge, Johnson said, "She is better employed at her toilet than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people's characters."

Mr. Boswell tells us, that a clergyman had come to submit some poetical pieces to Johnson's revision. "It is wonderful (says Mr. B.)

what a number and variety of writers, some of them even unknown to him, prevailed on his good nature to look over their works, and suggest corrections and improvements. My arrival interrupted for a little while the important busines of this true representative of Bayes; upon its being resumed, I found that the subject under immediate consideration was a translation, yet in manuscript, of the 'Carmen Seculare' of Horace, which had this year been set to music, and performed as a public entertainment in London, for the joint benefit of Monsieur Philidor and Signor Baretti. When Johnson had done reading, the author asked him bluntly, "If upon the whole it was a good translation?" Johnson, whose regard for truth was uncommonly strict, seemed to be puzzled for a moment what answer to make, as he certainly could not honestly commend the performance: with exquisite address he evaded the question thus: "Sir, I do not say that it may not be made a very good translation." Here nothing whatever in favour of the performance was affirmed, and yet the writer was not shocked. A printed 'Ode to the Warlike Genius of Britain' came next in review; the bard was a lank bony figure, with short black hair; he was writhing with agitation while Johnson read, and shewing his teeth in a

grin of earnestness, exclaimed in broken sentences, and in a keen sharp tone, "Is that poetry, Sir?—Is it Pindar?"—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, there is here a great deal of what is called poetry." Then turning to me, the poet cried, "My muse has not been long upon the town, and (pointing to the Ode) it trembles under the hand of the great critic." Johnson, in a tone of displeasure asked him, "Why do you praise Anson?" I did not trouble him by asking his reason for this question. He proceeded, "Here is an error, Sir; you have made genius feminine."—Palpable, Sir, (cried the enthusiast); I know it. But (in a lower tone) it was to pay a compliment to the Duchess of Devonshire, with which her Grace was pleased. She is walking across Coxheath, in the military uniform, and I suppose her to be the Genius of Britain."—*Johnson:* "Sir, you are giving a reason for it; but that will not make it right. You may have a reason why two and two should make five; but they will still make but four."

Mr. Boswell having once regretted to Johnson that he had learnt little Greek, as is too generally the case in Scotland; that he had for a long time hardly applied at all to the study of that noble language, he was desirous of being told by him what method to follow; he recom-

mended as easy helps, Sylvanus's 'First Book of the Iliad;' Dawson's 'Lexicon to the Greek New Testament;' and 'Hesiod,' with *Pasoris Lexicon* at the end of it."

One night at the CLUB, a translation of an Epitaph was produced, which Lord Elibank had written in English for his lady, and requested of Johnson to turn into Latin for him. Having read *Domina de North et Gray*, he said to Mr. Dyer, "You see, Sir, what barbarisms we are compelled to make use of when modern titles are to be specifically mentioned in Latin inscriptions. When he had read it once aloud, and there had been a general approbation expressed by the company, he addressed himself to Mr. Dyer in particular, and said, "Sir, I beg to have your judgment; for I know your nicety." Dyer then very properly desired to read it over again; which having done, he pointed out an incongruity in one of the sentences. Johnson immediately assented to the observation, and said, "Sir, this is owing to an alteration of a part of the sentence from the form in which I had first written it; and I believe, Sir, you may have remarked, that it is a very frequent cause of error in composition, when one has made a partial change, without a due regard to the general structure of the sentence."

Johnson was well acquainted with Mr. Dossie, author of a Treatise on Agriculture; and said of him, "Of the objects which the Society of Arts have chiefly in view, the chymical effects of bodies operating upon other bodies, he knows more than almost any man." Johnson, in order to give Mr. Dossie his vote to be a member of this Society, paid up an arrear which had run on for two years. On this occasion he mentioned a circumstance, as characteristic of the Scotch. "One of that nation, (said he), who had been a candidate, against whom I had voted, came up to me with a civil salutation.—Now, Sir, this is their way. An Englishman would have stomached it, and been sulky, and never have taken further notice of you; but a Scotchman, Sir, though you vote nineteen times against him, will accost you with equal complaisance after each time; and the twentieth time, Sir, he will get your vote."

His distinction of the different degrees of attainment of learning was thus marked upon two occasions. Of Queen Elizabeth he said, "She had learning enough to have given dignity to a bishop;" and of Mr. Thomas Davies he said, "Sir, Davies has learning enough to give credit to a clergyman."

He used to quote with great warmth the say-

ing of Aristotle recorded by Diogenes Laertius; "that there was the same difference between one learned and unlearned, as between the living and the dead."

"Spanish plays, (he observed), being wildly and improbably farcical, would please children here, as children are entertained with stories full of prodigies; their experience not being sufficient to cause them to be so readily startled at deviations from the natural course of life.—The machinery of the Pagans is uninteresting to us: when a goddess appears in Homer or Virgil, we grow weary; still more so in the Grecian Tragedies, as in that kind of composition a nearer approach to nature is intended. Yet there are good reasons for reading romances; as—the fertility of invention, the beauty of style and expression, the curiosity of seeing with what kind of performances the age and country in which they were written was delighted; for it is to be apprehended, that at the time when very wild improbable tales were well received, the people were in a barbarous state, and so on the footing of children, as has been explained.

