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BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

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BOSWELL'S
LIFE OF JOHNSON

EDITED BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

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THE LIFE OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

April 17, being Good Friday, I waited on Johnson, as usual. I observed at breakfast that although it was a part of his abstemious discipline on this most solemn fast to take no milk in his tea, yet when Mrs. Desmoulins inadvertently poured it in, he did not reject it. I talked of the strange indecision of mind, and imbecility in the common occurrences of life, which we may observe in some people. Johnson: 'Why, sir, I am in the habit of getting others to do things for me.' Boswell: 'What, sir, have you that weakness?' Johnson: 'Yes, sir. But I always think afterwards I should have done better for myself.'

I told him that at a gentleman's house where there was thought to be such extravagance or bad management, that he was living much beyond his income, his lady had objected to the cutting of a pickled mango, and that I had taken an opportunity to ask the price of it, and found that it was only two shillings; so here was a very poor saving. Johnson: 'Sir, that is the blundering economy of a narrow understanding. It is stopping one hole in a sieve.'

I expressed some inclination to publish an account

of my travels upon the continent of Europe, for which I had a variety of materials collected. JOHNSON: 'I do not say, sir, you may not publish your travels: but I give you my opinion, that you would lessen yourself by it. What can you tell of countries so well known as those upon the continent of Europe, which you have visited?' BOSWELL: 'But I can give an entertaining narrative, with many incidents, anecdotes, *jeux d'esprit*, and remarks, so as to make very pleasant reading?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, most modern travellers in Europe who have published their travels have been laughed at: I would not have you added to the number.[1] The world is not now contented to be merely entertained by a traveller's narrative; they want to learn something. Now some of my friends asked me why I did not give some account of my travels in France. The reason is plain; intelligent readers had seen more of France than I had. *You* might have liked my travels in France, and the Club might have liked them; but, upon the whole, there would have been more ridicule than good produced by them.' BOSWELL: 'I cannot agree with you, sir. People would like to read what you say of anything. Suppose a face has been painted by fifty painters before, still we love to see it done by Sir Joshua.' JOHNSON: 'True, sir, but Sir Joshua cannot paint a face when he has not time to look on it.' BOSWELL: 'Sir, a sketch of any sort by him is valuable. And, sir, to talk to you in your own style (raising my voice, and shaking my head), you *should* have given us your

[1] I believe, however, I shall follow my own opinion; for the world has shown a very flattering partiality to my writings on many occasions.

travels in France. I am *sure* I am right, and *there's an end on't.*'

I said to him that it was certainly true, as my friend Dempster had observed in his letter to me upon the subject, that a great part of what was in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland,* had been in his mind before he left London. JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir, the topics were; and books of travel will be good in proportion to what a man has previously in his mind; his knowing what to observe; his power of contrasting one mode of life with another. As the Spanish proverb says, "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him." So it is in travelling; a man must carry knowledge with him if he would bring home knowledge.' BOSWELL: 'The proverb, I suppose, sir, means he must carry a large stock with him to trade with.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir.'

It was a delightful day. As we walked to St. Clement's Church, I again remarked that Fleet Street was the most cheerful scene in the world. 'Fleet Street (said I), is in my mind more delightful than Tempé.' JOHNSON: 'Ay, sir, but let it be compared with Mull.'

There was a very numerous congregation to-day at St. Clement's Church, which Dr. Johnson said he observed with pleasure.

And now I am to give a pretty full account of one of the most curious incidents in Johnson's life, of which he himself has made the following minute on this day:

'In my return from church, I was accosted by Edwards, an old fellow-collegian, who had not seen me since 1729. He

knew me, and asked if I remembered one Edwards; I did not at first recollect the name, but gradually, as we walked along, recovered it, and told him a conversation that had passed at an alehouse between us. My purpose is to continue our acquaintance.'[1]

It was in Butcher Row that this meeting happened. Mr. Edwards, who was a decent-looking, elderly man in grey clothes, and a wig of many curls, accosted Johnson with familiar confidence, knowing who he was, while Johnson returned his salutation with a courteous formality, as to a stranger. But as soon as Edwards had brought to his recollection their having been at Pembroke College together nine-and-forty years ago, he seemed much pleased, asked where he lived, and said he should be glad to see him at Bolt Court. EDWARDS: 'Ah, sir! we are old men now.' JOHNSON (who never liked to think of being old): 'Don't let us discourage one another.' EDWARDS: 'Why, Doctor, you look stout and hearty, I am happy to see you so; for the newspapers told us you were very ill.' JOHNSON: 'Ah, sir, they are always telling lies of *us old fellows*.'

Wishing to be present at more of so singular a conversation as that between two fellow-collegians who had lived forty years in London without ever having chanced to meet, I whispered to Mr. Edwards that Dr. Johnson was going home, and that he had better accompany him now. So Edwards walked along with us, I eagerly assisting to keep up the conversation. Mr. Edwards informed Dr. Johnson that he had practised long as a solicitor in Chancery, but that he

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 164.

now lived in the country upon a little farm, about sixty acres, just by Stevenage in Hertfordshire, and that he came to London (to Barnard's Inn, No. 6) generally twice a week. Johnson appearing to me in a reverie, Mr. Edwards addressed himself to me, and expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country. BOSWELL: 'I have no notion of this, sir. What you have to entertain you is, I think, exhausted in half an hour.' EDWARDS: 'What! don't you love to have hope realised? I see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. Now, for instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit-trees.' JOHNSON (who we did not imagine was attending): 'You find, sir, you have fears as well as hopes.' So well did he see the whole, when another saw but the half of a subject.

When we got to Dr. Johnson's house and were seated in his library, the dialogue went on admirably. EDWARDS: 'Sir, I remember you would not let us say *prodigious* at College. For even then, sir (turning to me), he was delicate in language, and we all feared him.'[1] JOHNSON (to Edwards): 'From your having practised the law long, sir, I presume you must be rich.' EDWARDS: 'No, sir; I got a good deal of money, but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave great part of it.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word.' EDWARDS: 'But I shall not die rich.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sure, sir, it is better to *live* rich than to *die* rich.' EDWARDS: 'I wish I had continued at College.'

[1] Johnson said to me afterwards, 'Sir, they respected me for literature; and yet it was not great but by comparison. Sir, it is amazing how little literature there is in the world.'

JOHNSON: '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 Bloxham and several others, and lived comfortably.' 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.' Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, 'O! Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an alehouse near Pembroke Gate? At that time, you told me of the Eton boy, who, when verses on our Saviour's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired:

'"Vidit et erubuit lympha pudica Deum."[1]

And I told you of another fine line in Camden's

[1] [This line has frequently been attributed to Dryden, when a King's Scholar at Westminster. But neither Eton nor Westminster have in truth any claim to it, the line being borrowed, with a slight change (as Mr. Bindley has observed to me), from an epigram by Crashaw, which was published in his *Epigrammata Sacra*, first printed at Cambridge without the author's name, in 1634, 8vo. The original is much more elegant than the copy, the water being personified, and the word on which the point of the epigram turns, being reserved to the close of the line:

'JOANN. ii.—*Aquæ in vinum versæ.*

'Unde rubor vestris et non sua purpura lymphis?
Quæ rosa mirantes tam nova mutat aquas?
Numen, convivæ, præsens agnoscite numen,
Nympha pudica Deum vidit, et *erubuit*.'—M.]

Remains, a eulogy upon one of our kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit:

'"Mira cano, Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est."'

EDWARDS: 'You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.' Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Malone, and, indeed, all the eminent men to whom I have mentioned this, have thought it an exquisite trait of character. The truth is, that philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe, at least so grave as to exclude all gaiety.

EDWARDS: 'I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faltering tone) I have known what it was to *lose a wife*. It had almost broke my heart.'

EDWARDS: 'How do you live, sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I require it.' JOHNSON: 'I now drink no wine, sir. Early in life I drank wine: for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal.' EDWARDS: 'Some hogsheads, I warrant you.' JOHNSON: 'I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner without any incon-

venience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry; but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo, without being missed here or observed there.' EDWARDS: 'Don't you eat supper, sir?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir.' EDWARDS: 'For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass in order to get to bed.'[1]

JOHNSON: 'You are a lawyer, Mr. Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants.' EDWARDS: 'I am grown old: I am sixty-five.' JOHNSON: 'I shall be sixty-nine next birthday. Come, sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred.'

Mr. Edwards mentioned a gentleman who had left his whole fortune to Pembroke College. JOHNSON: 'Whether to leave one's whole fortune to a college be right, must depend upon circumstances. I would leave the interest of a fortune I bequeathed to a college to my relations or my friends for their lives. It is the same thing to a college, which is a permanent society, whether it gets the money now or twenty years hence; and I would wish to make my relations or friends feel the benefit of it.'

This interview confirmed my opinion of Johnson's most humane and benevolent heart. His cordial and placid behaviour to an old fellow-collegian, a man so different from himself; and his telling him that he would go down to his farm and visit him, showed a kindness of disposition very rare at an advanced age.

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[1] I am not absolutely sure but this was my own suggestion, though it is truly in the character of Edwards.

He observed 'how wonderful it was that they had both been in London forty years without having ever once met, and both walkers in the street too!' Mr. Edwards, when going away, again recurred to his consciousness of senility, and looking full in Johnson's face, said to him, 'You 'll find in Dr. Young,

'"Oh my coevals! remnants of yourselves."'

Johnson did not relish this at all; but shook his head with impatience. Edwards walked off seemingly highly pleased with the honour of having been thus noticed by Dr. Johnson. When he was gone I said to Johnson I thought him but a weak man. JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir. Here is a man who has passed through life without experience: yet I would rather have him with me than a more sensible man who will not talk readily. This man is always willing to say what he has to say.' Yet Dr. Johnson had himself by no means that willingness which he praised so much, and I think so justly; for who has not felt the painful effect of the dreary void, when there is a total silence in a company for any length of time; or, which is as bad, or perhaps worse, when the conversation is with difficulty kept up by a perpetual effort?

Johnson once observed to me, 'Tom Tyers described me the best: "Sir (said he), you are like a ghost: you never speak till you are spoken to."'

The gentleman whom he thus familiarly mentioned was Mr. Thomas Tyers, son of Mr. Jonathan Tyers, the founder of that excellent place of public amusement, Vauxhall Gardens, which must ever be an estate to its proprietor, as it is peculiarly adapted to the taste of the English nation; there being a

mixture of curious show,—gay exhibition,—music, vocal and instrumental, not too refined for the general ear; for all which only a shilling is paid;[1] and, though last, not least, good eating and drinking for those who choose to purchase that regale. Mr. Thomas Tyers was bred to the law; but having a handsome fortune, vivacity of temper, and eccentricity of mind, he could not confine himself to the regularity of practice. He therefore ran about the world with a pleasant carelessness, amusing everybody by his desultory conversation. He abounded in anecdote, but was not sufficiently attentive to accuracy. I therefore cannot venture to avail myself much of a biographical sketch of Johnson which he published, being one among the various persons ambitious of appending their names to that of my illustrious friend. That sketch is, however, an entertaining little collection of fragments. Those which he published of Pope and Addison are of higher merit; but his fame must chiefly rest upon his *Political Conferences*, in which he introduces several eminent persons delivering their sentiments in the way of dialogue, and discovers a considerable share of learning, various knowledge, and discernment of character. This much may I be allowed to say of a man who was exceedingly obliging to me, and who lived with Dr. Johnson in as easy a manner as almost any of his very numerous acquaintance.

Mr. Edwards had said to me aside, that Dr. Johnson

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[1] In summer 1792, additional and more expensive decorations having been introduced, the price of admission was raised to 2s. I cannot approve of this. The company may be more select; but a number of the honest commonalty are, I fear, excluded from sharing in elegant and innocent entertainment. An attempt to abolish the 1s. gallery at the playhouse has been very properly counteracted.

should have been of a profession. I repeated the remark to Johnson that I might have his own thoughts on the subject. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it *would* have been better that I had been of a profession. I ought to have been a lawyer.' BOSWELL: 'I do not think, sir, it would have been better, for we should not have had the *English Dictionary*.' JOHNSON: 'But you would have had reports.' BOSWELL: 'Ay; but there would not have been another who could have written the *Dictionary*. There would have been many very good judges. Suppose you had been Lord Chancellor, you would have delivered opinions with more extent of mind and in a more ornamental manner than perhaps any Chancellor ever did, or ever will do. But, I believe, causes have been as judiciously decided as you could have done.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir. Property has been as well settled.'

Johnson, however, had a noble ambition floating in his mind, and had, undoubtedly, often speculated on the possibility of his supereminent powers being rewarded in this great and liberal country by the highest honours of the state. Sir William Scott informs me that upon the death of the late Lord Lichfield, who was Chancellor of the University of Oxford, he said to Johnson, 'What a pity it is, sir, that you did not follow the profession of the law. You might have been Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, and attained to the dignity of the Peerage; and now that the title of Lichfield, your native city, is extinct, you might have had it.' Johnson upon this seemed much agitated, and in an angry tone exclaimed: 'Why will you vex me by suggesting this, when it is too late?'

But he did not repine at the prosperity of others.

The late Dr. Thomas Leland told Mr. Courtenay that when Mr. Edmund Burke showed Johnson his fine house and lands near Beaconsfield, Johnson coolly said, *Non equidem invideo; miror magis.*'[1]

Yet no man had a higher notion of the dignity of literature than Johnson, or was more determined in maintaining the respect which he justly considered as due to it. Of this, besides the general tenor of his conduct in society, some characteristical instances may be mentioned.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that once when he dined in a numerous company of booksellers, where, the room being small, the head of the table at which he sat was almost close to the fire, he persevered in suffering a great deal of inconvenience from the heat rather than quit his place, and let one of them sit above him.

Goldsmith in his diverting simplicity complained

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[1] I am not entirely without suspicion that Johnson may have felt a little momentary envy; for no man loved the good things of this life better than he did; and he could not but be conscious that he deserved a much larger share of them than he ever had. I attempted in a newspaper to comment on the above passage in the manner of Warburton, who must be allowed to have shown uncommon ingenuity, in giving to any author's text whatever meaning he chose it should carry. As this imitation may amuse my readers, I shall here introduce it:

'No saying of Dr. Johnson's has been more misunderstood than his applying to Mr. Burke when he first saw him at his fine place at Beaconsfield, *Non equidem invideo; miror magis.* These two celebrated men had been friends for many years before Mr. Burke entered on his Parliamentary career. They were both writers, both members of the Literary Club; when, therefore, Dr. Johnson saw Mr. Burke in a situation so much more splendid than that to which he himself had attained, he did not mean to express that he thought it a disproportionate prosperity; but while he, as a philosopher, asserted an exemption from envy, *non equidem invideo*, he went on in the words of the poet, *miror magis*: thereby signifying either that he was occupied in admiring what he was glad to see; or, perhaps, that considering the general lot of men of superior abilities, he wondered that Fortune, who is represented as blind, should in this instance have been so just.'

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 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.' JOHNSON: 'Well, sir, Garrick talked very properly. Lord Camden *was* a *little lawyer* to be associating so familiarly with a player.'

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.

Having fallen into a very serious frame of mind, in which mutual expressions of kindness passed between us, such as would be thought too vain in me to repeat, I talked with regret of the sad, inevitable certainty

that one of us must survive the other. JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, 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."' BOSWELL: 'The hope that we shall see our departed friends again must support the mind.' JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir.' BOSWELL: '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.' JOHNSON: '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.*' BOSWELL: 'True, sir, we may carry our books in our heads; but still there is something painful in the thought of leaving for ever what has given us pleasure. I remember, many years ago, when my imagination was warm, and I happened to be in a melancholy mood, it distressed me to think of going into a state of being in which Shakespeare's poetry did not exist. A lady whom I then much admired, a very amiable woman, humoured my fancy, and relieved me by saying, "The first thing you will meet in the other world will be an elegant copy of Shakespeare's works presented to you."' Dr. Johnson smiled benignantly at this, and did not appear to disapprove of the notion.

We went to St. Clement's Church again in the afternoon, and then returned and drank tea and coffee in Mrs. Williams's room, Mrs. Desmoulins doing the honours of the tea-table. I observed that he would

not even look at a proof-sheet of his *Life of Waller* on Good Friday.

Mr. Allen, the printer, brought a book on agriculture, which was printed and was soon to be published. It was a very strange performance, the author having mixed in it his own thoughts upon various topics, along with his remarks on ploughing, sowing, and other farming operations. He seemed to be an absurd, profane fellow, and had introduced in his book many sneers at religion, with equal ignorance and conceit. Dr. Johnson permitted me to read some passages aloud. One was that he resolved to work on Sunday, and did work, but he owned he felt *some* weak compunction; and he had this very curious reflection:—'I was born in the wilds of Christianity, and the briars and thorns still hang about me.' Dr. Johnson could not help laughing at this ridiculous image, yet was very angry at the fellow's impiety. 'However (said he), the reviewers will make him hang himself.' He, however, observed, 'that formerly there might have been a dispensation obtained for working on Sunday in the time of harvest.' Indeed in ritual observances, were all the ministers of religion what they should be, and what many of them are, such a power might be wisely and safely lodged with the Church.

On Saturday, April 18, I drank tea with him. He praised the late Mr. Duncombe of Canterbury as a pleasing man. 'He used to come to me; I did not seek much after *him*. Indeed I never sought much after anybody.' BOSWELL: 'Lord Orrery, I suppose.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; I never went to him but when he sent for me.' BOSWELL: 'Richardson?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir. But I sought after George Psalmanazar the

most. I used to go and sit with him at an alehouse in the city.'

I am happy to mention another instance which I discovered of his *seeking after* a man of merit. Soon after the Honourable Daines Barrington had published his excellent *Observations on the Statutes*, Johnson waited on that worthy and learned gentleman; and having told him his name, courteously said, 'I have read your book, sir, with great pleasure, and wish to be better known to you.' Thus began an acquaintance which was continued with mutual regard as long as Johnson lived.

Talking of a recent seditious delinquent,[1] he said, 'They should set him in the pillory that he may be punished in a way that would disgrace him.' I observed, that the pillory does not always disgrace. And I mentioned the instance of a gentleman,[2] who I thought was not dishonoured by it. JOHNSON: 'Ay, but he was, sir. He could not mouth and strut as he used to do after having been there. People are not willing to ask a man to their tables who has stood in the pillory.'

The gentleman who had dined with us at Dr. Percy's came in. Johnson attacked the Americans with intemperate vehemence of abuse. I said something in their favour; and added that I was always sorry when he talked on that subject. This, it seems, exasperated him; though he said nothing at the time. The cloud was charged with sulphureous vapour, which was afterwards to burst in thunder. We talked of a gentleman who was running out his fortune in London; and I

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1 [Horne Tooke.—A. B.]

2 [Croker thought Dr. Shebbeare was meant.—A. B.]

said, 'We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, we'll send *you* to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will.' This was a horrible shock, for which there was no visible cause. I afterwards asked him why he had said so harsh a thing. JOHNSON: 'Because, sir, you made me angry about the Americans.' BOSWELL: 'But why did you not take your revenge directly?' JOHNSON (smiling): 'Because, sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has weapons.' This was a candid and pleasant confession.

He showed me to-night his drawing-room, very genteelly fitted up; and said, 'Mrs. Thrale sneered when I talked of my having asked you and your lady to live at my house. I was obliged to tell her that you would be in as respectable a situation in my house as in hers. Sir, the insolence of wealth will creep out.' BOSWELL: 'She has a little both of the insolence of wealth and the conceit of parts.' JOHNSON: 'The insolence of wealth is a wretched thing; but the conceit of parts has some foundation. To be sure it should not be. But who is without it?' BOSWELL: 'Yourself, sir.' JOHNSON: 'Why, I play no tricks, I lay no traps.' BOSWELL: 'No, sir. You are six feet high, and you only do not stoop.'

We talked of the numbers of people that sometimes have composed the household of great families. I mentioned that there were a hundred in the family of the present Earl of Eglintoune's father. Dr. Johnson seeming to doubt it, I began to enumerate. 'Let us see: my Lord and my Lady two.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, if you are to count by twos, you may be long

enough.' BOSWELL: 'Well, but now I add two sons and seven daughters, and a servant for each, that will make twenty; so we have the fifth part already.' JOHNSON: 'Very true. You get at twenty pretty readily; but you will not so readily get farther on. We grow to five feet pretty readily; but it is not so easy to grow to seven.'

On Sunday, April 19, being Easter Day, after the solemnities of the festival in St. Paul's Church, I visited him but could not stay to dinner. I expressed a wish to have the arguments for Christianity always in readiness, that my religious faith may be as firm and clear as any proposition whatever, so that I need not be under the least uneasiness when it should be attacked. JOHNSON: '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 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.

On Monday, April 20, I found him at home in the morning. We talked of a gentleman who we apprehended was gradually involving his circumstances by bad management. JOHNSON: 'Wasting a fortune is

evaporation by a thousand imperceptible means. If it were a stream, they'd stop it. You must speak to him. It is really miserable. Were he a gamester, it could be said he had hopes of winning. Were he a bankrupt in trade, he might have grown rich; but he has neither spirit to spend, nor resolution to spare. He does not spend fast enough to have pleasure from it. He has the crime of prodigality, and the wretchedness of parsimony. If a man is killed in a duel, he is killed as many a one has been killed; but it is a sad thing for a man to lie down and die; to bleed to death because he has not fortitude enough to sear the wound, or even to stitch it up.' I cannot but pause a moment to admire the fecundity of fancy and choice of language, which in this instance, and indeed on almost all occasions, he displayed. It was well observed by Dr. Percy, now Bishop of Dromore, 'The conversation of Johnson is strong and clear, and may be compared to an antique statue, where every vein and muscle is distinct and bold. Ordinary conversation resembles an inferior cast.'

On Saturday, April 25, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the learned Dr. Musgrave,[1] Counsellor Leland of Ireland, son to the historian, Mrs. Cholmondeley, and some more ladies. *The Project*, a new poem, was read to the company by Dr. Musgrave. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it has no power. Were it not for the well-known names with which it is filled it would be nothing; the names carry the poet, not the poet the names.' MUSGRAVE: 'A temporary poem

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[1] [Samuel Musgrave, M.D., Editor of *Euripides*, and author of *Dissertations on the Grecian Mythology*, etc., published in 1782, after his death, by Mr. Tyrwhitt.—M.]

always entertains us.' JOHNSON: 'So does an account of the criminals hanged yesterday entertain us.'

