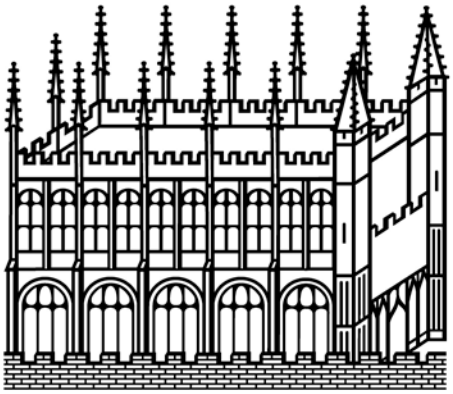

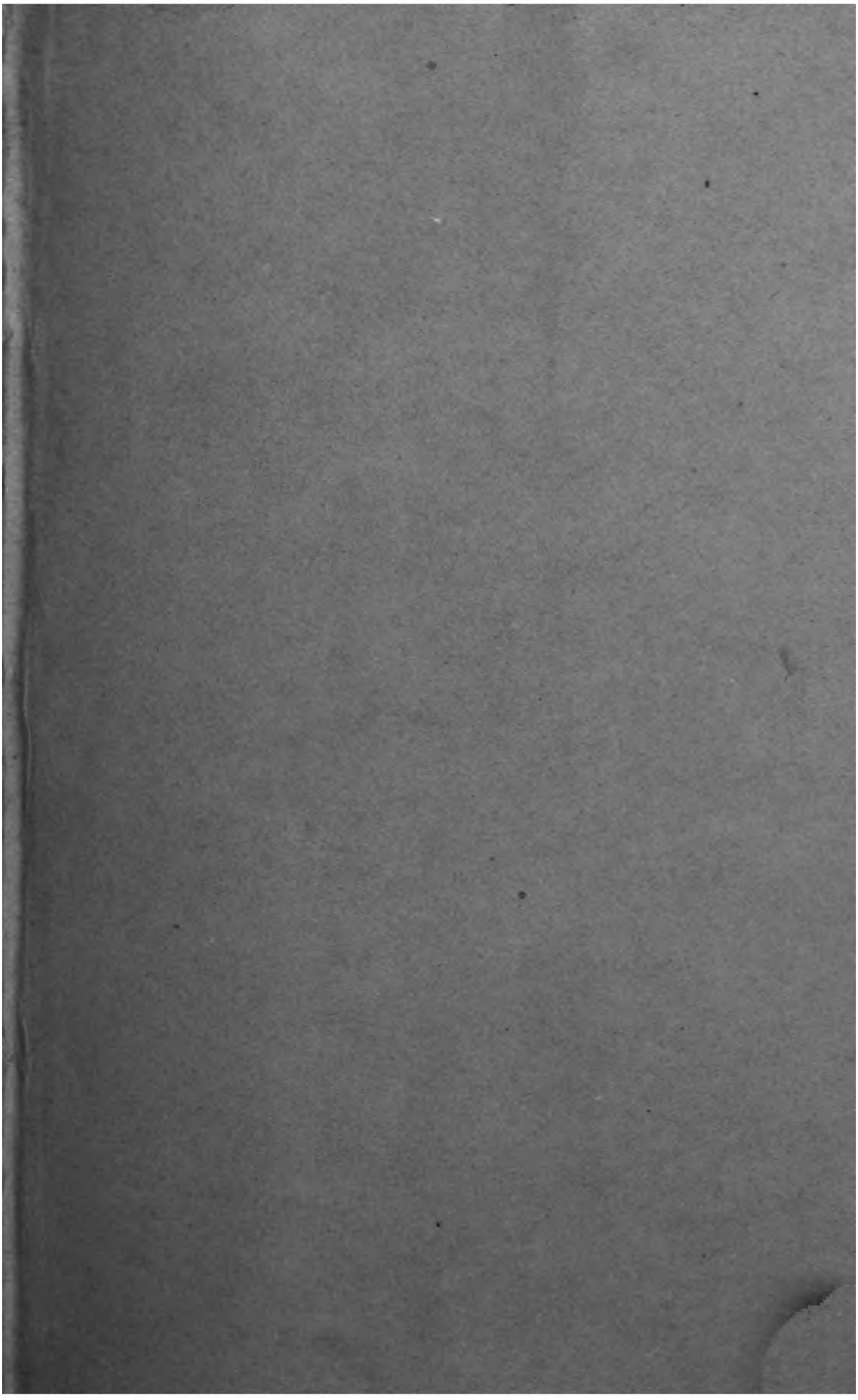

DR. JOHNSON'S TABLE-TALK:

CONTAINING

APHORISMS

ON

LITERATURE, LIFE, AND MANNERS;

WITH

ANECDOTES,

OF

DISTINGUISHED PERSONS:

SELECTED AND ARRANGED

FROM

MR. BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

He that questioneth much shall learn much, and content much; but especially if he apply his questions to the skill of the persons whom he asketh: for he shall give them occasion to please themselves in speaking, and himself shall continually gather knowledge.

Bacon's Essays.

LONDON:

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TABLE TALK.

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 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 wea-

ther 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 topicks, 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 inconveniencies, 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 va-

cancy, 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 champagne. *J.* "No, Sir; admiration and love are like being intoxicated with champagne; 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 teased 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

* "This reflection (says Mr. Boswell) was experimentally just. The feeling of languor, which succeeds the animation of gaiety, is itself a very severe pain; and when the mind is then vacant, a thousand disappointments and vexations rush in and excruciate."

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 twelve-month 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-guardmen 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, distin-

guished 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

* On this Mr. B. remarks: "I was struck with the justice of this observation. To be with those of whom a person, whose mind is wavering and dejected, stands in awe, represses and composes an uneasy tumult of spirits, and consoles him with the contemplation of something steady, and at least comparatively great."

stages of the distemper. They are eager for gratifications to sooth 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 melancholy. 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.

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. KNOWLES. "The Scriptures tell us, 'The righteous shall have hope in his death.'" —JOHNSON. "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 acknowledge 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

* "Here (says Mr. B.) I am sensible I was in the wrong to bring before his view what he ever looked upon with horror; for although when in a celestial frame, in his 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' he has supposed death to be 'kind Nature's signal for retreat,' from this state of being to 'a happier seat,' his thoughts upon this awful change were in general full of dismal apprehensions. His mind resembled the vast amphitheatre at Rome. In the center stood his judgment, which, like a mighty gladiator, combated those apprehensions that, like the wild beasts of the Arena, were all around in cells, ready to be let out upon him. After a conflict, he drives them back into their dens; but not killing them, they were still assailing him."

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 ful-

filled, 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 for 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 reunite those whom he has separated, or who sees that it is best not to reunite."

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 afterward 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 re-

strain 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 inquire 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 friendships 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 Coachmaker's 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 permitted 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."

RELIGION.

MR. BOSWELL one day stated an anxious thought, by which a sincere Christian might be disturbed, even when conscious of having lived a good life, so far as consistent with human infirmity; he might fear that he should afterwards fall away, and be guilty of such crimes as would render all his former religion vain. Could there be, he asked, upon this awful subject, such a thing as balancing of accounts? Suppose a man who has led a good life for seven years commits

an act of wickedness, and instantly dies; will his former good life have any effect in his favour?—"Sir (said Johnson), if a man has led a good life for seven years, and then is hurried by passion to do what is wrong, and is suddenly carried off, depend upon it he will have the reward of his seven years' good life; GOD will not take a catch of him. Upon this principle Richard Baxter believes that a suicide may be saved. If (said he) it should be objected, that what I maintain may encourage suicide, I answer, I am not to tell a lie to prevent it."—*B.* "But does not the text say, 'As the tree falls, so it must lie?'"—*J.* "Yes, Sir; as the tree falls: but (after a little pause)—that is meant as to the general state of the tree, not what is the effect of a sudden blast." In short (as Mr. B. observes), he interpreted the expression as referring to condition, not to position. The common notion, therefore, seems to be erroneous; and Shenstone's witty remark on Divines trying to give the tree a jerk upon a deathbed, to make it lie favourably, is not well-founded.

While Johnson and Mr. Boswell stood in calm conference by themselves in a garden, at a pretty late hour, one serene autumn night, looking up to the heavens, the discourse turned on the subject of a future state.—"Sir (said Johnson), I do not imagine that all things will be made clear

to us immediately after death; but that the ways of Providence will be explained to us very gradually." Mr. B. asked, whether, although the words of some texts of Scripture seemed strong in support of the dreadful doctrine of an eternity of punishment, we might not hope that the denunciation was figurative, and would not literally be executed.—Johnson replied, "Sir, you are to consider the intention of punishment in a future state. We have no reason to be sure that we shall then be no longer liable to offend against GOD. We do not know that even the angels are quite in a state of security; nay, we know that some of them have fallen. It may, therefore, perhaps be necessary, in order to preserve both men and angels in a state of rectitude, that they should have continually before them the punishment of those who have deviated from it; but we may hope, that by some other means a fall from rectitude may be prevented. Some of the texts of Scripture upon this subject are, as you observe, indeed strong; but they may admit of a mitigated interpretation." He talked upon this awful and delicate question in a gentle tone, and as if afraid to be decisive.

At another time, speaking of the *inward light* to which some methodists pretended, he said, it was a principle utterly incompatible with social or civil security. "If a man (said he) pretends

to a principle of action of which I can know nothing, nay, not so much as that he has it, but only that he pretends to it; how can I tell what that person may be prompted to do? When a person professes to be governed by a written ascertained law, I can then know where to find him."

Mrs. Knowles once mentioned, as a proselyte to Quakerism, Miss ——, a young lady well known to Dr. Johnson, for whom he had shewn much affection; while she ever had, and still retained, a great respect for him. Mrs. Knowles at the same time took an opportunity of letting him know, "that the amiable young creature was sorry at finding that he was offended at her leaving the church of England, and embracing a simpler faith;" and, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, solicited his kind indulgence for what was sincerely a matter of conscience. Johnson said (frowning very angrily), "Madam, she is an odious wench. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care, and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the Church which she left, and that which she embraced, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaick systems."—Mrs. Knowles. "She had the

New Testament before her."—JOHNSON. "Madam, she could not understand the New Testament, the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required."—MRS. K. "It is clear as to essentials."—*J.* "But not as to controversial points. The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong conviction indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion, you may be safe; but error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself."—MRS. K. "Must we then go by implicit faith?"—*J.* "Why, Madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion, have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius, all that a Mahometan can say for himself?" He then rose again into passion, and attacked the young proselyte in the severest terms of reproach. Mr. Boswell observed, that the essential part of religion was piety, a devout intercourse with the Divinity; and that many a man was a Quaker without knowing it.

A Quaker having objected to the "observance of days, and months, and years," Johnson answered, "The Church does not superstitiously observe days, merely as days, but as memorials of

important facts. Christmas might be kept as well upon one day of the year as another; but there should be a stated day for commemorating the birth of our Saviour, because there is danger that what may be done on any day will be neglected."

In a party one day, consisting only of Mr. Seward, Mr. Boswell, and the Doctor, Horace having been mentioned, Mr. Boswell said, "There is a great deal of thinking in his works. One finds there almost every thing but religion."—SEWARD. "He speaks of his returning to it in his Ode *Parcus Deorum cultor et infrequens*."—JOHNSON. "Sir, he was not in earnest; this was merely poetical."—BOSWELL. "There are, I am afraid, many people who have no religion at all."—*S.* "And sensible people too."—*J.* "Why, Sir, not sensible in that respect. There must be either a natural or moral stupidity, if one lives in a total neglect of so very important a concern."—*S.* "I wonder that there should be people without religion."—*J.* "Sir, you need not wonder at this, when you consider how large a proportion of almost every man's life is passed without thinking of it. I myself was for some years totally regardless of religion; it had dropped out of my mind. It was at an early part of my life. Sickness brought it back, and I hope I have never lost it since."—*B.* "My dear Sir, what a man

must you have been without religion! Why you must have gone on drinking, and swearing, and —." *J.* (with a smile) "I drank enough, and swore enough, to be sure."—*S.* "One should think that sickness, and the view of death, would make more men religious."—*J.* "Sir, they do not know how to go about it; they have not the first notion. A man who has never had religion before, no more grows religious when he is sick, than a man who has never learnt figures can count when he has need of calculation."

A gentleman was mentioned as being too ready to introduce religious discourse upon all occasions. Johnson observed, "Why yes, Sir, he will introduce religious discourse without seeing whether it will end in instruction and improvement, or produce some prophane jest. He would introduce it in the company of ******, and twenty more such."

Mr. Boswell mentioned the Doctor's excellent distinction between liberty of conscience and liberty of teaching *. Johnson said, "Consider, Sir; if you have children whom you wish to educate in the principles of the church of England, and there comes a Quaker who tries to pervert them to his principles, you would drive away the Quaker. You would not trust to the

* Ante, vol. i. p. 207.

predomination of right, which you believe is in your opinions; you would keep wrong out of their heads. Now the vulgar are the children of the State. If any one attempts to teach them doctrines contrary to what the State approves, the magistrate may and ought to restrain him."—*S.* "Would you restrain private conversation, Sir?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, it is difficult to say where private conversation begins, and where it ends. If we three should discuss even the great question concerning the existence of a Supreme Being by ourselves, we should not be restrained; for that would be to put an end to all improvement: but if we should discuss it in the presence of ten boarding-school girls, and as many boys, I think the magistrate would do well to put us in the stocks, to finish the debate there."

A gentleman once expressed a wish to go and live three years at Otaheite or New Zealand, in order to obtain a full acquaintance with people so totally different from all that we have ever known, and be satisfied what pure nature can do for man.—JOHNSON. "What could you learn, Sir? What can savages tell, but what they themselves have seen? Of the past, or the invisible, they can tell nothing. The inhabitants of Otaheite and New Zealand are not in a state of pure nature; for it is plain they broke off from some other people. Had they grown out of the

ground, you might have judged of a state of pure nature. Fanciful people may talk of a mythology being amongst them, but it must be invention. They have once had religion, which has been gradually debased; and what account of their religion can you suppose to be learnt from savages? Only consider, Sir, our own state: our religion is in a book; we have an order of men whose duty it is to teach it; we have one day in the week set apart for it, and this is in general pretty well observed; yet ask the first ten gross men you meet, and hear what they can tell of their religion."