"It is evident enough that no one who writes now can use the Pagan deities and mythology; the only machinery, therefore, seems that of ministring spirits, the ghosts of the de-

parted, witches, and fairies; though these latter, as the vulgar superstition concerning them (which, while in its force, infected at least the imagination of those that had more advantage in education, though their reason set them free from it) is every day wearing out, seem likely to be of little further assistance in the machinery of poetry. As I recollect, Hammond introduces a hag or witch into one of his love elegies, where the effect is unmeaning and disgusting."

Of ridicule he observed, "The man who in conversation uses his talent of ridicule in creating or grossly exaggerating the instances he gives, who imputes absurdities that did not happen, or when a man was a little ridiculous, describes him as having been very much so, abuses his talents greatly. The great use of delineating absurdities is, that we may know how far human folly can go; the account, therefore, ought of absolute necessity to be faithful. A certain character, (naming the person), as to the general cast of it, is well described by Garrick; but a great deal of the phraseology he uses in it, is quite his own, particularly in the proverbial comparisons, 'obstinate as a pig,' &c.; but I don't know whether it might not be true of Lord ——, that from a too great eagerness for praise and popularity, and a politeness carried to a

ridiculous excess, he was likely, after asserting a thing in general, to give it up again in parts. For instance, if he had said Reynolds was the first of painters, he was capable enough of giving up, as objections might happen to be severally made, first, his outline,—then the grace in form,—then the colouring,—and lastly, to have owned that he was such a mannerist, that the disposition of his pictures were all alike."

A gentleman, by no means deficient in literature, having discovered less acquaintance with one of the classics than Johnson expected, when the gentleman left the room, he observed, "You see, now, how little any body reads."—Mr. Langton happening to mention his having read a good deal in Clenardus's Greek Grammar, "Why, Sir, (said he), who is there in this town that knows any thing of Clenardus but you and I?" And upon Mr. Langton's mentioning that he had taken the pains to learn by heart the Epistle of St. Basil, which is given in that Grammar as a praxis, "Sir, (said he), I never made such an effort to attain Greek."

He had a strong prejudice against the political character of Secker, one instance of which appeared at Oxford, when he expressed great dissatisfaction at his varying the old established

toast, 'Church and King.'—"The Archbishop of Canterbury, (said he, with an affected smooth smiling grimace), drinks, 'Constitution in Church and State.'" Being asked what difference there was between the two toasts, he said, "Why, Sir, you may be sure he meant something." Yet when the Life of that Prelate, prefixed to his Sermons by Dr. Porteus and Dr. Stinton, his Chaplains, first came out, he read it with the utmost avidity, and said, "It is a Life well written, and that well deserves to be recorded."

Of Sir Joshua Reynolds he said, "I know no man who has passed through life with more observation than Reynolds."

Once when somebody produced a newspaper in which there was a letter of stupid abuse of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in which Johnson himself came in for a share,—"Pray (said he) let us have it read aloud from beginning to end;" which being done, he with a ludicrous earnestness, and not directing his look to any particular person, called out, "Are we alive after all this satire!"

Talking of the difference between the mode of education at Oxford, and that in those Colleges where instruction is chiefly conveyed by lectures, Johnson observed, "Lectures were once useful; but now, when all can read, and books

are so numerous, lectures are unnecessary. If your attention fails, and you miss a part of a lecture, it is lost; you cannot go back as you do upon a book." Dr. Scott agreed with him. "But yet, Dr. Scott, (said Mr. B.), you yourself gave lectures at Oxford." The Doctor smiled. "You laughed then (said Mr. B.) at those who came to you."

Talking of celebrated and successful irregular practisers in physic, Johnson said, "Taylor was the most ignorant man I ever knew, but sprightly. Ward the dullest. Taylor challenged me once to talk Latin with him: (laughing). I quoted some of Horace, which he took to be a part of my own speech. He said a few words well enough."—*Beauclerk:* "I remember, Sir, you said that Taylor was an instance how far impudence could carry ignorance." Mr. Beauclerk told a number of short stories in a lively elegant manner, and with that air of *the world* which has a sort of impressive effect, as if there were something more than is expressed, or than perhaps we could perfectly understand. As Johnson accompanied Sir Joshua Reynolds home in his coach, he said, "There is in Beauclerk a predominance over his company that one does not like. But he is a man who has lived so much in the world, that he has a short story

on every occasion; he is always ready to talk, and is never exhausted."

His affection, however, for Topham Beauclerk was so great, that when that gentleman was labouring under the severe illness which at last occasioned his death, Johnson said, (with a voice faultering with emotion), "Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk."

Mr. Beauclerk's great library was, after his death, sold in London by auction. Mr. Wilkes said, he wondered to find in it such a numerous collection of sermons, seeming to think it strange that a gentleman of Mr. Beauclerk's character in the gay world, should have chosen to have many compositions of that kind.—"Why, Sir, (said Johnson), you are to consider, that sermons make a considerable branch of English literature; so that a library must be very imperfect if it has not a numerous collection of sermons; and in all collections, Sir, the desire of augmenting it grows stronger in proportion to the advance in acquisition; as motion is accelerated by the continuance of the *impetus*. Besides, Sir, (looking at Mr. Wilkes with a placid but significant smile), a man may collect sermons with intention of making himself better by them. I hope Mr. Beauclerk

intended, that some time or other that should be the case with him."