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

Mrs. Cholmondeley, in a high flow of spirits, exhibited some lively sallies of hyperbolical compliment to Johnson, with whom she had been long acquainted, and was very easy. He was quick in catching the *manner* of the moment, and answered her somewhat in the style of the hero of a romance, 'Madam, you crown me with unfading laurels.'

I happened, I know not how, to say that a pamphlet meant a prose piece. JOHNSON: 'No, sir. A few sheets of poetry unbound are a pamphlet,[1] as much as a few sheets of prose.' MUSGRAVE: 'A pamphlet may be understood to mean a poetical piece in Westminster Hall, that is, in formal language; but in common language it is understood to mean prose.'

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[1] [Dr. Johnson is here perfectly correct, and is supported by the usage of preceding writers. So in *Musarum Deliciæ*, a collection of poems, 8vo, 1656 (the writer is speaking of Suckling's play entitled *Aglaura*, printed in folio):

> 'This great voluminous *pamphlet* may be said,
> To be like one that hath more hair than head.'—M.]

JOHNSON (and here was one of the many instances of his knowing clearly and telling exactly how a thing is): 'A pamphlet is understood in common language to mean prose, only from this, that there is so much more prose written than poetry; as when we say a *book*, prose is understood for the same reason, though a book may as well be in poetry as in prose. We understand what is most general, and we name what is less frequent.'

We talked of a lady's verses on Ireland. MISS REYNOLDS: 'Have you seen them, sir?' JOHNSON: 'No, madam, I have seen a translation from Horace, by one of her daughters. She showed it me.' MISS REYNOLDS: 'And how was it, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Why, very well for a young Miss's verses;—that is to say, compared with excellence, nothing; but very well for the person who wrote them. I am vexed at being shown verses in that manner.' MISS REYNOLDS: 'But if they should be good, why not give them hearty praise?' JOHNSON: 'Why, madam, because I have not then got the better of my bad humour from having been shown them. You must consider, madam, beforehand, 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 shows 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.' JOHNSON: '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.' JOHNSON: 'But you can be *sure* of neither; and therefore I should 'scruple 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 JOSHUA REYNOLDS: 'The *Beggar's Opera* affords a proof how strangely people

will differ in opinion about a literary performance. Burke thinks it has no merit.' JOHNSON: '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.'

We went to the drawing-room, where was a considerable increase of company. Several of us got round Dr. Johnson, and complained that he would not give us an exact catalogue of his works, that there might be a complete edition. He smiled, and evaded our entreaties. That he intended to do it, I have no doubt, because I have heard him say so; and I have in my possession an imperfect list, fairly written out, which he entitles *Historia Studiorum*. I once got from one of his friends a list, which there was pretty good reason to suppose was accurate, for it was written down in his presence by this friend, who enumerated each article aloud, and had some of them mentioned to him by Mr. Levett, in concert with whom it was made out; and Johnson, who heard all this, did not contradict it. But when I showed a copy of this list to him, and mentioned the evidence for its exactness, he laughed and said, 'I was willing to let them go on as they pleased, and never interfered.' Upon which I read it to him, article by article, and got him positively to own or refuse; and then, having obtained certainty so far, I got some other articles confirmed by him directly, and afterwards, from time to time, made additions under his sanction.

His friend, Edward Cave, having been mentioned,

he told us, 'Cave used to sell ten thousand of the *Gentleman's Magazine*; yet such was then his minute attention and anxiety that the sale should not suffer the smallest decrease, that he would name a particular person who he heard had talked of leaving off the Magazine, and would say, "Let us have something good next month."'

It was observed that avarice was inherent in some dispositions. JOHNSON: 'No man was born a miser, because no man was born to possession. Every man is born *cupidus*—desirous of getting; but not *avarus*,—desirous of keeping.' BOSWELL: 'I have heard old Mr. Sheridan maintain, with much ingenuity, that a complete miser is a happy man; a miser who gives himself wholly to the one passion of saving.' JOHNSON: 'That is flying in the face of all the world, who have called an avaricious man a *miser*, because he is miserable. No, sir; a man who both spends and saves money is the happiest man, because he has both enjoyments.'

The conversation having turned on *Bon-mots*, he quoted, from one of the *Ana*, an exquisite instance of flattery in a maid of honour in France, who being asked by the Queen what o'clock it was, answered, 'What your Majesty pleases.' He admitted that Mr. Burke's classical pun upon Mr. Wilkes's being carried on the shoulders of the mob,

> '. . . numerisque fertur
> Lege solutus,'[1]

was admirable; and though he was strangely unwilling to allow to that extraordinary man the talent of

[1] Hor. *Carm.* Lib. iv. Od. ii. 11.

wit,[1] he also laughed with approbation at another of his playful conceits; which was, that 'Horace has in one line given a description of a good desirable manor:[2]

'"Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines,"[3]—

that is to say, a *modus* as to the tithes, and certain *fines*.'

He observed, 'A man cannot with propriety speak of himself, except he relates simple facts; as, "I was at Richmond": or what depends on mensuration; as, "I am six feet high." He is sure he has been at Richmond; he is sure he is six feet high; but he cannot be sure he is wise, or that he has any other excellence. Then, all censure of a man's self is oblique praise. It is in order to show how much he can spare. It has all the invidiousness of self-praise, and all the reproach of falsehood.' BOSWELL: 'Sometimes it may proceed from a man's strong consciousness of his faults being observed. He knows that others would throw him down, and therefore he had better lie down softly of his own accord.'

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[1] See this question fully investigated in the notes upon my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit., p. 21, *et seq*. And here, as a lawyer mindful of the maxim *Suum cuique tribuito*, I cannot forbear to mention that the additional note beginning with 'I find since the former edition' is not mine, but was obligingly furnished by Mr. Malone, who was so kind as to superintend the press while I was in Scotland, and the first part of the second edition was printing. He would not allow me to ascribe it to its proper author; but, as it is exquisitely acute and elegant, I take this opportunity, without his knowledge, to do him justice.

[2] [This, as both Mr. Bindley and Dr. Kearney have observed to me, is the motto to *An Enquiry into Customary Estates and Tenants' Rights, etc.—with some considerations for restraining excessive fines*. By Everard Fleetwood, Esq., 8vo, 1731. But it is, probably, a mere coincidence. Mr. Burke perhaps never saw that pamphlet.—M.]

[3] 1 *Sat*. i. 106.

On Tuesday, April 28, he was engaged to dine at General Paoli's, where, as I have already observed, I was still entertained in elegant hospitality, and with all the ease and comfort of a home. I called on him, and accompanied him in a hackney-coach. We stopped first at the bottom of Hedge Lane, into which he went to leave a letter, 'with good news for a poor man in distress,' as he told me. I did not question him particularly as to this. He himself often resembled Lady Bolingbroke's lively description of Pope, that 'he was *un politique aux choux et aux raves*.' He would say, 'I dine to-day in Grosvenor Square'; this might be with a Duke; or, perhaps, 'I dine to-day at the other end of the town': or, 'A gentleman of great eminence called on me yesterday.' He loved thus to keep things floating in conjecture: *Omne ignotum pro magnifico est.* I believe I ventured to dissipate the cloud, to unveil the mystery, more freely and frequently than any of his friends. We stopped again at Wirgman's, the well-known *toy shop*, in St. James's Street, at the corner of St James's Place, to which he had been directed, but not clearly, for he searched about some time, and could not find it at first; and said, 'To direct me only to a corner shop is *toying* with one.' I suppose he meant this as a play upon the word *toy*; it was the first time that I knew him stoop to such sport. After he had been some time in the shop, he sent for me to come out of the coach, and help him to choose a pair of silver buckles, as those he had were too small. Probably this alteration in dress had been suggested by Mrs. Thrale, by associating with whom his external appearance was much improved. He got better clothes; and

the dark colour, from which he never deviated, was enlivened by metal buttons. His wigs, too, were much better; and during their travels in France, he was furnished with a Paris-made wig, of handsome construction. This choosing of silver buckles was a negotiation: 'Sir (said he), I will not have the ridiculous large ones now in fashion; and I will give no more than a guinea for a pair.' Such were the *principles* of the business; and, after some examination, he was fitted. As we drove along, I found him in a talking humour, of which I availed myself. BOSWELL: 'I was this morning in Ridley's shop, sir; and was told that the collection called *Johnsoniana* has sold very much.' JOHNSON: 'Yet the *Journey to the Hebrides* has not had a great sale.'[1] BOSWELL: 'That is strange.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; for in that book I have told the world a great deal that they did not know before.'

BOSWELL: 'I drank chocolate, sir, this morning with Mr. Eld; and, to my no small surprise, found him to be a *Staffordshire Whig*, a being which I did not believe had existed.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, there are rascals in all countries.' BOSWELL: 'Eld said, a Tory was a creature generated between a non-juring parson and one's grandmother.' JOHNSON: 'And I have always said, the first Whig was the Devil.' BOSWELL: 'He certainly was, sir. The Devil was impatient

[1] Here he either was mistaken, or had a different notion of an extensive sale from what is generally entertained: for the fact is, that four thousand copies of that excellent work were sold very quickly. A new edition has been printed since his death, besides that in the collection of his works.

[Another edition has been printed since Mr. Boswell wrote the above, besides repeated editions in the general collection of his works during the last ten years.—M.]

of subordination; he was the first who resisted power:

'"Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."'

At General Paoli's were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr Langton, Marchese Gherardi of Lombardy, and Mr. John Spottiswoode the younger, of Spottiswoode,[1] the solicitor. At this time fears of invasion were circulated; to obviate which, Mr. Spottiswoode observed, that Mr. Fraser the engineer, who had lately come from Dunkirk, said, that the French had the same fears of us. JOHNSON: 'It is thus that mutual cowardice keeps us in peace. Were one half of mankind brave, and one half cowards, the brave would be always beating the cowards. Were all brave, they would lead a very uneasy life; all would be continually fighting; but being all cowards, we go on very well.'

We talked of drinking wine. JOHNSON: 'I require wine, only when I am alone. I have then often wished for it, and often taken it.' SPOTTISWOODE: 'What, by way of a companion, sir?' JOHNSON: 'To get rid of myself, to send myself away. Wine gives great pleasure, and every pleasure is of itself a good. It is a good, unless counterbalanced by evil. A man may have a strong reason not to drink wine; and that may be greater than the pleasure. Wine makes a man better pleased with himself. I do not say that it makes him more pleasing to others. Some-

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[1] In the phraseology of Scotland, I should have said, 'Mr. John Spottiswoode the younger, *of that ilk*.' Johnson knew that sense of the word very well, and has thus explained it in his *Dictionary*, *voce* ILK—'It also signifies "the same"; as *Mackintosh of that ilk*, denotes a gentleman whose surname and the title of his estate are the same.'

times it does. But the danger is, that while a man grows better pleased with himself, he may be growing less pleasing to others.[1] Wine gives a man nothing. It neither gives him knowledge nor wit; it only animates a man, and enables him to bring out what a dread of the company has repressed. It only puts in motion what has been locked up in frost. But this may be good, or it may be bad.' SPOTTISWOODE: 'So, sir, wine is a key which opens a box; but this box may be either full or empty?' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, conversation is the key, wine is a pick-lock, which forces open the box, and injures it. A man should cultivate his mind so as to have that confidence and readiness without wine, which wine gives.' BOSWELL: 'The great difficulty of resisting wine is from benevolence. For instance, a good worthy man asks you to taste his wine, which he has had twenty years in his cellar' JOHNSON: 'Sir, all this notion about benevolence arises from a man's imagining himself to be of more importance to others than he really is. They don't care a farthing whether he drinks wine or not.' SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: 'Yes, they do for the time.' JOHNSON: 'For the time!—if they care this minute, they forget it the next. And as for the good worthy man; how do you know he is good and worthy? No good and worthy man will insist upon another man's drinking wine. As to the wine twenty years in the cellar—of ten men, three say this, merely because

[1] It is observed in Waller's Life, in the *Biographia Britannica*, that he drank only water; and that while he sat in a company who were drinking wine, 'he had the dexterity to accommodate his discourse to the pitch of theirs as it *sunk*.' If excess in drinking be meant, the remark is acutely just. But surely a moderate use of wine gives a gaiety of spirits which water-drinkers know not.

they must say something; three are telling a lie, when they say they have had the wine twenty years; three would rather save the wine; one, perhaps, cares. I allow it is something to please one's company; and people are always pleased with those who partake pleasure with them. But after a man has brought himself to relinquish the great personal pleasure which arises from drinking wine, any other consideration is a trifle. To please others by drinking wine, is something only, if there be nothing against it. I should, however, be sorry to offend worthy men:

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

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

> '"*Si patriæ volumus, si* Nobis *vivere cari.*"

I was at this time myself a water-drinker, upon trial, by Johnson's recommendation. Johnson: 'Boswell is a bolder combatant than Sir Joshua; he argues for wine without the help of wine; but Sir Joshua with it.' Sir Joshua Reynolds: 'But to please one's company is a strong motive.' Johnson (who from

drinking only water, supposed everybody who drank wine to be elevated): 'I won't argue any more with you, sir. You are too far gone.' SIR JOSHUA: 'I should have thought so indeed, sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done.' JOHNSON (drawing himself in, and I really thought blushing): 'Nay, don't be angry. I did not mean to offend you.' SIR JOSHUA: 'At first the taste of wine was disagreeable to me; but I brought myself to drink it, that I might be like other people. The pleasure of drinking wine is so connected with pleasing your company, that altogether there is something of social goodness in it.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, this is only saying the same thing over again.' SIR JOSHUA: 'No, this is new.' JOHNSON: 'You put it in new words, but it is an old thought. This is one of the disadvantages of wine, it makes a man mistake words for thoughts.' BOSWELL: 'I think it is a new thought; at least, it is a new *attitude*.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, it is only in a new coat; or an old coat with a new facing. (Then laughing heartily) It is the old dog in a new doublet.—An extraordinary instance, however, may occur where a man's patron will do nothing for him unless he will drink: *there* may be a good reason for drinking.'

I mentioned a nobleman, who I believed was really uneasy if his company would not drink hard. JOHNSON: 'That is from having had people about him whom he has been accustomed to command.' BOSWELL: 'Supposing I should be *tête-à-tête* with him at table.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, there is no more reason for your drinking with *him*, than his being sober with *you*. BOSWELL: 'Why, that is true; for it would do him less hurt to be sober, than it would do me to get

drunk.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; and from what I have heard of him, one would not wish to sacrifice himself to such a man. If he must always have somebody to drink with him, he should buy a slave, and then he would be sure to have it. They who submit to drink as another pleases, make themselves his slaves.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, you will surely make allowance for the duty of hospitality. A gentleman who loves drinking comes to visit me.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, a man knows whom he visits; he comes to the table of a sober man.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, you and I should not have been so well received in the Highlands and Hebrides, if I had not drunk with our worthy friends. Had I drunk water only, as you did, they would not have been so cordial.' JOHNSON: 'Sir William Temple mentions, that in his travels through the Netherlands he had two or three gentlemen with him; and when a bumper was necessary, he put it on *them*. Were I to travel again through the islands, I would have Sir Joshua with me to take the bumpers.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, let me put a case: Suppose Sir Joshua should take a jaunt into Scotland; he does me the honour to pay me a visit at my house in the country; I am overjoyed at seeing him; we are quite by ourselves; shall I unsociably and churlishly let him sit drinking by himself? No, no, my dear Sir Joshua, you shall not be treated so, I *will* take a bottle with you.'

The celebrated Mrs. Rudd being mentioned—JOHNSON: 'Fifteen years ago I should have gone to see her.' SPOTTISWOODE: 'Because she was fifteen years younger?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; but now they have a trick of putting everything in the newspapers.'

He begged of General Paoli to repeat one of the introductory stanzas of the first book of Tasso's *Jerusalem*, which he did, and then Johnson found fault with the simile of sweetening the edges of a cup for a child, being transferred from Lucretius into an epic poem. The General said he did not imagine Homer's poetry was so ancient as is supposed, because he ascribes to a Greek colony circumstances of refinement not found in Greece itself at a later period, when Thucydides wrote. JOHNSON: 'I recollect but one passage quoted by Thucydides from Homer, which is not to be found in our copies of Homer's works; I am for the antiquity of Homer, and think that a Grecian colony by being nearer Persia might be more refined than the mother country.'

On Wednesday, April 29, I dined with him at Mr. Allan Ramsay's, where were Lord Binning, Dr. Robertson the historian, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen, widow of the Admiral, and mother of the present Viscount Falmouth; of whom, if it be not presumptuous in me to praise her, I would say, that her manners are the most agreeable, and her conversation the best, of any lady with whom I ever had the happiness to be acquainted. Before Johnson came we talked a good deal of him; Ramsay said he had always found him a very polite man, and that he treated him with great respect, which he did very sincerely. I said I worshipped him. ROBERTSON: 'But some of you spoil him: you should not worship him; you should worship no man.' BOSWELL: 'I cannot help worshipping him, he is so much superior to other men.' ROBERTSON: 'In criticism, and in wit and conversation, he is no doubt very

excellent; but in other respects he is not above other men; he will believe anything, and will strenuously defend the most minute circumstances connected with the Church of England.' BOSWELL: 'Believe me, Doctor, you are much mistaken as to this; for when you talk with him calmly in private, he is very liberal in his way of thinking.' ROBERTSON: 'He and I have been always very gracious; the first time I met him was one evening at Strahan's, when he had just had an unlucky altercation with Adam Smith, to whom he had been so rough, that Strahan, after Smith was gone, had remonstrated with him, and told him that I was coming soon, and that he was uneasy to think that he might behave in the same manner to me. "No, no, sir (said Johnson), I warrant you Robertson and I shall do very well." Accordingly he was gentle and good-humoured and courteous with me, the whole evening; and he has been so upon every occasion that we have met since. I have often said (laughing), that I have been in a great measure indebted to Smith for my good reception.' BOSWELL: 'His power of reasoning is very strong, and he has a peculiar art of drawing characters, which is as rare as good portrait-painting.' SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: 'He is undoubtedly admirable in this; but in order to mark the characters which he draws, he overcharges them, and gives people more than they really have, whether of good or bad.'

No sooner did he, of whom we had been thus talking so easily, arrive, than we were all as quiet as a school upon the entrance of the headmaster; and were very soon sat down to a table covered with such variety of good things, as contributed not a little to dispose him to be pleased.

RAMSAY: 'I am old enough to have been a contemporary of Pope. His poetry was highly admired in his lifetime, more a great deal than after his death.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it has not been less admired since his death; no authors ever had so much fame in their own lifetime as Pope and Voltaire; and Pope's poetry has been as much admired since his death as during his life; 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 superfetation, this teeming of the press in modern 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.' JOHN-

SON: 'Sir, you could not read it without the pleasure of verse.'[1]

We talked of antiquarian researches. JOHNSON: '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.' ROBERTSON: '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 afterwards received a much higher price for my writings. An author should sell his first 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.'

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[1] This experiment, which Madame Dacier made in vain, has since been tried in our own language, by the editor of *Ossian*, and we must either think very meanly of his abilities, or allow that Dr. Johnson was in the right. And Mr. Cowper, a man of real genius, has miserably failed in his blank verse translation.

Dr. Robertson expatiated on the character of a certain nobleman,[1] that he was one of the strongest-minded men that ever lived; that he would sit in company quite sluggish, while there was nothing to call forth his intellectual vigour; but the moment that any important subject was started, for instance, how this country is to be defended against a French invasion, he would rouse himself, and show his extraordinary talents with the most powerful ability and animation. JOHNSON: 'Yet this man cut his own throat. The true, strong, and sound mind is the mind that can embrace equally great things and small. Now I am told that the King of Prussia will say to a servant, "Bring me a bottle of such a wine, which came in such a year; it lies in such a corner of the cellars." I would have a man great in great things, and elegant in little things.' He said to me afterwards, when we were by ourselves: 'Robertson was in a mighty romantic humour, he talked of one whom he did not know; but I *downed* him with the King of Prussia.' 'Yes, sir (said I), you threw a *bottle* at his head.'

An ingenious gentleman was mentioned, concerning whom both Robertson and Ramsay agreed 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 observed, 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

[1] [Lord Clive.—A. B.]

of mind, I do not say; because every man feels his mind less firm at one time than another; but I think a man's being in a good or bad humour depends upon his will.' I, however, could not help thinking that a man's humour is often uncontrollable by his will.

Johnson harangued against drinking wine. 'A man (said he) may choose whether he will have abstemiousness and knowledge, or claret and ignorance.' Dr. Robertson (who is very companionable) was beginning to dissent as to the proscription of claret. JOHNSON (with a placid smile): 'Nay, sir, you shall not differ with me; as I have said that the man is most perfect who takes in the most things, I am for knowledge and claret.' ROBERTSON (holding a glass of generous claret in his hand): 'Sir, I can only drink your health.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I should be sorry if *you* should be ever in such a state as to be able to do nothing more.' ROBERTSON: 'Dr. Johnson, allow me to say that in one respect I have the advantage of you; when you were in Scotland you would not come to hear any of our preachers, whereas, when I am here, I attend your public worship without scruple, and, indeed, with great satisfaction.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, that is not so extraordinary: the King of Siam sent ambassadors to Louis the Fourteenth; but Louis the Fourteenth sent none to the King of Siam.'[1]

Here my friend, for once, discovered a want of knowledge, or forgetfulness; for Louis the Fourteenth did send an embassy to the King of Siam,[2] and the

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[1] Mrs. Piozzi confidently mentions this as having passed in Scotland. —*Anecdotes.*

[2] [The Abbé de Choisi was sent by Louis XIV. on an embassy to the King of Siam in 1683, with a view, it has been said, to convert the king of that country to Christianity.—M.]

Abbé Choisi, who was employed in it, published an account of it in two volumes.