Mr. Murray one day praised the ancient philosophers for the candour and good humour with which those of different sects disputed with each other. "Sir (said Johnson) they disputed with good humour, because they were not in earnest as to religion. Had the ancients been serious in their belief, we should not have had their Gods exhibited in the manner we find them represented in the Poets. The people would not have suffered it. They disputed with good humour upon their fanciful theories, because they were not interested in the truth of them; when a man has nothing to lose, he may be in good humour with his opponent. Accordingly, you see in Lucian that the Epicurean, who argues only negatively, keeps his temper; the Stoick, who

has something positive to preserve, grows angry. Being angry with one who controverts an opinion which you value, is a necessary consequence of the uneasiness which you feel. Every man who attacks my belief diminishes in some degree my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy; and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy. Those only who believed in revelation have been angry at having their faith called in question, because they only had something upon which they could rest as matter of fact." Mr. MURRAY. "It seems to me that we are not angry at a man for controverting an opinion which we believe and value; we rather pity him."—JOHNSON. "Why, Sir; to be sure when you wish a man to have that belief which you think is of infinite advantage, you wish well to him; but your primary consideration is your own quiet. If a madman were to come into this room with a stick in his hand, no doubt we should pity the state of his mind; but our primary consideration would be to take care of ourselves. We should knock him down first, and pity him afterwards. No, Sir; every man will dispute with great good humour upon a subject in which he is not interested. I will dispute very calmly upon the probability of another man's son being hanged; but if a man zealously enforces the probability that my own son will be hanged, I shall certainly not be in a very

good humour with him." Mr. Boswell added this illustration, "If a man endeavours to convince me that my wife, whom I love very much, and in whom I place great confidence, is a disagreeable woman, and is even unfaithful to me, I shall be very angry, for he is putting me in fear of being unhappy."—MURRAY. "But, Sir, truth will always bear an examination."—JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir, but it is painful to be forced to defend it. Consider, Sir, how should you like, though conscious of your innocence, to be tried before a jury for a capital crime, once a week."

Talking of devotion, he said, "Though it be true that 'God dwelleth not in temples made with hands,' yet in this state of being, our minds are more piously affected in places appropriated to divine worship, than in others. Some people have a particular room in their house where they say their prayers; of this I do not disapprove, as it may animate their devotion."

He said also, "that to find a substitution for violated morality was the leading feature in all perversions of religion."

A sectary being mentioned, who was a very religious man, and not only attended regularly on public worship with those of his communion, but made a particular study of the Scriptures, and even wrote a commentary on some parts of them, yet was known to be very licentious in in-

dulging himself with women; maintaining that men are to be saved by faith alone, and that the Christian religion had not prescribed any fixed rule for the intercourse between the sexes;" Johnson said, "Sir, there is no trusting to that crazy piety."

At another time he said, "The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half a crown to a beggar with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but with respect to me the action is very wrong. So religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please God, avail us nothing. As our Saviour says of those who perform them from other motives, 'Verily they have their reward.'"

A question being introduced as having been much agitated in the Church of Scotland, whether the claim of lay-patrons to present ministers to parishes be well founded; and supposing it to be well founded, whether it ought to be exercised without the concurrence of the people? Johnson said, the subject was well treated in the 'Defence of Pluralities;' and although he thought that a patron should exercise his right with tenderness to the inclinations of the people of a parish, he was very clear as to his right. He then proceeded to dictate an argument at

large on the subject, as supposing the question to be agitated before the general assembly.

On another occasion Mr. Boswell introduced a common subject of complaint, the very small salaries which many curates have, and maintained, "that no man should be invested with the character of a clergyman, unless he has a security for such an income as will enable him to appear respectable; that therefore a clergyman should not be allowed to have a curate, unless he gives him a hundred pounds a year; if he cannot do that, let him perform the duty himself."—Johnson observed, "To be sure, Sir, it is wrong that any clergyman should be without a reasonable income; but as the church revenues were sadly diminished at the Reformation, the clergy who have livings cannot afford, in many instances, to give good salaries to curates, without leaving themselves too little; and if no curate were to be permitted, unless he had a hundred pounds a year, their number would be very small, which would be a disadvantage, as then there would be no such choice in the nursery for the church, curates being candidates for the higher ecclesiastical offices, according to their merit and good behaviour." He explained the system of the English Hierarchy exceedingly well. "It is not thought fit (said he) to trust a man with the care of a parish, till he has given

proof as a curate that he shall deserve such a trust." This is an excellent *theory;* and if the *practice* were according to it, the Church of England would be admirable indeed. However, as Dr. Johnson once observed as to the Universities, bad practice does not infer that the *constitution* is bad.

The subject of the inequality of the livings of the clergy of England, and the scanty provisions of some of the curates, was resumed at another time; when Johnson said, "It cannot be helped. You must consider, that the revenues of the clergy are not at the disposal of the State, like the pay of the army. Different men have founded different churches; and some are better endowed, some worse. The State cannot interfere and make an equal division of what has been particularly appropriated. Now when a clergyman has but a small living, or even two small livings, he can afford very little to a curate."

Johnson's old fellow-collegian Mr. Edwards, who has been mentioned before, once expressed a wish that he had continued at college. Johnson asked, "Why do you wish that, Sir?" EDWARDS. "Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxam and several others, and lived comfort-

ably."—JOHNSON. "Sir, the life of a parson, of a conscientious clergyman, is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, Sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life."

In one of his Journals was found the following scheme of life for Sunday: "Having lived (as he with tenderness of conscience expresses himself) not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires;

"To rise early, and in order to it, to go to sleep early on Saturday.

2. "To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.

3. "To examine the tenour of my life, and particularly the last week; and to mark my advances in religion, or recession from it.

4. "To read the Scripture methodically with such helps as are at hand.

5. "To go to church twice.

6. "To read books of Divinity, either speculative or practical.

7. "To instruct my family.

8. "To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week."

From another of his Journals was transcribed what follows:

"At church, Oct.—65.

"To avoid all singularity.

"To come in before service, and compose my mind by meditation, or by reading some portions of scripture.

"If I can hear the sermon to attend to it, unless attention be more troublesome than useful.

"To consider the act of prayer as a reposal of myself upon God, and a resignation of all into his holy hand."

He said he would not have Sunday kept with rigid severity and gloom, but with a gravity and simplicity of behaviour.

Johnson and Mr. Boswell were once at Southill church together, and it being the first Sunday of the month, and the holy sacrament administered, Mr. B. staid to partake of it. When he came afterwards into Dr. Johnson's room, the Doctor said, "You did right to stay and receive the communion; I had not thought of it." This seemed to imply that he did not choose to approach the altar without a previous preparation; as to which good men entertain different opinions, some holding that it is irreverent to partake of that ordinance without considerable premeditation; others, that whoever is a sincere christian, and in a proper frame of mind to discharge any other ritual duty of our religion, may without scruple discharge this most solemn one. A middle notion Mr. Boswell seems to believe to be the just one, which is, that communicants need not think a long train of preparatory forms

indispensably necessary; but neither should they rashly and lightly venture upon so awful and mysterious an institution. Christians must judge each for himself, what degree of retirement and self-examination is necessary upon each occasion.

Being once (says Mr. B.) in a frame of mind which, I hope for the felicity of human nature, many experience—in fine weather,—at the country-house of a friend,—consoled and elevated by pious exercises, I expressed myself with an unrestrained fervour to my 'Guide, Philosopher, and Friend.' "My dear Sir, I would fain be a good man; and I am very good now. I fear God and honour the King, I wish to do no ill, and to be benevolent to all mankind." He looked at me with a benignant indulgence; but took occasion to give me wise and salutary caution. "Do not, Sir, accustom yourself to trust to *impressions*. There is a middle state of mind between conviction and hypocrisy, of which many are conscious. By trusting to impressions, a man may gradually come to yield to them, and at length be subject to them, so as not to be a free agent. A man who is in that state should not be suffered to live; if he declares he cannot help acting in a particular way, and is irresistibly impelled, there can be no confidence in him, no more than in a tyger. But, Sir, no man believes

himself to be impelled irresistibly; we
he who says he believes it, lies. Fav
pressions at particular moments, as to
of our souls, may be deceitful and dangerous. In general no man can be sure of his acceptance with God; some, indeed, may have had it revealed to them. St. Paul, who wrought miracles, may have had a miracle wrought on himself, and may have obtained supernatural assurance of pardon, and mercy, and beatitude; yet St. Paul, though he expresses strong hope, also expresses fear, lest having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away."

The opinion of a learned Bishop, as to there being merit in religious faith, being mentioned, Johnson said, "Why yes, Sir, the most licentious man, were hell open before him, would not take the most beautiful strumpet to his arms. We must, as the Apostle says, live by faith, not by sight."

Mr. Boswell talking of original sin in consequence of the fall of man, and of the atonement made by our Saviour, "With respect to original sin (said Johnson), the enquiry is not necessary; for whatever is the cause of human corruption, men are evidently and confessedly so corrupt, that all the laws of heaven and earth are insufficient to restrain them from crimes.

"Whatever difficulty there may be in the

conception of vicarious punishments, it is an opinion which has had possession of mankind in all ages. There is no nation that has not used the practice of sacrifices. Whoever, therefore, denies the propriety of vicarious punishments, holds an opinion which the sentiments and practice of mankind have contradicted from the beginning of the world. The great sacrifice for the sins of mankind was offered at the death of the MESSIAH, who is called in scripture, 'The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.' To judge of the reasonableness of the scheme of redemption, it must be considered as necessary to the government of the Universe, that God should make known his perpetual and irreconcileable detestation of moral evil. He might indeed punish, and punish only the offenders; but as the end of punishment is not revenge of crimes, but propagation of virtue, it was more becoming the Divine clemency to find another manner of proceeding, less destructive to man, and at least equally powerful to promote goodness. The end of punishment is, to reclaim and warn. *That* punishment will both reclaim and warn, which shews evidently such abhorrence of sin in God, as may deter us from it, or strike us with dread of vengeance when we have committed it: this is effected by vicarious punishment. Nothing could more testify the opposition between

the nature of God and moral evil, or more amply display his justice to men and angels, to all orders and successions of beings, than that it was necessary for the highest and purest nature, even for Divinity itself, to pacify the demands of vengeance, by a painful death; of which the natural effect will be, that when justice is appeased, there is a proper place for the exercise of mercy; and that such propitiation shall supply, in some degree, the imperfections of our obedience, and the efficacy of our repentance; for obedience and repentance, such as we can perform, are still necessary. Our Saviour has told us, that he did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil: to fulfil the typical law, by the performance of what those types had foreshewn; and the moral law, by precepts of greater purity and higher exaltation.

"The peculiar doctrine of Christianity is that of an universal sacrifice, and perpetual propitiation. Other prophets only proclaimed the will and the threatenings of God. Christ satisfied his justice *."

* Dr. Ogden, in his second Sermon 'On the Articles of the Christian Faith,' with admirable acuteness thus addresses the opposers of that Doctrine, which accounts for the confusion, sin, and misery, which we find in this life: "It would be severe in God, you think, to *degrade* us to such a sad state as this for the offence of our first parents; but you can allow him to *place* us in it without any inducement. Are our calamities lessened for not being ascribed to Adam? If your condition be unhappy, is it not

He said at another time, that the holidays observed by our church were of great use in religion.

It was told Johnson, that Goldsmith had said that he had come too late into the world, for that Pope and other poets had taken up the places in the Temple of Fame; so that as but a few at any period could possess poetical reputation, a man of genius could now hardly acquire it. "That (said Johnson) is one of the most sensible things I have ever heard of Goldsmith. It is difficult to get literary fame, and it is every day growing more difficult. Ah, Sir, that should make a man think of securing happiness in another world, which all who try sincerely for it may attain. In comparison of that, how little are all other things! The belief of immortality is impressed upon all men, and all men act under an impression of it, however they may talk, and though perhaps they may be scarcely sensible of it."

When Johnson paid a visit at Oxford, he surprized the company not a little, by acknowledging, with a look of horror, that he was much oppressed by the fear of death. The amiable Dr.

still unhappy, whatever was the occasion? with the aggravation of this reflection, that if it was as good as it was at first designed, there seems to be somewhat the less reason to look for its amendment."

Adams suggested that God was infinitely good.—JOHNSON. "That he is infinitely good, as far as the perfection of his nature will allow, I certainly believe; but it is necessary for good upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As to an *individual* therefore he is not infinitely good; and as I cannot be *sure* that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned."—DR. ADAMS. "What do you mean by damned?"—*J.* (passionately and loudly) "Sent to Hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly."— Dr. *A.* "I don't believe that doctrine."—*J.* "Hold, Sir; do you believe that some will be punished at all?"—Dr. *A.* "Being excluded from Heaven will be a punishment; yet there may be no great positive suffering."—*J.* "Well, Sir; but if you admit any degree of punishment, there is an end of your argument for infinite goodness simply considered; for infinite goodness would inflict no punishment whatever. There is not infinite goodness physically considered; morally there is."—BOSWELL. "But may not a man attain to such a degree of hope as not to be uneasy from the fear of death?"—*J.* "A man may have such a degree of hope as to keep him quiet. You see I am not quiet, from the vehemence with which I talk; but I do not despair."—MRS. ADAMS. "You seem, Sir,

to forget the merits of our Redeemer."—*J.* "Madam, I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said, that he will set some on his right hand and some on his left." He was in gloomy agitation, and said, "I'll have no more on't." If what has now been stated should be urged by the enemies of Christianity, as if its influence on the mind were not benignant, let it be remembered, that Johnson's temperament was melancholy, of which such direful apprehensions of futurity are often a common effect. When he approached nearer to his awful change, we have seen that his mind became tranquil, and he exhibited as much fortitude as becomes a thinking man in that situation.

From the subject of death they passed to discourse of life, whether it was upon the whole more happy or miserable. Johnson was decidedly for the balance of misery.

They then talked of the recent expulsion of six students from the University at Oxford, who were methodists, and would not desist from publickly praying and exhorting. Johnson said, "Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an University who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt but at an University? Sir, they were examined, and

found to be mighty ignorant fellows."—Boswell. "But was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?"—Johnson. "Sir, I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her out of a garden." This was an uncommonly happy illustration.

Of preaching, and of the great success which those called Methodists have, Johnson said, "It is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregations; a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases Reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and shew them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. When the Scotch clergy shall give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country."

He at another time repeated, that the established Clergy in general did not preach plain

enough; and that polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people, without any impression upon their hearts. Something might be necessary, he observed, to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy, and therefore he supposed that the new concomitants of methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect. The mind, like the body, he observed, delighted in change and novelty, and even in religion itself courted new appearances and modifications. Whatever might be thought of some methodist teachers, he said, he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man who travelled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelve times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labour.

Mr. Boswell once told him, that having objected to keeping company with a notorious infidel, a friend of his said to him, "I do not think that men who live laxly in the world, as you and I do, can with propriety assume such an authority. Dr. Johnson may, who is uniformly exemplary in his conduct. But it is not very consistent to shun an infidel to-day, and get drunk to morrow."—JOHNSON. "Nay, Sir, this is sad reasoning. Because a man cannot be

right in all things, is he to be right in nothing? Because a man sometimes gets drunk, is he therefore to steal? This doctrine would very soon bring a man to the gallows."

After all, however, Mr. Boswell seems to think it a difficult question how far sincere Christians should associate with the avowed enemies of religion; for, in the first place, almost every man's mind may be more or less 'corrupted by evil communications;' secondly, the world may very naturally suppose that they are not really in earnest in religion, who can easily bear its opponents; and thirdly, if the profane find themselves quite well received by the pious, one of the checks upon an open declaration of their infidelity, and one of the probable chances of obliging them seriously to reflect, which their being shunned would do, is removed.