Sir John Pringle had expressed a wish to have Dr. Johnson's opinion what were the best English sermons for style. Mr. B. one day took an opportunity of mentioning several to him. *Atterbury ?—Johnson:* "Yes, Sir, one of the best."—*Boswell:* "*Tillotson ?*"—*J.* "Why, not now. I should not advise a preacher at this day to imitate Tillotson's style; though I don't know; I should be cautious of objecting to what has been applauded by so many suffrages.—*South* is one of the best, if you except his peculiarities, and his violence, and sometimes coarseness of language. *Seed* has a very fine style; but he is not very theological.—*Jortin's* sermons are very elegant. *Sherlock's* style too is very elegant, though he has not made it his principal study. And you may add *Smallridge*. All the latter preachers have a good style. Indeed, nobody now talks much of style: every body composes pretty well. There are no such unharmonious periods as there were a hundred years ago. I should recommend *Dr. Clarke's* sermons, were he orthodox. However, it is very well known *where* he was not orthodox, which was upon the doctrine of the Trinity, as to which he is a condemned heretic; so one is aware of it."—

B. "I like Ogden's sermons on prayer very much, both for neatness of style and subtilty of reasoning."—*J.* "I should like to read all that Ogden has written."—*B.* "What I wish to know is, what sermons afford the best specimen of English pulpit eloquence."—*J.* "We have no sermons addressed to the passions that are good for any thing: if you mean that kind of eloquence."—A Clergyman (whose name I do not recollect) asked, "Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to the passions?"—*J.* "They were nothing, Sir, be they addressed to what they may."

Sir Joshua Reynolds praised 'Mudge's sermons.'—*Johnson:* "Mudge's sermons are good, but not practicable. He grasps more sense than he can hold; he takes more corn than he can make into meal; he opens a wide prospect, but so distant that it is indistinct. I love 'Blair's sermons.' Though the dog is a Scotchman, and a Presbyterian, and every thing he should not be, I was the first to praise them. Such was my candour (smiling)."—*Mrs. Boscawen:* "Such his great merit to get the better of all your prejudices."—*J.* "Why, Madam, let us compound the matter; let us ascribe it to my candour and his merit."

Somebody observed, that the life of a mere

literary man could not be very entertaining.—Johnson said, "But it certainly may. This is a remark which has been made and repeated without justice. Why should the life of a literary man be less entertaining than the life of any other man? Are there not as interesting varieties in such a life? As *a literary life*, it may be very entertaining."—*Boswell:* "But it must be better surely, when it is diversified with a little active variety—such as his having gone to Jamaica; or, his having gone to the Hebrides." Johnson was not displeased at this.

Speaking of a certain literary friend, "He is a very pompous puzzling fellow, (said he); he lent me a letter once that somebody had written to him, no matter what it was about; but he wanted to have the letter back, and expressed a mighty value for it; he hoped it was to be met with again, he would not lose it for a thousand pounds. I laid my hand upon it soon afterwards, and gave it him. I believe I said, I was very glad to have met with it. O, then he did not know that it signified any thing. So you see, when the letter was lost it was worth a thousand pounds, and when it was found it was not worth a farthing."

An author of most anxious and restless vanity being mentioned, "Sir, (said he), there is not a

young sapling upon Parnassus more severely blown about by every wind of criticism than that poor fellow."

Talking of a certain clergyman of extraordinary character, who by exerting his talents in writing on temporary topics, and displaying uncommon boldness, had raised himself to affluence, a gentleman maintained that they ought not to be indignant at his success; for merit of every sort was entitled to reward.—"Sir, (said Johnson), I will not allow this man to have merit. No, Sir; what he has is rather the contrary; I will, indeed, allow him courage, and on this account we so far give him credit. We have more respect for a man who robs boldly on the highway, than for a fellow who jumps out of a ditch, and knocks you down behind your back. Courage is a quality so necessary for maintaining virtue, that it is always respected, even when it is associated with vice."

Johnson was by no means of opinion, that every man of a learned profession should consider it as incumbent upon him, or as necessary to his credit, to appear as an author. When, in the ardour of ambition for literary fame, I regretted to him one day that an eminent Judge had nothing of it, and therefore would leave no

perpetual monument of himself to posterity, "Alas, Sir, (said Johnson), what a mass of confusion should we have, if every Bishop and every Judge, every Lawyer, Physician, and Divine, were to write books."

At another time he said, "I was angry with Hurd about Cowley, for having published a selection of his works; but upon better consideration, I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any author, if he does not put the rest out of the way. A man, for instance, may print the Odes of Horace alone."

Talking of those writers who had affected to imitate his style, Johnson said, "The imitators of my style have not hit it. Miss Aikin has done it best; for she has imitated the sentiment as well as the diction."

He observed, that a gentleman of eminence in literature had got into a bad style of poetry of late. "He puts (said he) a very common thing in a strange dress, till he does not know it himself, and thinks other people do not know it."—*Boswell:* "That is owing to his being so much versant in old English poetry."—*Johnson:* "What is that to the purpose, Sir? If I say a man is drunk, and you tell me it is owing to his

taking so much drink, the matter is not mended. No, Sir, ****** has taken to an odd mode. For example; he'd write thus:

" Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
" Wearing out life's evening gray."

Gray evening is common enough; but *evening gray* he'd think fine.—Stay; we'll make out the stanza:

" Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
" Wearing out life's evening gray;
" Smite thy bosom, sage, and tell,
" What is bliss? and which the way?"

Boswell: " But why smite his bosom, Sir?"—*Johnson:* " Why, to shew he was in earnest," smiling. Johnson at an after period added the following stanza:

" Thus I spoke; and speaking sigh'd;
" Scarce repress'd the starting tear;
" When the smiling sage replied,
" Come, my lad, and drink some beer."