Next day, Thursday, April 30, I found him at home by himself. JOHNSON: 'Well, sir, Ramsay gave us a splendid dinner. I love Ramsay. You will not find a man in whose conversation there is more instruction, more information, and more elegance than in Ramsay's.' BOSWELL: 'What I admire in Ramsay, is his continuing to be so young.' JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir, it is to be admired. I value myself upon this, that there is nothing of the old man in my conversation. I am now sixty-eight, and I have no more of it than at twenty-eight.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, would not you wish to know old age? He who is never an old man, does not know the whole of human life; for old age is one of the divisions of it.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, what talk is this?' BOSWELL: 'I mean, sir, the Sphinx's description of it;—morning, noon, and night. I would know night as well as morning and noon.' JOHNSON: 'What, sir, would you know what it is to feel the evils of old age? Would you have the gout? Would you have decrepitude?' Seeing him heated, I would not argue any further; but I was confident that I was in the right. I would, in due time, be a Nestor, an elder of the people; and there *should* be some difference between the conversation of twenty-eight and sixty-eight.[1] A grave picture should not be gay.

[1] Johnson clearly meant (what the author has often elsewhere mentioned), that he had none of the listlessness of old age, that he had the same *activity and energy of mind* as formerly; not that a man of sixty-eight might dance in a public assembly with as much propriety as he could at twenty-eight. His conversation, being the product of much various knowledge, great acuteness, and extraordinary wit, was equally well suited to every period of life; and as in his youth it probably did not exhibit any unbecoming levity, so certainly in his later years it was totally free from the garrulity and querulousness of old age.—M.]

There is a serene, solemn, placid old age. JOHNSON: 'Mrs. Thrale's mother said of me what flattered me much. A clergyman was complaining of want of society in the country where he lived, and said, "They talk of *runts*" (that is, young cows).[1] "Sir (said Mrs. Salusbury), Mr. Johnson would learn to talk of runts": meaning that I was a man who would make the most of my situation, whatever it was.' He added, 'I think myself a very polite man.'

On Saturday, May 2, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where there was a very large company, and a great deal of conversation; but owing to some circumstances which I cannot now recollect, I have no record of any part of it, except that there were several people there by no means of the Johnsonian school; so that less attention was paid to him than usual, which put him out of humour; and upon some imaginary offence from me, he attacked me with such rudeness, that I was vexed and angry, because it gave those persons an opportunity of enlarging upon his supposed ferocity, and ill treatment of his best friends. I was so much hurt, and had my pride so much roused, that I kept away from him for a week; and, perhaps, might have kept away much longer, nay, gone to Scotland without seeing him again, had not we fortunately met and been reconciled. To such unhappy chances are human friendships liable.

On Friday, May 8, I dined with him at Mr. Lang-

[1] [Such is the signification of this word in Scotland, and, it should seem, in Wales. (See Skinner in *v.*) But the heifers of Scotland and Wales, when brought to England, being always smaller than those of this country, the word *runt* has acquired a secondary sense, and generally signifies a heifer diminutive in size, small beyond the ordinary growth of that animal; and in this sense alone the word is acknowledged by Dr. Johnson in his *Dictionary*.—M.]

ton's. I was reserved and silent, which I suppose he perceived, and might recollect the cause. After dinner, when Mr. Langton was called out of the room, and we were by ourselves, he drew his chair near to mine, and said, in a tone of conciliating courtesy, 'Well, how have you done?' BOSWELL: 'Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behaviour to me when we were last at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear sir, no man has a greater respect and affection for you, or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. Now, to treat me so ——' He insisted that I had interrupted him, which I assured him was not the case; and proceeded—'But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?' JOHNSON: 'Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different ways, as you please.' BOSWELL: 'I said to-day to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you *tossed* me sometimes—I don't care how often, or how high he tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground; but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present. I think this is a pretty good image, sir.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is one of the happiest I have ever heard.'

The truth is, there was no venom in the wounds which he inflicted at any time, unless they were irritated by some malignant infusion by other hands. We were instantly as cordial again as ever, and joined in hearty laugh at some ludicrous but innocent peculiarities of one of our friends. BOSWELL: 'Do you think, sir, it is always culpable to laugh at a man to his face?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, that depends upon the man and the thing. If it is a slight man, and a

slight thing, you may; for you take nothing valuable from him.'

He said, 'I read yesterday 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.'

When Mr. Langton returned to us, the 'flow of talk' went on. An eminent author being mentioned —JOHNSON: 'He is not a pleasant man. His conversation is neither instructive nor brilliant. He does not talk as if impelled by any fulness of knowledge or vivacity of imagination. His conversation is like that of any other sensible man. He talks with no wish either to inform or to hear, but only because he thinks it does not become —— to sit in a company and say nothing.'

Mr. Langton having repeated the anecdote of Addison having distinguished between his powers in conversation and in writing by saying, 'I have only ninepence in my pocket; but I can draw for a thousand pounds'—JOHNSON: 'He had not that retort ready, sir; he had prepared it beforehand.' LANGTON (turning to me): 'A fine surmise. Set a thief to catch a thief.'

Johnson called the East Indians barbarians. Bos-

WELL: 'You will except the Chinese, sir?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir.' BOSWELL: 'Have they not arts?' JOHNSON: 'They have pottery.' BOSWELL: 'What do you say to the written characters of their language?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, they have not an alphabet. They have not been able to form what all other nations have formed.' BOSWELL: 'There is more learning in their language than in any other, from the immense number of their characters.' JOHNSON: 'It is only more difficult from its rudeness; as there is more labour in hewing down a tree with a stone than with an axe.'

He said, 'I have been reading Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man.* In treating of severity of punishment, he mentions that of Madame Lapouchin, in Russia, but he does not give it fairly; for I have looked at *Chappe d'Auteroche,* from whom he has taken it. He stops where it is said that the spectators thought her innocent, and leaves out what follows; that she nevertheless was guilty. Now this is being as culpable as one can conceive, to misrepresent fact in a book, and for what motive? It is like one of those lies which people tell, one cannot see why. The woman's life was spared; and no punishment was too great for the favourite of an Empress, who had conspired to dethrone her mistress.' BOSWELL: 'He was only giving a picture of the lady in her sufferings.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, don't endeavour to palliate this. Guilt is a principal feature in the picture. Kames is puzzled with a question that puzzled me when I was a very young man. Why is it that the interest of money is lower when money is plentiful; for five pounds has the same proportion of value to a hundred pounds when money is plentiful as when it is scarce? A lady

explained it to me. "It is (said she) because when money is plentiful there are so many more who have money to lend, that they bid down one another. Many have then a hundred pounds; and one says,—Take mine rather than another's, and you shall have it at four *per cent.*"' BOSWELL: 'Does Lord Kames decide the question?' JOHNSON: 'I think he leaves it as he found it.' BOSWELL: 'This must have been an extraordinary lady who instructed you, sir. May I ask who she was?' JOHNSON: 'Molly Aston,[1] sir, the sister of those ladies with whom you dined at Lichfield.—I shall be at home to-morrow.' BOSWELL: 'Then let us dine by ourselves at the Mitre, to keep up the old custom, "the custom of the manor," custom of the Mitre.' JOHNSON: 'So it shall be.'

On Saturday, May 9, we fulfilled our purpose of dining by ourselves at the Mitre, according to old custom. There was, on these occasions, a little circumstance of kind attention to Mrs. Williams, which

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[1] Johnson had an extraordinary admiration for this lady, notwithstanding she was a violent Whig. In answer to her high-flown speeches for *Liberty*, he addressed to her the following epigram, of which I presume to offer a translation:

> 'Liber ut esse velim, suasisti, pulcra Maria
> Ut maneam liber, pulcra Maria, vale.'

> (Adieu, Maria! since you'd have me free;
> For who beholds thy charms a slave must be.)

A correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, who subscribes himself Sciolus, to whom I am indebted for several excellent remarks, observes, 'The turn of Dr. Johnson's lines to Miss Aston, whose Whig principles he had been combating, appears to me to be taken from an ingenious epigram in the *Menagiana* (vol. iii. p. 376, edit. 1716), on a young lady who appeared at a masquerade, *habillé en Jesuite*, during the fierce contentions of the followers of Molinos and Jansenius concerning free-will:

> 'On s'etonne ici que Caliste,
> Ait pris l'habit de Moliniste.
> Puisque cette jeune beauté
> Ote a chacun sa liberté
> N'est ce pas une Janseniste?'

must not be omitted. Before coming out, and leaving her to dine alone, he gave her her choice of a chicken, a sweetbread, or any other little nice thing, which was carefully sent to her from the tavern, ready dressed.

Our conversation to-day, I know not how, turned, I think for the only time at any length during our long acquaintance, upon the sensual intercourse between the sexes, the delight of which he ascribed chiefly to imagination. 'Were it not for imagination, sir (said he), a man would be as happy in the arms of a chambermaid as of a duchess. But such is the adventitious charm of fancy, that we find men who have violated the best principles of society, and ruined their fame and their fortune, that they might possess a woman of rank.' It would not be proper to record the particulars of such a conversation in moments of unreserved frankness, when nobody was present on whom it could have any hurtful effect. That subject, when philosophically treated, may surely employ the mind in a curious discussion, and as innocently as anatomy; provided that those who do treat it keep clear of inflammatory incentives.

'From grave to gay, from lively to severe,'—we were soon engaged in very different speculation; humbly and reverently considering and wondering at the universal mystery of all things, as our imperfect faculties can now judge of them. 'There are (said he) innumerable questions to which the inquisitive mind can in this state receive no answer: Why do you and I exist? Why was this world created? Since it was to be created, why was it not created sooner?'

On Sunday, May 10, I supped with him at Mr. Hoole's, with Sir Joshua Reynolds. I have neglected the memorial of this evening, so as to remember no more of it than two particulars; one that he strenuously opposed an argument by Sir Joshua, that virtue was preferable to vice, considering this life only; and that a man would be virtuous were it only to preserve his character: and that he expressed much wonder at the curious formation of the bat, a mouse with wings; saying that it was almost as strange a thing in physiology as if the fabulous dragon could be seen.

On Tuesday, May 12, I waited on the Earl of Marchmont, to know if his Lordship would favour Dr. Johnson with information concerning Pope, whose life he was about to write. Johnson had not flattered himself with the hopes of receiving any civility from this nobleman; for he said to me, when I mentioned Lord Marchmont as one who could tell him a great deal about Pope, 'Sir, he will tell *me* nothing.' I had the honour of being known to his Lordship, and applied to him of myself, without being commissioned by Johnson. His Lordship behaved in the most polite and obliging manner, promised to tell all he recollected about Pope, and was so very courteous as to say, 'Tell Dr. Johnson I have a great respect for him, and am ready to show it in any way I can. I am to be in the city to-morrow, and will call at his house as I return.' His Lordship however asked, 'Will he write the *Lives of the Poets* impartially? He was the first that brought Whig and Tory into a dictionary. And what do you think of his definition of Excise? Do you know the history of his aversion to the word *transpire*?' Then taking

down the folio dictionary, he showed it with this censure on its secondary sense: '"To escape from secrecy to notice; a sense lately innovated from France, without necessity." The truth was, Lord Bolingbroke, who left the Jacobites, first used it; therefore it was to be condemned. He should have shown what word would do for it, if it was unnecessary.' I afterwards put the question to Johnson: 'Why, sir (said he), *get abroad.*' BOSWELL: 'That, sir, is using two words.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, there is no end of this. You may as well insist to have a word for old age. BOSWELL: 'Well, sir, *senectus.*' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, to insist always that there should be one word to express a thing in English, because there is one in another language, is to change the language.'

I availed myself of this opportunity to hear from his Lordship many particulars both of Pope and Lord Bolingbroke, which I have in writing.

I proposed to Lord Marchmont that he should revise Johnson's *Life of Pope.* 'So (said his Lordship), you would put me in a dangerous situation. You know he knocked down Osborne, the bookseller.'

Elated with the success of my spontaneous exertion to procure material and respectable aid to Johnson for his very favourite work, the *Lives of the Poets,* I hastened down to Mr. Thrale's at Streatham, where he now was, that I might ensure his being at home next day; and after dinner, when I thought he would receive the good news in the best humour, I announced it eagerly: 'I have been at work for you to-day, sir. I have been with Lord Marchmont. He bade me tell you he has a great respect for you, and will call on you

to-morrow at one o'clock, and communicate all he knows about Pope.' Here I paused, in full expectation that he would be pleased with this intelligence, would praise my active merit, and would be alert to embrace such an offer from a nobleman. But whether I had shown an over-exultation, which provoked his spleen; or whether he was seized with a suspicion that I had obtruded him on Lord Marchmont, and humbled him too much; or whether there was anything more than an unlucky fit of ill-humour, I know not; but, to my surprise, the result was,—JOHNSON: 'I shall not be in town to-morrow. I don't care to know about Pope.' MRS. THRALE (surprised as I was, and a little angry): 'I suppose, sir, Mr. Boswell thought, that as you are to write Pope's Life, you would wish to know about him.' JOHNSON: 'Wish! why yes. If it rained knowledge, I'd hold out my hand; but I would not give myself the trouble to go in quest of it.' There was no arguing with him at the moment. Some time afterwards he said, 'Lord Marchmont will call on me, and then I shall call on Lord Marchmont.' Mrs. Thrale was uneasy at his unaccountable caprice; and told me, that if I did not take care to bring about a meeting between Lord Marchmont and him, it would never take place, which would be a great pity. I sent a card to his Lordship, to be left at Johnson's house, acquainting him that Dr. Johnson could not be in town next day, but would do himself the honour of waiting on him at another time. I give this account fairly, as a specimen of that unhappy temper with which this great and good man had occasionally to struggle, from something morbid in his constitution. Let the most censorious of my

readers suppose himself to have a violent fit of the toothache, or to have received a severe stroke on the shin-bone, and when in such a state to be asked a question; and if he has any candour he will not be surprised at the answers which Johnson sometimes gave in moments of irritation, which, let me assure them, is exquisitely painful. But it must not be erroneously supposed that he was, in the smallest degree, careless concerning any work which he undertook, or that he was generally thus peevish. It will be seen that in the following year he had a very agreeable interview with Lord Marchmont, at his Lordship's house; and this very afternoon he soon forgot any fretfulness, and fell into conversation as usual.

I mentioned a reflection having been thrown out against four Peers for having presumed to rise in opposition to the opinion of the twelve judges, in a cause in the House of Lords, as if that were indecent. JOHNSON: 'Sir, there is no ground for censure. The Peers are judges themselves; and supposing them really to be of a different opinion, they might from duty be in opposition to the judges, who were there only to be consulted.'

In this observation I fully concurred with him; for, unquestionably, all the Peers are vested with the highest judicial powers; and when they are confident that they understand a cause, are not obliged, nay, ought not to acquiesce in the opinion of the ordinary law judges, or even in that of those who, from their studies and experience, are called the law lords. I consider the Peers in general as I do a jury, who ought to listen with respectful attention to the sages

of the law; but, if after hearing them, they have a firm opinion of their own, are bound as honest men to decide accordingly. Nor is it so difficult for them to understand even law questions as is generally thought; provided they will bestow sufficient attention upon them. This observation was made by my honoured relation to the late Lord Cathcart, who had spent his life in camps and courts; yet assured me, that he could form a clear opinion upon most of the causes that came before the House of Lords, 'as they were so well enucleated in the cases.'

Mrs. Thrale told us that a curious clergyman of our acquaintance had discovered a licentious stanza, which Pope had originally in his *Universal Prayer*, before the stanza,

> 'What conscience dictates to be done,
> Or warns us not to do,' etc.

It was this:

> 'Can sins of moment claim the rod
> Of everlasting fires?
> And that offend great Nature's God,
> Which Nature's self inspires?'

and that Dr. Johnson observed, 'it had been borrowed from Guarini.' There are, indeed, in *Pastor Fido*, many such flimsy, superficial reasonings, as that in the last two lines of this stanza.

BOSWELL: 'In that stanza of Pope's, '*rod of fires*' is certainly a bad metaphor.' MRS. THRALE: 'And "sins of *moment*" is a faulty expression; for its true import is *momentous*, which cannot be intended.' JOHNSON: 'It must have been written "of *moments*." Of *moment* is *momentous*; of *moments*, *momentary*. I

warrant you, however, Pope wrote this stanza, and some friend struck it out. Boileau wrote some such thing, and Arnaud struck it out, saying, "*Vous gagnerez deux ou trois impies, et perdrez je ne sais combien des honnêtes gens.*" These fellows want to say a daring thing, and don't know how to go about it. Mere poets know no more of fundamental principles than——' Here he was interrupted somehow. Mrs. Thrale mentioned Dryden. JOHNSON: 'He puzzled himself about predestination. How foolish it was in Pope to give all his friendship to Lords who thought they honoured him by being with him; and to choose such Lords as Burlington, and Cobham, and Bolingbroke? Bathurst was negative, a pleasing man; and I have heard no ill of Marchmont;—and then always saying, "I do not value you for being a Lord"; which was a sure proof that he did. I never say I do not value Boswell more for being born to an estate, because I do not care.' BOSWELL: 'Nor for being a Scotchman?' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, I do value you more for being a Scotchman. You are a Scotchman without the faults of Scotchmen. You would not have been so valuable as you are had you not been a Scotchman.'

Talking of divorces, I asked if Othello's doctrine was not plausible;

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

Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale joined against this. JOHNSON: 'Ask any man if he'd wish not to know of such an injury.' BOSWELL: 'Would you tell your friend to make him unhappy?' JOHNSON: 'Perhaps, sir, I should not; but that would be from prudence

on my own account. A man would tell his father.' BOSWELL: 'Yes; because he would not have spurious children to get any share of the family inheritance.' MRS. THRALE: 'Or he would tell his brother.' BOSWELL: 'Certainly, his *elder* brother.' JOHNSON: 'You would tell your friend of a woman's infamy, to prevent his marrying a whore: there is the same reason to tell him of his wife's infidelity, when he is married, to prevent the consequences of imposition. It is a breach of confidence not to tell a friend.' BOSWELL: 'Would you tell Mr. ——?' (naming a gentleman who assuredly was not in the least danger of such a miserable disgrace, though married to a fine woman). JOHNSON: 'No, sir; because it would do no good: he is so sluggish, he'd never go to Parliament and get through a divorce.'

He said of one of our friends, 'He is ruining himself without pleasure. A man who loses at play, or who runs out his fortune at court, makes his estate less, in hopes of making it bigger (I am sure of this word, which was often used by him); but it is a sad thing to pass through the quagmire of parsimony, to the gulf of ruin. To pass over the flowery path of extravagance is very well.'

Amongst the numerous prints pasted on the walls of the dining-room at Streatham, was Hogarth's 'Modern Midnight Conversation.' I asked him what he knew of Parson Ford, who makes a conspicuous figure in the riotous group. JOHNSON: 'Sir, he was my acquaintance and relation, my mother's nephew. He had purchased a living in the country, but not simoniacally. I never saw him but in the country. I have been told he was a man of great parts; very pro-

fligate, but I never heard he was impious.' BOSWELL: 'Was there not a story of his ghost having appeared?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it was believed. A waiter at the Hummums, in which house Ford died, had been absent for some time, and returned, not knowing that Ford was dead. Going down to the cellar, according to the story, he met him; going down again, he met him a second time. When he came up, he asked some of the people of the house what Ford could be doing there. They told him Ford was dead. The waiter took a fever, in which he lay for some time. When he recovered he said he had a message to deliver to some women from Ford; but he was not to tell what, or to whom. He walked out; he was followed; but somewhere about St. Paul's they lost him. He came back, and said he had delivered the message, and the women exclaimed, "Then we are all undone!" Dr. Pellet, who was not a credulous man, inquired into the truth of this story, and he said the evidence was irresistible. My wife went to the Hummums (it is a place where people get themselves cupped). I believe she went with intention to hear about this story of Ford. At first they were unwilling to tell her; but after they had talked to her, she came away satisfied that it was true. To be sure the man had a fever; and this vision may have been the beginning of it. But if the message to the women, and their behaviour upon it, were true, as related, there was something supernatural. That rests upon his word; and there it remains.'

After Mrs. Thrale was gone to bed, Johnson and I sat up late. We resumed Sir Joshua Reynolds's argument on the preceding Sunday, that a man would be virtuous, though he had no other motive than to

preserve his character. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is not true; for, as to this world, vice does not hurt a man's character.' BOSWELL: 'Yes, sir, debauching a friend's wife will.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir. Who thinks the worse of ——[1] for it?' BOSWELL: 'Lord ——[2] was not his friend.' JOHNSON: 'That is only a circumstance, sir, a slight distinction. He could not get into the house but by Lord ——. A man is chosen knight of the shire, not the less for having debauched ladies.' BOSWELL: 'What, sir, if he debauched the ladies of gentlemen in the county, will not there be a general resentment against him?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir. He will lose those particular gentlemen; but the rest will not trouble their heads about it' (warmly). BOSWELL: 'Well, sir, I cannot think so.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, there is no talking with a man who will dispute what everybody knows (angrily). Don't you know this?' BOSWELL: 'No, sir; and I wish to think better of your country than you represent it. I knew in Scotland a gentleman obliged to leave it for debauching a lady; and in one of our counties an Earl's brother lost his election, because he had debauched the lady of another Earl in that county, and destroyed the peace of a noble family.'

Still he would not yield. He proceeded: 'Will you not allow, sir, that vice does not hurt a man's character so as to obstruct his prosperity in life, when you know that ——[3] was loaded with wealth and honours; a man who had acquired his fortune by such crimes, that his consciousness of them impelled him to cut his own throat.' BOSWELL: 'You will recollect,

1 [Beauclerk.—A. B.] 2 [Bolingbroke.—A. B.]
3 [Lord Clive.—A. B.]

sir, that Dr. Robertson said, he cut his throat because he was weary of still life; little things not being sufficient to move his great mind.' JOHNSON (very angry): 'Nay, sir, what stuff is this? You had no more this opinion after Robertson said it, than before. I know nothing more offensive than repeating what one knows to be foolish things, by way of continuing a dispute, to see what a man will answer,—to make him your butt!' (angrier still.) BOSWELL: 'My dear sir, I had no such intention as you seem to suspect: I had not, indeed. Might not this nobleman have felt everything "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable," as Hamlet says?' JOHNSON: 'Nay, if you are to bring in gabble, I'll talk no more. I will not, upon my honour.' My readers will decide upon this dispute.