A gentleman one day said, that in his opinion the character of an infidel was more detestable than that of a man notoriously guilty of an atrocious crime. Another differed from him, because we are surer of the odiousness of the one, than of the error of the other.—JOHNSON. "Sir, I agree with him; for the infidel would be guilty of any crime, if he were inclined to it."—A general Officer asked him, what he thought of the spirit of infidelity, which was so prevalent.—*J.* "Sir, this gloom of infidelity, I hope, is only a tran-

sient cloud passing through the hemisphere, which will soon be dissipated, and the sun break forth with his usual splendour."—"You think then (said the General) that they will change their principles like their clothes."—*J.* "Why, Sir, if they bestow no more thought on principles than on dress, it must be so." The General said, that "a great part of the fashionable infidelity was owing to a desire of shewing courage. Men who have no opportunity of shewing it as to things in this life, take death and futurity as objects on which to display it."—*J.* "That is mighty foolish affectation. Fear is one of the passions of human nature, of which it is impossible to divest it."

Mr. B. mentioned to Dr. Johnson, that David Hume's persisting in his infidelity when he was dying shocked him much.—JOHNSON. "Why should it shock you, Sir? Hume owned he had never read the New Testament with attention. Here then was a man who had been at no pains to inquire into the truth of religion, and had continually turned his mind the other way. It was not to be expected that the prospect of death would alter his way of thinking, unless God should send an angel to set him right."—Mr. B. said, he had reason to believe that the thought of annihilation gave Hume no pain.—*J.* "It was not so, Sir. He had a vanity in being thought

easy. It is more probable that he should assume an appearance of ease, than that so very improbable a thing should be, as a man not afraid of going (as, in spite of his delusive theory, he cannot be sure but he may go) into an unknown state, and not being uneasy at leaving all he knew. And you are to consider, that upon his own principle of annihilation he had no motive to speak the truth."

At another time Mr. B. expressed a wish to have the arguments for Christianity always in readiness, that his religious faith might be as firm and clear as any proposition whatever, so that he need not be under the least uneasiness when it should be attacked. Johnson said, "Sir, you cannot answer all objections. You have demonstration for a First Cause: you see he must be good as well as powerful, because there is nothing to make him otherwise, and goodness of itself is preferable. Yet you have against this, what is very certain, the unhappiness of human life. This, however, gives us reason to hope for a future state of compensation, that there may be a perfect system. But of that we were not sure till we had a positive revelation."—"I told him (adds Mr. B.) that his 'Rasselas' had often made me unhappy; for it represented the misery of human life so well, and so convincingly to a thinking mind, that if at any time the

impression wore off, and I felt myself easy, I began to suspect some delusion."

His profound adoration of the Great First Cause was such as to set him above that "Philosophy and vain deceit," with which men of narrower conceptions have been infected. He used strongly to maintain, that "what is right is not so from any natural fitness, but because God wills it to be right."

Of a gentleman who was mentioned, he said, "I have not met with any man for a long time who has given me such general displeasure. He is totally unfixed in his principles, and wants to puzzle other people."—Mr. B. said, his principles had been poisoned by a noted infidel writer; but that he was, nevertheless, a benevolent good man.—JOHNSON. "We can have no dependance upon that instinctive, that consitutional goodness which is not founded upon principle. I grant you that such a man may be a very amiable member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation, that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and as every man prefers virtue, when there is not some strong incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him; and I should certainly not trust him with young ladies, for *there* there is

always temptation. Hume and other sceptical innovators are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expence. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, Sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expence of truth, what fame might I have acquired. Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this, that after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum*; yet one of them must certainly be true."

Hume's argument against the belief of miracles being mentioned, 'that it is more probable the witnesses to the truth of them are mistaken, or speak falsely, than that the miracles should be true,' Johnson said, "Why, Sir, the great difficulty of proving miracles should make us very cautious in believing them. But let us consider; although God has made Nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to

think that he may suspend those laws, in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind. Now the Christian religion is a most beneficial system, as it gives us light and certainty where we were before in darkness and doubt. The miracles which prove it are attested by men who had no interest in deceiving us; but who, on the contrary, were told that they should suffer persecution, and did actually lay down their lives in confirmation of the truth of the facts which they asserted. Indeed, for some centuries the heathens did not pretend to deny the miracles; but said they were performed by the aid of evil spirits. This is a circumstance of great weight. Then, Sir, when we take the proofs derived from prophecies which have been so exactly fulfilled, we have most satisfactory evidence. Supposing a miracle possible, as to which, in my opinion, there can be no doubt, we have as strong evidence for the miracles in support of Christianity, as the nature of the thing admits."

Talking of those who denied the truth of Christianity, he said, "It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were now to deny that there is salt upon the table, you could not reduce him to an absurdity. Come, let us try this a little further. I deny that Canada is taken, and I can support my denial by pretty good ar-

guments. The French are a much more numerous people than we; and it is not likely that they would allow us to take it.—'But the ministry have assured us, in all the formality of the Gazette, that it is taken.'—Very true. But the ministry have put us to an enormous expence by the war in America, and it is their interest to persuade us that we have got something for our money.—'But the fact is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it.'—Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us. They don't want you should think the French have beat them, but that they have beat the French.—Now suppose you should go over and find that it is really taken, that would only satisfy yourself; for when you come home we will not believe you. We will say you have been bribed. Yet, Sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours. Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion?"

Mr. B. once acknowledged to Johnson, that though educated very strictly in the principles of religion, he had for some time been misled into a certain degree of infidelity; but that he was come now to a better way of thinking, and was fully satisfied of the truth of the Christian revelation, though he was not clear as to every point

considered to be orthodox. Being at all times a curious examiner of the human mind, and pleased with an undisguised display of what had passed in it, Johnson called to him with warmth, and said, "Give me your hand; I have taken a liking to you." He then began to descant upon the force of testimony, and the little we could know of final causes; so that the objections of, Why was it so? or, Why was it not so? ought not to disturb us: adding, that he himself had at one period been guilty of a temporary neglect of religion; but that it was not the result of argument, but mere absence of thought.

After having given credit to reports of his bigotry, the reader will be agreeable surprized at hearing Johnson expressing the following very liberal sentiment, which has the additional value of obviating an objection to our holy religion, founded upon the discordant tenets of Christians themselves: "For my part, Sir, I think all Christians, whether Papists or Protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences are trivial, and rather political than religious."

At another time he observed, "The Christian religion has very strong evidences. It, indeed, appears in some degree strange to reason; but in History we have undoubted facts, against which, in reasoning *à priori*, we have more arguments than we have for them; but then, testi-

mony has great weight, and casts the balance. I would recommend to every man whose faith is yet unsettled, Grotius, Dr. Pearson, and Dr. Clarke."

Again: "As to the Christian religion, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth, after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a very firm believer.'

Johnson said, "No honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity." Hume was mentioned.—JOHNSON. "No, Sir, Hume owned to a clergyman in the bishopric of Durham, that he had never read the New Testament with attention."

Talking of the Roman Catholic religion, Johnson said, "In the barbarous ages, Sir, priests and people were equally deceived; but afterwards there were gross corruptions introduced by the Clergy, such as indulgencies to priests to have concubines, and the worship of images, not, indeed, inculcated, but knowingly permitted."

Talking one day of Dr. Johnson's unwillingness to believe extraordinary things, Mr. B. ventured to say, "Sir, you come near Hume's argument against miracles, 'That it is more probable witnesses should lie, or be mistaken, than that they should happen.'"—JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, Hume, taking the proposition simply, is right. But the Christian revelation is not proved by the miracles alone, but as connected with prophesies, and with the doctrines in confirmation of which the miracles were wrought."

He repeated his observation, that the differences among Christians are really of no consequence. "For instance (said he), if a Protestant objects to a Papist, 'You worship images;' the Papist can answer, 'I do not insist on *your* doing it; you may be a very good Papist without it: I do it only as a help to my devotion." It was observed, that the great article of Christianity was the revelation of immortality. Johnson admitted it.

Mr. Boswell had hired a Bohemian as his servant while he remained in London, and being much pleased with him, asked Dr. Johnson whether his being a Roman Catholic ought to prevent his taking him to Scotland.—"Why no, Sir (said Johnson). If *he* has no objection, you can have none."—BOSWELL. "So, Sir, you are no great enemy to the Roman Catholic reli-

gion."—JOHNSON. "No, more, Sir, than to the Presbyterian religion."—*B.* "You are joking."—*J.* "No, Sir, I really think so. Nay, Sir, of the two I prefer the Popish."—*B.* "How so, Sir?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, the Presbyterians have no church, no apostolical ordination."—*B.* "And do you think that absolutely essential, Sir?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, as it was an apostolical institution, I think it is dangerous to be without it. And, Sir, the Presbyterians have no public worship: they have no form of prayer in which they know they are to join.—They go to hear a man pray, and are to judge whether they will join with him."—*B.* "But, Sir, their doctrine is the same with that of the Church of England. Their confession of faith, and the thirty-nine articles, contain the same points, even the doctrine of predestination."—*J.* "Why, yes, Sir; predestination was a part of the clamour of the times, so it is mentioned in our articles, but with as little positiveness as could be."—*B.* "Is it necessary, Sir, to believe all the thirty-nine articles?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, that is a question which has been much agitated. Some have thought it necessary that they should all be believed; others have considered them to be only articles of peace, that is to say, you are not to preach against them."—*B.* "It appears to me, Sir, that predestination, or what is equivalent to

it, cannot be avoided, if we hold an universal prescience in the Deity."—*J.* "Why, Sir, does not God every day see things going on without preventing them?"—*B.* "True, Sir; but if a thing be certainly foreseen, it must be fixed, and cannot happen otherwise; and if we apply this consideration to the human mind, there is no free will, nor do I see how prayer can be of any avail." Dr. Johnson mentioned Dr. Clarke, and Bishop Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity, and bid Mr. B. read South's Sermons on Prayer, but avoided the question which has excruciated philosophers and divines, beyond any other. "I did not (says Mr. B.) press it further, when I perceived that he was displeased, and shrunk from any abridgement of an attribute usually ascribed to the Divinity, however irreconcilable in its full extent with the grand system of moral government. His supposed orthodoxy here cramped the vigorous powers of his understanding. He was confined by a chain which early imagination and long habit made him think massy and strong, but which, had he ventured to try, he could at once have snapt asunder." Mr. B. proceeded: "What do you think, Sir, of Purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?" —*J.* "Why, Sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to de-

serve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore that God is graciously pleased to allow of a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, Sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this."—*B.* "But then, Sir, their masses for the dead?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, if it be once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for them, as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life."—*B.* "The idolatry of the Mass?"—*J.* "Sir, there is no idolatry in the Mass. They believe God to be there, and they adore him."—*B.* "The worship of Saints?"—*J.* "Sir, they do not worship Saints; they invoke them; they only ask their prayers. I am talking all this time of the *doctrines* of the Church of Rome. I grant you that in *practice*, Purgatory is made a lucrative imposition, and that the people do become idolatrous as they recommend themselves to the tutelary protection of particular saints. I think their giving the sacrament only in one kind is criminal, because it is contrary to the express institution of Christ, and I wonder how the Council of Trent admitted it."—*B.* "Confession?"—*J.* "Why, I don't know but that is a good thing. The Scripture says, 'Confess your faults one to another;' and the priests confess as well as the laity. Then it must

be considered, that their absolution is only upon repentance, and often upon penance also. You think your sins may be forgiven without penance, upon repentance alone." I thus ventured to mention all the common objections against the Roman Catholic Church, that I might hear so great a man upon them. What he said is here accurately recorded. But it is not improbable that if one had taken the other side, he might have reasoned differently."

It must however be mentioned, that he had a respect for "*the old religion*," as the mild Melancthon called that of the Roman Catholic Church, even while he was exerting himself for its reformation in some particulars. Sir William Scott tells, that he heard Johnson say, "A man who is converted from Protestantism to Popery, may be sincere: he parts with nothing: he is only superadding to what he already had. But a convert from Popery to Protestantism, gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as any thing that he retains; there is so much *laceration of mind* in such a conversion, that it can hardly be sincere and lasting." The truth of this reflection may be confirmed by many and eminent instances, some of which will occur to most readers.

Again, talking of the Roman Catholic religion, and how little difference there was in essential matters between ours and it, Johnson said,

"True, Sir: all denominations of Christians have really little difference in point of doctrine, though they may differ widely in external forms. There is a prodigious difference between the external form of one of our Presbyterian churches in Scotland, and a church in Italy; yet the doctrine taught is essentially the same."

The petition to Parliament for removing the subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles was mentioned. Johnson observed, "It was soon thrown out. Sir, they talk of not making boys at the University subscribe to what they do not understand: but they ought to consider, that our Universities were founded to bring up members for the Church of England, and we must not supply our enemies with arms from our arsenal. No, Sir, the meaning of subscribing is not that they fully understand all the articles, but that they will adhere to the Church of England. Now take it in this way, and suppose that they should only subscribe their adherence to the Church of England, there would be still the same difficulty; for still the young men would be subscribing to what they do not understand. For if you should ask them, what do you mean by the Church of England? Do you know in what it differs from the Presbyterian Church? from the Romish Church? from the Greek Church? from the Coptic Church? they could not tell you. So, Sir, it comes to the

same thing."—*B.* "But would it not be sufficient to subscribe the Bible?"—*J.* "Why, no, Sir; for all sects will subscribe the Bible, nay, the Mahometans will subscribe the Bible; for the Mahometans acknowledge Jesus Christ, as well as Moses; but maintain that God sent Mahomet as a still greater prophet than either."

Johnson's profound reverence for the Hierarchy made him expect from Bishops the highest degree of decorum; he was offended even at their going to taverns: "A bishop (said he) has nothing to do at a tippling house. It is not indeed immoral in him to go to a tavern; neither would it be immoral in him to whip a top in Grosvenor-square; but if he did, I hope the boys would fall upon him, and apply the whip to him. There are gradations in conduct; there is morality, decency, propriety. None of these should be violated by a bishop. A bishop should not go to a house where he may meet a young fellow leading out a wench."

He also disapproved of bishops going to routs, at least of their staying at them longer than their presence commanded respect. He mentioned a particular bishop. "Poh! (said Mrs. Thrale) the Bishop of ——— is never minded at a rout."—Boswell. "When a bishop places himself in a situation where he has no distinct character, and is of no consequence, he degrades the

dignity of his order."—JOHNSON. "Mr. Boswell, Madam, has said it as correctly as it could be."

Nor was it only in the dignitaries of the Church that Johnson required a particular decorum and delicacy of behaviour: he justly considered that the Clergy, as persons set apart for the sacred office of serving at the altar, and impressing the minds of men with the awful concerns of a future state, should be somewhat more serious than the generality of mankind, and have a suitable composure of manners. A due sense of the dignity of their profession, independent of higher motives, will ever prevent them from losing their distinction in an indiscriminate sociality; and did such as affect this know how much it lessens them in the eyes of those whom they think to please by it, they would feel themselves much mortified.

Johnson and his friend Beauclerk were once together in company with several clergymen, who thought that they should appear to advantage by assuming the lax jollity of *men of the world;* which, as it may be observed in similar cases, they carried to a noisy excess. Johnson, who they expected would be *entertained,* sat grave and silent for some time; at last, turning to Beauclerk, he said, by no means in a whisper, "This merriment of parsons is mightily offensive."