Speaking of a collection being made of all the English Poets who had published a volume of poems, Johnson said, that a " Mr. Coxeter, whom he knew, had gone the greatest length towards this, having collected about five hundred volumes of poets whose works were little

known; but that upon his death Tom Osborne bought them, and they were dispersed, which he thought a pity, as it was curious to see any series complete; and in every volume of poems something good may be found."

In his review of Warton's 'Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope,' Johnson has given the following salutary caution: "Nothing but experience could evince the frequency of false information, or enable any man to conceive that so many groundless reports should be propagated as every man of eminence may hear of himself. Some men relate what they think as what they know; some men of confused memories and habitual inaccuracy, ascribe to one man what belongs to another; and some talk on, without thought or care. A few men are sufficient to broach falsehoods which are afterwards innocently diffused by successive relaters."—"Had he lived (observes Mr. Boswell) to read what Sir John Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi have related concerning himself, how much would he have found his observation illustrated. He was indeed so much impressed with the prevalence of falsehood, voluntary or unintentional, that I never knew any person who upon hearing an extraordinary circumstance told, discovered more of the *incredulus odi*. He would say, with a sig-

nificant look and decisive tone, 'It is not so. Do not tell this again.'—He inculcated upon all his friends the importance of perpetual vigilance against the slightest degrees of falsehood; the effect of which, as Sir Joshua Reynolds observed to me, has been, that all who were of his *school*, are distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy, which they would not have possessed in the same degree if they had not been known to Johnson."

Talking of the great difficulty of obtaining authentic information for biography, Johnson said, "When I was a young fellow I wanted to write the 'Life of Dryden,' and in order to get materials, I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, 'That at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair.' Cibber could tell no more but 'That he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's.' You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden; had perhaps one leg only in the room, and durst not draw in the other."

Mr. Boswell said, in writing a life, a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character.—*Johnson:* "Sir, there is no doubt as to peculiarities: the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned?—for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely; for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth. Here was an instance of his varying from himself in talk; for on a former occasion he had maintained, that "If a man is to write *A Panegyric*, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write *A Life*, he must represent it really as it was;" and when a person objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, he said, that "it would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it." In the Hebrides he maintained, as appears from Mr. Boswell's 'Journal,' that a man's intimate friend should mention his faults, if he writes his life."

"The writer of an epitaph (he observed) should not be considered as saying nothing but what is strictly true. Allowance must be made

for some degree of exaggerated praise. In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath."

At another time, when somebody endeavoured to argue in favour of the Epitaph for Goldsmith's tablet in Westminster Abbey being in English, Johnson said, "The language of the country of which a learned man was a native, is not the language fit for his epitaph, which should be in ancient and permanent language. Consider, Sir; how should you feel were you to find at Rotterdam an epitaph upon Erasmus in Dutch!" Mr. Boswell thought it would be best to have epitaphs written both in a learned language, and in the language of the country; so that they might have the advantage of being more universally understood, and at the same time be secured of classical stability.

A gentleman asking Johnson whether he would advise him to read the Bible with a commentary, and what commentaries he would recommend, Johnson said, "To be sure, Sir, I would have you read the Bible with a commentary; and I would recommend Lowth and Patrick on the Old Testament, and Hammond on the New."

Speaking one day of Arthur Murphy, whom he very much loved, "I don't know (said he) that Arthur can be classed with the very first

dramatic writers; yet at present I doubt much whether we have any thing superior to Arthur."

A lady's verses on Ireland being mentioned, Miss Reynolds said, "Have you seen them, Sir?"—*Johnson:* "No, Madam. I have seen a translation from Horace by one of her daughters. She shewed it me."—*Miss Reynolds:* "And how was it, Sir?"—*J.* "Why, very well for a young Miss's verse;—that is to say, compared with excellence, nothing; but very well for the person who wrote them. I am vexed at being shewn verses in that manner."—*Miss R.* "But if they should be good, why not give them hearty praise?"—*J.* "Why, Madam, because I have not then got the better of my bad humour from having been shewn them. You must consider, Madam; before-hand they may be bad as well as good. Nobody has a right to put another under such a difficulty, that he must either hurt the person by telling the truth, or hurt himself by telling what is not true."—*Boswell:* "A man often shews his writings to people of eminence to obtain from them, either from their good nature, or from their not being able to tell the truth firmly, a commendation of which he may afterwards avail himself."—*J.* "Very true, Sir; therefore the man who is asked by an author what he thinks

of his work, is put to the torture, and is not obliged to speak the truth; so that what he says is not considered as his opinion; yet he has said it, and cannot retract it; and this author, when mankind are hunting him with a cannister at his tail, can say, 'I would not have published, had not Johnson, or Reynolds, or Musgrave, or some other good judge commended the work.' Yet I consider it as a very difficult question in conscience, whether one should advise a man not to publish a work, if profit be his object; for the man may say, 'Had it not been for you I should have had the money.' Now you cannot be sure; for you have only your own opinion, and the public may think very differently." —*Sir Joshua Reynolds:* "You must upon such an occasion have two judgments; one as to the real value of the work, the other as to what may please the general taste at the time."—*J.* "But you can be *sure* of neither; and therefore I should scruple much to give a suppressive vote. Both Goldsmith's comedies were once refused; his first by Garrick, his second by Colman, who was prevailed on at last, by much solicitation, nay a kind of force, to bring it on. His 'Vicar of Wakefield' I myself did not think would have had much success. It was written, and sold to

a bookseller before his 'Traveller,' but published after; so little expectation had the bookseller from it. Had it been sold after the 'Traveller,' he might have had twice as much money for it, though sixty guineas was no mean price. The bookseller had the advantage of Goldsmith's reputation from 'The Traveller,' in the sale, though Goldsmith had it not in selling the copy."—*Sir J. R.* "The Beggars' Opera affords a proof, how strangely people will differ in opinion about a literary performance. Burke thinks it has no merit."—*J.* "It was refused by one of the houses; but I should have thought it would succeed, not from any great excellence in the writing, but from the novelty, and the general spirit and gaiety of the piece, which keeps the audience always attentive, and dismisses them in good humour."