Next morning I stated to Mrs. Thrale at breakfast, before he came down, the dispute of last night as to the influence of character upon success in life. She said he was certainly wrong; and told me that a baronet lost an election in Wales, because he had debauched the sister of a gentleman in the country, whom he made one of his daughters invite as her companion at his seat in the country, when his lady and his other children were in London. But she would not encounter Johnson upon the subject.

I stayed all this day with him at Streatham. He talked a great deal in very good humour.

Looking at Messrs. Dilly's splendid edition of Lord Chesterfield's *Miscellaneous Works*, he laughed, and said, 'Here are now two speeches ascribed to him, both of which were written by me: and the best of it is, they have found out that one is like Demosthenes, and the other like Cicero.'

He censured Lord Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man* for misrepresenting Clarendon's account of the appearance of Sir George Villiers' 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 Kames 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.' BOSWELL: 'Is not modesty natural?' JOHNSON: 'I cannot say, sir, as we find no people quite in a state of nature; but I think the more they are taught the more modest they are. The French are a gross, ill-bred, untaught people; a lady there will spit on the floor and rub it with her foot. What I gained by being in France was learning to be better satisfied with my own country. Time may be employed to more advantage from nineteen to twenty-four, almost in any way than in travelling; when you set travelling against mere negation, against doing nothing, it is better to be sure; but how much more would a young man improve were he to study during those years. Indeed, if a young man is wild, and must run after women and bad company, it is better this should be done abroad, as, on his return, he can break off such connections, and begin at home a new man, with a character to form, and acquaintances to

make. How little does travelling supply to the conversation of any man who has travelled; how little to Beauclerk?' BOSWELL: 'What say you to Lord ——?' JOHNSON: 'I never but once heard him talk of what he had seen, and that was of a large serpent in one of the pyramids of Egypt.' BOSWELL: 'Well, I happened to hear him tell the same thing, which made me mention him.'[1]

I talked of a country life. JOHNSON: 'Were I to live in the country, I would not devote myself to the acquisition of popularity; I would live in a much better way, much more happily; I would have my time at my own command.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, is it not a sad thing to be at a distance from all our literary friends?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you will by-and-by have enough of this conversation which now delights you so much.'

As he was a zealous friend of subordination, he was at all times watchful to repress the vulgar cant against the manners of the great: 'High people, sir (said he), are the best; take a hundred ladies of quality, you'll find them better wives, better mothers, more willing to sacrifice their own pleasure to their children, than a hundred other women. Tradeswomen (I mean the wives of tradesmen) in the city, who are worth from £10,000 to £15,000, are the worst creatures upon the earth, grossly ignorant, and thinking viciousness fashionable. Farmers, I think, are often worthless fellows. Few lords will cheat; and if they do they'll be ashamed of it: farmers cheat and are not ashamed of it: they have all the sensual vices, too, of the

[1] [Lord Charlemont, who, according to Croker, used to bore his friends with this story until his last gasp.—A. B.]

nobility, with cheating into the bargain. There is as much fornication and adultery amongst farmers as amongst noblemen.' BOSWELL: 'The notion of the world, sir, however, is, that the morals of women of quality are worse than those in lower stations.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, the licentiousness of one woman of quality makes more noise than that of a number of women in lower stations; then, sir, you are to consider the malignity of women in the city against women of quality, which will make them believe anything of them, such as that they call their coachmen to bed. No, sir, so far as I have observed, the higher in rank the richer ladies are, they are the better instructed and the more virtuous.'

This year the Reverend Mr. Horne 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[1] of Mr. Horne's etymologies; I hope they did not put the dog in the pillory for his libel; he has too much literature for that.'

On Saturday, May 16, I dined with him at Mr. Beauclerk's with Mr. Langton, Mr. Steevens, Dr. Higgins, and some others. I regret very feelingly every instance of my remissness in recording his *memorabilia*; I am afraid it is the condition of humanity (as Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, once ob-

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[1] In Mr. Horne Tooke's enlargement of that *Letter*, which he has since published with the title of 'Επεα πτερόεντα; *or*, *the Diversions of Purley*, he mentions this compliment as if Dr. Johnson, instead of *several* of his etymologies, had said *all*. His recollection having thus magnified it, shows how ambitious he was of the approbation of so great a man.

served to me, after having made an admirable speech in the House of Commons, which was highly applauded, but which he afterwards perceived might have been better), 'that we are more uneasy from thinking of our wants, than happy in thinking of our acquisitions.' This is an unreasonable mode of disturbing our tranquillity, and should be corrected; let me then comfort myself with the large treasure of Johnson's conversation which I have preserved for my own enjoyment and that of the world, and let me exhibit what I have upon each occasion, whether more or less, whether a bulse, or only a few sparks of a diamond.

He said, 'Dr. Mead lived more in the broad sunshine of life than almost any man.'

The disaster of General Burgoyne's army was then the common topic of conversation. It was asked why piling their arms was insisted upon as a matter of such consequence, when it seemed to be a circumstance so inconsiderable in itself? JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, a French author says, "*Il y a beaucoup de puerilités dans la guerre.*" All distinctions are trifles, because great things can seldom occur, and those distinctions are settled by custom. A savage would as willingly have his meat sent to him in the kitchen, as eat it at the table here: as men become civilised, various modes of denoting honourable preference are invented.'

He this day made the observations upon the similarity between *Rasselas* and *Candide*, which I have inserted in its proper place, when considering his admirable philosophical romance. He said *Candide* he thought had more power in it than anything that Voltaire had written.

He said, 'The lyrical part of Horace never can be perfectly translated; so much of the excellence is in the numbers and the expression. Francis has done it the best; I'll take his, five out of six, against them all.'

On Sunday, May 17, I presented to him Mr. Fullarton, of Fullarton, who has since distinguished himself so much in India, to whom he naturally talked of travels, as Mr. Brydone accompanied him in his tour to Sicily and Malta. He said, 'The information which we have from modern travellers is much more authentic than what we had from ancient travellers; ancient travellers guessed; modern travellers measure. The Swiss admit that there is but one error in Stanyan. If Brydone were more attentive to his Bible he would be a good traveller.'

He said, 'Lord Chatham was a Dictator; he possessed the power of putting the State in motion; now there is no power; all order is relaxed.' BOSWELL: 'Is there no hope of a change to the better?' JOHNSON: 'Why, yes, sir, when we are weary of this relaxation. So the city of London will appoint its mayors again by seniority. BOSWELL: 'But is not that taking a mere chance for having a good or a bad mayor?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; but the evil of competition is greater than that of the worst mayor that can come; besides, there is no more reason to suppose that the choice of a rabble will be right, than that chance will be right.'

On Tuesday, May 19, I was to set out for Scotland in the evening. He was engaged to dine with me at Mr. Dilly's; I waited upon him to remind him of his appointment and attend him thither; he gave me

some salutary counsel, and recommended vigorous resolution against any deviation from moral duty. BOSWELL: 'But you would not have me to bind myself by a solemn obligation?' JOHNSON (much agitated): 'What! a vow?—O no, sir, a vow is a horrible thing, it is a snare for sin. The man who cannot go to heaven without a vow, may go——' Here standing erect, in the middle of his library, and rolling grand, his pause was truly a curious compound of the solemn and the ludicrous; he half whistled in his usual way, when pleasant, and he paused, as if checked by religious awe. Methought he would have added—to Hell—but was restrained. I humoured the dilemma. 'What! sir (said I), "*In cælum jusseris ibit?*"' alluding to his imitation of it,

> 'And bid him go to Hell, to Hell he goes.'

I had mentioned to him a slight fault in his noble *Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal*, a too near recurrence of the verb *spread*, in his description of the young Enthusiast at College:

> 'Through all his veins the fever of renown,
> *Spreads* from the strong contagion of the gown;
> O'er Bodley's dome his future labours *spread*,
> And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.'

He had desired me to change *spreads* to *burns*, but for perfect authenticity, I now had it done with his own hand.[1] I thought this alteration not only cured the fault, but was more poetical, as it might carry an allusion to the shirt by which Hercules was inflamed.

[1] The slip of paper on which he made the correction is deposited by me in the noble library to which it relates, and to which I have presented other pieces of his handwriting.

We had a quiet, comfortable meeting at Mr. Dilly's; nobody there but ourselves. Mr. Dilly mentioned somebody having wished that Milton's *Tractate on Education* should be printed along with his poems in the edition of the *English Poets* then going on. JOHNSON: 'It would be breaking in upon the plan; but would be of no great consequence. So far as it would be anything, it would be wrong. Education in England has been in danger of being hurt by two of its greatest men, Milton and Locke. Milton's plan is impracticable, and I suppose has never been tried. Locke's, I fancy, has been tried often enough, but is very imperfect; it gives too much to one side, and too little to the other; it gives too little to literature —I shall do what I can for Dr. Watts; but my materials are very scanty. His poems are by no means his best works; I cannot praise his poetry itself highly; but I can praise its design.'

My illustrious friend and I parted with assurances of affectionate regard.

I wrote to him on the 25th of May from Thorpe in Yorkshire, one of the seats of Mr. Bosville, and gave him an account of my having passed a day at Lincoln, unexpectedly, and therefore without having any letters of introduction, but that I had been honoured with civilities from the Rev. Mr. Simpson, an acquaintance of his, and Captain Broadley, of the Lincolnshire Militia; but more particularly from the Rev. Dr. Gordon, the Chancellor, who first received me with great politeness as a stranger, and, when I informed him who I was, entertained me at his house with the most flattering attention; I also expressed the pleasure with which I had found that our worthy friend,

Langton, was highly esteemed in his own country town.

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, June* 18, 1778

'MY DEAR SIR,—

. . . . .

'Since my return to Scotland I have been again at Lanark, and have had more conversation with Thomson's sister. It is strange that Murdoch, who was his intimate friend, should have mistaken his mother's maiden name, which he says was Hume, whereas Hume was the name of his grandmother by the mother's side. His mother's name was Beatrix Trotter,[1] a daughter of Mr. Trotter of Fogo, a small proprietor of land. Thomson had one brother, whom he had with him in England as his amanuensis; but he was seized with a consumption, and having returned to Scotland to try what his native air would do for him, died young. He had three sisters, one married to Mr. Bell, minister of the parish of Strathaven; one to Mr. Craig, father of the ingenious architect, who gave the plan of the New Town of Edinburgh; and one to Mr. Thomson, master of the grammar school at Lanark. He was of a humane and benevolent disposition; not only sent valuable presents to his sisters, but a yearly allowance in money, and was always wishing to have it in his power to do them more good. Lord Lyttelton's observation, that "he loathed much to write," was very true. His letters to his sister, Mrs. Thomson, were not frequent, and in one of them he says, "All my friends who know me know how backward I am to write letters; and never impute the negligence of my hand to the coldness of my heart." I send you a copy of the last letter which she had from him; she never heard that he had any intention of going into holy orders. From this late interview with his sister I think much more favourably of him, as I hope you will. I am eager to see more of your Prefaces to the Poets: I solace myself with the few proof-sheets which I have.

[1] Dr. Johnson was by no means attentive to minute accuracy in his *Lives of the Poets*; for, notwithstanding my having detected this mistake, he has continued it.

'I send another parcel of Lord Hailes' *Annals*, which you will please to return to me as soon as you conveniently can. He says, "he wishes you would cut a little deeper"; but he may be proud that there is so little occasion to use the critical knife.—I ever am, my dear sir, your faithful and affectionate humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

Mr. Langton has been pleased, at my request, to favour me with some particulars of Dr. Johnson's visit to Warley Camp, where this gentleman was at the time stationed as a Captain in the Lincolnshire Militia. I shall give them in his own words in a letter to me:

'It was in the summer of the year 1778 that he complied with my invitation to come down to the Camp at Warley, and he stayed with me about a week; the scene appeared, notwithstanding a great degree of ill-health that he seemed to labour under, to interest and amuse him, as agreeing with the disposition that I believe you know he constantly manifested towards inquiring into subjects of the military kind. He sat, with a patient degree of attention, to observe the proceedings of a regimental court-martial, that happened to be called in the time of his stay with us; and one night, as late as at eleven o'clock, he accompanied the Major of the regiment in going what are styled the *Rounds*, where he might observe the forms of visiting the guards, for the seeing that they and their sentries are ready in their duty on their several posts. He took occasion to converse at times on military topics, one in particular, that I see the mention of in your *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, which lies open before me, as to gunpowder; which he spoke of to the same effect, in part, that you relate.

'On one occasion when the regiment were going through their exercise, he went quite close to the men at one of the extremities of it, and watched all their practices attentively; and when he came away his remark was, "The men indeed do load their muskets and fire with wonderful celerity." He was likewise particular in requiring to know what was the weight of the musket balls in use, and within what distance they might be expected to take effect when fired off.

'In walking among the tents, and observing the difference between those of the officers and private men, he said, that the superiority of accommodation of the better conditions of life, to that of the inferior ones, was never exhibited to him in so distinct a view. The civilities paid to him in the camp were, from the gentlemen of the Lincolnshire regiment, one of the officers of which accommodated him with a tent in which he slept; and from General Hall, who very courteously invited him to dine with him, where he appeared to be very well pleased with his entertainment, and the civilities he received on the part of the General;[1] the attention likewise of the General's aide-de-camp, Captain Smith, seemed to be very welcome to him, as appeared by their engaging in a great deal of discourse together. The gentlemen of the East York regiment likewise, on being informed of his coming, solicited his company at dinner, but by that time he had fixed his departure, so that he could not comply with the invitation.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'SIR,—I have received two letters from you, of which the second complains of the neglect shown to the first. You must not tie your friends to such punctual correspondence. You have all possible assurances of my affection and esteem; and there ought to be no need of reiterated professions. When it may happen that I can give you either counsel or comfort, I hope it will never happen to me that I should neglect you; but you must not think me criminal or cold if I say nothing when I have nothing to say.

'You are now happy enough. Mrs. Boswell is recovered; and I congratulate you upon the probability of her long life. If general approbation will add anything to your enjoyment, I can tell you that I have heard you mentioned as *a man whom everybody likes*. I think life has little more to give.

'——[2] has gone to his regiment. He has laid down his coach, and talks of making more contractions of his expense:

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[1] When I one day at Court expressed to General Hall my sense of the honour he had done my friend, he politely answered, 'Sir, I did *myself* honour.'

[2] Langton.

how he will succeed I know not. It is difficult to reform a household gradually; it may be better done by a system totally new. I am afraid he has always something to hide. When we pressed him to go to ——, he objected the necessity of attending his navigation; yet he could talk of going to Aberdeen, a place not much nearer his navigation. I believe he cannot bear the thought of living at —— in a state of diminution; and of appearing among the gentlemen of the neighbourhood *shorn of his beams*. This is natural, but it is cowardly. What I told him of the increasing expense of a growing family seems to have struck him. He certainly had gone on with very confused views, and we have, I think, shown him that he is wrong: though, with the common deficience of advisers, we have not shown him how to do right.

'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 London. Without asserting Stoicism,[1] 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 everywhere.

'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.

'Mrs. Thrale, poor thing, has a daughter. Mr. Thrale dislikes the times, like the rest of us. Mrs. Williams is sick; Mrs. Desmoulins is poor. I have miserable nights. Nobody is well but Mr. Levett.—I am, dear sir, your most, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, July* 3, 1778.'

In the course of this year there was a difference

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[1] [I suspect that this is a misprint, and that Johnson wrote 'without affecting stoicism':—but the original letter being burned in a mass of papers in Scotland, I have not been able to ascertain whether my conjecture is well founded or not. The expression in the text, however, may be justified.—M.]

between him and his friend Mr. Strahan; the particulars of which it is unnecessary to relate. Their reconciliation was communicated to me in a letter from Mr. Strahan in the following words:

'The notes I showed you that passed between him and me were dated in March last. The matter lay dormant till July 27, when he wrote to me as follows:—

TO WILLIAM STRAHAN, ESQ.

'SIR,—It would be very foolish for us to continue strangers any longer. You can never by persistency make wrong right. If I resented too acrimoniously, I resented only to yourself. Nobody ever saw or heard what I wrote. You saw that my anger was over, for in a day or two I came to your house. I have given you a longer time; and I hope you have made so good use of it, as to be no longer on evil terms with, sir, your, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.

'On this I called upon him; and he has since dined with me.'

After this time, the same friendship as formerly continued between Dr. Johnson and Mr. Strahan. My friend mentioned to me a little circumstance of his attention, which, though we may smile at it, must be allowed to have its foundation in a nice and true knowledge of human life. 'When I write to Scotland (said he), I employ Strahan to frank my letters, that he may have the consequence of appearing a Parliament-man among his countrymen.'

TO CAPTAIN LANGTON,[1] WARLEY CAMP

'DEAR SIR,—When I recollect how long ago I was received with so much kindness at Warley Common, I am ashamed that I have not made some inquiries after my friends.

[1] Dr. Johnson here addresses his worthy friend, Bennet Langton, Esq., by his title as Captain of the Lincolnshire Militia, in which he has since been most deservedly raised to the rank of Major.

'Pray how many sheep-stealers did you convict? and how did you punish them? When are you to be cantoned in better habitations? The air grows cold, and the ground damp. Longer stay in the camp cannot be without much danger to the health of the common men, if even the officers can escape.

'You see that Dr. Percy is now Dean of Carlisle; about five hundred a year, with a power of presenting himself to some good living. He is provided for.

'The session of the Club is to commence with that of the Parliament. Mr. Banks desires to be admitted; he will be a very honourable accession.

'Did the King please you? The Coxheath men, I think, have some reason to complain: Reynolds says your camp is better than theirs.

'I hope you find yourself able to encounter this weather. Take care of your own health; and, as you can, of your men. Be pleased to make my compliments to all the gentlemen whose notice I have had, and whose kindness I have experienced.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*October* 31, 1778.'

I wrote to him on the 18th of August, the 18th of September, and the 6th of November; informing him of my having had another son born, whom I had called James; that I had passed some time at Auchinleck; that the Countess of Loudoun, now in her ninety-ninth year, was as fresh as when he saw her, and remembered him with respect; and that his mother by adoption, the Countess of Eglintoune, had said to me, 'Tell Mr. Johnson I love him exceedingly; that I had again suffered much from bad spirits; and that as it was very long since I had heard from him, I was not a little uneasy.'

The continuance of his regard for his friend Dr. Burney appears from the following letters:—

TO THE REV. DR. WHEELER, OXFORD

'Dear Sir,—Dr. Burney, who brings this paper, is engaged in a History of Music; and having been told by Dr. Markham of some mss. relating to the subject, which are in the library of your college, is desirous to examine them. He is my friend; and therefore I take the liberty of entreating your favour and assistance in his inquiry; and can assure you, with great confidence, that if you knew him he would not want any intervenient solicitation to obtain the kindness of one who loves learning and virtue as you love them.

'I have been flattering myself all the summer with the hope of paying my annual visit to my friends, but something has obstructed me; I still hope not to be long without seeing you. I should be glad of a little literary talk; and glad to show you, by the frequency of my visits, how eagerly I love it, when you talk it.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant, Sam. Johnson.

'*London, November* 2, 1778.'

TO THE REV. DR. EDWARDS, OXFORD

'Sir,—The bearer, Dr. Burney, has had some account of a Welsh manuscript in the Bodleian library, from which he hopes to gain some materials for his History of Music; but being ignorant of the language, is at a loss where to find assistance. I make no doubt but you, sir, can help him through his difficulties, and therefore take the liberty of recommending him to your favour, as I am sure you will find him a man worthy of every civility that can be shown, and every benefit that can be conferred.

'But we must not let Welsh drive us from Greek. What comes of Xenophon? If you do not like the trouble of publishing the book, do not let your commentaries be lost; contrive that they may be published somewhere.—I am, sir, your humble servant, Sam. Johnson.

'*London, November* 2, 1778.'

These letters procured Dr. Burney great kindness and friendly offices from both of these gentlemen, not

only on that occasion, but in future visits to the university. The same year Dr. Johnson not only wrote to Dr. Joseph Warton in favour of Dr. Burney's youngest son, who was to be placed in the College of Winchester, but accompanied him when he went thither.

We surely cannot but admire the benevolent exertions of this great and good man, especially when we consider how grievously he was afflicted with bad health, and how uncomfortable his home was made by the perpetual jarring of those whom he charitably accommodated under his roof. He has sometimes suffered me to talk jocularly of his group of females, and called them his *Seraglio*. He thus mentions them, together with honest Levett, in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale:—'Williams hates everybody; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams: Desmoulins hates them both; Poll[1] loves none of them.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—It is indeed a long time since I wrote, and think you must have some reason to complain; however, you must not let small things disturb you, when you have such a fine addition to your happiness as a new boy, and I hope your lady's health is restored by bringing him. It seems very probable that a little care will now restore her, if any remains of her complaints are left.

'You seem, if I understand your letter, to be gaining ground at Auchinleck—an incident that would give me great delight.

. . . . .

'When any fit of anxiety, or gloominess, or perversion of mind, lays hold upon you, make it a rule not to publish it by complaints, but exert your whole care to hide it; by

[1] Miss Carmichael.

endeavouring to hide it you will drive it away. Be always busy.

'The Club is to meet with the Parliament; we talk of electing Banks, the traveller; he will be a reputable member.

'Langton has been encamped with his company of militia on Warley Common; I spent five days amongst them; he signalised himself as a diligent officer, and has very high respect in the regiment. He presided when I was there at a court-martial; he is now quartered in Hertfordshire; his lady and little ones are in Scotland. Paoli came to the camp, and commended the soldiers.

'Of myself I have no great matters to say; my health is not restored, my nights are restless and tedious. The best night that I have had these twenty years was at Fort Augustus.

'I hope soon to send you a few Lives to read.—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*November* 21, 1778.'

About this time the Rev. Mr. John Hussey, who had been some time in trade, and was then a clergyman of the Church of England, being about to undertake a journey to Aleppo and other parts of the East, which he accomplished, Dr. Johnson (who had long been in habits of intimacy with him) honoured him with the following letter:—

TO MR. JOHN HUSSEY

'DEAR SIR,—I have sent you the *Grammar*, and have left you two books more, by which I hope to be remembered: write my name in them; we may perhaps see each other no more; you part with my good wishes, nor do I despair of seeing you return. Let no opportunities of vice corrupt you; let no bad example seduce you; let the blindness of Mohammedans confirm you in Christianity. God bless you. —I am, dear sir, your affectionate humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*December* 29, 1778.