Even the dress of a clergyman should be in

character, and nothing can be more despicable than conceited attempts at avoiding the appearance of the clerical order; attempts, which are as ineffectual as they are pitiful. Dr. Porteus, now Bishop of London, in his excellent charge when presiding over the diocese of Chester, justly animadverts upon this subject; and observes of a reverend fop, that he "can be but half a beau."

Addison, in "The Spectator," has given a fine portrait of a clergyman, who is supposed to be a member of his Club; and Johnson has exhibited a model, in the character of Mr. Mudge, which has escaped the collectors of his works, but which he owned to Mr. Boswell, and which indeed he shewed to Sir Joshua Reynolds at the time when it was written. It bears the genuine marks of Johnson's best manner, and is as follows:

"The Reverend Mr. Zachariah Mudge, Prebendary of Exeter, and Vicar of St. Andrew's in Plymouth; a man equally eminent for his virtues and abilities, and at once beloved as a companion, and reverenced as a pastor. He had that general curiosity to which no kind of knowledge is indifferent or superfluous; and that general benevolence by which no order of men is hated or despised.

"His principles both of thought and action

were great and comprehensive. By a solicitous examination of objections, and judicious comparison of opposite arguments, he attained what enquiry never gives but to industry and perspicuity, a firm and unshaken settlement of conviction. But his firmness was without asperity; for knowing with how much difficulty truth was sometimes found, he did not wonder that many missed it.

" The general course of his life was determined by his profession: he studied the sacred volumes in the original languages; with what diligence and success, his 'Notes upon the Psalms' give sufficient evidence. He once endeavoured to add the knowledge of Arabic to that of Hebrew; but finding his thoughts too much diverted from other studies, after some time desisted from his purpose.

" His discharge of parochial duties was exemplary. How his Sermons were composed, may be learned from the excellent volume which he has given to the public; but how they were delivered can be known only to those who heard them; for as he appeared in the pulpit, words will not easily describe him. His delivery, though unconstrained, was not negligent, and though forcible, was not turbulent; disdaining anxious nicety of emphasis, and laboured artifice of action, it captivated the hearer by its natural

dignity, it roused the sluggish, and fixed the volatile, and detained the mind upon the subject, without directing it to the speaker.

"The grandeur and solemnity of the preacher did not intrude upon his general behaviour; at the table of his friends he was a companion communicative and attentive, of unaffected manners, of manly cheerfulness, willing to please, and easy to be pleased. His acquaintance was universally solicited, and his presence obstructed no enjoyment which religion did not forbid. Though studious he was popular; though argumentative he was modest; though inflexible he was candid; and though metaphysical yet orthodox."

JOHNSON, speaking of religious seclusion, said, "If convents should be allowed at all, they should only be retreats for persons unable to serve the public, or who have served it. It is our first duty to serve Society, and after we have done that we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls. A youthful passion for abstracted devotion should not be encouraged. It is as unreasonable for a man to go into a Carthusian convent for fear of being immoral, as for a man to cut off his hands for fear he should steal. There is indeed great resolution in the immediate act of dismembering himself; but when that is once done, he has no longer any merit;

for though it is out of his power to steal, yet he may all his life be a thief in his heart. So when a man has once become a Carthusian, he is obliged to continue so, whether he chooses it or not. Their silence too is absurd. We read in the Gospel of the Apostles being sent to preach, but not to hold their tongues. All severity that does not tend to increase good, or prevent evil, is idle. I said to the Lady Abbess of a convent, 'Madam, you are here, not for the love of virtue, but the fear of vice.' She said, she should remember this as long as she lived." It was, perhaps, hard to give her this view of her situation, when she could not help it; and, indeed, we may wonder at the whole of what he said on this subject, because both in his "Rambler" and "Idler," he treats religious austerities with much solemnity of respect.

To a young clergyman in the country, Dr. Johnson gave the following valuable advice, which may be not unuseful, we think, to Divines in general:

"You are afraid of falling into some improprieties in the daily service by reading to an audience that requires no exactness. Your fear, I hope, secures you from danger. They who contract absurd habits are such as have no fear. It is impossible to do the same thing very often, without some peculiarity of manner; but that

manner may be good or bad, and a little care will at least preserve it from being bad: to make it good, there must, I think, be something of natural or casual felicity, which cannot be taught.

" Your present method of making your sermons seems very judicious. Few frequent preachers can be supposed to have sermons more their own than yours will be. Take care to register, some where or other, the authors from whom your several discourses are borrowed; and do not imagine that you shall always remember, even what, perhaps, you now think it impossible to forget.

" My advice, however, is, that you attempt, from time to time, an original sermon; and in the labour of composition, do not burthen your mind with too much at once; do not exact from yourself at one effort of excogitation, propriety of thought, and elegance of expression. Invent first, and then embellish. The production of something, where nothing was before, is an act of greater energy, than the expansion or decoration of the thing produced. Set down diligently your thoughts as they rise in the first words that occur; and, when you have matter, you will easily give it form: nor, perhaps, will this method be always necessary; for by habit, your thoughts and diction will flow together.

" The composition of sermons is not very dif-

ficult: the divisions not only help the memory of the hearer, but direct the judgment of the writer; they supply sources of invention, and keep every part in its proper place.

"What I like least is your account of manners in your parish; from which I find that it has been long neglected by the parson. The Dean of Carlisle, when he was a little rector in Northamptonshire, told me, that it might be discerned whether or no there was a clergyman resident in a parish, by the civil or savage manner of a people. Such a congregation as yours stands in need of much reformation, and I would not have you think it impossible to reform them. A very savage parish was civilized by a decayed gentlewoman, who came among them to teach a petty school. My learned friend Dr. Wheeler of Oxford, when he was a young man, had the care of a neighbouring parish for fifteen pounds a year, which he was never paid; but he counted it a convenience that it compelled him to make a sermon weekly. One woman he could not bring to the communion; and when he reproved or exhorted her, she only answered, that she was no scholar. He was advised to set some good woman or man of the parish, a little wiser than herself, to talk to her in a language level to her mind.—Such honest, I may call them holy artifices, must be practised by every clergyman; for

all means must be tried by which souls may be saved. Talk to your people, however, as much as you can; and you will find, that the more frequently you converse with them upon religious subjects, the more willingly they will attend, and the more submissively they will learn. A clergyman's diligence always makes him venerable."

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 atchievements. 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 fanatick 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 with 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 after-

wards 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 foreigner, 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 pub-

lishes 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, (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, that 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 answer-

ed, "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 Shakspeare, 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 dispro-

portion 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 gentleman; 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 Shakspeare 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 Shakspeare. It may be replied to what is said by one of the remarkers on Shakspeare, 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 follow-

ing 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 magick powers, with honours due
" Exalt;—but be thyself what they record."

The subject of quotation being once introduced, 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. Shakspeare 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 eccentrick 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

* The Doctor, whose memory was wonderfully retentive, remembered the first four lines of this curious production to be,

" When first I drew my vital breath,
" A little minikin I came upon earth;
" And then I came from a dark abode,
" Into this gay and gaudy world."

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 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, & omnibus aliis antecellere.*

On the licence 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 preeminence, he observed, was the highest superiority; and every nation derived their highest reputation from the splendor 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 surprized 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 rather 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 migration 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 in-

terests 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 intitled, ' 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 surprized 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 written monuments behind them.

" Every man's opinions (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 man-

ner, 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 were 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, Arabick, 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 show 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 Oxford, 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, history 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 fe-

male 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 business 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 recommended 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 at-

tainment 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 saying 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 departed, 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 practical. He grasps more sense than he can hold; he takes more corn that 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 un-

common 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 considera-

tion, 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 pro-

pagated, 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 significant 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 you should 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 canister 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 Beggar's 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 man-

ners 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. Indeed he read 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 a 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 alleging 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 plough-share." 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-bespangled 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 money 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 in-

deed was; but Puffendorf was not; Burlamaqui 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 alleged 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 me-

moirs 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 Lyttleton's 'Dialogues of the Dead' came out, one of which is between Apicius, an ancient epicure, 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 remembered, 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 in-

tentionally 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 pathetick 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 chaplain 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 intro-

ducing 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 serges 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 *."

* In the Monthly Review for May 1792, there is a correction of the above passage. "This account (says the Critic) is very inaccurate. The following statement of facts we know to be true, in every material circumstance:—Shiels was the principal collector and digester of the materials for the work; but as he was

" I once introduced (says Mr. B.) Aristotle's doctrine in his 'Art of Poetry,' of καθαρσις των

very raw in authorship, and an indifferent writer in prose, and his language full of Scoticisms, Cibber, who was a clever, lively fellow, and then soliciting employment among the booksellers, was engaged to correct the style and diction of the whole work, then intended to make only four volumes, with power to alter, expunge, or add, as he liked. He was also to supply notes occasionally, especially concerning those dramatic poets with whom he had been chiefly conversant. He also engaged to write several of the Lives; which (as we are told) he accordingly performed. He was farther useful in striking out the Jacobitical and Tory sentiments which Shiels had industriously interspersed wherever he could bring them in; and, as the success of the work appeared, after all, very doubtful, he was content with twenty-one pounds for his labour, besides a few sets of the books to disperse among his friends. Shiels had nearly seventy pounds, beside the advantage of many of the best lives in the work being communicated by friends to the undertaking; and for which Mr. Shiels had the same consideration as for the rest, being paid by the sheet for the whole. He was, however, so angry with his Whiggish supervisor (THE. like his father, being a violent stickler for the political principles which prevailed in the reign of George the Second), for so unmercifully mutilating his copy, and scouting his politics, that he wrote Cibber a challenge; but was prevented from sending it by the publisher, who fairly laughed him out of his fury. The proprietors, too, were discontented in the end, on account of Mr. Cibber's unexpected industry; for his corrections and alterations in the proof-sheets were so numerous and considerable, that the printer made for them a grievous addition to his bill; and, in fine, all parties were dissatisfied. On the whole, the work was productive of no profit to the undertakers, who had agreed, in case of success, to make Cibber a present of some addition to the twenty guineas which he had received, and for which his receipt is now in the bookseller's hands. We are far-

παθημάτων, 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

ther assured, that he actually obtained an additional sum. He soon after (in the year 1758) unfortunately embarked for Dublin, on an engagement for one of the theatres there: but the ship was cast away, and every person on board perished. There were about sixty passengers, among whom was the Earl of Drogheda, with many other persons of consequence and property.

" As to the alledged design of making the compilement pass for the work of old Mr. Cibber, the charges seem to have been founded on a somewhat uncharitable construction. We are assured that the thought was not harboured by some of the proprietors, who are still living; and we hope that it did not occur to the first designer of the work, who was also the printer of it, and who bore a respectable character.

" We have been induced to enter thus circumstantially into the foregoing detail of facts relating to the lives of the Poets, compiled by Messrs. Cibber and Shiels, from a sincere regard to that sacred principle of Truth, to which Dr. Johnson so rigidly adhered, according to the best of his knowledge; and which, we believe, *no consideration* would have prevailed on him to violate. In regard to the matter, which we now dismiss, he had, no doubt, been misled by partial and wrong information. Shiels was the doctor's amanuensis; he had quarrelled with Cibber; it is natural to suppose that he told his story in his own way; and it is certain that he was not 'a very sturdy moralist.'"

This explanation appears very satisfactory. It is, however, to be observed, that the story told by Johnson does not rest solely upon this record of his conversation; for he himself has published it in his Life of Hammond, where he says, "The manuscript of Shiels is now in my possession." Very probably he had trusted to Shiels's word, and never looked at it so as to compare it with 'The Lives of the Poets,' as published under Mr. Cibber's name.

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 imperfection. 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."

Sir Joshua Reynolds mentioned Mr. Cumberland's Odes, which were then just published. JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, they would have been thought as good as Odes commonly are, if Cumberland had not put his name to them; but a name immediately draws censure, unless it be a name that bears down every thing before it. Nay Cumberland has made his Odes subsidiary to the fame of another man; they might have run well enough by themselves, but he has not only loaded them with a name, but has made them carry double."

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."

Speaking of the ancient poets, he observed, "Theocritus is not deserving of very high respect as a writer; as to the pastoral part, Virgil is very evidently superior. He wrote when

there had been a larger influx of knowledge into the world than when Theocritus lived. Theocritus does not abound in description, though living in a beautiful country; the manners painted are coarse and gross. Virgil has much more description, more sentiment, more of nature, and more of art. Some of the most excellent parts of Theocritus are where Castor and Pollux, going with the other Argonauts, land on the Bebrycian coast, and there fall into a dispute with Amycus, the king of that country; which is as well conducted as Euripides could have done it; and the battle is well related. Afterwards they carry off a woman, whose two brothers come to recover her, and expostulate with Castor and Pollux on their injustice; but they pay no regard to the brothers, and a battle ensues, where Castor and his brother are triumphant. Theocritus seems not to have seen that the brothers have the advantage in their argument over his Argonaut heroes.—' The Sicilian Gossips' is a piece of merit. Callimachus is a writer of little excellence. The chief thing to be learned from him is his account of Rites and Mythology, which though desirable to be known for the sake of understanding other parts of ancient authors, is the least pleasing or valuable part of their writings."

" Mattaire's account of the Stephani is a heavy book. He seems to have been a puzzle-headed

man, with a large share of scholarship, but with little geometry or logic in his head, without method, and possessed of little genius. He wrote Latin verses from time to time, and published a set in his old age which he called 'Senilia;' in which he shews so little learning or taste in writing, as to make *Carteret* a dactyl. In matters of genealogy it is necessary to give the bare names as they are; but in poetry, and in prose of any elegance in the writing, they require to have inflection given to them. His book of the Dialects is a sad heap of confusion; the only way to write on them is to tabulate them with Notes, added at the bottom of the page, and references."

Huggins, the translator of Ariosto, and Mr. Thomas Warton, in the early part of his literary life, had a dispute concerning that poet, of whom Mr. Warton, in his 'Observations on Spenser's Fairy Queen,' gave some account, which Huggins attempted to answer with violence, and said, "I will *militate* no longer against his *nescience*." Huggins was master of the subject, but wanted expression. Mr. Warton's knowledge of it was then imperfect, but his manner lively and elegant. Johnson said, "It appears to me, that Huggins has ball without powder, and Warton powder without ball."

Johnson used at one time to go occasionally to

the Green-room of Drury-lane Theatre, where he was much regarded by the players, and was very easy and facetious with them. He had a very high opinion of Mrs. Clive's comic powers, and conversed more with her than with any of them. He said, "Clive, Sir, is a good thing to sit by, she always understands what you say;" and she said of him, "I love to sit by Dr. Johnson, he always entertains me." One night, when 'The Recruiting Officer' was acted, he said to Mr. Holland, who had been expressing an apprehension that Dr. Johnson would disdain the works of Farquhar; "No, Sir, I think Farquhar a man whose writings have considerable merit."

Talking of the farce of 'High Life Below Stairs,' he said, "Here is a farce, which is really very diverting when you see it acted; and yet one may read it, and not know that one has been reading any thing at all."

Johnson, who had done liberal justice to Warburton in his edition of Shakspeare, which was published during the life of that powerful writer, with still greater liberality took an opportunity, in the Life of Pope, of paying the tribute due to him, when he was no longer in "high place," but numbered with the dead.