He once mentioned with an air of satisfaction what Baretti had told him; that meeting, in the course of his studying English, with an excellent paper in the Spectator, one of four that were written by the respectable dissenting minister Mr. Grove of Taunton, and observing the genius and energy of mind that it exhibits, it greatly quickened his curiosity to visit our country; as he thought if such were the lighter

periodical essays of our authors, their productions on more weighty occasions must be wonderful indeed.

Mr. Boswell expressed a liking for Mr. Francis Osborn's works, and asked Johnson what he thought of that writer. He answered, "A conceited fellow. Were a man to write so now, the boys would throw stones at him." He however (says Mr. B.) did not alter my opinion of a favourite author, to whom I was first directed by his being quoted in 'The Spectator,' and in whom I have found much shrewd and lively sense, expressed indeed in a style somewhat quaint, which however I do not dislike. His book has an air of originality. We figure to ourselves an ancient gentleman talking to us.

Johnson once talked with approbation of an intended edition of 'The Spectator' with notes; two volumes of which had been prepared by a gentleman eminent in the literary world, and the materials which he had collected for the remainder had been transferred to another hand. He observed, that all works which describe manners, require notes in sixty or seventy years or less; and said, he had communicated all he knew that could throw light upon 'The Spectator.' He said, "Addison had made his Sir Andrew Freeport a true Whig, arguing against

giving charity to beggars, and throwing out other such ungracious sentiments; but that he had thought better, and made amends by making him found an hospital for decayed farmers." He called for the volume of 'The Spectator' in which that account is contained, and read it aloud, and indeed he read it so well, that every thing acquired additional weight and grace from his utterance.

Johnson on another occasion praised 'The Spectator,' particularly the character of Sir Roger de Coverley. He said, "Sir Roger did not die a violent death, as has been generally fancied. He was not killed; he died only because others were to die, and because his death afforded an opportunity to Addison for some very fine writing. We have the example of Cervantes making Don Quixote die. I never could see why Sir Roger is represented as a little cracked. It appears to me that the story of the widow was intended to have something superinduced upon it; but the superstructure did not come."

Johnson talked of its having been said that Addison wrote some of his best papers in 'The Spectator' when warm with wine. He did not seem willing to admit this. Dr. Scott, as a confirmation of it, related, that Blackstone, a

sober man, composed his 'Commentaries' with a bottle of port before him; and found his mind invigorated and supported in the fatigue of his great work, by a temperate use of it.

In another conversation on 'The Spectator,' he said, "It is wonderful that there is such a proportion of bad papers in the half of the work which was not written by Addison; for there was all the world to write that half, yet not half of that half is good. One of the finest pieces in the English language is the paper on Novelty, yet we do not hear it talked of. It was written by Mr. Grove, a dissenting teacher. Mr. Murphy said, he remembered when there were several people alive in London, who enjoyed a considerable reputation merely from having written a paper in 'The Spectator.' He mentioned particularly Mr. Ince, who used to frequent Tom's coffee-house; "but (said Johnson) you must consider how highly Steele speaks of Mr. Ince." He would not allow that the paper on carrying a boy to travel, signed *Philip Homebred*, which was reported to be written by the Lord Chancellor Hardwick, had merit. He said, "It was quite vulgar, and had nothing luminous."

A gentleman mentioned Sir Richard Steele having published his 'Christian Hero' with the

avowed purpose of obliging himself to lead a religious life, yet that his conduct was by no means strictly suitable.—*Johnson:* "Steele, I believe, practised the lighter vices."

A desire was expressed to know his authority for the story of Addison's sending an execution into Steele's house. "Sir, (said he), it is generally known; it is known to all who are acquainted with the literary history of that period. It is as well known, as that he wrote 'Cato.' Mr. Thomas Sheridan once defended Addison, by alledging that he did it in order to cover Steele's goods from other creditors, who were going to seize them."

Johnson said, that "Addison wrote Budgell's papers in the Spectator, at least mended them so much, that he made them almost his own; and that Draper, Tonson's partner, assured Mrs. Johnson, that the much admired Epilogue to 'The Distressed Mother,' which came out in Budgell's name, was in reality written by Addison."

Mr. Eliot, with whom Dr. Walter Harte had travelled, talked of Harte's 'History of Gustavus Adolphus,' which he said was a very good book in the German translation. Johnson said, "Harte was excessively vain: he put copies of his book in manuscript into the hands of Lord

Chesterfield and Lord Granville, that they might revise it. Now how absurd was it to suppose that two such noblemen would revise so big a manuscript. Poor man! he left London the day of the publication of his book, that he might be out of the way of the great praise he was to receive; and he was ashamed to return when he found how ill his book had succeeded. It was unlucky in coming out on the same day with Robertson's 'History of Scotland.' His husbandry, however, is good."—*Boswell:* "So, he was fitter for that than heroick history. He did well when he turned his sword into a ploughshare."—Johnson at another time much commended Harte as a scholar, and a man of the most companionable talents he had ever known. He said, the defects in his history proceeded not from imbecility but from foppery.