Johnson this year expressed great satisfaction at the publication of the first volume of *Discourses to the Royal Academy*, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, whom he always considered as one of his literary school. Much praise indeed is due to those excellent Discourses, which are so universally admired, and for which the author received from the Empress of Russia a gold snuff-box, adorned with her profile in *bas relief*, set in diamonds; and containing what is infinitely more valuable, a slip of paper, on which are written with her Imperial Majesty's own hand, the following words: '*Pour le Chevalier Reynolds, en temoignage du contentement que j'ai ressentie à la lecture de ses excellens discours sur la peinture.*'

This year Johnson gave the world a luminous proof that the vigour of his mind in all its faculties, whether memory, judgment, or imagination, was not in the least abated; for this year came out the first four volumes of his *Prefaces, biographical and critical, to the most eminent of the English Poets*, published by the booksellers of London. The remaining volumes came out in the year 1780. The poets were selected by the several booksellers who had the honorary copyright, which is still preserved among them by mutual compact, notwithstanding the decision of the House of Lords against the perpetuity of literary property. We have his own authority,[1] that by his recommendation the poems of Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden, were added to the collection. Of this work I shall speak more particularly hereafter.

On the 22nd of January, I wrote to him on several

[1] *Life of Watts.*

topics, and mentioned that as he had been so good as to permit me to have the proof-sheets of his *Lives of the Poets,* I had written to his servant Francis to take care of them for me.

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Feb.* 2, 1779.

'MY DEAR SIR,—Garrick's death is a striking event; not that we should be surprised with the death of any man, who has lived sixty-two years;[1] but because there was a *vivacity* in our late celebrated friend, which drove away the thoughts of *death* from any association with *him.* I am sure you will be tenderly affected with his departure; and I would wish to hear from you upon the subject. I was obliged to him in my days of effervescence in London, when poor Derrick was my governor; and since that time I received many civilities from him. Do you remember how pleasing it was, when I received a letter from him, at Inveraray, upon our first return to civilised living after our Hebridean journey? I shall always remember him with affection as well as admiration.

'On Saturday last, being the 30th of January, I drank coffee and old port, and had solemn conversation with the Reverend Mr. Falconer, a non-juring bishop, a very learned and worthy man. He gave two toasts, which you will believe I drank with cordiality, Dr. Samuel Johnson and Flora Macdonald. I sat about four hours with him, and it was really as if I had been living in the last century. The Episcopal Church of Scotland, though faithful to the royal house of Stuart, has never accepted of any *congé d'élire,* since the Revolution; it is the only true Episcopal Church in Scotland, as it has its own succession of bishops. For as to the episcopal clergy who take the oaths to the present government, they indeed follow the rites of the Church of England, but, as Bishop Falconer observed, "they are not *Episcopals*; for they are under no

[1] [On Mr. Garrick's monument in Lichfield Cathedral, he is said to have died, 'aged 64 years.' But it is a mistake, and Mr. Boswell is perfectly correct. Garrick was baptized at Hereford, February 28, 1716-17, and died at his house in London, January 20, 1779. The inaccuracy of lapidary inscriptions is well known.—M.]

bishop, as a bishop cannot have authority beyond his diocese." This venerable gentleman did me the honour to dine with me yesterday, and he laid his hands upon the heads of my little ones. We had a good deal of curious literary conversation, particularly about Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, with whom he lived in great friendship.

'Any fresh instance of the uncertainty of life makes one embrace more closely a valuable friend. My dear and much respected sir, may God preserve you long in this world while I am in it.—I am ever, your much obliged and affectionate humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

On the 23rd of February I wrote to him again, complaining of his silence, as I had heard he was ill, and had written to Mr. Thrale for information concerning him; and I announced my intention of soon being again in London.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Why should you take such delight to make a bustle, to write to Mr. Thrale that I am negligent, and to Francis to do what is so very unnecessary? Thrale, you may be sure, cared not about it; and I shall spare Francis the trouble, by ordering a set both of the Lives and Poets to dear Mrs. Boswell,[1] in acknowledgment of her marmalade. Persuade her to accept them, and accept them kindly. If I thought she would receive them scornfully, I would send them to Miss Boswell, who, I hope, has yet none of her mamma's ill-will to me.

'I would send sets of Lives, four volumes, to some other friends, to Lord Hailes first. His second volume lies by my bedside; a book surely of great labour, and to every just thinker of great delight. Write me word to whom I shall send besides; would it please Lord Auchinleck? Mrs. Thrale waits in the coach.—I am, dear sir, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*March* 13, 1779.'

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[1] He sent a set elegantly bound and gilt, which was received as a very handsome present.

This letter crossed me on the road to London, where I arrived on Monday, March 15, and next morning at a late hour found Dr. Johnson sitting over his tea, attended by Mrs. Desmoulins, Mr. Levett, and a clergyman, who had come to submit some poetical pieces to his revision. It is wonderful 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 himself in agitation, while Johnson read, and showing 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.'

Although I was several times with him in the course of the following days, such it seems were my occupations, or such my negligence, that I have preserved no memorial of his conversation till Friday, March 26, when I visited him. He said he expected to be attacked on account of his *Lives of the Poets.* 'However (said he), I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. An assault upon a town is a bad thing; but starving it is still worse; an assault may be unsuccessful; you may have more men killed than you kill; but if you starve the town, you are sure of victory.'

Talking of a friend of ours associating with persons of very discordant principles and characters; I said he

was a very universal man, quite a man of the world. JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; but one may be so much a man of the world as to be nothing in the world. I remember a passage in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, which he was afterwards fool enough to expunge: "I do not love a man who is zealous for nothing."' BOSWELL: 'That was a fine passage.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; there was another fine passage too, which he struck out: "When I was a young man, being anxious to distinguish myself, I was perpetually starting new propositions. But I soon gave this over; for I found that generally what was new was false."'[1] I said I did not like to sit with people of whom I had not a good opinion. JOHNSON: 'But you must not indulge your delicacy too much; or you will be a *tête-à-tête* man all your life.'

During my stay in London this spring, I find I was unaccountably negligent in preserving Johnson's sayings, more so than at any time when I was happy enough to have an opportunity of hearing his wisdom and wit. There is no help for it now. I must content myself with presenting such scraps as I have. But I am nevertheless ashamed and vexed to think how much has been lost. It is not that there was a bad crop this year; but that I was not sufficiently careful in gathering it in. I, therefore, in some instances, can only exhibit a few detached fragments.

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[1] [Dr. Burney, in a note introduced in a former page, has mentioned this circumstance, concerning Goldsmith, as communicated to him by Dr. Johnson; not recollecting that it occurred here. His remark, however, is not wholly superfluous, as it ascertains that the words which Goldsmith had put into the mouth of a fictitious character in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and which, as we learn from Dr. Johnson, he afterwards expunged, related, like many other passages in his novel, to himself.—M.]

Talking of the wonderful concealment of the author of the celebrated 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.'

He observed that his old friend, Mr. Sheridan, had been honoured with extraordinary attention in his own country, by having had an exception made in his favour in an Irish Act of Parliament concerning insolvent debtors. 'Thus to be singled out (said he) by legislature, as an object of public consideration and kindness, is a proof of no common merit.'

At Streatham, on Monday, March 29, at breakfast, he maintained that a father had no right to control the inclinations of his daughters in marriage.

On Wednesday, March 31, when I visited him, and confessed an excess of which I had very seldom been guilty; that I had spent a whole night in playing at cards, and that I could not look back on it with satisfaction: instead of a harsh animadversion, he mildly said, 'Alas! sir, on how few things can we look back with satisfaction.'

On Thursday, April 1, he commended one of the Dukes of Devonshire for 'a dogged veracity.' He said too, 'London is nothing to some people; but to a man whose pleasure is intellectual, London is the place. And there is no place where economy can be so well practised as in London: more can be had here for the money, even by ladies, than anywhere else. You

cannot play tricks with your fortune in a small place; you must make an uniform appearance. Here a lady may have well-furnished apartments, and elegant dress, without any meat in her kitchen.'

I was amused by considering with how much ease and coolness he could write or talk to a friend, exhorting him not to suppose that happiness was not to be found as well in other places as in London; when he himself was at all times sensible of its being, comparatively speaking, a heaven upon earth. The truth is, that by those who from sagacity, attention, and experience, have learned the full advantage of London, its pre-eminence over every other place, not only for variety of enjoyment, but for comfort, will be felt with a philosophical exultation. The freedom from remark and petty censure, with which life may be passed there, is a circumstance which a man who knows the teasing restraint of a narrow circle must relish highly. Mr. Burke, whose orderly and amiable domestic habits might make the eye of observation less irksome to him than to most men, said once very pleasantly in my hearing, 'Though I have the honour to represent Bristol, I should not like to live there; I should be obliged to be so much *upon my good behaviour.*' In London, a man may live in splendid society at one time, and in frugal retirement at another, without animadversion. There, and there alone, a man's own house is truly his *castle,* in which he can be in perfect safety from intrusion whenever he pleases. I never shall forget how well this was expressed to me one day by Mr. Meynell: 'The chief advantage of London (said he) is, that a man is always *so near his burrow.*'

He said of one of his old acquaintances, 'He is very fit for a travelling governor. He knows French very well. He is a man of good principles; and there would be no danger that a young gentleman should catch his manner; for it is so very bad, that it must be avoided. In that respect he would be like the drunken Helot.'

A gentleman has informed me, that Johnson said of the same person, 'Sir, he has the most *inverted* understanding of any man whom I have ever known.'

On Friday, April 2, being Good Friday, I visited him in the morning as usual; and finding that we insensibly fell into a train of ridicule upon the foibles of one of our friends, a very worthy man, I, by way of a check, quoted some good admonition from the *Government of the Tongue*, that very pious book. It happened also remarkably enough, that the subject of the sermon preached to us to-day by Dr. Burrows, the rector of St. Clement Danes, was the certainty that at the last day we must give an account of 'the deeds done in the body'; and amongst various acts of culpability he mentioned evil-speaking. As we were moving slowly along in the crowd from church, Johnson jogged my elbow, and said, 'Did you attend to the sermon?' 'Yes, sir (said I), it was very applicable to *us*.' He, however, stood upon the defensive. 'Why, sir, the sense of ridicule is given us, and may be lawfully used. The author of the *Government of the Tongue* would have us treat all men alike.'

In the interval between morning and evening service, he endeavoured to employ himself earnestly in devotional exercise; and, as he has mentioned in his *Prayers*

and Meditations, gave me *Les Pensées de Pascal,* that I might not interrupt him. I preserve the book with reverence. His presenting it to me is marked upon it with his own hand, and I have found in it a truly divine unction. We went to church again in the afternoon.

On Saturday, April 3, I visited him at night, and found him sitting in Mrs. Williams's room with her, and one who he afterwards told me was a natural son[1] of the second Lord Southwell. The table had a singular appearance, being covered with a heterogeneous assemblage of oysters and porter for his company, and tea for himself. I mentioned my having heard an eminent physician, who was himself a Christian, argue in favour of universal toleration, and maintain, that no man could be hurt by another man's differing from him in opinion. JOHNSON: 'Sir, you are to a certain degree hurt by knowing that even one man does not believe.'

On Easter Day, after solemn service at St. Paul's, I dined with him: Mr Allen the printer was also his guest. He was uncommonly silent; and I have not written down anything, except a single curious fact, which, having the sanction of his inflexible veracity, may be received as a striking instance of human insensibility and inconsideration. As he was passing by a fishmonger who was skinning an eel alive, he heard him 'curse it, because it would not lie still.'

On Wednesday, April 7, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. I have not marked what company was there. Johnson harangued upon the qualities of

[1] [Mr. Mauritius Lowe, a painter.—M.]

different liquors; and spoke with great contempt of claret, as so weak, that 'a man would be drowned by it before it made him drunk.' He was persuaded to drink one glass of it, that he might judge, not from recollection, which might be dim, but from immediate sensation. He shook his head, and said, 'Poor stuff! No, sir, claret is the liquor for boys; port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero (smiling) must drink brandy. In the first place, the flavour of brandy is most grateful to the palate; and then brandy will do soonest for a man what drinking *can* do for him. There are, indeed, few who are able to drink brandy. That is a power rather to be wished for than attained. And yet (proceeded he), as in all pleasure hope is a considerable part, I know not but fruition comes too quick by brandy. Florence wine I think the worst; it is wine only to the eye; it is wine neither while you are drinking it, nor after you have drunk it: it neither pleases the taste, nor exhilarates the spirits.' I reminded him how heartily he and I used to drink wine together, when we were first acquainted; and how I used to have a headache after sitting up with him. He did not like to have this recalled, or, perhaps thinking that I boasted improperly, resolved to have a witty stroke at me: 'Nay, sir, it was not the *wine* that made your head ache, but the *sense* that I put into it.' BOSWELL: 'What, sir! will sense make the head ache?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir (with a smile), when it is not used to it.' No man who has a true relish of pleasantry could be offended at this; especially if Johnson in a long intimacy had given him repeated proofs of his regard and good estimation. I used to say, that as he had given me £1000 in praise, he had

a good right now and then to take a guinea from me.

On Thursday, April 8, I dined with him at Mr. Allan Ramsay's, with Lord Graham and some other company. We talked of Shakespeare's witches. JOHNSON: '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.' Johnson observed that abilities might be employed in a narrow sphere, as in getting money, which he said he believed no man could do, without vigorous parts, though concentrated to a point. RAMSAY: 'Yes; like a strong horse in a mill, he pulls better.'

Lord Graham, while he praised the beauty of Loch Lomond, on the banks of which is his family seat, complained of the climate, and said he could not bear it. JOHNSON: 'Nay, my Lord, don't talk so: you may bear it well enough. Your ancestors have borne it more years than I can tell.' This was a handsome compliment to the antiquity of the House of Montrose. His Lordship told me afterwards that he had only affected to complain of the climate; lest, if he had spoken as favourably of his country as he really thought, Dr. Johnson might have attacked it. Johnson was very courteous to Lady Margaret Macdonald. 'Madam (said he), when I was in the Isle of Skye, I heard of the people running to take the stones off the road, lest Lady Margaret's horse should stumble.'

Lord Graham commended Dr. Drummond at Naples

as a man of extraordinary talents; and added, that he had a great love of liberty. JOHNSON: 'He is *young*, my Lord (looking to his Lordship with an arch smile); all *boys* love liberty, till experience convinces them they are not so fit to govern themselves as they imagined. We all are agreed as to our own liberty; we would have as much of it as we can get; but we are not agreed as to the liberty of others; for in proportion as we take, others must lose. I believe we hardly wish that the mob should have liberty to govern us. When that was the case some time ago, no man was at liberty not to have candles in his windows.' RAMSAY: 'The result is, that order is better than confusion.' JOHNSON: 'The result is, that order cannot be had but by subordination.'

On Friday, April 16, I had been present at the trial of the unfortunate Mr. Hackman, who, in a fit of frantic jealous love, had shot Miss Ray, the favourite of a nobleman.[1] Johnson, in whose company I had dined to-day with some other friends, was much interested by my account of what passed, and particularly with his prayer for the mercy of heaven. He said, in a solemn, fervid tone, 'I hope he *shall* find mercy.'

This day a violent altercation arose between Johnson and Beauclerk, which having made much noise at the time, I think it proper, in order to prevent any future misrepresentation, to give a minute account of it.

In talking of Hackman, Johnson argued, as Judge Blackstone had done, that his being furnished with

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1 [The Earl of Sandwich. Mr. Basil Montagu, an editor of Bacon, and the father of Mrs. Procter, was one of the nine children of Lord Sandwich and Miss Ray. Hackman was a clergyman.—A. B.]

two pistols was a proof that he meant to shoot two persons. Mr. Beauclerk said, 'No; for that every wise man who intended to shoot himself, took two pistols, that he might be sure of doing it at once. Lord ——'s cook shot himself with one pistol, and lived ten days in great agony. Mr. ——, who loved buttered muffins, but durst not eat them because they disagreed with his stomach, resolved to shoot himself; and then he ate three buttered muffins for breakfast before shooting himself, knowing that he should not be troubled with indigestion: *he* had two charged pistols; one was found lying charged upon the table by him, after he had shot himself with the other.[1] 'Well (said Johnson, with an air of triumph), you see here one pistol was sufficient).' Beauclerk replied smartly, 'Because it happened to kill him.' And either then or very little afterwards, being piqued at Johnson's triumphant remark, added, 'This is what you don't know, and I do.' There was then a cessation of the dispute; and some minutes intervened, during which dinner and the glass went on cheerfully, when Johnson suddenly and abruptly exclaimed, 'Mr. Beauclerk, how came you to talk so petulantly to me, as 'This is what you don't know, but what I know?' One thing *I* know which *you* don't seem to know, that you are very uncivil.' BEAUCLERK: 'Because *you* began by being uncivil (which you always are).' The words in parentheses were, I believe, not heard by Dr. Johnson. Here again there was a cessation of arms. Johnson told me that the reason why he waited at first some time without taking any notice of what Mr.

[1] [This is the origin of the muffin story in *Pickwick*, ch. xliv. Dickens, though no reader, made an exception in favour of Boswell. —A. B.]

Beauclerk said, was because he was thinking whether he should resent it. But when he considered that there were present a young Lord and an eminent traveller, two men of the world with whom he had never dined before, he was apprehensive that they might think they had a right to take such liberties with him as Beauclerk did, and therefore resolved he would not let it pass; adding, 'that he would not appear a coward.' A little while after this, the conversation turned on the violence of Hackman's temper. Johnson then said, 'It was his business to *command* his temper, as my friend Mr. Beauclerk should have done some time ago.' BEAUCLERK: 'I should learn of *you*, sir.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you have given *me* opportunities enough of learning when I have been in *your* company. No man loves to be treated with contempt.' BEAUCLERK (with a polite inclination towards Johnson): 'Sir, you have known me twenty years, and however I may have treated others, you may be sure I could never treat you with contempt.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you have said more than was necessary.' Thus it ended; and Beauclerk's coach not having come for him till very late, Dr. Johnson and another gentleman sat with him a long time after the rest of the company were gone; and he and I dined at Beauclerk's on the Saturday se'nnight following.

After this tempest had subsided, I recollect the following particulars of his conversation:

'I am always for getting a boy forward in his learning; for that is a sure good. I would let him at first read *any* English book which happens to engage his attention; because you have done a great deal when you have brought him to have entertain-

ment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards.'

'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.'

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

Of a gentleman who made some figure among the *Literati* of his time (Mr. Fitzherbert), he said, 'What eminence he had was by a felicity of manner: he had no more learning than what he could not help.'

On Saturday, April 24, I dined with him at Mr. Beauclerk's, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Jones (afterwards Sir William), Mr. Langton, Mr. Steevens, Mr. Paradise, and Dr. Higgins. I mentioned that Mr. Wilkes had attacked Garrick to me, as a man who had no friend. JOHNSON: 'I believe he is right, sir, Οἱ φίλοι, οὐ φίλος—He had 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.' I took upon me, for once, to fight with Goliath's weapons and play the sophist. 'Garrick did not need a friend, as he got from evĕrybody all that 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. JOHNSON: 'There were more materials to make friendship in Garrick, had he not been so diffused.' BOSWELL: 'Garrick was pure gold, but beat out to thin leaf. Lord Chesterfield was tinsel.' JOHNSON: '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 fourpence do as much as others made fourpence halfpenny do. But when he had got money, he was very liberal.' I presumed to animadvert on his eulogy on Garrick, in his *Lives of the Poets*.[1] 'You say, sir, his death eclipsed the gaiety of nations.' JOHNSON: '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.' BOSWELL: 'But why nations? Did his gaiety extend farther than his own nation?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, some exaggeration must be allowed. Besides, nations may be said—if we allow the Scotch to be a nation—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

[1] See the life of Edmund Smith.

Scotchman.' I, however, 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?' JOHNSON: '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, I was not satisfied.

A celebrated wit being mentioned, he said, 'One may say of him as was said of a French wit, *Il n'a de l'esprit que contre Dieu.* I have been several times in company with him, but never perceived any strong power of wit. He produces a general effect by various means; he has a cheerful countenance and a gay voice. Besides, his trade is wit. It would be as wild in him to come into company without merriment, as for a highwayman to take the road without his pistols.'

Talking of the effects of drinking, he said, 'Drinking may be practised with great prudence; a man who exposes himself when he is intoxicated, has not the art of getting drunk; a sober man who happens occasionally to get drunk, readily enough goes into a new company, which a man who has been drinking should never do. Such a man will undertake any-

thing; he is without skill in inebriation. I used to slink home when I had drunk too much. A man accustomed to self-examination will be conscious when he is drunk, though an habitual drunkard will not be conscious of it. I knew a physician, who for twenty years was not sober; yet in a pamphlet, which he wrote upon fevers, he appealed to Garrick and me for his vindication from a charge of drunkenness. A bookseller (naming him) who got a large fortune by trade, was so habitually and equally drunk, that his most intimate friends never perceived that he was more sober at one time than another.'

Talking of celebrated and successful irregular practisers in physic, he said, 'Taylor[1] 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 was very entertaining this day, and told us a number of short stories in a lively, elegant manner, and with that air of *the world* which has I know not what impressive effect, as if there were something more than is expressed, or than perhaps we could perfectly understand. As Johnson and I accompanied Sir Joshua Reynolds in his coach, Johnson 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.'

[1] [The Chevalier Taylor, the celebrated oculist.—M.]

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

Soon after this time a little incident occurred which I will not suppress, because I am desirous that my work should be, as much as is consistent with the strictest truth, an antidote to the false and injurious notions of his characters which have been given by others, and therefore I infuse every drop of genuine sweetness into my biographical cup.

TO DR. JOHNSON

'MY DEAR SIR,—I am in great pain with an inflamed foot, and obliged to keep my bed, so am prevented from having the pleasure to dine at Mr. Ramsay's to-day, which is very hard; and my spirits are sadly sunk. Will you be so friendly as to

come and sit an hour with me in the evening.—I am ever your most faithful and affectionate humble servant,

'JAMES BOSWELL.

'*South Audley Street*,
'*Monday, April* 26.'

TO MR. BOSWELL

'Mr. Johnson laments the absence of Mr. Boswell, and will come to him.

'*Harley Street*.'