Speaking of Boetius, who was the favourite writer of the middle ages, he said, it was very

surprising, that upon such a subject, and in such a situation, he should be *magis philosophus quàm Christianus.*

"Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' (said Johnson) is a valuable work. It is, perhaps, overloaded with quotation. But there is great spirit and great power in what Burton says, when he writes from his own mind." He observed, that it was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise.

Books of Travels having been mentioned, Johnson praised Pennant very highly. Dr. Percy (who was present), knowing himself to be the heir male of the ancient Percies, and having the warmest attachment to the noble House of Northumberland, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised, who had spoken disrespectfully of Alnwick-Castle, and the Duke's pleasure-grounds, especially as he thonght meanly of his Travels. He therefore opposed Johnson eagerly.—JOHNSON. "Pennant, in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended: he has made you very angry."—PERCY. "He has said the garden is *trim*, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks."—*J.* "According to your own account, Sir, Pennant is right. It is trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The

extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast-beef, and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees."—PERCY. "He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late."—*J.* "That, Sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history: that is *civil* history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak, is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow, is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the Park or at Islington."—*P.* "Pennant does not describe well; a carrier who goes along the side of Lochlomond would describe it better."—*J.* "I think he describes very well."—*P.* "I travelled after him."—*J.* "And *I* travelled after him."—*P.* "But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do." The company wondered at Dr. Percy's venturing thus. Dr. Johnson said nothing at the time; but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr. Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant.—*J.* (pointedly) "This is the resentment of a nar-

row mind, because he did not find every thing in Northumberland." — *P.* (feeling the stroke) "Sir, you may be as rude as you please."—*J.* "Hold, Sir! Don't talk of rudeness; remember, Sir, you told me (puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent) I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please."—*P.* "Upon my honour, Sir, I did not mean to be uncivil."—*J.* "I cannot say so, Sir; I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil." Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and, taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation immediately took place.—*J.* "My dear Sir, I am willing you shall *hang* Pennant."—*P.* (resuming the former subject) "Pennant complains that the helmet is not hung out to invite to the hall of hospitality. Now I never heard that it was the custom to hang out a *helmet*.—*J.* "Hang him up, hang him up."—Boswell. (humouring the joke) "Hang out his skull instead of a helmet, and you may drink ale out of it in your hall of Odin, as he is your enemy; that will be truly ancient. *There* will be 'Northern Antiquities.'" —*J.* "He's a *Whig*, Sir; a *sad dog*, (smiling at his own violent expressions, merely for *political* difference of opinion). But he's the best tra-

veller I ever read; he observes more things than any one else does."

He gave much praise to his friend Dr. Burney's elegant and entertaining Travels, and told Mr. Seward, that he had them in his eye, when writing his 'Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland.'

Dr. Dodd's poem entitled, 'Thoughts in a Prison,' appearing an extraordinary effort by a man who was in Newgate for a capital crime, Mr. Boswell was desirous to hear Johnson's opinion of it. To my surprize (says Mr. B.) he told me he had not read a line of it. I took up the book, and read a passage to him.—JOHNSON. "Pretty well, if you are previously disposed to like them." I read another passage, with which he was better pleased. He then took the book into his own hands, and having looked at the prayer at the end of it, he said, "What *evidence* is there that this was composed the night before he suffered? *I* do not believe it." He then read aloud where he prays for the King, &c. and observed, "Sir, do you think that a man the night before he is to be hanged cares for the succession of a royal family? Though he *may* have composed this prayer then. A man who has been canting all his life may cant to the last; and yet a man who has been refused a pardon after so

much petitioning would hardly be praying thus fervently for the King."

Mr. Boswell one day asked, "Was not Dr. John Campbell a very inaccurate man in his narrative, Sir? He once told me, that he drank thirteen bottles of port at a sitting."—JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, I do not know that Campbell ever lied with pen and ink; but you could not entirely depend on any thing he told you in conversation, if there was fact mixed with it. However, I loved Campbell: he was a solid orthodox man; he had a reverence for religion. Though defective in practice, he was religious in principle; and he did nothing grossly wrong that I have heard."

Mr. Boswell had lent Johnson, 'An Account of Scotland, in 1702,' written by a man of various enquiry, an English Chaplain to a regiment stationed there.—"It is sad stuff, Sir (said the Doctor), miserably written, as books in general then were. There is now an elegance of style universally diffused. No man now writes so ill as Martin's Account of the Hebrides is written. A man could not write so ill, if he should try. Set a merchant's clerk now to write, and he'll do better."

"Thomas à' Kempis (he observed) must be a good book, as the world has opened its arms to receive it. It is said to have been printed, in

one language or other, as many times as there have been months since it first came out. I always was struck with this sentence in it:—' Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.' "

He said, the critics had done too much honour to Sir Richard Blackmore, by writing so much against him. In his ' Creation' he had been helped by various wits, a line by Phillips and a line by Tickell; so that by their aid, and that of others, the poem had been made out.

" Lord Chesterfield's ' Letters to his Son' (he thought) might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put into the hands of every young gentleman. An elegant manner and easiness of behaviour are acquired gradually and imperceptibly. No man can say ' I'll be genteel.' There are ten genteel women for one genteel man, because they are more restrained. A man without some degree of restraint is insufferable: but we are all less restrained than women. Were a woman sitting in company to put out her legs before her as most men do, we should be tempted to kick them in."

" I read (said he) ' Sharpe's Letters on Italy' over again when I was at Bath. There is a great deal of matter in them."

Johnson usually spoke with contempt of Col-

ley Cibber. "It is wonderful (said he) that a man who for forty years had lived with the great and the witty should have acquired so ill the talents of conversation: and he had but half to furnish; for one half of what he said was oaths." He, however, allowed considerable merit to some of his comedies, and said, there was no reason to believe that the 'Careless Husband' was not written by himself.—Mr. Davies said, he was the first dramatic writer who introduced genteel ladies upon the stage. Johnson refuted his observation by instancing several such characters in comedies before his time. DAVIES. (trying to defend himself from a charge of ignorance) "I mean genteel moral characters."—"I think (said Mr. Hicky), gentility and morality are inseparable."—BOSWELL. "By no means, Sir. The genteelest characters are often the most immoral. Does not Lord Chesterfield give precepts for uniting wickedness and the graces? A man indeed is not genteel when he gets drunk; but most vices may be committed very genteelly: a man may debauch his friend's wife genteelly; he may cheat at cards genteelly."—HICKY. "I do not think *that* is genteel."—*B.* "Sir, it may not be like a gentleman; but it may be genteel."—*J.* "You are meaning two different things. One means exterior grace; the other honour. It is

certain that a man may be very immoral with exterior grace. Lovelace, in 'Clarissa,' is a very genteel and a very wicked character. Tom Hervey, who died t'other day, though a vicious man, was one of the genteelest men that ever lived."—*B.* "Cibber was a man of observation?"—*J.* "I think not."—*B.* "You will allow his 'Apology' to be well done."—*J.* "Very well done, to be sure, Sir.—That book is a striking proof of the justice of Pope's remark:

> "Each might his several province well command,
> "Would all but stoop to what they understand."

—*B.* "And his plays are good."—*J.* "Yes; but that was his trade; *l'esprit du corps;* he had been all his life among players and play-writers. I wonder that he had so little to say in conversation, for he had kept the best company, and learnt all that can be got by the ear. He abused Pindar to me, and then shewed me an Ode of his own, with an absurd couplet, making a linnet soar on an eagle's wings. I told him that when the ancients made a simile, they always made it like something real."

Of old Sheridan he remarked, that he neither wanted parts nor literature; but that his vanity and Quixotism obscured his merits. He said, foppery was never cured; it was the bad stamina

of the mind, which, like those of the body, were never rectified: once a coxcomb, and always a coxcomb.

When the Rev. Mr. Horne (now Horne Tooke, Esq.) published his 'Letter to Mr. Dunning on the English Particle,' Johnson read it; and, though not treated in it with sufficient respect, he had candour enough to say to Mr. Seward, "Were I to make a new edition of my Dictionary, I would adopt several of Mr. Horne's etymologies; I hope they did not put the dog into the pillory for his libels, he has too much literature for that."

He said, that Bacon was a favourite author with him; but he had never read his works till he was compiling the English Dictionary, in which, he said, we might see Bacon very often quoted. He observed, that a Dictionary of the English language might be compiled from Bacon's writings alone, and that he had once an intention of giving an edition of Bacon, at least of his English works, and writing the Life of that great man. Had he executed this intention, there can be no doubt that he would have done it in a most masterly manner.

Of his fellow-collegian, the celebrated Mr George Whitefield, he said "Whitefield never drew so much attention as a mountebank does; he did not draw attention by doing better than

others, but by doing what was strange. Were Astley to preach a sermon standing upon his head on a horse's back, he would collect a multitude to hear him; but no wise man would say he had made a better sermon for that. I never treated Whitefield's ministry with contempt; I believe he did good. He had devoted himself to the lower classes of mankind, and among them he was of use; but when familiarity and noise claim the praise due to knowledge, art, and elegance, we must beat down such pretensions." He would not allow much merit to Whitefield's oratory. "His popularity, Sir (said he), is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit, or were he to preach from a tree."

He said, "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do."

At another time he said, "I have read Dr. Blair's sermon on Devotion, from the text '*Cornelius, a devout man.*' His doctrine is the best limited, the best expressed; there is the most warmth without fanaticism, the most rational transport. There is one part of it which I disapprove, and I'd have him correct it; which is, that

' he who does not feel joy in religion is far from the kingdom of Heaven!' There are many good men whose fear of God predominates over their love. It may discourage. It was rashly said. A noble sermon it is indeed. I wish Blair would come over to the church of England."

He talked of Lord Lyttelton's extreme anxiety as an author, observing, that " he was thirty years in preparing his History, and that he employed a man to point it for him; as if (laughing) another man could point his sense better than himself." Mr. Murphy said, he understood his history was kept back several years for fear of Smollet. JOHNSON. " This seems strange to Murphy and me, who never felt that anxiety, but sent what we wrote to the press, and let it take its chance."—MRS. THRALE. " The time has been, Sir, when you felt it."—*J.* " Why really, Madam, I do not recollect a time when that was the case."

Lord Lyttelton's Dialogues he deemed a nugatory performance. " That man (said he) sat down to write a book, to tell the world what the world had all his life been telling him."

He attacked Lord Monboddo's strange speculation on the primitive state of human nature; observing, " Sir, it is all conjecture about a thing useless, even were it known to be true. Knowledge of all kinds is good: conjecture as to

things useful is good; but conjecture as to what it would be useless to know, such as whether men went upon all four, is very idle."

The conversation turning upon Mr. David Hume's style, Johnson said, "Why, Sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French. Now the French structure and the English structure may, in the nature of things, be equally good; but if you allow that the English language is established, he is wrong. My name might originally have been Nicholson, as well as Johnson; but were you to call me Nicholson now, you would call me very absurdly."

Dr. Adams had distinguished himself by an able answer to David Hume's 'Essay on Miracles.' He told Mr. Boswell he had once dined in company with Hume in London; that Hume shook hands with him, and said, "You have treated me much better than I deserve;" and that they exchanged visits. Mr. B. objected to treating an infidel writer with smooth civility. "Where there is a controversy concerning a passage in a classic author, or concerning a question in antiquities, or any other subject in which human happiness is not deeply interested, (Mr. B. argues), a man may treat his antagonist with politeness and even respect; but where the controversy is concerning the truth of religion,

it is of such vast importance to him who maintains it to obtain the victory, that the person of an opponent ought not to be spared. If a man firmly believes that religion is an invaluable treasure, he will consider a writer who endeavours to deprive mankind of it as a *robber*; he will look upon him as *odious*, though the infidel might think himself in the right. A robber who reasons as the gang do in the 'Beggar's Opera,' who call themselves *practical* philosophers, and may have as much sincerity as pernicious *speculative* philosophers, is not the less an object of just indignation. An abandoned profligate may think that it is not wrong to debauch my wife; but shall I therefore not detest him? and if I catch him in making an attempt, shall I treat him with politeness? No, I will kick him down stairs, or run him through the body; that is, if I really love my wife, or have a true rational notion of honour. An infidel then should not be treated handsomely by a Christian, merely because he endeavours to rob with ingenuity. I do declare, however, that I am exceedingly unwilling to be provoked to anger; and could I be persuaded that truth would not suffer from a cool moderation in its defenders, I should wish to preserve good humour, at least, in every controversy; nor indeed do I see why a man should lose his temper while he does all he can to refute

an opponent. I think ridicule may be fairly used against an infidel; for instance, if he be an ugly fellow, and yet absurdly vain of his person, we may contrast his appearance with Cicero's beautiful image of Virtue, could she be seen. Johnson coincided with me and said, 'When a man voluntarily engages in an important controversy, he is to do all he can to lessen his antagonist, because authority from personal respect has much weight with most people, and often more than reasoning. If my antagonist writes bad language, though that may not be essential to the question, I will attack him for his bad language.'"—ADAMS. "You would not jostle a chimney-sweeper."—JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir, if it were necessary to jostle him *down*."

He censured Lord Kaimes's 'Sketches of the History of Man,' for misrepresenting Clarendon's account of the appearance of Sir George Villiers's ghost, as if Clarendon were weakly credulous; when the truth is, that Clarendon only says, that the story was upon a better foundation of credit than usually such discourses are founded upon; nay speaks thus of the person who was reported to have seen the vision, "the poor man, *if he had been at all waking;*" which Lord Kaimes has omitted. He added, "in this book it is maintained that virtue is natural to man, and that if we would but consult our own hearts

we should be virtuous. Now after consulting our own hearts all we can, and with all the helps we have, we find how few of us are virtuous. This is saying a thing which all mankind know not to be true."

"The Elements of Criticism,' (said he), is a pretty essay, and deserves to be held in some estimation, though much of it is chimerical." He proceeded: "The Scotchman has taken the right method in his 'Elements of Criticism.' I do not mean that he has taught us any thing; but he has told us old things in a new way."—MURPHY. "He seems to have read a great deal of French criticism, and wants to make it his own; as if he had been for years anatomising the heart of man, and peeping into every cranny of it."—GOLDSMITH. "It is easier to write that book, than to read it."—JOHNSON. "We have an example of true criticism in Burke's 'Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful;' and if I recollect there is also Du Bos; and Bouhours, who shews all beauty to depend on truth. There is no great merit in telling how many plays have ghosts in them, and how this ghost is better than that. You must shew how terror is impressed on the human heart.—In the description of night in Macbeth, the beetle and the bat detract from the general idea of darkness,—inspissated gloom."

Johnson told Mr. B. that he was glad that he

had by General Oglethorpe's means become acquainted with Dr. Shebbeare. Indeed (says Mr. B.) that gentleman, whatever objections were made to him, had knowledge and abilities much above the class of ordinary writers, and deserves to be remembered as a respectable name in literature, were it only for his admirable 'Letters on the English Nation,' under the name of 'Battista Angeloni, a Jesuit.'