Berkeley, he said, was a profound scholar, as well as a man of fine imagination; but Usher was the great luminary of the Irish church; and a greater, he added, no church could boast of; at least in modern times.

Bayle's Dictionary, he observed, was a very useful work for those to consult who love the biographical part of literature, which was what he loved most.

He said, he had looked into the poems of a

pretty voluminous writer, Mr. (now Dr.) John Ogilvie, one of the Presbyterian ministers of Scotland, which had lately come out, but could find no thinking in them. Mr. Boswell asked, "Is there not imagination in them, Sir?"—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, there is in them what *was* imagination, but it is no more imagination in *him*, than sound is sound in the echo; and his diction too is not his own. We have long ago seen *white-robed innocence* and *flower-be-spangled meads.*"

Talking of the eminent writers in Queen Anne's reign, he observed, "I think Dr. Arbuthnot the first man among them. He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humour. Mr. Addison was, to be sure, a great man; his learning was not profound, but his morality, his humour, and his elegance of writing set him very high."

He enlarged very convincingly upon the excellence of rhyme over blank verse in English poetry. Mr. Boswell mentioned to him that Dr. Adam Smith, in his Lectures upon Composition, when he studied under him in the College of Glasgow, had maintained the same opinion strenuously, and Mr. B. repeated some of his arguments. Johnson said, "Sir, I was once

in company with Smith, and we did not take to each other; but had I known that he loved rhyme as much as you tell me he does, I should have hugged him."

Mr. B. mentioned Dr. Adam Smith's book on 'The Wealth of Nations,' which was just published, and that Sir John Pringle had observed to him, that Dr. Smith, who had never been in trade, could not be expected to write well on that subject any more than a lawyer upon physick. Johnson said, "He is mistaken, Sir; a man who has never been engaged in trade himself may undoubtedly write well upon trade, and there is nothing which requires more to be illustrated by philosophy than trade does. As to mere wealth, that is to say money, it is clear that one nation or one individual cannot increase its store but by making another poorer; but trade procures what is more valuable, the reciprocation of the peculiar advantages of different countries. A merchant seldom thinks but of his own particular trade. To write a good book upon it, a man must have extensive views. It is not necessary to have practised, to write well upon a subject."

Law was mentioned as a subject on which no man could write well without practice.—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, in England, where so much mo-

ney is to be got by the practice of the law, most of our writers upon it have been in practice; though Blackstone had not been much in practice when he published his 'Commentaries.' But upon the Continent, the great writers on law have not all been in practice: Grotius indeed was; but Puffendorf was not; Burlamiqui was not."

Sir Thomas Robinson, sitting with Johnson one day, observed, that the King of Prussia valued himself upon three things:—upon being a hero, a musician, and an author. "Pretty well, Sir, (said Johnson), for one man. As to his being an author, I have not looked at his poetry, but his prose is poor stuff. He writes just as you might suppose Voltaire's footboy to do, who has been his amanuensis. He has such parts as the valet might have, and about as much of the colouring of the style as might be got by transcribing his works."

The ballad of Hardyknute (he said) had no great merit, if it were really ancient. "People talk of nature; but mere obvious nature may be exhibited with very little power of mind."

Johnson thought the poems published as translations from Ossian, had so little merit, that he said, "Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever, if he would *abandon* his mind to it." Johnson had all along denied their authenticity;

and, what was still more provoking to their admirers, maintained that they had no merit. The subject having been introduced by Dr Fordyce, Dr. Blair, relying on the internal evidence of their antiquity, asked Dr. Johnson whether he thought any man of a modern age could have written such poems? Johnson replied, "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children." Johnson at this time did not know that Dr. Blair had just published a Dissertation, not only defending their authenticity, but seriously ranking them with the poems of Homer and Virgil; and when he was afterwards informed of this circumstance, he expressed some displeasure at Dr. Fordyce's having suggested the topick, and said, "I am not sorry that they got thus much for their pains: Sir, it was like leading one to talk of a book, when the author is concealed behind the door." The poem of Fingal, he said, was a mere unconnected rhapsody, a tiresome repetition of the same images. "In vain shall we look for the *lucidus ordo*, where there is neither end nor object, design nor moral, *nec certa recurrit imago.*"

He much commended 'Law's Serious Call,' which he said was the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language. "Law (said he) fell latterly into the reveries of Jacob Behmen,

whom Law alledged to have been somewhat in the same state with St. Paul, and to have seen *unutterable things*. Were it even so, (said Johnson), Jacob would have resembled St. Paul still more, by not attempting to utter them."

Of Dr. Priestley's theological works, he remarked, that they tended to unsettle every thing, and yet settled nothing.

The conversation turning on critical subjects, Johnson said, "Bayes in 'The Rehearsal,' is a mighty silly character. If it was intended to be like a particular man, it could only be diverting while that man was remembered; but I question whether it was meant for Dryden, as has been reported; for we know some of the passages said to be ridiculed, were written since 'The Rehearsal;' at least a passage mentioned in the Preface is of a later date."—Mr. B. maintained that it had merit as a general satire on the self-importance of dramatick authors. But even in this light he held it very cheap.