He came to me in the evening, and brought Sir Joshua Reynolds. I need scarcely say that their conversation, while they sat by my bedside, was the most pleasing opiate to pain that could have been administered.

Johnson being now better disposed to obtain information concerning Pope than he was last year, sent by me to my Lord Marchmont, a present of those volumes of his *Lives of the Poets*, which were at this time published, with a request to have permission to wait on him; and his Lordship, who had called on him twice, obligingly appointed Saturday, the 1st of May, for receiving us.

On that morning Johnson came to me from Streatham, and after drinking chocolate at General Paoli's, in South Audley Street, we proceeded to Lord Marchmont's in Curzon Street. His Lordship met us at the door of his library, and with great politeness said to Johnson, 'I am not going to make an encomium upon *myself*, by telling you the high respect I have for *you*, sir.' Johnson was exceedingly courteous; and the interview, which lasted about two hours, during which the Earl communicated his anecdotes of Pope, was as

agreeable as I could have wished. When we came out, I said to Johnson, that considering his Lordship's civility, I should have been vexed if he had again failed to come. 'Sir (said he), I would rather have given twenty pounds than not have come.' I accompanied him to Streatham, where we dined, and returned to town in the evening.

On Monday, May 3, I dined with him at Mr. Dilly's; I pressed him this day for his opinion on the passage on Parnell, concerning which I had in vain questioned him in several letters, and at length obtained it in *due form of law.*

'CASE for DR. JOHNSON'S Opinion:
3rd of May 1779.

'PARNELL, in his *Hermit*, has the following passage:

"To clear this doubt, to know the world by sight,
To find if *books* and *swains* report it right;
(For yet by *swains alone* the world he knew,
Whose feet came wand'ring o'er the nightly dew)."

Is there not a contradiction in its being *first* supposed that the Hermit knew *both* what books and swains reported of the world; yet *afterwards* said, that he knew it by swains *alone*?'

'I think it an inaccuracy. He mentions two instructors in the first line, and says he had only one in the next.' [1]

This evening I set out for Scotland.

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[1] 'I do not (says Mr. Malone) see any difficulty in this passage, and wonder that Dr. Johnson should have acknowledged it to be *inaccurate.* The Hermit, it should be observed, had no actual experience of the world whatsoever: all his knowledge concerning it had been obtained in two ways; from *books*, and from the *relations* of those country swains, who had seen a little of it. The plain meaning,

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER IN LICHFIELD

'DEAR MADAM,—Mr. Green has informed me that you are much better; I hope I need not tell you that I am glad of it. I cannot boast of being much better; my old nocturnal complaint still pursues me, and my respiration is difficult, though much easier than when I left you the summer before last. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale are well; Miss has been a little indisposed; but she is got well again. They have since the loss of their boy had two daughters; but they seem likely to want a son.

'I hope you had some books which I sent you. I was sorry for poor Mrs. Adey's death, and am afraid you will be sometimes solitary; but endeavour, whether alone or in company, to keep yourself cheerful. My friends likewise die very fast; but such is the state of man.—I am, dear love, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*May* 4, 1779.'

He had, before I left London, resumed the conversation concerning the appearance of a ghost at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which Mr. John Wesley believed,

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therefore, is, "To clear his doubts concerning Providence, and to obtain some knowledge of the world by actual experience; to see whether the accounts furnished by books, or by the oral communications of swains, were just representations of it: [I say, *swains*] for his oral or *vivâ voce* information had been obtained from that part of mankind *alone*, etc." The word *alone* here does not relate to the whole of the preceding line, as has been supposed, but, by a common licence, to the words, *of all mankind,* which are understood, and of which it is restrictive.'

Mr. Malone, it must be owned, has shown much critical ingenuity in his explanation of this passage. His interpretation, however, seems to me much too recondite. The *meaning* of the passage may be certain enough; but surely the expression is confused, and one part of it contradictory to the other.

[But why *too recondite*? When a meaning is given to a passage by understanding words in an uncommon sense, the interpretation may be said to be *recondite*, and, however ingenious, may be suspected not to be sound; but when words are explained in their ordinary acceptation, and the explication which is fairly deduced from them without any force or constraint is also perfectly justified by the context, it surely may be safely accepted; and the calling such an explication *recondite*, when *nothing else can be said against it*, will not make it the less just.—M.]

but to which Johnson did not give credit. I was, however, desirous to examine the question closely, and at the same time wished to be made acquainted with Mr. John Wesley; for though I differed from him in some points, I admired his various talents, and loved his pious zeal. At my request, therefore, Dr. Johnson gave me a letter of introduction to him.

TO THE REV. MR. JOHN WESLEY

'SIR,—Mr. Boswell, a gentleman who has been long known to me, is desirous of being known to you, and has asked this recommendation, which I give him with great willingness, because I think it very much to be wished that worthy and religious men should be acquainted with each other.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*May* 3, 1779.'

Mr. Wesley being in the course of his ministry at Edinburgh, I presented this letter to him, and was very politely received. I begged to have it returned to me, which was accordingly done. His state of the evidence as to the ghost did not satisfy me.

I did not write to Johnson, as usual, upon my return to my family; but tried how he would be affected by my silence. Mr. Dilly sent me a copy of a note which he received from him on the 13th of July, in these words:

TO MR. DILLY

'SIR,—Since Mr. Boswell's departure I have never heard from him; please to send word what you know of him, and whether you have sent my books to his lady.—I am, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

My readers will not doubt that his solitude about me was very flattering.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—What can possibly have happened, that keeps us two such strangers to each other? I expected to have heard from you when you came home; I expected afterwards. I went into the country and returned, and yet there is no letter from Mr. Boswell. No ill I hope has happened; and if ill should happen, why should it be concealed from him who loves you? Is it a fit of humour, that has disposed you to try who can hold out longest without writing? If it be, you have the victory. But I am afraid of something bad; set me free from my suspicions.

'My thoughts are at present employed in guessing the reason of your silence: you must not expect that I should tell you anything, if I had anything to tell. Write, pray write to me, and let me know what is, or what has been the cause of this long interruption.—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant, Sam. Johnson.

'*July* 13, 1779.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, July* 17, 1779.

'My dear Sir,—What may be justly denominated a supine indolence of mind has been my state of existence since I last returned to Scotland. In a livelier state I had often suffered severely from long intervals of silence on your part; and I had even been chid by you for expressing my uneasiness. I was willing to take advantage of my insensibility, and while I could bear the experiment, to try whether your affection for me would, after an unusual silence on my part, make you write first. This afternoon I have had very high satisfaction by receiving your kind letter of inquiry, for which I most gratefully thank you. I am doubtful if it was right to make the experiment; though I have gained by it. I was beginning to grow tender, and to upbraid myself, especially after having dreamt two nights ago that I was with you. I and my wife,

and my four children, are all well. I would not delay one post to answer your letter; but as it is late, I have not time to do more. You shall soon hear from me, upon many and various particulars; and I shall never again put you to any test.—I am, with veneration, my dear sir, your much obliged and faithful humble servant, JAMES BOSWELL.'

On the 22nd of July, I wrote to him again; and gave him an account of my last interview with my worthy friend Mr. Edward Dilly, at his brother's house, at Southill, in Bedfordshire, where he died soon after I parted from him, leaving me a very kind remembrance of his regard.

I informed him that Lord Hailes, who had promised to furnish him with some anecdotes for his *Lives of the Poets*, had sent me three instances of Prior's borrowing from Gombauld, in *Recueil des Poetes*, tome 3. Epigram 'To John I owed great obligation,' p. 25. 'To the Duke of Noailles, p. 32. 'Sauntering Jack and Idle Joan,' p. 25.

My letter was a pretty long one, and contained a variety of particulars; but he, it should seem, had not attended to it; for his next to me was as follows:

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'MY DEAR SIR,—Are you playing the same trick again, and trying who can keep silence longest? Remember that all tricks are either knavish or childish; and that it is as foolish to make experiments upon the constancy of a friend, as upon the chastity of a wife.

'What can be the cause of this second fit of silence, I cannot conjecture; but after one trick, I will not be cheated by another, nor will harass my thoughts with conjectures about the motives of a man who, probably, acts only by caprice. I therefore suppose you are well, and that Mrs. Boswell is well too: and that the fine summer has restored Lord Auchin-

leck. I am much better than you left me; I think I am better than when I was in Scotland.

'I forgot whether I informed you that poor Thrale has been in great danger. Mrs. Thrale likewise has miscarried, and been much indisposed. Everybody else is well; Langton is in camp. I intend to put Lord Hailes' description of Dryden[1] into another edition, and as I know his accuracy, wish he would consider the dates, which I could not always settle to my own mind.

'Mr. Thrale goes to Brighthelmstone about Michaelmas, to be jolly and ride a hunting. I shall go to town, or perhaps to Oxford. Exercise and gaiety, or rather carelessness, will, I hope, dissipate all remains of his malady; and I likewise hope, by the change of place, to find some opportunities of growing yet better myself.—I am, dear sir, your humble servant, 'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Streatham, Sept.* 9, 1779.'

My readers will not be displeased at being told every slight circumstance of the manner in which Dr. Johnson contrived to amuse his solitary hours. He sometimes employed himself in chemistry, sometimes in watering and pruning a vine, sometimes in small experiments, at which those who may smile should recollect that they are moments which admit of being soothed only by trifles.[2]

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[1] Which I communicated to him from his Lordship, but it has not yet been published. I have a copy of it.

[The few notices concerning Dryden, which Lord Hailes had collected, the author afterwards gave to Mr. Malone.—M.]

[2] In one of his manuscript Diaries, there is the following entry, which marks his curious minute attention: 'July 26, 1768. I shaved my nail by accident in whetting the knife about an eighth of an inch from the bottom, and about a fourth from the top. This I measure that I may know the growth of nails: the whole is about five eighths of an inch.'

Another of the same kind appears, 'Aug. 7, 1779: *Partem brachii dextri carpo proximam et cutem pectoris circa mamillam dextram rasi, ut notum fieret quanto temporis pili renovarentur.*'

And, 'Aug. 15, 1783: I cut from the vine 41 leaves, which weighed five oz. and a half and eight scruples. I lay them upon my bookcase to see what weight they will lose by drying.'

On the 20th of September I defended myself against his suspicion of me, which I did not deserve; and added, 'Pray, let us write frequently. A whim strikes me, that we should send off a sheet once a week, like a stage-coach, whether it be full or not; nay, though it should be empty. The very sight of your handwriting would comfort me: and were a sheet to be thus sent regularly, we should much oftener convey something, were it only a few kind words.'

My friend Colonel James Stuart, second son of the Earl of Bute, who had distinguished himself as a good officer of the Bedfordshire Militia, had taken a public-spirited resolution to serve his country in its difficulties, by raising a regular regiment, and taking the command of it himself. This, in the heir of the immense property of Wortley, was highly honourable. Having been in Scotland recruiting, he obligingly asked me to accompany him to Leeds, then the headquarters of his corps: from thence to London for a short time, and afterwards to other places to which the regiment might be ordered. Such an offer, at a time of the year when I had full leisure, was very pleasing; especially as I was to accompany a man of sterling good sense, information, discernment, and conviviality; and was to have a second crop, in one year, of London and Johnson. Of this I informed my illustrious friend, in characteristical warm terms, in a letter dated the 30th of September, from Leeds.

On Monday, October 4, I called at his house before he was up. He sent for me to his bedside, and expressed his satisfaction at this incidental meeting, with as much vivacity as if he had been in the gaiety

of youth. He called briskly, 'Frank, go and get coffee, and let us breakfast *in splendour*.'

During this visit to London I had several interviews with him, which it is unnecessary to distinguish particularly. I consulted him as to the appointment of guardians to my children, in case of my death. 'Sir (said he), do not appoint a number of guardians. When there are many, they trust one to another, and the business is neglected. I would advise you to choose only one; let him be a man of respectable character, who, for his own credit, will do what is right; let him be a rich man, so that he may be under no temptation to take advantage; and let him be a man of business, who is used to conduct affairs with ability and expertness, to whom, therefore, the execution of the trust will not be burdensome.'

On Sunday, October 10, we dined together at Mr. Strahan s. The conversation having turned on the prevailing practice of going to the East Indies in quest of wealth;—JOHNSON: 'A man had better have £10,000 at the end of ten years passed in England, than £20,000 at the end of ten years passed in India, because you must compute what you *give* for money; and a man who has lived ten years in India, has given up ten years of social comfort, and all those advantages which arise from living in England. The ingenious Mr. Brown, distinguished by the name of *Capability Brown*, told me that he was once at the seat of Lord Clive, who had returned from India with great wealth; and that he showed him at the door of his bed-chamber a large chest, which he said he had once had full ot gold; upon which Brown observed, "I am glad you can bear it so near your bed-chamber."'

We talked of the state of the poor in London. JOHNSON: 'Saunders Welch, the Justice, who was once high constable of Holborn, and had the best opportunities of knowing the state of the poor, told me that I underrated the number, when I computed that twenty a week, that is above a thousand a year, died of hunger; not absolutely of immediate hunger; but of the wasting and other diseases which are the consequences of hunger. This happens only in so large a place as London, where people are not known. What we are told about the great sums got by begging is not true—the trade is overstocked. And, you may depend upon it, there are many who cannot get work. A particular kind of manufacture fails; those who have been used to work at it can, for some time, work at nothing else. You meet a man begging; you charge him with idleness: he says, "I am willing to labour. Will you give me work?" "I cannot." "Why, then, you have no right to charge me with idleness."'

We left Mr. Strahan's at seven, as Johnson had said he intended to go to evening prayers. As we walked along he complained of a little gout in his toe, and said, 'I shan't go to prayers to-night; I shall go to-morrow. Whenever I miss church on a Sunday, I resolve to go another day. But I do not always do it.' This was a fair exhibition of that vibration between pious resolutions and indolence, which many of us have too often experienced.

I went home with him, and we had a long, quiet conversation.

I read him a letter from Dr. Hugh Blair concerning Pope (in writing whose life he was now

employed), which I shall insert as a literary curiosity.[1]

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—In the year 1763, 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 handwriting; 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

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[1] The Rev. Dr. Law, Bishop of Carlisle, in the Preface to his valuable edition of Archbishop's King's *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, mentions that the principles maintained in it had been adopted by Pope in his *Essay on Man*; and adds, 'The fact, notwithstanding such denial (Bishop Warburton's) might have been strictly verified by an unexceptionable testimony, viz., that of the late Lord Bathurst, who saw the very same system of the τὸ βέλτιον (taken from the Archbishop) in Lord Bolingbroke's own hand, lying before Mr. Pope, while he was composing his Essay.' This is respectable evidence; but that of Dr. Blair is more direct from the fountain-head, as well as more full. Let me add to it that of Dr. Joseph Warton: 'The late Lord Bathurst repeatedly assured me that he had read the whole scheme of the *Essay on Man*, in the handwriting of Bolingbroke, and drawn up in a series of propositions, which Pope was to versify and illustrate.'—*Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, vol. ii. p. 62.

as I have now given them, distinctly marked; and am thence enabled to fix this conversation to have passed on Friday, the 22nd of April 1763.

'I remember also distinctly (though I have not for this the authority of my Journal), that the conversation going on concerning Mr. Pope, I took notice of a report which had been sometimes propagated that he did not understand Greek. Lord Bathurst said to me that he knew that to be false; for the part of the *Iliad* was translated by Mr. Pope in his house in the country; and that in the morning 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.

'If these circumstances can be of any use to Dr. Johnson, you have my full liberty to give them to him. I beg you will, at the same time, present to him my most respectful compliments, with best wishes for his success and fame in all his literary undertakings.—I am, with great respect, my dearest sir, your most affectionate and obliged humble servant,

HUGH BLAIR.

'*Broughton Park, Sept.* 21, 1779.'

JOHNSON: '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 everything. I 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' *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.'

Boswell: 'Why, sir, do people play this trick which I observe now, when I look at your grate, putting the shovel against it to make the fire burn?' Johnson: 'They play the trick, but it does not make the fire burn. *There* is a better (setting the poker perpendicularly at right angles with the grate). In days of superstition they thought, as it made a cross with the bars, it would drive away the witch.'

Boswell: 'By associating with you, sir, I am always getting an accession of wisdom. But perhaps a man, after knowing his own character—the limited strength of his own mind, should not be desirous of having too much wisdom, considering, *quid valeant humeri*, how little he can carry.' Johnson: 'Sir, be as wise as you can; let a man be *aliis lætus sapiens sibi*:

> "Though pleased to see the dolphins play,
> I mind my compass and my way."[1]

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

He said, 'Dodsley first mentioned to me the scheme

[1] *The Spleen*, a poem.

of an English Dictionary; but I had long thought of it.' BOSWELL: 'You did not know what you were undertaking.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, I knew very well what I was undertaking—and very well how to do it—and have done it very well.' BOSWELL: 'An excellent climax! and it *has* availed you. In your Preface you say, "What would it avail me in this gloom of solitude?" You have been agreeably mistaken.'

In his Life of Milton he observes: 'I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.' I had, before I read this observation, been desirous of showing that respect to Johnson by various inquiries. Finding him this evening in a very good humour, I prevailed on him to give me an exact list of his places of residence, since he entered the metropolis as an author, which I subjoin in a note.[1]

I mentioned to him a dispute between a friend of mine and his lady, concerning conjugal infidelity,

[1] 1. Exeter Street, off Catherine Street, Strand.
2. Greenwich.
3. Woodstock Street, near Hanover Square.
4. Castle Street, Cavendish Square, No. 6.
5. Strand.
6. Boswell Court.
7. Strand, again.
8. Bow Street.
9. Holburn.
10. Fetter Lane.
11. Holborn, again.
12. Gough Square.
13. Staple Inn.
14. Gray's Inn.
15. Inner Temple Lane, No. 1.
16. Johnson's Court, No. 7.
17. Bolt Court, No. 8.

which my friend had maintained was by no means so bad in the husband as in the wife. JOHNSON: 'Your friend was in the right, sir. Between a man and his Maker it is a different question: but between a man and his wife, a husband's infidelity is nothing. They are connected by children, by fortune, by serious considerations of community. Wise married women don't trouble themselves about infidelity in their husbands.' BOSWELL: 'To be sure there is a great difference between the offence of infidelity in a man and that of his wife.' JOHNSON: 'The difference is boundless. The man imposes no bastards upon his wife.'

Here it may be questioned whether Johnson was entirely in the right. I suppose it will not be controverted, that the difference in the degree of criminality is very great on account of consequences: but still it may be maintained that independent of moral obligation, infidelity is by no means a light offence in a husband; because it must hurt a delicate attachment in which a mutual constancy is implied, with such refined sentiments as Massinger has exhibited in his play of *The Picture.* Johnson probably at another time would have admitted this opinion. And let it be kept in remembrance that he was very careful not to give any encouragement to irregular conduct. A gentleman not adverting to the distinction made by him on this subject, supposed a case of singular perverseness in a wife, and heedlessly said, 'That then he thought a husband might do as he pleased with a safe conscience.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, this is wild indeed (smiling); you must consider that fornication is a crime in a single man; and you cannot have more liberty by being married.'

He this evening expressed himself strongly against the Roman Catholics, observing, 'In everything in which they differ from us, they are wrong.' He was even against the invocation of saints; in short, he was in the humour of opposition.

Having regretted to him that I had learned little Greek, as is too generally the case in Scotland; that I had for a long time hardly applied at all to the study of that noble language, and that I was desirous of being told by him what method to follow; he recommended to me as easy helps, Sylvanus's *First Book of the Iliad*, Dawson's *Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, and *Hesiod*, with Pasori's *Lexicon* at the end of it.

On Tuesday, October 12, I dined with him at Mr. Ramsay's, with Lord Newhaven, and some other company, none of whom I recollect, but a beautiful Miss Graham,[1] a relation of his Lordship's, who asked Dr. Johnson to hob or nob with her. He was flattered by such pleasing attention, and politely told her he never drank wine; but if she would drink a glass of water, he was much at her service. She accepted. 'Oho, sir (said Lord Newton), you are caught.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, I do not see *how* I am *caught*; but if I am caught, I don't want to get free again. If I am caught I hope to be kept.' Then when the two glasses of water were brought, smiling placidly to the young lady, he said, 'Madam, let us *reciprocate*.'

Lord Newhaven and Johnson carried on an argument for some time concerning the Middlesex election. Johnson said, 'Parliament may be considered as

[1] Now the lady of Sir Henry Dashwood, Bart.

bound by law, as a man is bound where there is nobody to tie the knot. As it is clear that the House of Commons may expel, and expel again and again, why not allow of the power to incapacitate for that Parliament, rather than have a perpetual contest kept up between Parliament and the people?' Lord Newhaven took the opposite side; but respectfully said, 'I speak with great deference to you, Dr. Johnson; I speak to be instructed.' This had its full effect on my friend. He bowed his head almost as low as the table to a complimenting nobleman, and called out, 'My Lord, my Lord, I do not desire all this ceremony; let us tell our minds to one another quietly.' After the debate was over, he said, 'I have got lights on the subject to-day, which I had not before.' This was a great deal from him, especially as he had written a pamphlet upon it.

He observed, 'The House of Commons was originally not a privilege of the people, but a check, for the Crown, on the House of Lords. I remember Henry the Eighth wanted them to do something; they hesitated in the morning, but did it in the afternoon. He told them, "It is well you did; or half your heads should have been upon Temple Bar." But the House of Commons is now no longer under the power of the Crown, and therefore must be bribed.' He added, 'I shall have no delight in talking of public affairs.'

Of his fellow-collegian, the celebrated Mr. George Whitefield, he said, 'Whitefield never drew as 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.'

What I have preserved of his conversation during the remainder of my stay in London at this time, is only what follows: I told him that when I objected to keeping company with a notorious infidel, a celebrated friend of ours said to me, '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, it is 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.

He, I know not why, showed upon all occasions an aversion to go to Ireland, where I proposed to him that we should make a tour. JOHNSON: 'It is the last place where I should wish to travel.' BOSWELL: 'Should you not like to see Dublin, sir?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; Dublin is only a worse capital.' BOSWELL: 'Is not the Giant's Causeway worth seeing?' JOHNSON: 'Worth seeing? yes; but not worth going to see.'