Johnson and Shebbeare were frequently named together, as having in former reigns had no predilection for the family of Hanover. The author of the celebrated 'Heroick Epistle to Sir William Chambers' introduces them in one line, in a list of those who "tasted the sweets of his present Majesty's reign." Such was Johnson's candid relish of the merit of that satire, that he allowed Dr. Goldsmith, as he told Mr. Boswell, to read it to him from beginning to end, and did not refuse his praise to its execution.

Mr. Boswell mentioned the very liberal payment which had been received for reviewing; and, as evidence of this, that it had been proved in a trial, that Dr. Shebbeare had received six guineas a sheet for that kind of literary labour. —JOHNSON. "Sir, he might get six guineas for a particular sheet, but not *communibus sheetibus*." —BOSWELL. "Pray, Sir, by a sheet of review is it meant that it shall be all of the writer's own

composition? or are extracts, made from the book reviewed, deducted?"—*J.* "No, Sir; it is a sheet, no matter of what."—*B.* "I think that is not reasonable."—*J.* "Yes, Sir, it is. A man will more easily write a sheet all his own, than read an octavo volume to get extracts." To one of Johnson's wonderful fertility of mind, perhaps writing was really easier than reading and extracting; but with ordinary men the case is very different. A great deal, indeed, will depend upon the care and judgment with which the extracts are made. We can (observes Mr. B.) suppose the operation to be tedious and difficult; but in many instances we must observe crude morsels cut out of books as if at random; and when a large extract is made from one place, it surely may be done with very little trouble. One might, I must acknowledge however, be led from the practice of Reviewers to suppose that they take a pleasure in original writing; for we often find, that instead of giving an accurate account of what has been done by the author whose work they are reviewing, which is surely the proper business of a literary journal, they produce some plausible and ingenious conceits of their own upon the topicks which have been discussed.

Again talking of the Reviews, Johnson said, "I think them very impartial: I do not know

an instance of partiality."—" The Monthly Reviewers (said he) are not Deists; but they are Christians with as little christianity as may be; and are for pulling down all establishments. The Critical Reviewers are for supporting the constitution both in Church and State. The Critical Reviewers, I believe, often review without reading the books through; but lay hold of a topick, and write chiefly from their own minds. The Monthly Reviewers are duller men, and are glad to read the books through." Sir Joshua Reynolds said, that he wondered to find so much good writing employed in them, when the authors were to remain unknown, and so could not have the motive of fame.—JOHNSON. " Nay, Sir, those who write in them write well in order to be paid well."

He praised Signior Baretti. " His account of Italy (said he) is a very entertaining book; and, Sir, I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind: he has not, indeed, many hooks; but with what hooks he has he grapples very forcibly."

Mr. B. censured a ludicrous fantastick dialogue between two coach-horses, and other such stuff, which Baretti had lately published. Johnson joined and said, " Nothing odd will do long. 'Tristram Shandy' did not last."—Mr. B. ex-

pressed a desire to be acquainted with a lady who had been much talked of, and universally celebrated for extraordinary address and insinuation. Johnson said, " Never believe extraordinary characters which you hear of people. Depend upon it, Sir, they are exaggerated. You do not see one man shoot a great deal higher than another." — Mr. Burke was mentioned. " Yes (said Johnson): Burke *is* an extraordinary man; his stream of mind is perpetual."—The Doctor's high estimation of the talents of this gentleman was uniform from their early acquaintance. When Mr. Burke was first elected a member of Parliament, and Sir John Hawkins expressed a wonder at his attaining a seat, Johnson said, " Now we who know Mr. Burke know that he will be one of the first men in this country." And once when Johnson was ill, and unable to exert himself as much as usual without fatigue, Mr. Burke having been mentioned, he said, " That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now it would kill me." So much was he accustomed to consider conversation as a contest, and such was his notion of Burke as an opponent.

He used frequently to observe, that men might be very eminent in a profession without our perceiving any particular power of mind in them in conversation. " It seems strange (said he) that

a man should see so far to the right, who sees so short a way to the left. Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you."

Talking of the wonderful concealment of the author of the letters signed *Junius*, he said, "I should have believed Burke to be Junius, because I know no man but Burke who is capable of writing these letters; but Burke spontaneously denied it to me. The case would have been different had I asked him if he was the author; a man so questioned, as to an anonymous publication, may think he has a right to deny it *."

* In a work lately published, the following account is given of this writer; who appears to have obtained much more celebrity than the temporary nature of his writings and his virulent acrimony entitled him to.

"The bold assertions and keen invectives with which the papers of *Junius* abounded throughout contributed greatly to their popularity and fame. They were occasionally attributed to Lord *Sackville*, to the Right Hon. *W. G. Hamilton*, to the Right Hon. *Edmund Burke*, to *John Dunning*, Esq. and many others; but without the least ground or foundation in truth. It is to be observed of them, that all parties are attacked in them, except the Grenvilles. During their original publication, the writer lived in Norfolk-street, in the Strand, not in affluent circumstances; but he did not write for pecuniary aid. He was a native of Ireland, of an honourable family, and of Trinity College, Dublin. He was at one time intended for the army, and at another for the bar; but private circumstances prevented either taking place. Perhaps

However Johnson may have casually talked of Young the poet, yet when he sat, as "an ardent judge zealous to his trust, giving sentence" upon the excellent works of Young, he allowed them the high praise to which they are justly entitled. "The Universal Passion (says he) is indeed a very great performance,—his distichs have the weight of solid sentiment, and his points the sharpness of resistless truth. In his 'Night Thoughts' he has exhibited a very wide display of original poetry, variegated with deep reflections and striking allusions; a wilderness of thought, in which the fertility of fancy scatters flowers of every hue and of every odour. This is one of the few poems in which blank verse could not be changed for rhime but with disad-

no man possessed a stronger memory. He frequently attended Parliament, and the Courts in Westminster Hall; and sometimes he committed to paper the speeches he had heard.—When the contest concerning the Middlesex election had abated, he ceased to write, which was about the close of the year 1771. However, towards the end of the year 1779, he resumed his pen, and wrote a number of political essays, or letters, which he entitled *The Whig*. They were printed in one of the public papers of that time; they were in number 18; but they died with the other papers of the day. In the year 1791, he went to Madras with Lord Macartney, to whom he had been known in Ireland, and there he died."

The above account, however, we have been assured from authority is not to be relied on. The person alluded to was not the author of Junius.

vantage. Particular lines are not to be regarded, the power is in the whole, and in the whole there is a magnificence like that ascribed to Chinese plantation, the magnificence of vast extent and endless diversity."

Mr. Boswell goes on to remark, "But there is in this Poem not only all that Johnson so well brings in view, but a power of the *pathetick* beyond almost any example that I have seen. He who does not feel his nerves shaken, and his heart pierced by many passages in this extraordinary work, particularly by that most affecting one which describes the gradual torment suffered by the contemplation of an object of affectionate attachment visibly and certainly decaying into dissolution, must be of a hard and obstinate frame. To all the other excellencies of 'Night Thoughts' let me add the great and peculiar one, that they contain not only the noblest sentiments of virtue and contemplations on immortality, but the *Christian Sacrifice*, the *Divine Propitiation*, with all its interesting circumstances, and consolations to a wounded spirit, solemnly and poetically displayed in such imagery and language as cannot fail to exalt, animate, and soothe the truly pious. No book whatever can be recommended to young persons with better hopes of seasoning their minds with *vital religion* than Young's 'Night Thoughts.'"

Johnson said, that the description of the temple, in 'The Mourning Bride,' was the finest poetical passage he had ever read; he recollected none in Shakspeare equal to it. "But," said Garrick (who was present, all-alarmed for 'the God of his idolatry'), "we know not the extent and variety of his powers. We are to suppose there are such passages in his works. Shakspeare must not suffer from the badness of our memories."—Johnson, diverted by this enthusiastic jealousy, went on with greater ardour: "No, Sir; Congreve has *nature*," (smiling on the tragick eagerness of Garrick); but composing himself, he added, "Sir, this is not comparing Congreve on the whole, with Shakspeare on the whole; but only maintaining that Congreve has one finer passage than any that can be found in Shakspeare. Sir, a man may have no more than ten guineas in the world, but he may have those ten guineas in one piece; and so may have a finer piece than a man who has ten thousand pounds; but then he has only one ten-guinea piece. What I mean is, that you can shew me no passage where there is simply a description of material objects, without any intermixture of moral notions, which produces such an effect." Mr. Murphy mentioned Shakspeare's description of the night before the battle of Agincourt; but it was observed, it had *men* in it. Mr. Davies

suggested the speech of Juliet, in which she figures herself awaking in the tomb of her ancestors. Some one mentioned the description of Dover Cliff.—JOHNSON. "No, Sir; it should be all precipice, all vacuum. The crows impede your fall. The diminished appearance of the boats, and other circumstances, are all very good description; but do not impress the mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on by computation from one stage of the tremendous space to another. Had the girl in 'The Mourning Bride' said she could not cast her shoe to the top of one of the pillars in the temple, it would not have aided the idea, but weakened it." Again adverting to the passage in Congreve with high commendation, he said, "Shakspeare never has six lines together without a fault. Perhaps you may find seven; but it does not refute my general assertion. If I come to an orchard, and say there's no fruit here, and then comes a poring man who finds two apples and three pears, and tells me, 'Sir, you are mistaken, I have found both apples and pears,' I should laugh at him; what would that be to the purpose?"

Talking of Shakspeare's witches, Johnson said, "They are beings of his own creation; they are a compound of malignity and meanness, without any abilities; and are quite different from the

Italian magician. King James says, in his 'Dæmonology,' 'Magicians command the devils; witches are their servants.' The Italian magicians are elegant beings."—RAMSAY. "Opera witches, not Drury-lane witches."

"Colman (said Johnson) in a note on his translation of Terence, talking of Shakspeare's learning, asks, 'What says Farmer to this? What says Johnson?'" Upon this he observed, "Sir, let Farmer answer for himself: *I* never engaged in this controversy. I always said Shakspeare had Latin enough to grammaticise his English."

The character of Mallet having been introduced, and spoken of slightingly by Goldsmith, Johnson said "Why, Sir, Mallet had talents enough to keep his literary reputation alive as long as he himself lived; and that, let me tell you, is a good deal."—GOLDSMITH. "But I cannot agree that it was so. His literary reputation was dead long before his natural death. I consider an author's literary reputation to be alive only while his name will ensure a good price for his copy from the booksellers. I will get you (to Johnson) a hundred guineas for any thing whatever that you shall write, if you put your name to it."

Mr. Boswell mentioned Mallet's tragedy of

'Elvira,' which had been acted the preceding winter at Drury-lane, and that the Honourable Andrew Erskine, Mr. Dempster, and himself, had joined in writing a pamphlet, entitled 'Critical Strictures' against it. That the mildness of Dempster's disposition had, however, relented; and he had candidly said, "We have hardly a right to abuse this tragedy; for bad as it is, how vain should either of us be to write one not near so good!"—JOHNSON. "Why no, Sir; this is not just reasoning. You *may* abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables."

Of Mr. Mallet he usually spoke with no great respect; he said, that he was ready for any dirty job; that he had wrote against Byng at the instigation of the ministry, and was equally ready to write for him, provided he found his account in it. "Mallet's Life of Bacon (said he) has no inconsiderable merit as an acute and elegant dissertation relative to its subject; but Mallet's mind was not comprehensive enough to embrace the vast extent of Lord Verulam's genius and research. Dr. Warburton therefore observed with witty justness, "that Mallet in his Life of Bacon had forgotten that he was a philosopher;

and that if he should write the Life of the Duke of Marlborough, which he had undertaken to do, he would probably forget that he was a General."

Lord Hailes had sent Johnson a present of a curious little printed Poem, on repairing the University of Aberdeen, by David *Malloch*, which he thought would please Johnson, as affording clear evidence that Mallet had appeared even as a literary character by the name of *Malloch;* his changing which to one of softer sound had given Johnson occasion to introduce him into his Dictionary, under the article *Alias.* This piece was, it is supposed, one of Mallet's first essays. It is preserved in his works with several variations. Johnson having read aloud, from the beginning of it, where there were some commonplace assertions as to the superiority of ancient times;—"How false (said he) is all this, to say that in ancient times learning was not a disgrace to a peer as it is now. In ancient times a peer was as ignorant as any one else. He would have been angry to have it thought he could write his name. Men in ancient times dared to stand forth with a degree of ignorance, with which nobody would dare now to stand forth. I am always angry when I hear ancient times praised at the expence of modern times. There is now a great deal more learning in the world than there was formerly; for it is universally diffused.

You have, perhaps, no man who knows as much Greek and Latin as Bentley; no man who knows as much mathematicks as Newton; but you have many more men who know Greek and Latin, and who know mathematicks. Mallet, I believe, never wrote a single line of his projected life of the Duke of Marlborough. He groped for materials: and thought of it, till he had exhausted his mind. Thus it sometimes happens that men entangle themselves in their own schemes."

He allowed high praise to Thomson as a poet; but when one of the company said he was also a very good man, our moralist contested this with great warmth, accusing him of gross sensuality and licentiousness of manners. "I was (says Mr. B.) very much afraid that in writing Thomson's Life, Dr. Johnson would have treated his private character with a stern severity, but I was agreeably disappointed; and I may claim a little merit in it, from my having been at pains to send him authentick accounts of the affectionate and generous conduct of that poet to his sisters; one of whom, the wife of Mr. Thomson, schoolmaster at Lanark, I knew, and was presented by her with three of his letters, one of which Dr. Johnson has inserted in his Life."

"Thomson, I think (said the Doctor), had as much of the poet about him as most writers. Every thing appeared to him through the me-

dium of his favourite pursuit. He could not have viewed two candles burning but with a poetical eye."—" Thomson (he added at another time) had a true poetical genius, the power of viewing every thing in a poetical light. His fault is such a cloud of words sometimes, that the sense can hardly peep through. Shiels, who compiled 'Cibber's Lives of the Poets *,' was one day sitting with me. I took down Thomson, and read aloud a large portion of him, and then asked, is not this fine? Shiels having expressed the highest admiration, Well, Sir (said I), I have omitted every other line."

Talking of the Irish clergy, he said, Swift was a man of great parts, and the instrument of much good to his country.

One observation which Johnson makes in Swift's Life should be often inculcated: "It may be justly supposed, that there was in his conversation what appears so frequently in his letters, an affectation of familiarity with the great, an ambition of momentary equality, sought and enjoyed by the neglect of those ceremonies which custom has established as the barriers between one order of society and another. This transgression of regularity was by himself and his admirers termed greatness of soul; but a great

* See Page 153.

mind disdains to hold any thing by courtesy, and therefore never usurps what a lawful claimant may take away. He that encroaches on another's dignity puts himself in his power; he is either repelled with helpless indignity, or endured by clemency and condescension."

At another time he said, "Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves. His excellence is strong sense; for his humour, though very well, is not remarkably good. I doubt whether the 'Tale of the Tub, be his; for he never owned it, and it is much above his usual manner." A person praised Swift's 'Conduct of the Allies;' Johnson called it a performance of very little ability. "Surely, Sir (said Dr. Douglas), you must allow it has strong facts."—JOHNSON. "Why yes, Sir; but what is that to the merit of the composition? In the Sessions-paper of the Old Bailey there are strong facts. Housebreaking is a strong fact; robbery is a strong fact; and murder is a *mighty* strong fact: but is great praise due to the historian of those strong facts? No, Sir; Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but that is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right. Why, Sir, Tom Davies (who was present) might have written the conduct of the Allies."