He seemed to take a pleasure in speaking in his own style; for sometimes when he had carelessly missed it, he would repeat the thought translated into it. Talking of the Comedy of 'The Rehearsal,' he said, "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet." This was easy; he therefore caught himself, and pronounced a

more rounded sentence: "It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction."

Hawkesworth's compilation of the voyages to the South Sea being mentioned, Johnson said, "Sir, if you talk of it as a subject of commerce, it will be gainful; if as a book that is to increase human knowledge, I believe there will not be much of that. Hawkesworth can tell only what the voyagers have told him; and they have found very little, only one new animal, I think."—*Boswell:* "But many insects, Sir."—*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, as to insects, Ray reckons of British insects twenty thousand species. They might have staid at home and discovered enough in that way."

The casual mention of biography led to the mention of Dr. John Campbell, who had written a considerable part of the 'Biographia Britannica.' Johnson, though he valued him highly, was of opinion that there was not so much in his great work, 'A Political Survey of Great Britain,' as the world had been taught to expect, and had formerly said to Mr. Boswell, that he believed Campbell's disappointment, on account of the bad success of that work, had killed him. He now again observed of it, "That work was his death." Mr. Warton, who

was present, not adverting to his meaning, answered, "I believe so; from the great attention he bestowed on it."—*Johnson:* "Nay, Sir, he died of *want* of attention, if he died at all by that book."

Again recurring to biography, Johnson said, "It is rarely well executed. They only who live with a man, can write his life with any genuine exactness and discrimination; and few people who have lived with a man know what to remark about him. The chaplain of a late Bishop, whom I was to assist in writing some memoirs of his Lordship, could tell me scarcely any thing."

A gentleman said, Mr. Robert Dodsley's life should be written, as he had been so much connected with the wits of his time, and by his literary merits had raised himself from the station of a footman. Mr. Warton observed, that he had published a little volume under the title of 'The Muse in Livery.'—*Johnson:* "I doubt whether Dodsley's brother would thank a man who should write his life; yet Dodsley himself was not unwilling that his original low condition should be recollected. When Lord Lyttelton's 'Dialogues of the Dead' came out, one of which is between Apicius, an ancient epi-

cure, and Dartineuf, a modern epicure, Dodsley said to me, "I knew Dartineuf well, for I was once his footman."

Of Dodsley's 'Public Virtue,' a Poem, he said, "It was fine *blank* (meaning to express his usual contempt for blank verse); however this miserable poem did not sell, and my poor friend Doddy said, Public Virtue was not a subject to interest the age."

Mr. Langton, when a very young man, read Dodsley's 'Cleone, a Tragedy,' to Johnson, not aware of his extreme impatience to be read to. As it went on, he turned his face to the back of his chair, and put himself into various attitudes which marked his uneasiness. At the end of an act, however, he said, "Come, let's have some more, let's go into the slaughter-house again, Lanky; but I am afraid there is more blood than brains." Yet he afterwards said, "When I heard you read it, I thought higher of its power of language. When I read it myself, I was more sensible of its pathetic effect, and then paid it a compliment which many will think very extravagant. 'Sir, (said he), if Otway had written this play, no other of his pieces would have been remembered.' Dodsley himself, upon this being repeated to him, said, 'It was too much;' it must be re-

membered, that Johnson always appeared not to be sufficiently sensible of the merit of Otway."

Talking of Rochester's Poems, he said, he had given them to Mr. Steevens to castrate for the edition of the Poets to which he was to write Prefaces. Dr. Taylor (the only time, says Mr. B. I ever heard him say any thing witty) observed, that "If Rochester had been castrated himself, his exceptionable poems would not have been written." One asked if Burnet had not given a good Life of Rochester. "We have (said Johnson) a good *Death;* there is not much *Life.*"

He said, "Burnet's 'History of his own Times' is very entertaining. The style indeed is mere chit-chat. I do not believe that Burnet intentionally lied; but he was so much prejudiced, that he took no pains to find out the truth. He was like a man who resolves to regulate his time by a certain watch; but will not enquire whether the watch is right or not."

Such was Johnson's sensibility, and so much was he affected by pathetic poetry, that the reading of Dr. Beattie's 'Hermit' brought tears into his eyes."

Baxter's 'Reasons of the Christian Religion,' he thought, contained the best collection of

the evidences of the divinity of the Christian system.

Being asked what works of Richard Baxter's a person should read, he said, "Any of them; they are all good."

Johnson praised John Bunyan highly. "His 'Pilgrim's Progress' has great merit, both for invention, imagination, and the conduct of the story; and it has had the best evidence of its merit, the general and continued approbation of mankind. Few books, I believe, have had a more extensive sale. It is remarkable, that it begins very much like the poem of Dante; yet there was no translation of Dante when Bunyan wrote. There is reason to think that he had read Spenser."

Mr. Boswell mentioning that we were to have the remains of Mr. Gray, in prose and verse, published by Mr. Mason, "I think (said Johnson) we have had enough of Gray."

Mr. Murphy said, that the memoirs of Gray's Life set him much higher in his estimation than his Poems did; for you there saw a man constantly at work in literature.—Johnson acquiesced in this, but depreciated the book, perhaps unreasonably; for he said, "I forced myself to read it, only because it was a common topick

of conversation. I found it mighty dull, and as to the style, it is fit for the second table."