Yet he had a kindness for the Irish nation, and thus generously expressed himself to a gentleman from that country on the subject of an union which artful politicians have often had in view—'Do not make an union with us, sir, we should unite with you only to rob you. We should have robbed the Scotch, if they had had anything of which we could have robbed them.'

Of an acquaintance of ours, whose manners and everything about him, though expensive, were coarse, he said, 'Sir, you see in him vulgar prosperity.'

A foreign minister of no very high talents, who had been in his company for a considerable time quite overlooked, happened luckily to mention that he had read some of his *Rambler* in Italian, and admired it much. This pleased him greatly; he observed that the title had been translated, *Il Genio errante*, though I have been told it was rendered more ludicrously, *Il Vagabondo*; and finding that this minister gave such a proof of his taste, he was all attention to him, and on the first remark which he made, however simple, exclaimed, 'The Ambassador says well;—His Excellency observes ——' And then he expanded and enriched the little that had been said in so strong a manner that it appeared something of consequence. This was exceed-

ingly entertaining to the company who were present, and many a time afterwards it furnished a pleasant topic of merriment: '*The Ambassador says well,*' became a laughable term of applause, when no mighty matter had been expressed.

I left London on Monday, October 18, and accompanied Colonel Stuart to Chester, where his regiment was to lie for some time.

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

'*Chester, October 22*, 1779.

'MY DEAR SIR,—It was not till one o'clock on Monday morning that Colonel Stuart and I left London; for we chose to bid a cordial adieu to Lord Mountstuart, who was to set out on that day on his embassy to Turin. We drove on excellently, and reached Lichfield in good time enough that night. The Colonel had heard so preferable a character of the George that he would not put up at the Three Crowns, so that I did not see our host Wilkins. We found at the George as good accommodations as we could wish to have, and I fully enjoyed the comfortable thought that *I was in Lichfield again.* Next morning it rained very hard; and as I had much to do in a little time I ordered a post-chaise, and between eight and nine sallied forth to make a round of visits. I first went to Mr. Green, hoping to have had him to accompany me to all my other friends, but he was engaged to attend the Bishop of Sodor and Man, who was then lying at Lichfield very ill of the gout. Having taken a hasty glance at the additions to Green's museum, from which it was not so easy to break away, I next went to the Friary, where I at first occasioned some tumult in the ladies, who were not prepared to receive *company* so early; but my *name*, which has by wonderful felicity come to be closely associated with yours, soon made all easy; and Mrs. Cobb and Miss Adey re-assumed their seats at the breakfast table, which they had quitted with some precipitation. They received me with the kindness of an old acquaintance; and after we had joined in

a cordial chorus to *your* praise, Mrs. Cobb gave *me* the high satisfaction of hearing that you said, "Boswell is a man who I believe never left a house without leaving a wish for his return." And she afterwards added, that she bid you tell me that if ever I came to Lichfield, she hoped I would take a bed at the Friary. From thence I drove to Peter Garrick's,[1] where I also found a very flattering welcome. He appeared to me to enjoy his usual cheerfulness; and he very kindly asked me to come when I could and pass a week with him. From Mr. Garrick's I went to the Palace to wait on Mr. Seward. I was first entertained by his lady and daughter, he himself being in bed with a cold, according to his valetudinary custom. But he desired to see me; and I found him dressed in his black gown, with a white flannel night-gown above it; so that he looked like a Dominican friar. He was good-humoured and polite; and under his roof too my reception was very pleasing. I then proceeded to Stowhill, and first paid my respects to Mrs. Gastrell, whose conversation I was not willing to quit. But my sand-glass was now beginning to run low, as I could not trespass too long on the Colonel's kindness, who obligingly waited for me; so I hastened to Mrs. Aston's,[2] whom I found much better than I feared I should; and there I met a brother-in-law of these ladies, who talked much of you, and very well too, as it appeared to me. It then only remained to visit Mrs. Lucy Porter, which I did, I really believe, with sincere satisfaction on both sides. I am sure I was glad to see her again; and, as I take her to be very honest, I trust she was glad to see me again; for she expressed herself so, that I could not doubt of her being in earnest. What a great keystone of kindness, my dear sir, were you that morning! for we were all held together by our common attachment to you. I cannot say that I ever passed two hours with more self-complacency than I did those two at Lichfield. Let me not entertain any suspicion that this is idle vanity. Will not you

[1] [This gentleman survived his brother David many years; and died at Lichfield, Dec. 12, 1795, ætat. 86.—A. C.]

[2] A maiden sister of Johnson's favourite Molly Aston, who married Captain Brodie of the Navy.—M.]

confirm me in my persuasion, that he who finds himself so regarded has just reason to be happy?

'We got to Chester about midnight on Tuesday; and here again I am in a state of much enjoyment. Colonel Stuart and his officers treat me with all the civility I could wish; and I play my part admirably. *Lætus aliis, sapiens sibi,* the classical sentence which you, I imagine, invented the other day, is exemplified in my present existence. The Bishop, to whom I had the honour to be known several years ago, shows me much attention; and I am edified by his conversation. I must not omit to tell you that his Lordship admires, very highly, your Prefaces to the Poets. I am daily obtaining an extension of agreeable acquaintance, so that I am kept in animated variety; and the study of the place itself, by the assistance of books, and of the Bishop, is sufficient occupation. Chester pleases my fancy more than any town I ever saw. But I will not enter upon it at all in this letter.

'How long I shall stay here I cannot yet say. I told a very pleasing young lady,[1] niece to one of the Prebendaries, at whose house I saw her, "I have come to Chester, madam, I cannot tell how; and far less can I tell how I am to get away from it. Do not think me too juvenile." I beg it of you, my dear sir, to favour me with a letter while I am here, and add to the happiness of a happy friend, who is ever, with affectionate veneration, most sincerely yours,

'JAMES BOSWELL.

'If you do not write directly so as to catch me here, I shall be disappointed. Two lines from you will keep my lamp burning bright.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Why should you importune me so earnestly to write? Of what importance can it be to hear of distant friends to a man who finds himself welcome wherever he goes, and makes new friends faster than he can want them? If to the delight of such universal kindness of reception anything

[1] Miss Letitia Barnston.

can be added by knowing that you retain my good-will, you may indulge yourself in the full enjoyment of that small addition.

'I am glad that you made the round of Lichfield with so much success: the oftener you are seen the more you will be liked. It was pleasing to me to read that Mrs. Aston was so well, and that Lucy Porter was so glad to see you.

'In the place where you now are there is much to be observed; and you will easily procure yourself skilful directors. But what will you do to keep away the *black dog* that worries you at home? If you would, in compliance with your father's advice, inquire into the old tenures and old characters of Scotland, you would certainly open to yourself many striking scenes of the manners of the middle ages. The feudal system, in a country half barbarous, is naturally productive of great anomalies in civil life. The knowledge of past times is naturally growing less in all cases not of public record; and the past time of Scotland is so unlike the present that it is already difficult for a Scotchman to image the economy of his grandfather. Do not be tardy nor negligent; but gather up eagerly what can yet be found.[1]

'We have, I think, once talked of another project, a History of the late insurrection in Scotland, with all its incidents. Many falsehoods are passing into uncontradicted history. Voltaire, who loved a striking story, has told what he could not find to be true.

'You may make collections for either of these projects, or for both, as opportunities occur, and digest your materials at leisure. The great direction which Burton has left to men disordered like you, is this, *Be not solitary; be not idle*: which I would thus modify;—If you are idle, be not solitary; if you are solitary, be not idle. There is a letter for you, from your humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, October* 27, 1779.'

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[1] I have a valuable collection made by my father, which, with some additions and illustrations of my own, I intend to publish. I have some hereditary claim to be an Antiquary; not only from my father, but as being descended, by the mother's side, from the able and learned Sir John Skene, whose merit bids defiance to all the attempts which have been made to lessen his fame.

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Carlisle, Nov.* 7, 1779.

'MY DEAR SIR,—That I should importune you to write to me at Chester is not wonderful, when you consider what an avidity I have for delight; and that the *amor* of pleasure, like the *amor nummi*, increases in proportion with the quantity which we possess of it. Your letter, so full of polite kindness and masterly counsel, came like a large treasure upon me, while already glittering with riches. I was quite enchanted at Chester, so that I could with difficulty quit it. But the enchantment was the reverse of that of Circé; for so far was there from being anything sensual in it that I was *all mind.* I do not mean all reason only: for my fancy was kept finely in play. And why not?—If you please, I will send you a copy, or an abridgment of my Chester journal, which is truly a log-book of felicity.

'The Bishop treated me with a kindness which was very flattering. I told him that you regretted you had seen so little of Chester. His Lordship bade me tell you that he should be glad to show you more of it. I am proud to find the friendship with which you honour me is known in so many places.

'I arrived here late last night. Our friend, the Dean, has been gone from hence some months; but I am told at my inn that he is very *populous* (popular). However, I found Mr. Law, the Archdeacon, son to the Bishop, and with him I have breakfasted and dined very agreeably. I got acquainted with him at the assizes here about a year and a half ago; he is a man of great variety of knowledge, uncommon genius, and, I believe, sincere religion. I received the holy sacrament in the Cathedral in the morning, this being the first Sunday in the month; and was at prayers there in the morning. It is divinely cheering to me to think that there is a cathedral so near Auchinleck; and I now leave Old England in such a state of mind as I am thankful to God for granting me.

'The *black dog* that worries me at home I cannot but dread; yet as I have been for some time past in a military train, I trust I shall *repulse* him. To hear from you will animate me like the sound of a trumpet, I therefore hope,

that soon after my return to the northern field I shall receive a few lines from you.

'Colonel Stuart did me the honour to escort me in his carriage to show me Liverpool, and from thence back again to Warrington, where we parted.[1] In justice to my valuable wife, I must inform you she wrote to me, that as I was so happy, she would not be so selfish as to wish me to return sooner than business absolutely required my presence. She made my clerk write to me a post or two after to the same purpose, by commission from her; and this day a kind letter from her met me at the Post Office here, acquainting me that she and the little ones were well, and expressing all their wishes for my return home.—I am, more and more, my dear sir, your affectionate and obliged humble servant,

'JAMES BOSWELL.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Your last letter was not only kind but fond. But I wish you to get rid of all intellectual excesses, and neither to exalt your pleasures, nor aggravate your vexations beyond their real and natural state. Why should you not be as happy at Edinburgh as at Chester? *In culpa est animus qui se non effugit usquam.* Please yourself with your wife and children and studies and practice.

I have sent a petition[2] from Lucy Porter, with which I leave it to your discretion whether it is proper to comply. Return me her letter, which I have sent, that you may know the whole case, and not be seduced to anything that you may afterwards repent. Miss Doxy perhaps you know to be Mr. Garrick's niece.

'If Dean Percy can be popular at Carlisle he may be very happy. He has in his disposal two livings, each equal, or almost equal in value to the deanery; he may take one himself, and give the other to his son.

[1] His regiment was afterwards ordered to Jamaica, where he accompanied it, and almost lost his life by the climate. This impartial order I should think a sufficient refutation of the idle rumour that 'there was still something behind the throne greater than the throne itself.'

[2] Requesting me to inquire concerning the family of a gentleman who was then paying his addresses to Miss Doxy.

'How near is the Cathedral to Auchinleck, that you are so much delighted with it? it is, I suppose, at least an hundred and fifty miles off. However, if you are pleased, it is so far well.

'Let me know what reception you have from your father, and the state of his health. Please him as much as you can, and add no pain to his last years.

'Of our friends here I can recollect nothing to tell you. I have neither seen nor heard of Langton. Beauclerk is just returned from Brighthelmstone, I am told, much better. Mr. Thrale and his family are still there; and his health is said to be visibly improved; he has not bathed but hunted.

'At Bolt Court there is much malignity, but of late little open hostility.[1] I have had a cold, but it is gone. Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, etc.—I am, sir, your humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Nov.* 13, 1779.'

On November 22, and December 21, I wrote to him from Edinburgh, giving a very favourable report of the family of Miss Doxy's lover;—that after a good deal of inquiry I had discovered the sister of Mr. Francis Stewart, one of his amanuenses when writing his *Dictionary*;—that I had, as desired by him, paid her a guiuea for an old pocket-book of her brother's which he had retained; and that the good woman, who was in very moderate circumstances, but contented and placid, wondered at his scrupulous and liberal honesty, and received the guinea as if sent her by Providence.—That I had repeatedly begged of him to keep his promise to send me his letter to Lord Chesterfield, and that this *memento*, like *Delenda est Carthago*, must be in every letter that I should write to him till I had obtained my object.

In 1780 the world was kept in impatience for the

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[1] See p. 67.

completion of his *Lives of the Poets,* upon which he was employed so far as his indolence allowed him to labour.

I wrote to him on January 1, and March 13, sending him my notes of Lord Marchmont's information concerning Pope;—complaining that I had not heard from him for almost four months, though he was two letters in my debt;—that I had suffered again from melancholy;—hoping that he had been in so much better company (the Poets), that he had not time to think of his distant friends; for if that were the case, I should have some recompense for my uneasiness;—that the state of my affairs did not admit of my coming to London this year; and begging he would return me Goldsmith's two poems, with his lines marked.

His friend Dr. Lawrence having now suffered the greatest affliction to which a man is liable, and which Johnson himself had felt in the most severe manner; Johnson wrote to him in an admirable strain of sympathy and pious consolation:—

TO DR. LAWRENCE

'Dear Sir,—At a time when all your friends ought to show their kindness, and with a character which ought to make all that know you your friends, you may wonder that you have yet heard nothing from me.

'I have been hindered by a vexatious and incessant cough, for which within these ten days I have been bled once, fasted four or five times, taken physic five times, and opiates, I think, six. This day it seems to remit.

'The loss, dear sir, 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.—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate, and most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*January* 20, 1780.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Well, I had resolved to send you the Chesterfield letter; but I will write once again without it. Never impose tasks upon mortals. To require two things is the way to have them both undone.

'For the difficulties which you mention in your affairs I am sorry; but difficulty is now very general: it is not therefore less grievous, for there is less hope of help. I pretend not to give you advice, not knowing the state of your affairs; and general counsels about prudence and frugality would do you little good. You are, however, in the right not to increase your own perplexity by a journey hither; and I hope that by staying at home you will please your father.

'Poor dear Beauclerk [1]—*nec, ut soles, dabis joca.* His wit and his folly, his acuteness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over. Such another will not often be found among mankind. He directed himself to be buried by the side of his mother, an instance of tenderness which I hardly expected. He has left his children to the care of Lady

[1] [The Hon. Topham Beauclerk died March 11, 1780, aged 40.—M.

Di, and if she dies, of Mr. Langton, and of Mr. Leicester, his relation, and a man of good character. His library has been offered to sale to the Russian ambassador.[1]

'Dr. Percy, notwithstanding all the noise of the newspapers, has had no literary loss.[2] Clothes and movables were burnt to the value of about £100; but his papers, and I think his books, were all preserved.

'Poor Mr. Thrale has been in extreme danger from an apoplectical disorder, and recovered, beyond the expectation of his physicians; he is now at Bath that his mind may be quiet, and Mrs. Thrale and Miss are with him.

'Having told you what has happened to your friends, let me say something to you of yourself. You are always complaining of melancholy, and I conclude from those complaints that you are fond of it. No man talks of that which he is desirous to conceal, and every man desires to conceal that of which he is ashamed. Do not pretend to deny it; *manifestum habemus furem*; make it an invariable and obligatory law to yourself never to mention your own mental diseases; if you are never to speak of them you will think on them but little, and if you think little of them they will molest you rarely. When you talk of them it is plain that you want either praise or pity; for praise there is no room, and pity will do you no good; therefore, from this hour speak no more, think no more, about them.

'Your transaction with Mrs. Stewart gave me great satisfaction; I am much obliged to you for your attention. Do not lose sight of her; your countenance may be of great credit, and of consequence of great advantage to her. The memory of her brother is yet fresh in my mind; he was an ingenious and worthy man.

'Please to make my compliments to your lady and to the young ladies. I should like to see them, pretty loves.—I am, dear sir, yours affectionately, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*April* 8, 1780.'

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1 [Mr. Beauclerk's Library was sold by public auction in April and May 1781, for £5011.—M.]

2 By a fire in Northumberland House, where he had an apartment, in which I have passed many an agreeable hour.

Mrs. Thrale being now at Bath with her husband, the correspondence between Johnson and her was carried on briskly. I shall present my readers with one of her original letters to him at this time, which will amuse them probably more than those well-written but studied epistles which she has inserted in her collection, because it exhibits the easy vivacity of their literary intercourse. It is also of value as a key to Johnson's answer, which she has printed by itself, and of which I shall subjoin extracts.

MRS. THRALE TO DR. JOHNSON

'I had a very kind letter from you yesterday, dear sir, with a most circumstantial date. You took trouble with my circulating letter, Mr. Evans writes me word, and I thank you sincerely for so doing: one might do mischief else, not being on the spot.

'Yesterday's evening was passed at Mrs. Montagu's: there was Mr. Melmoth; I do not like him *though*, nor he me; it was expected we should have pleased each other; he is, however, just Tory enough to hate the Bishop of Peterborough[1] for Whiggism, and Whig enough to abhor you for Toryism.

'Mrs. Montagu flattered him finely; so he had a good afternoon on 't. This evening we spend at a concert. Poor Queeney's[2] sore eyes have just released her: she had a long confinement, and could neither read nor write, so my master[3] treated her very good-naturedly with the visits of a young woman in this town, a tailor's daughter, who professes music, and teaches so as to give six lessons a day to ladies at five and threepence a lesson. Miss Burney says she is a great performer; and I respect the wench for getting her living so prettily; she is very modest and pretty-mannered, and not seventeen years old.

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[1] Dr. John Hinchliffe.

[2] A kind of nickname given to Mrs. Thrale's eldest daughter, whose name being *Esther* she might be assimilated to a *Queen*.

[3] Mr. Thrale.

'You live in a fine whirl indeed; if I did not write regularly you would half forget me, and that would be very wrong, for I *felt* my regard for you in my *face* last night when the criticisms were going on.

'This morning it was all connoisseurship; we went to see some pictures painted by a gentleman-artist, Mr. Taylor, of this place; my master makes one everywhere, and has got a good dawdling companion to ride with him now. . . . He looks well enough, but I have no notion of health for a man whose mouth cannot be sewed up. Burney and I and Queeney tease him every meal he eats, and Mrs. Montagu is quite serious with him; but what *can* one do? He will eat, I think, and if he does eat I know he will not live; it makes me very unhappy, but I must bear it. Let me always have your friendship.—I am, most sincerely, dear sir, your faithful servant, H. L. T.

'*Bath, Friday, April* 28.'

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE

'DEAREST MADAM,—Mr. Thrale never will live abstinently till he can persuade himself to live by rule.[1] . . . Encourage, as you can, the musical girl.

'Nothing is more common than mutual dislike where mutual approbation is particularly expected. There is often on both sides a vigilance not over-benevolent; and as attention is strongly excited, so that nothing drops unheeded, any difference in taste or opinion, and some difference where there is no restraint will commonly appear, immediately generates dislike.

'Never let criticisms operate on your face or your mind; it is very rarely that an author is hurt by his critics. The blaze of reputation cannot be blown out, but it often dies in the socket; a very few names may be considered as perpetual lamps that shine unconsumed. From the author of *Fitzosborne's Letters* I cannot think myself in much danger.[2] I met him only once about thirty years ago, and in some small dispute reduced him to whistle; having not seen him since,

[1] I have taken the liberty to leave out a few lines.

[2] Melmoth.

that is the last impression. Poor Moore, the fabulist, was one of the company.

'Mrs. Montagu's long stay, against her own inclination, is very convenient. You would, by your own confession, want a companion; and she is *par pluribus*; conversing with her you may *find variety in one.*

'*London, May* 1, 1780.'

On the 2nd of May I wrote to him, and requested that we might have another meeting somewhere in the North of England in the autumn of this year.

From Mr. Langton I received soon after this time a letter, of which I extract a passage, relative both to Mr. Beauclerk and Dr. Johnson:—

'The melancholy information you have received concerning Mr. Beauclerk's death is true. Had his talents been directed in any sufficient degree as they ought, I have always been strongly of opinion that they were calculated to make an illustrious figure; and that opinion, as it had been in part formed upon Dr. Johnson's judgment, receives more and more confirmation by hearing what, since his death, Dr. Johnson has said concerning them; a few evenings ago he was at Mr. Vesey's, where Lord Althorpe, who was one of a numerous company there, addressed Dr. Johnson on the subject of Mr. Beauclerk's death, saying, "Our Club has had a great loss since we met last." He replied, "A loss that perhaps the whole nation could not repair!" The Doctor then went on to speak of his endowments, and particularly extolled the wonderful ease with which he uttered what was highly excellent. He said, that "no man ever was so free when he was going to say a good thing, from a *look* that expressed that it was coming; or, when he had said it, from a look that expressed that it had come." At Mr. Thrale's, some days before, when we were talking on the same subject, he said, referring to the same idea of his wonderful facility, "That Beauclerk's talents were those which he had felt himself more disposed to envy than those of any whom he had known."

'On the evening I have spoken of above, at Mr. Vesey's, you would have been much gratified, as it exhibited an instance of the high importance in which Dr. Johnson's character is held, I think even beyond any I ever before was witness to. The company consisted chiefly of ladies, among whom were the Duchess Dowager of Portland, the Duchess of Beaufort, whom I suppose from her rank I must name before her mother Mrs. Boscawen, and her elder sister Mrs. Lewson, who was likewise there; Lady Lucan, Lady Clermont, and others of note both for their station and understandings. Among the gentlemen were Lord Althorpe, whom I have before named, Lord Macartney, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lord Lucan, Mr. Wraxal, whose book you have probably seen, *The Tour to the Northern Parts of Europe*; a very agreeable ingenious man; Dr. Warren, Mr. Pepys, the Master in Chancery, whom I believe you know, and Dr. Barnard, the Provost of Eton. As soon as Dr. Johnson was come in, and had taken a chair, the company began to collect round him till they became not less than four, if not five, deep; those behind standing and listening over the heads of those that were sitting near him. The conversation for some time was chiefly between Dr. Johnson and the Provost of Eton, while the others contributed occasionally their remarks. Without attempting to detail the particulars of the conversation, which perhaps if I did, I should spin my account out to a tedious length, I thought, my dear sir, this general account of the respect with which our valued friend was attended to might be acceptable.'