He praised Delaney's 'Observations on Swift;' said that his book and Lord Orrery's

might both be true, though one viewed Swift more, and the other less favourably; and that between both we might have a complete notion of Swift.

'The Beggar's Opera,' and the common question, whether it was pernicious in its effects, having been introduced, Johnson said, "As to this matter, which has been very much contested, I myself am of opinion, that more influence has been ascribed to 'The Beggar's Opera' than it in reality ever had; for I do not believe that any man was ever made a rogue by being present at its representation. At the same time I do not deny that it may have some influence by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing *."

Of Hoole's 'Cleonice' he said, "The plot is well framed, the intricacy artful, the disentanglement easy, the suspense affecting, and the passionate parts properly interposed."

* A very eminent physician, whose discernment is as acute and penetrating in judging of the human character as it is in his own profession, remarked once, that a lively young man, fond of pleasure, and without money, would hardly resist a solicitation from his mistress to go upon the highway, immediately after being present at the representation of 'The Beggar's Opera.' An ingenious observation was made by Mr. Gibbon, that "The Beggar's Opera may, perhaps, have sometimes increased the number of highwaymen; but it has had a beneficial effect in refining that class of men, making them less ferocious."

Buchanan, he said, was a very fine poet; and was the first who complimented a lady, by ascribing to her the different perfections of the heathen goddesses; but that Johnston improved upon this, by making his lady, at the same time, free from their defects.

He dwelt upon Buchanan's elegant verses to Mary Queen of Scots, *Nympha Caledoniæ*, &c. and spoke with enthusiasm of the beauty of Latin verse. "All the modern languages (said he) cannot furnish so melodious a line as

"*Formosam resonare doces Amarillida silvas.*"

"Buchanan (he observed) has fewer *centos* than any modern Latin poet. He not only has great knowledge of the Latin language, but was a great poetical genius. Both the Scaligers praise him."

Mrs. Thrale once disputed with Johnson on the merit of Prior. He attacked him powerfully; said he wrote of love like a man who had never felt it: his love verses were college verses; and he repeated the song 'Alexis shunn'd his Fellow Swains," &c. in so ludicrous a manner, as to make all the company wonder how any one could have been pleased with such fantastical stuff. Mrs. Thrale stood to her guns with great courage, in defence of amorous ditties, which Johnson despised, till he at last silenced her by

saying, "My dear Lady, talk no more of this. Nonsense can be defended but by nonsense."

A proposition which had been agitated, that monuments to eminent persons should, for the time to come, be erected in St. Paul's church as well as in Westminster Abbey, was mentioned; and it was asked, who should be honoured by having his monument first erected there. Somebody suggested Pope.—JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, as Pope was a Roman Catholic, I would not have his to be first. I think Milton's rather should have the precedence. I think more highly of him now than I did at twenty. There is more thinking in him and in Butler, than in any of our poets."

It was a lively saying of Dr. Johnson to Miss Hannah More, who had expressed a wonder that the poet who had written 'Paradise Lost' should write such poor Sonnets: "Milton, Madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock; but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones."

He censured Ruffhead's life of Pope; and said, "he knew nothing of Pope, and nothing of poetry." He praised Dr. Joseph Warton's Essay on Pope; but said, he supposed we should have no more of it, as the author had not been able to persuade the world to think of Pope as he did.—BOSWELL. "Why, Sir, should that prevent him from continuing his work? He is

an ingenious Counsel, who has made the most of his cause; he is not obliged to gain it."—JOHNSON. "But, Sir, there is a difference when the cause is of a man's own making."

Mr. Boswell told Johnson, that Pope and Dryden had been thus distinguished by a foreign writer: "Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses."—*J.* "Why, Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot."

Johnson said, Pope's characters of men were admirably drawn, those of women not so well. He repeated, in his forcible melodious manner, the concluding lines of the Dunciad.—While he was talking loudly in praise of those lines, one of the company ventured to say, "Too fine for such a poem: a poem on what?"—JOHNSON (with a disdainful look). "Why, on *dunces*. It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, Sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days! It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits." Bickerstaff observed, as a peculiar circumstance, that Pope's fame was higher when he was alive than it was then. Johnson said, his Pastorals were poor things, though the versification was fine. He told us, with high satisfaction, the anecdote of Pope's inquiring who was the

author of his 'London,' and saying he will be soon *deterré*. He observed, that in Dryden's Poetry there were passages drawn from a profundity which Pope could never reach. He repeated some fine lines on love by the former (which I have now forgotten), and gave great applause to the character of Zimri. Goldsmith said, that Pope's character of Addison shewed a deep knowledge of the human heart.

"In the year 1763 (says Mr. Boswell, addressing himself to Dr. Johnson), being at London, I was carried by Dr. John Blair, Prebendary of Westminster, to dine at old Lord Bathurst's; where we found the late Mr. Mallet, Sir James Porter, who had been Ambassador at Constantinople, the late Dr. Macaulay, and two or three more. The conversation turning on Mr. Pope, Lord Bathurst told us, that 'The Essay on Man' was originally composed by Lord Bolingbroke in prose, and that Mr. Pope did no more than put it into verse: that he had read Lord Bolingbroke's manuscript in his own hand-writing; and remembered well, that he was at a loss whether most to admire the elegance of Lord Bolingbroke's prose, or the beauty of Mr. Pope's verse. When Lord Bathurst told this, Mr. Mallet bade me attend, and remember this remarkable piece of information; as, by the course of nature, I might survive his Lordship, and be a

witness of his having said so. The conversation was indeed too remarkable to be forgotten. A few days after, meeting with you, who were then also at London, you will remember that I mentioned to you what had passed on this subject, as I was much struck with this anecdote. But what ascertains my recollection of it beyond doubt is, that being accustomed to keep a Journal of what passed when I was at London, which I wrote out every evening, I find the particulars of the above information, just as I have now given them, distinctly marked; and am thence enabled to fix this conversation to have passed on Friday, the 22d of April, 1763.

Johnson said, "Depend upon it, Sir, this is too strongly stated. Pope may have had from Bolingbroke the philosophic stamina of his Essay; and admitting this to be true, Lord Bathurst did not intentionally falsify. But the thing is not true in the latitude that Blair seems to imagine; we are sure that the poetical imagery, which makes a great part of the poem, was Pope's own. It is amazing, Sir, what deviations there are from precise truth, in the account which is given of almost every thing. I once told Mrs. Thrale, 'You have so little anxiety about truth, that you never tax your memory with the exact thing.' Now what is the use of the memory to truth, if one is careless of exactness? Lord

Hailes's 'Annals of Scotland' are very exact; but they contain mere dry particulars. They are to be considered as a dictionary. You know such things are there; and may be looked at when you please. Robertson paints; but the misfortune is, you are sure he does not know the people whom he paints; so you cannot suppose a likeness.—Characters should never be given by an historian, unless he knew the people whom he describes, or copies from those who knew them."

Mr. Boswell also relates (though not on the authority of his journal), that in the same conversation he took notice of a report which had been sometimes propagated, that he did not understand Greek. Lord Bathurst said, that he knew that to be false: for that part of the Iliad was translated by Mr. Pope in his house in the country; and that in the mornings when they assembled at breakfast, Mr. Pope used frequently to repeat, with great rapture, the Greek lines which he had been translating, and then to give them his version of them, and to compare them together.

Mr. Beauclerk one day repeated to Dr. Johnson Pope's lines,

'Let modest Foster, if he will, excel
'Ten metropolitans in preaching well.'

Then asked the Doctor, "Why did Pope say

this?"—JOHNSON. "Sir, he hoped it would vex somebody."

Talking of the minuteness with which people will often record the sayings of eminent persons, a story was told, that when Pope was on a visit to Spence at Oxford, as they looked from the window they saw a Gentleman Commoner, who was just come in from riding, amusing himself with whipping at a post. Pope took occasion to say, "That young gentleman seems to have little to do." Mr. Beauclerk observed, "Then, to be sure, Spence turned round and wrote that down;" and went on to say to Dr. Johnson, "Pope, Sir, would have said the same of you, if he had seen you distilling."—JOHNSON. "Sir, if Pope had told me of my distilling, I would have told him of his grotto." Mr. Ramsay said, "I am old enough to have been a contemporary of Pope. His Poetry was highly admired in his life-time, more a great deal than after his death." —*J.* "Sir, it has not been less admired after his death; it has only not been as much talked of; but that is owing to its being now more distant, and people having other writings to talk of. Virgil is less talked of than Pope, and Homer is less talked of than Virgil; but they are not less admired. We must read what the world reads at the moment. It has been maintained that this superfœtation, this teeming of the press in mo-

dern times is prejudicial to good literature, because it obliges us to read so much of what is of inferior value, in order to be in the fashion; so that better works are neglected for want of time, because a man will have more gratification of his vanity in conversation from having read modern books, than from having read the best works of antiquity. But it must be considered, that we have now more knowledge generally diffused; all our ladies read now, which is a great extension. Modern writers are the moons of literature; they shine with reflected light, with light borrowed from the ancients. Greece appears to me to be the fountain of knowledge; Rome of elegance."—RAMSAY. "I suppose Homer's 'Iliad' to be a collection of pieces which had been written before his time. I should like to see a translation of it in poetical prose, like the book of Ruth or Job."—ROBERTSON. "Would you, Dr. Johnson, who are master of the English language, but try your hand upon a part of it."—*J.* "Sir, you could not read it without the pleasure of verse."

On another occasion, Johnson said, "Sir, a thousand years may elapse before there shall appear another man with a power of versification equal to that of Pope." That power must undoubtedly be allowed its due share in enhancing the value of his captivating composition.

He said, that the dispute as to the comparative excellence of Homer or Virgil was inaccurate. "We must consider (said he) whether Homer was not the greatest poet, though Virgil may have produced the finest poem. Virgil was indebted to Homer for the whole invention of the structure of an epic poem, and for many of his beauties."

Mr. Boswell one day found fault with Foote for indulging his talent of ridicule at the expence of his visitors, which he colloquially termed making fools of his company.—JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, when you go to see Foote, you do not go to see a saint; you go to see a man who will be entertained at your house, and then bring you on a public stage; who will entertain you at his house for the very purpose of bringing you on a public stage. Sir, he does not make fools of his company; they whom he exposes are fools already: he only brings them into action."—BOSWELL. "Foote has a great deal of humour?"—*J.* "Yes, Sir."—*B.* "He has a singular talent of exhibiting character."—*J.* "Sir, it is not a talent; it is a vice; it is what others abstain from. It is not comedy, which exhibits the character of a species, as that of a miser gathered from many misers: it is farce, which exhibits individuals."—*B.* "Did not he think of exhibiting you, Sir?"—*J.* "Sir, fear restrained him; he knew I would

have broken his bones. I would have saved him the trouble of cutting off a leg; I would not have left him a leg to cut off."—*B.* "Pray, Sir, is not Foote an infidel?"—*J.* "I do not know, Sir, that the fellow is an infidel; but if he be an infidel, he is an infidel as a dog is an infidel; that is to say, he has never thought upon the subject."—*B.* "I suppose, Sir, he has thought superficially, and seized the first notions which occurred to his mind."—*J.* "Why then, Sir, still he is like a dog, that snatches the piece next him. Did you never observe that dogs have not the power of comparing? A dog will take a small bit of meat as readily as a large, when both are before him."

Johnson said, "Foote was not a good mimic." One of the company added, "A merry Andrew, a buffoon."—*J.* "But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, Sir, when you think you have got him, like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Foote is

free."—WILKES. "Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's."—*J.* "The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him; but the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, Sir, he was irresistible. He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance.—Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, upon a certain day, that they would

drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went down stairs he told them, 'This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer.'" Somebody observed that Garrick could not have done this.—WILKES. "Garrick would have made the small-beer still smaller. He is now leaving the stage; but he will play *Scrub* all his life." I knew (says Mr. Boswell) that Johnson would let nobody attack Garrick but himself, as Garrick once said to me, and I had heard him praise his liberality; so to bring out his commendation of his celebrated pupil, I said, loudly, "I have heard Garrick is liberal."—*J.* "Yes, Sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so when he came to have money, he probably was very unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could; and I am of opinion, the reputation of avarice which he has had has been very lucky for him, and prevented his having many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been

much better attacked for living with more splendor than is suitable to a player; if they had had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamouring about his avarice, which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy."

Mrs. Thrale praised Garrick's talent for light gay poetry; and, as a specimen, repeated his song in 'Florizel and Perdita,' and dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line:

"I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor."

—JOHNSON. "Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David! Smile with the simple? —What folly is that. And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich."— Mr. Boswell says, "I repeated this sally to Garrick, and wondered to find his sensibility as a writer not a little irritated by it. To sooth him, I observed, that Johnson spared none of us; and I quoted the passage in Horace, in which he compares one who attacks his friends for the sake of a laugh to a pushing ox that is marked by a bunch of hay put upon his horns; '*fœnum habet in cornu.*'" "Aye (said Garrick vehemently), he has a whole *mow* of it."

Soon after the publication of the Dictionary, Garrick being asked by Johnson what people

said of it, told him, that among other animadversions, it was objected that he cited authorities which were beneath the dignity of such a work, and mentioned Richardson. "Nay (said Johnson), I have done worse than that: I have cited *thee*, David."

Johnson on some occasion observed, "Garrick's conversation is gay and grotesque. It is a dish of all sorts, but all good things. There is no solid meat in it; there is a want of sentiment in it. Not but that he has sentiment sometimes, and sentiment too very powerful and very pleasing; but it has not its full proportion in his conversation."

Mr. B. complained that he had not mentioned Garrick in his Preface to Shakspeare; and asked him if he did not admire him.—*J.* "Yes, as 'a poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage'—as a shadow."—*B.* "But has he not brought Shakspeare into notice?"—*J* "Sir, to allow that would be to lampoon the age. Many of Shakspeare's plays are the worse for being acted. Macbeth, for instance."—*B.* "What Sir, is nothing gained by decoration and action? Indeed, I do wish that you had mentioned Garrick."—*J.* "My dear Sir, had I mentioned him, I must have mentioned many more: Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber—nay, and Mr. Cibber too; he too altered Shakspeare."—*B.* "You have read his

apology, Sir?"—*J.* "Yes, it is very entertaining. But as for Cibber himself, taking from his conversation all that he ought not to have said, he was a poor creature. I remember when he brought me one of his Odes to have my opinion of it, I could not bear such nonsense, and would not let him read it to the end; so little respect had I for *that great man!* (laughing). Yet I remember Richardson wondering that I could treat him with familiarity."

"Garrick (he observed) does not play the part of Archer in 'The Beaux Stratagem' well. The gentleman should break out through the footman, which is not the case as he does it."