He now gave it as his opinion, that "Akenside was a superior poet both to Gray and Mason." Yet he said, "I see they have published a splendid edition of Akenside's works. One bad ode may be suffered; but a number of them together makes one sick."—*Boswell:* "Akenside's distinguished poem is his 'Pleasures of Imagination;' but for my part, I never could admire it so much as most people do."—*Johnson:* "Sir, I could not read it through."—*B.* "I have read it through; but I did not find any great power in it."

Mr. B. told him, that he heard Dr. Percy was writing the history of the wolf in Great Britain.—*Johnson:* "The wolf, Sir! why the wolf? Why does he not write of the bear which we had formerly? Nay, it is said we had the beaver; or why does he not write of the grey rat, the Hanover rat, as it is called, because it is said to have come into this country about the time that the family of Hanover came? I should like to see 'The History of the Grey Rat,' by Thomas Percy, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty," (laughing immoderately).—*Boswell:* "I am afraid a court chap-

lain could not decently write of the grey rat."—*J.* "Sir, he need not give it the name of the Hanover rat."—Thus could he indulge a luxuriant sportive imagination, when talking of a friend whom he loved and esteemed.

Having talked of Grainger's 'Sugar Cane,' Mr. Boswell mentioned Mr. Langton's having told him, that this poem, when read in manuscript at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, had made all the assembled wits burst into a laugh, when after much blank-verse pomp, the poet began a new paragraph thus:

"Now, Muse, let's sing of *rats*."

And what increased the ridicule was, that one of the company, who slily overlooked the reader, perceived that the word had been originally *mice*, and had been altered to *rats*, as more dignified.

This passage does not appear in the printed work, Dr. Grainger, or some of his friends, it should seem, having become sensible that introducing even *rats* in a grave poem, might be liable to banter. He, however, could not bring himself to relinquish the idea; for they are thus, in a still more ludicrous manner, periphrastically exhibited in his Poem as it now stands:

"Nor with less waste the whisker'd vermin race,
"A countless clan, despoil the lowland cane."

Johnson said, that Dr. Grainger was an agreeable man; a man who would do any good that was in his power. His translation of Tibullus, he thought, was very well done; but 'The Sugar Cane' did not please him; for he exclaimed, "What could he make of a sugar-cane? One might as well write the 'Parsley Bed, a Poem;' or, 'The Cabbage Garden, a Poem.'"—*Boswell:* "You must then *pickle* your cabbage with the *sal atticum.*"—*Johnson:* "You know there is already 'The Hop Garden, a Poem;' and I think one could say a great deal about cabbage. The poem might begin with the advantages of civilized society over a rude state, exemplified by the Scotch, who had no cabbages till Oliver Cromwell's soldiers introduced them; and one might thus shew how arts are propagated by conquest, as they were by the Roman arms."—He seemed to be much diverted with the fertility of his own fancy.

He spoke slightingly of Dyer's 'Fleece.' "The subject, Sir, cannot be made poetical. How can a man write poetically of surges and druggets? Yet you will hear many people talk to you gravely of that *excellent* poem 'The Fleece.'"

Speaking of Cheyne, whom Mr. Boswell reckoned whimsical, "So he was (said Johnson)

in some things; but there is no end of objections. There are few books to which some objection or other may not be made." He added, "I would not have you read any thing else of Cheyne, but his book on Health, and his 'English Malady.'"

He said, that the book entitled 'The Lives of the Poets,' by Mr. Cibber, was entirely compiled by Mr. Shiels, a Scotchman, one of his amanuenses. "The booksellers (said he) gave Theophilus Cibber, who was then in prison, ten guineas, to allow *Mr. Cibber* to be put upon the title-page, as the author; by this, a double imposition was intended: in the first place, that it was the work of a Cibber at all; and in the second place, that it was the work of old Cibber."

"I once introduced (says Mr. B.) Aristotle's doctrine in his 'Art of Poetry,' of καθαρσις των παθημαλων, the purging of the passions, as the purpose of tragedy. But how are the passions to be purged by terror and pity?" (said I, with an assumed air of ignorance, to excite him to talk, for which it was often necessary to employ some address). —*Johnson:* "Why, Sir, you are to consider what is the meaning of purging, in the original sense. It is to expel impurities from the human body. The mind is subject to the same imper-

fection. The passions are the great movers of human actions; but they are mixed with such impurities, that it is necessary they should be purged or refined by means of terror and pity. For instance, ambition is a noble passion; but by seeing upon the stage that a man, who is so excessively ambitious as to raise himself by injustice, is punished, we are terrified at the fatal consequences of such a passion. In the same manner a certain degree of resentment is necessary; but if we see that a man carries it too far, we pity the object of it, and are taught to moderate that passion."

Mr. Boswell observed, that the great defect of the tragedy of 'Othello' was, that it had not a moral; for that no man could resist the circumstances of suspicion which were artfully suggested to Othello's mind.—*Johnson:* "In the first place, Sir, we learn from Othello this very useful moral, not to make an unequal match; in the second place, we learn not to yield too readily to suspicion. The handkerchief is merely a trick, though a very pretty trick: but there are no other circumstances of reasonable suspicion, except what is related by Iago, of Cassio's warm expressions concerning Desdemona in his sleep; and that depended entirely upon the assertion of one man. No,

Sir, I think Othello has more moral than almost any play."

Johnson said, "The little volumes entitled 'Respublicæ,' which are very well done, were a bookseller's work."

Of Chatterton, he said, "This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things."

END OF VOL. I.

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