Mr. Boswell, dining with Johnson at Mr. Beauclerk's one day with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Jones (afterwards Sir William), Mr. Langton, Mr. Steevens, Mr. Paradise, and Dr. Higgins, mentioned that Mr. Wilkes had attacked Garrick to him, as a man who had no friend. JOHNSON. "I believe he is right, Sir. Οι φιλοι ου φιλος.—He has friends, but no friend. Garrick was so diffused, he had no man to whom he wished to unbosom himself. He found people always ready to applaud him, and that always for the same thing; so he saw life with great uniformity."—BOSWELL. "Garrick did not need a friend, as he got from every body all he wanted. What is a friend? One who supports you, and comforts

you, while others do not. Friendship, you know, Sir, is the cordial drop,' 'to make the nauseous draught of life go down;' but if the draught be not nauseous, if it be all sweet, there is no occasion for that drop."—JOHNSON. "Many men would not be content to live so. I hope I should not. They would wish to have an intimate friend, with whom they might compare minds, and cherish private virtues." One of the company mentioned Lord Chesterfield, as a man who had no friend.—*J.* "There were more materials to make friendship in Garrick, had he not been so diffused."—*B.* "Garrick was pure gold, but beat out to thin leaf. Lord Chesterfield was tinsel."—*J.* "Garrick was a very good man, the cheerfullest man of his age; a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness; and a man who gave away freely money acquired by himself. He began the world with a great hunger for money; the son of a half-pay officer, bred in a family whose study was to make four-pence do as much as others made four-pence half-penny do; but, when he had got money, he was very liberal." Mr. Boswell animadverted on his eulogy on Garrick, in his 'Lives of the Poets.'—"You say, Sir, his death eclipsed the gaiety of nations."—*J.* "I could not have said more nor less. It is the truth; *eclipsed*, not *extinguished;* and his death *did* eclipse; it was like a storm."—

B. "But why nations? Did his gaiety extend farther than his own nation?"—*J.* "Why, Sir, some exaggeration must be allowed. Besides, nations may be said if we allow the Scotch to be a nation, and to have gaiety, which they have not. *You* are an exception though. Come, gentlemen, let us candidly admit that there is one Scotchman who is cheerful."—BEAUCLERK. "But he is a very unnatural Scotchman." I however (says Mr. B.) continued to think the compliment to Garrick hyperbolically untrue. His acting had ceased some time before his death; at any rate he had acted in Ireland but a short time, at an early period of his life, and never in Scotland. I objected also to what appears an anticlimax of praise, when contrasted with the preceding panegyric—'and diminished the public stock of harmless pleasure!' "Is not *harmless pleasure* very tame?"—*J.* "Nay, Sir, harmless pleasure is the highest praise. Pleasure is a word of dubious import; pleasure is in general dangerous and pernicious to virtue; to be able therefore to furnish Pleasure that is harmless, pleasure pure and unalloyed, is as great a power as man can possess." This was, perhaps, as ingenious a defence as could be made: still, however, (says Mr. B.) I was not satisfied.

His friend Garrick was so busy in conducting the drama, that they could not have so much in-

tercourse as Mr. Garrick used to profess an anxious wish that there should be. There might indeed be something in the contemptuous severity as to the merit of acting, which his old preceptor nourished in himself, that would mortify Garrick after the great applause which he received from the audience. For though Johnson said of him, "Sir, a man who has a nation to admire him every night may well be expected to be somewhat elated;" yet he would treat theatrical matters with a ludicrous slight. He said one evening, "I met David coming off the stage, drest in a woman's riding-hood, when he acted in 'The Wonder;' I came full upon him, and I believe he was not pleased."

Sir Joshua Reynolds observed with great truth, that Johnson considered Garrick to be as it were his *property*. He would allow no man either to blame or to praise Garrick in his presence without contradicting him.

Goldsmith in his diverting simplicity complained one day, in a mixed company, of Lord Camden. "I met him (said he) at Lord Clare's house in the country, and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man." The company having laughed heartily, Johnson stood forth in defence of his friend. "Nay, Gentlemen (said he), Dr. Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made

up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him."

Nor could he patiently endure to hear that such respect as he thought due only to higher intellectual qualities should be bestowed on men of slighter, though perhaps more amusing, talents. I told him (says Mr. B.) that one morning, when I went to breakfast with Garrick, who was very vain of his intimacy with Lord Camden, he accosted me thus:—"Pray now, did you?—did you meet a little lawyer turning the corner, eh?"—"No, Sir (said I); pray what do you mean by the question?"—"Why (replied Garrick, with an affected indifference, yet as if standing on tip-toe), Lord Camden has this moment left me. We have had a long walk together."—*J.* "Well, Sir, Garrick talked very properly. Lord Camden *was* a little lawyer to be associating so familiarly with a player."

Mrs. Montagu, a lady distinguished for having written an Essay on Shakspeare, being mentioned, Sir Joshua Reynolds said, "I think that essay does her honour."—JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir, it does *her* honour; but it would do nobody else honour. I have, indeed, not read it all. But when I take up the end of a web, and find it packthread, I do not expect, by looking further, to find embroidery. Sir, I will venture to say,

there is not one sentence of true criticism in her book."—GARRICK. "But, Sir, surely it shows how much a certain French writer has mistaken Shakspeare, which nobody else has done."—*J.* "Sir, nobody else has thought it worth while; and what merit is there in that? You may as well praise a schoolmaster for whipping a boy who has construed ill. No, Sir, there is no real criticism in it; none shewing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart*".

He said that he had given Mrs. Montagu a catalogue of all Daniel Defoe's works of imagination; most, if not all of which, as well as of his other works, he enumerated; allowing a considerable share of merit to a man who, bred a tradesman, had written so variously and so well. Indeed his 'Robinson Crusoe' is enough of itself to establish his reputation.

* Mr. Boswell says, he considers it is a piece of the secondary or comparative species of criticism, and not of that profound species which alone Dr. Johnson would allow to be "real criticism." It is besides clearly and elegantly expressed, and has done effectually what it professed to do, namely vindicated Shakspeare from the misrepresentations of the French writer; and considering how many young people were misled by his witty, though false, observations, Mrs. Montagu's Essay was of service to Shakspeare with a certain class of readers, and is, therefore, entitled to praise. Johnson, I am assured, allowed the merit which I have stated, saying (with reference to the Frenchman), "it is conclusive *ad hominem*."

It always appeared, that he estimated the compositions of Richardson too highly, and that he had an unreasonable prejudice against Fielding. In comparing those two writers, he used this expression; "that there was as great a difference between them as between a man who knew how a watch was made, and a man who could tell the hour by looking on the dial-plate." This was a short and figurative state of his distinction between drawing characters of nature and characters only of manners. "But (says Mr. B.) I cannot help being of opinion, that the neat watches of Fielding are as well constructed as the large clocks of Richardson, and that his dial-plates are brighter. Fielding's characters, though they do not expand themselves so widely in dissertation, are as just pictures of human nature, and I will venture to say, have more striking features, and nicer touches of the pencil; and though Johnson used to quote with approbation a saying of Richardson's, 'that the virtues of Fielding's heroes were the vices of a truly good man,' I will venture to add, that the moral tendency of Fielding's writings, though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty, and cherishes the benevolent and generous affections. He, who is as good as Fielding would make him, is an amiable member of society, and may be led on by more regu-

lated instructors to a high state of ethical perfection."

Johnson at another time said, "Sir Francis Wronghead is a character of manners, though drawn with great humour." He then repeated very happily all Sir Francis's credulous account to Manly of his being with "the great man," and securing a place. Being asked if 'The Suspicious Husband' did not furnish a well drawn character, that of Ranger, Johnson said, "No, Sir; Ranger is just a rake, a mere rake, and a lively young fellow, but no *character*."

Richardson had little conversation, except about his own works, of which Sir Joshua Reynolds said he was always willing to talk, and glad to have them introduced*. Johnson, when he carried

* One day at his country house at Northend, where a large company was assembled at dinner, a gentleman who was just returned from Paris, willing to please Mr. Richardson, mentioned to him a very flattering circumstance,—that he had seen his 'Clarissa' lying on the King's brother's table. Richardson, observing that part of the company were engaged in talking to each other, affected then not to attend to it; but by and by, when there was a general silence, and he thought that the flattery might be fully heard, he addressed himself to the gentleman, "I think, Sir, you were saying something about—" pausing in a high flutter of expectation. The gentleman, provoked at his inordinate vanity, resolved not to indulge it, and with an exquisitely sly air of indifference answered, "A mere trifle, Sir, not worth repeating." The mortification of Richardson was visible, and he did not speak ten words more the whole day.

Mr. Langton to see him, professed that he could bring him out into conversation, and used this allusive expression, "Sir, I can make him *rear;*" but he failed: for in that interview Richardson said little else than that there lay in the room a translation into German of his 'Clarissa.'

Talking of some of the modern plays, Johnson said, 'False Delicacy' was totally void of character. He praised Goldsmith's 'Good Natured Man;' said it was the best comedy that had appeared since the 'Provoked Husband,' and that there had not been of late any such character exhibited on the stage as that of Croaker. Mr. B. observed, that it was the Suspirius of Johnson's Rambler. He said, Goldsmith had owned he had borrowed it from thence. "Sir (continued he), there is all the difference in the world between characters of nature and characters of manners; and *there* is the difference between the characters of Fielding and those of Richardson. Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart."

Of Dr. Goldsmith he said, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, nor more wise when he had."

Of Goldsmith's 'Traveller,' he said, "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time."

At another time, Goldsmith being mentioned, "It is amazing (said Johnson) how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else."—SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. "Yet there is no man whose company is more liked."—JOHNSON. "To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true, — he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, he grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his 'Traveller' is a very fine performance; aye, and so is his 'Deserted Village,' were it not sometimes too much the echo of his 'Traveller.' Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet,—as a comick writer,—or as an historian, he stands in the first class."—BOSWELL. "An historian! My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman History with the works of other historians of this age?"—*J.* "Why, who are before him?"—*B.* "Hume, Robertson, Lord Lyttleton."—*J.* (His antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise), "I have not read Hume; but doubtless Goldsmith's History is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the

foppery of Dalrymple."—*B.* "Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose History we find such penetration—such painting?"—*J.* "Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are employed. It is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece; he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as romance, and try it by that standard. History it is not. Besides, Sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his History. Now Robertson might have put twice as much into his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool; the wool takes up more room than the gold. No, Sir; I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight,—would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know; Robertson detains you a great deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is

particularly fine, strike it out.' Goldsmith's Abridgment is better than that of Lucius Florus, or Eutropius; and I will venture to say, that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the Roman History, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying every thing he has to say in a pleasing manner. He is now writing a Natural History, and will make it as entertaining as a Persian Tale."

Dr. Goldsmith's play, 'She Stoops to Conquer,' being mentioned, Johnson said, "I know of no comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated an audience, that has answered so much the great end of comedy, making an audience merry."

Johnson observed, that it was long before Goldsmith's merit came to be acknowledged.—That he once complained to him, in ludicrous terms of distress, "Whenever I write any thing, the public *make a point* to know nothing about it;" but that his 'Traveller' brought him into high reputation.—MR. LANGTON. "There is not one bad line in that poem; not one of Dryden's careless verses."—SIR JOSHUA. "I was glad to hear Charles Fox say it was one of the finest poems in the English language."—LANGTON. "Why was you glad? You surely had no doubt of this before."—JOHNSON. "No; the merit of

'The Traveller' is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it."—SIR JOSHUA. "But his friends may suspect they had a too great partiality for him."—*J.* "Nay, Sir, the partiality of his friends was always against him. It was with difficulty we could give him a hearing. Goldsmith had no settled notions upon any subject; so he talked always at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry too when catched in an absurdity; but it did not prevent him from falling into another the next minute. I remember Chamier, after talking with him for some time, said, 'Well, I do believe he wrote this poem himself; and, let me tell you, that is believing a great deal. Chamier once asked him what he meant by *slow*, the last word in the first line of 'The Traveller,'

'Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,'

Did he mean tardiness of locomotion? Goldsmith, who would say something without consideration, answered, 'Yes.' I was sitting by, and said, 'No, Sir; you do not mean tardiness of locomotion; you mean that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude.' Chamier believed then that I had written the line, as much as if he had seen me write it. Gold-

smith, however, was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster-Abbey, and every year he lived would have deserved it better. He had, indeed, been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another; and it did not settle in his mind; so he could not tell what was in his own books."

"Goldsmith (he said) referred every thing to vanity; his virtues and his vices too were from that motive. He was not a social man. He never exchanged mind with you."

Goldsmith had long a visionary project, that some time or other, when his circumstances should be easier, he would go to Aleppo, in order to acquire a knowledge, as far as might be, of any arts peculiar to the East, and introduce them into Britain. When this was talked of in Dr. Johnson's company, he said, "Of all men Goldsmith is the most unfit to go out upon such an enquiry; for he is utterly ignorant of such arts as we already possess, and consequently could not know what would be accessions to our present stock of mechanical knoweldge. Sir, he would bring home a grinding-barrow, which you see in every street in London, and think that he had furnished a wonderful improvement."

Of Goldsmith he on some other occasion said,

"He was not an agreeable companion, for he talked always for fame. A man who does so never can be pleasing. The man who talks to unburden his mind is the man to delight you. An eminent friend of ours is not so agreeable as the variety of his knowledge would otherwise make him, because he talks partly from ostentation. Goldsmith too was very envious." Mr. B. defended him, by observing that he owned it frankly upon all occasions.—*J.* "Sir, you are enforcing the charge. He had so much envy that he could not conceal it. He was so full of it that he overflowed. He talked of it, to be sure, often enough. Now, Sir, what a man avows, he is not ashamed to think; though many a man thinks what he is ashamed to avow. We are all envious naturally; but by checking envy we get the better of it. So we are all thieves naturally: a child always tries to get at what it wants the nearest way; by good instruction and good habits this is cured, till a man has not even an inclination to seize what is another's; has no struggle with himself about it."

He said, "Goldsmith's Life of Parnell is poor; not that it is poorly written, but that he had poor materials; for nobody can write the life of a man but those who have ate and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him."

Dr. Goldsmith, upon occasion of Mrs. Len-

nox's bringing out a play, said to Dr. Johnson at the Club, that a person had advised him to go and hiss it, because she had attacked Shakspeare in her book called 'Shakspeare Illustrated.' JOHNSON. "And did not you tell him that he was a rascal?"—GOLDSMITH. "No, Sir, I did not. Perhaps he might not mean what he said."—JOHNSON. "Nay, Sir, if he lied it is a different thing."—Colman slily said (but it is believed Dr. Johnson did not hear him), "Then the proper expression should have been,—Sir, if you don't lie, you're a rascal."

Goldsmith could sometimes take adventurous liberties with Johnson, and escape unpunished. When he once talked of a project for having a third theatre in London, solely for the exhibition of new plays, in order to deliver authors from the supposed tyranny of managers, Johnson treated it slightingly; upon which Goldsmith said, "Aye, aye, this may be nothing to you, who can now shelter yourself behind the corner of a pension;" and Johnson bore this with good humour.

Goldsmith, upon being visited by Johnson one day in the Temple, said to him with a little jealousy of the appearance of his accommodation, "I shall soon be in better chambers than these." Johnson at the same time checked him,

and paid him a handsome compliment, implying that a man of his talents should be above attention to such distinctions. "Nay, Sir (said he), never mind that; *nil te quæsiveris extra.*"

FINIS.