TO THE REV. DR. FARMER

'*May* 25, 1780.

'Sir,—I know your disposition to second any literary attempt, and therefore venture upon the liberty of entreating you to procure from College or University registers all the dates or other informations which they can supply relating to Ambrose Philips, Broome, and Gray, who were all of Cambridge, and of whose lives I am to give such accounts as I can gather. Be pleased to forgive this trouble from, sir, your most humble servant, Sam. Johnson.'

While Johnson was thus engaged in preparing a delightful literary entertainment for the world the tranquillity of the metropolis of Great Britain was unexpectedly disturbed by the most horrid series of outrage that ever disgraced a civilised country. A relaxation of some of the severe penal provisions against our fellow-subjects of the Catholic communion had been granted by the legislature, with an opposition so inconsiderable that the genuine mildness of Christianity united with liberal policy seemed to have become general in this island. But a dark and malignant spirit of persecution soon showed itself in an unworthy petition for the repeal of the wise and humane statute. That petition was brought forward by a mob with the evident purpose of intimidation, and was justly rejected. But the attempt was accompanied and followed by such daring violence as is unexampled in history. Of this extraordinary tumult Dr. Johnson has given the following concise, lively, and just account in his *Letters to Mrs. Thrale*: [1]

'On Friday [2] the good Protestants met in Saint George's Fields, at the summons of Lord George Gordon, and marching to Westminster, insulted the Lords and Commons, who all bore it with great tameness. At night the outrages began by the demolition of the mass-house by Lincoln's Inn.

'An exact journal of a week's defiance of government I cannot give you. On Monday Mr. Strahan, who had been insulted, spoke to Lord Mansfield, who had, I think, been insulted too, of the licentiousness of the populace; and his Lordship treated it as a very slight irregularity. On Tuesday night they pulled down Fielding's house,[3] and burnt his goods

[1] Vol. ii. p. 133, *et seq.* I have selected passages from several letters, without mentioning dates. [2] June 2.

[3] [This is not quite correct. Sir John Fielding was, I think, then dead. It was Justice Hyde's house in St. Martin's Street, Leicester Fields, that was gutted and his goods burnt in the street.—BURNEY.]

in the street. They had gutted on Monday Sir George Savile's house, but the building was saved. On Tuesday evening, leaving Fielding's ruins, they went to Newgate to demand their companions, who had been seized demolishing the chapel. The keeper could not release them but by the Mayor's permission, which he went to ask; at his return he found all the prisoners released and Newgate in a blaze. They then went to Bloomsbury and fastened upon Lord Mansfield's house, which they pulled down; and as for his goods, they totally burnt them. They have since gone to Caen-wood, but a guard was there before them. They plundered some Papists, I think, and burnt a mass-house in Moorfields the same night.

'On Wednesday I walked with Dr. Scot to look at Newgate, and found it in ruins with the fire yet glowing. As I went by the Protestants were plundering the Sessions House at the Old Bailey. There were not, I believe, a hundred; but they did their work at leisure, in full security, without sentinels, without trepidation, as men lawfully employed in full day. Such is the cowardice of a commercial place. On Wednesday they broke open the Fleet, and the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, and Wood Street Compter, and Clerkenwell Bridewell, and released all the prisoners.

'At night they set fire to the Fleet and to the King's Bench, and I know not how many other places; and one might see the glare of conflagration fill the sky from many parts. The sight was dreadful. Some people were threatened: Mr. Strahan advised me to take care of myself. Such a time of terror you have been happy in not seeing.

'The king said in council, "That the magistrates had not done their duty, but that he would do his own;" and a proclamation was published directing us to keep our servants within doors, as the peace was now to be preserved by force. The soldiers were sent out to different parts, and the town is now [*June* 9] at quiet.

'The soldiers are stationed so as to be everywhere within call: there is no longer any body of rioters, and the individuals are hunted to their holes and led to prison; Lord George was last night sent to the Tower. Mr. John Wilkes was this day in my neighbourhood to seize the publisher of a seditious paper.

'Several chapels have been destroyed, and several inoffensive Papists have been plundered, but the high sport was to burn the jails. This was a good rabble trick. The debtors and the criminals were all set at liberty; but of the criminals, as has always happened, many are already retaken; and two pirates have surrendered themselves, and it is expected that they will be pardoned.

'Government now acts again with its proper force; and we are all under the protection of the king and the law. I thought that it would be agreeable to you and my master to have my testimony to the public security; and that you would sleep more quietly when I told you that you are safe.

'There has, indeed, been an universal panic, from which the king was the first that recovered. Without the concurrence of his ministers, or the assistance of the civil magistrates, he put the soldiers in motion, and saved the town from calamities such as a rabble's government must naturally produce.

'The public has escaped a very heavy calamity. The rioters attempted the Bank on Wednesday night, but in no great number; and like other thieves, with no great resolution. Jack Wilkes headed the party that drove them away. It is agreed, that if they had seized the Bank on Tuesday, at the height of the panic, when no resistance had been prepared, they might have carried irrecoverably away whatever they had found. Jack, who was always zealous for order and decency, declares that if he be trusted with power he will not leave a rioter alive. There is, however, now no longer any need of heroism or bloodshed; no blue riband[1] is any longer worn.'

Such was the end of this miserable sedition, from which London was delivered by the magnanimity of the Sovereign himself. Whatever some may maintain, I am satisfied that there was no combination or plan, either domestic or foreign; but that the mischief spread by a gradual contagion of frenzy,

[1] [Lord George Gordon and his followers, during these outrages, wore blue ribands in their hats.—M.]

augmented by the quantities of fermented liquors, of which the deluded populace possessed themselves in the course of their depredations.

I should think myself very much to blame, did I here neglect to do justice to my esteemed friend Mr. Akerman, the keeper of Newgate, who long discharged a very important trust with an uniform intrepid firmness, and at the same time a tenderness and a liberal charity, which entitle him to be recorded with distinguished honour.

Upon this occasion, from the timidity and negligence of magistracy on the one hand, and the almost incredible exertions of the mob on the other, the first prison of this great country was laid open, and the prisoners set free; but that Mr. Akerman, whose house was burnt, would have prevented all this, had proper aid been sent him in due time, there can be no doubt.

Many years ago, a fire broke out in the brick part, which was built as an addition to the old jail of Newgate. The prisoners were in consternation and tumult, calling out, 'We shall be burnt—we shall be burnt! Down with the gate!—down with the gate!' Mr. Akerman hastened to them, showed himself at the gate, and having, after some confused vociferation of 'Hear him—hear him!' obtained a silent attention, he then calmly told them that the gate must not go down; that they were under his care, and that they should not be permitted to escape; but that he could assure them, they need not be afraid of being burnt, for that the fire was not in the prison, properly so called, which was strongly built with stone; and that if they would engage to be

quiet, he himself would come in to them, and conduct them to the farther end of the building, and would not go out till they gave him leave. To this proposal they agreed; upon which Mr. Akerman, having first made them fall back from the gate, went in, and with a determined resolution ordered the outer turnkey upon no account to open the gate, even though the prisoners (though he trusted they would not) should break their word, and by force bring himself to order it. 'Never mind me (said he) should that happen.' The prisoners peaceably followed him, while he conducted them through passages of which he had the keys, to the extremity of the jail, which was most distant from the fire. Having by this very judicious conduct fully satisfied them that there was no immediate risk, if any at all, he then addressed them thus: 'Gentlemen, you are now convinced that I told you true. I have no doubt that the engines will soon extinguish this fire; if they should not, a sufficient guard will come, and you shall be all taken out and lodged in the Compters. I assure you, upon my word and honour, that I have not a farthing insured. I have left my house that I might take care of you. I will keep my promise, and stay with you if you insist upon it; but if you will allow me to go out and look after my family and property, I shall be obliged to you.' Struck with his behaviour, they called out, 'Master Akerman, you have done bravely; it was very kind in you; by all means go and take care of your own concerns.' He did so accordingly, while they remained, and were all preserved.

Johnson has been heard to relate the substance of this story with high praise, in which he was joined by

Mr. Burke. My illustrious friend, speaking of Mr. Akerman's kindness to his prisoners, pronounced this eulogy upon his character: 'He who has long had constantly in his view the worst of mankind, and is yet eminent for the humanity of his disposition, must have had it originally in a great degree, and continued to cultivate it very carefully.'

In the course of this month my brother David waited upon Dr. Johnson with the following letter of introduction, which I had taken care should be lying ready on his arrival in London:—

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, April* 29, 1780.

'MY DEAR SIR,—This will be delivered to you by my brother David on his return from Spain. You will be glad to see the man who vowed to "stand by the old castle of Auchinleck, with heart, purse, and sword": that romantic family solemnity devised by me, of which you and I talked with complacency upon the spot. I trust that twelve years of absence have not lessened his feudal attachment; and that you will find him worthy of being introduced to your acquaintance.—I have the honour to be, with affectionate veneration, my dear sir, your most faithful humble servant,

'JAMES BOSWELL.'

Johnson received him very politely, and has thus mentioned him in a letter to Mrs. Thrale:[1]

'I HAVE had with me a brother of Boswell's, a Spanish merchant,[2] whom the war has driven from his residence at Valencia; he is gone to see his friends, and will find Scotland but a sorry place after twelve years' residence in a happier climate. He is a very agreeable man, and speaks no Scotch.'

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[1] Mrs. Piozzi has omitted the name, she best knows why.
[2] Now settled in London.

TO DR. BEATTIE, AT ABERDEEN

'SIR,—More years[1] than I have any delight to reckon have passed since you and I saw one another: of this, however, there is no reason for making reprehensory complaint:—*Sic fata ferunt.* But methinks there might pass some small interchange of regard between us. If you say that I ought to have written, I now write; and I write to tell you that I have much kindness for you and Mrs. Beattie; and that I wish your health better and your life long. Try change of air, and come a few degrees southwards; a softer climate may do you both good; winter is coming in; and London will be warmer, and gayer, and busier, and more fertile of amusement than Aberdeen.

'My health is better; but that will be little in the balance when I tell you that Mrs. Montagu has been very ill, and is, I doubt, now but weakly. Mr. Thrale has been very dangerously disordered; but is much better, and I hope will totally recover. He has withdrawn himself from business the whole summer. Sir Joshua and his sister are well; and Mr. Davies has got great success as an author,[2] generated by the corruption of a bookseller. More news I have not to tell you, and therefore you must be contented with hearing what I know not whether you much wish to hear,[3] that I am, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street,*
'*August* 21, 1780.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I find you have taken one of your fits of taciturnity, and have resolved not to write till you are written

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[1] I had been five years absent from London.—BEATTIE.

[2] Meaning his entertaining *Memoirs of David Garrick, Esq.*, of which Johnson (as Davies informed me) wrote the first sentence; thus giving, as it were, the keynote to the performance. It is, indeed, very characteristical of its author, beginning with a maxim and proceeding to illustrate. 'All excellence has a right to be recorded. I shall, therefore, think it superfluous to apologise for writing the life of a man who, by an uncommon assemblage of private virtues, adorned the highest eminence in a public profession.'

[3] I wish he had omitted the suspicion expressed here, though I believe he meant nothing but jocularity: for though he and I differed sometimes in opinion, he well knew how much I loved and revered him.—BEATTIE.

to; it is but a peevish humour, but you shall have your way.

'I have sat at home in Bolt Court all the summer thinking to write the *Lives*, and a great part of the time only thinking. Several of them, however, are done, and I still think to do the rest.

'Mr. Thrale and his family have, since his illness, passed their time first at Bath, and then at Brighthelmstone; but I have been at neither place. I would have gone to Lichfield if I could have had time, and I might have had time if I had been active; but I have missed much and done little.

'In the late disturbances Mr. Thrale's house and stock were in great danger; the mob was pacified at their first invasion, with about £50 in drink and meat; and at their second, were driven away by the soldiers. Mr. Strahan got a garrison into his house, and maintained them a fortnight; he was so frighted that he removed part of his goods. Mrs. Williams took shelter in the country.

'I know not whether I shall get a ramble this autumn; it is now about the time when we were travelling. I have, however, better health than I had then, and hope you and I may yet show ourselves on some part of Europe, Asia, or Africa.[1] In the meantime let us play no trick, but keep each other's kindness by all means in our power.

'The bearer of this is Dr. Dunbar of Aberdeen, who has written and published a very ingenious book,[2] and who I think has a kindness for me, and will, when he knows you, have a kindness for you.

'I suppose your little ladies are grown tall: and your son has become a learned young man. I love them all, and I love your naughty lady, whom I never shall persuade to love me. When the *Lives* are done I shall send them to complete

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1 It will no doubt be remarked how he avoids the *rebellious* land of America. This puts me in mind of an anecdote for which I am obliged to my worthy social friend, Governor Richard Penn:—'At one of Miss E. Hervey's assemblies Dr. Johnson was following her up and down the room: upon which Lord Abington observed to her, "Your great friend is very fond of you; you can go nowhere without him." "Ay (said she), he would follow me to any part of the world." "Then (said the Earl), ask him to go with you to *America*."'

2 *Essays on the History of Mankind.*

her collection, but must send them in paper, as for want of a pattern I cannot bind them to fit the rest.—I am, sir, yours most affectionately, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Aug.* 21, 1780.'

This year he wrote to a young clergyman in the country the following very excellent letter, which contains valuable advice to divines in general:—

'DEAR SIR,—Not many days ago Dr. Lawrence showed me a letter, in which you make mention of me; I hope, therefore, you will not be displeased that I endeavour to preserve your good-will by some observations which your letter suggested to me.

'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, somewhere 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 burden 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 arise 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 difficult: 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 in your letter is your account of the manners of your parish; from which I gather, that it has been long neglected by the parson. The Dean of Carlisle,[1] who was then 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 the 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 civilised 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 £15 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. I think I have now only to say, that in the momentous work you have undertaken, I pray God to bless you.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Aug.* 30, 1780.'

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[1] Dr. Percy, now Bishop of Dromore.

My next letters to him were dated August 24, September 6, and October 1, and from them I extract the following passages:—

'My brother David and I find the long-indulged fancy of our comfortable meeting again at Auchinleck, so well realised, that it in some degree confirms the pleasing hopes of *O præclarum diem!* in a future state.

'I beg that you may never again harbour a suspicion of my indulging a peevish humour, or playing tricks; you will recollect, that when I confessed to you, that I had once been intentionally silent to try your regard, I gave you my word and honour that I would not do so again.

'I rejoice to hear of your good state of health; I pray God to continue it long. I have often said, that I would willingly have ten years added to my life, to have ten taken from yours; I mean, that I would be ten years older to have you ten years younger. But let me be thankful for the years during which I have enjoyed your friendship, and please myself with the hopes of enjoying it many years to come in this state of being, trusting always, that in another state, we shall meet never to be separated. Of this we can form no notion; but the thought, though indistinct, is delightful, when the mind is calm and clear.

'The riots in London were certainly horrible; but you give me no account of your own situation during the barbarous anarchy. A description of it by Dr. Johnson would be a great painting;[1] you might write another *London, a Poem.*

'I am charmed with your condescending affectionate expression, "Let us keep each other's kindness by all the means in our power": my revered friend! how elevating is it to my mind, that I am found worthy to be a companion to Dr. Samuel Johnson! All that you have said in grateful praise of Mr. Walmsley, I have long thought of you; but we are both Tories, which has a very general influence upon our sentiments. I hope that you will agree to meet me at York, about the end of this month; or if you will come to Carlisle, that would be better still, in case the Dean be there. Please

[1] I had not then seen his letters to Mrs. Thrale.

to consider, that to keep each other's kindness, we should every year have that free and intimate communication of mind which can be had only when we are together. We should have both our solemn and our pleasant talk."

'I write now for the third time, to tell you that my desire for our meeting this autumn is much increased. I wrote to 'Squire Godfrey Bosville, my Yorkshire chief, that I should, perhaps, pay him a visit, as I was to hold a conference with Dr. Johnson at York. I give you my word and honour that I said not a word of his inviting you; but he wrote to me as follows:

'"I need not tell you I shall be happy to see you here the latter end of this month, as you propose; and I shall likewise be in hopes that you will persuade Dr. Johnson to finish the conference here. It will add to the favour of your own company, if you prevail on such an associate, to assist your observations. I have often been entertained with his writings, and I once belonged to a club of which he was a member, and I never spent an evening there, but I heard something from him well worth remembering."

'We have thus, my dear sir, good comfortable quarters in the neighbourhood of York, where you may be assured we shall be heartily welcome. I pray you then resolve to set out; and let not the year 1780 be a blank in our social calendar, and in that record of wisdom and wit, which I keep with so much diligence, to your honour, and the instruction and delight of others.'

Mr. Thrale had now another contest for the representation in Parliament of the borough of Southwark, and Johnson kindly lent him his assistance by writing advertisements and letters for him. I shall insert one as a specimen:

TO THE WORTHY ELECTORS OF THE BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

'GENTLEMEN,—A new Parliament being now called, I again solicit the honour of being elected for one of your repre-

sentatives; and solicit it with the greater confidence, as I am not conscious of having neglected my duty, or of having acted otherwise than as becomes the independent representative of independent constituents; superior to fear, hope, and expectation, who has no private purposes to promote, and whose prosperity is involved in the prosperity of his country. As my recovery from a very severe distemper is not yet perfect, I have declined to attend the Hall, and hope an omission so necessary will not be harshly construed.

'I can only send my respectful wishes, that all your deliberations may tend to the happiness of the kingdom, and the peace of the borough.—I am, gentlemen, your most faithful and obedient servant, HENRY THRALE.

'*Southwark, Sept.* 5, 1780.'

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY SOUTHWELL,[1]
DUBLIN

'MADAM,—Among the numerous addresses of condolence which your great loss must have occasioned, be pleased to receive this from one whose name perhaps you have never heard, and to whom your Ladyship is known only by the reputation of your virtue, and to whom your Lord was known only by his kindness and beneficence.

'Your Ladyship is now again summoned to exert that piety of which you once gave, in a state of pain and danger, so illustrious an example; and your Lord's beneficence may

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1 [Margaret, the second daughter and one of the co-heiresses of Arthur Cecil Hamilton, Esq. She was married in 1741 to Thomas George, the third Baron, and first Viscount, Southwell, and lived with him in the most perfect connubial felicity till September 1780, when Lord Southwell died: a loss which she never ceased to lament to the hour of her own dissolution, in her eighty-first year, August 16, 1802.—The 'illustrious example of piety and fortitude' to which Dr. Johnson alludes, was the submitting, when past her fiftieth year, to an extremely painful surgical operation, which she endured with extraordinary firmness and composure, not allowing herself to be tied to her chair, nor uttering a single moan.—This slight tribute of affection to the memory of these two most amiable and excellent persons, who were not less distinguished by their piety, beneficence, and unbounded charity, than by a suavity of manners which endeared them to all who knew them, it is hoped, will be forgiven from one who was honoured by their kindness and friendship from his childhood.—M.]

be still continued by those, who with his fortune inherit his virtues.

'I hope to be forgiven the liberty which I shall take of informing your Ladyship, that Mr. Mauritius Lowe, a son of your late Lord's father,[1] had, by recommendation to your Lord, a quarterly allowance of £10, the last of which, due July 26, he has not received: he was in hourly hope of his remittance, and flattered himself that on October 26 he should have received the whole half year's bounty, when he was struck with the dreadful news of his benefactor's death.

'May I presume to hope, that his want, his relation, and his merit, which excited his Lordship's charity, will continue to have the same effect upon those whom he has left behind; and that, though he has lost one friend, he may not yet be destitute? Your Ladyship's charity cannot easily be exerted where it is wanted more; and to a mind like yours, distress is a sufficient recommendation.—I hope to be allowed the honour of being, madam, your Ladyship's most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London,*
'*Sept.* 9, 1780.'

On his birthday, Johnson has this note: 'I am now beginning the seventy-second year of my life, with more strength of body and greater vigour of mind, than I think is common at that age.' But still he complains of sleepless nights and idle days, and forgetfulness, or neglect of resolutions. He thus pathetically expresses himself: 'Surely I shall not

1 [Thomas, the second Lord Southwell, who died in London in 1766. Johnson was well acquainted with this nobleman, and said, 'he was the highest bred man, without insolence, that he was ever in company with.' His younger brother, Edmund Southwell, lived in intimacy with Johnson for many years. (See an account of him in Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 405.) He died in London, Nov. 22, 1772.

In opposition to the Knight's unfavourable representation of this gentleman, to whom I was indebted for my first introduction to Johnson, I take this opportunity to add, that he appeared to me a pious man, and was very fond of leading the conversation to religious subjects.—M.]

spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation.'[1]

Mr. Macbean, whom I have mentioned more than once, as one of Johnson's humble friends, a deserving but unfortunate man, being now oppressed by age and poverty, Johnson solicited the Lord Chancellor Thurlow, to have him admitted into the Charterhouse. I take the liberty to insert his Lordship's answer, as I am eager to embrace every occasion of augmenting the respectable notion which should ever be entertained of my illustrious friend :—

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*London, October* 24, 1780.

'SIR,—I have this moment received your letter dated the 19th, and returned from Bath.

'In the beginning of the summer I placed one in the Chartreux, without the sanction of a recommendation so distinct and so authoritative as yours of Macbean; and I am afraid, that according to the establishment of the House, the opportunity of making the charity so good amends will not soon recur. But whenever a vacancy shall happen, if you'll favour me with notice of it, I will try to recommend him to the place, even though it should not be my turn to nominate.—I am, sir, with great regard, your most faithful and obedient servant, THURLOW.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to write you a letter that will not please you, and yet it is at last what I resolve to do. This year must pass without an interview; the summer has been foolishly lost, like many other of my summers and winters. I hardly saw a green field, but stayed in town to work, without working much.

'Mr. Thrale's loss of health has lost him the election; he is now going to Brighthelmstone, and expects me to go with

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 185.

him; and how long I shall stay, I cannot tell. I do not much like the place, but yet I shall go, and stay while my stay is desired. We must, therefore, content ourselves with knowing, what we know as well as man can know the mind of man, that we love one another, and that we wish each other's happiness, and that the lapse of a year cannot lessen our mutual kindness.

'I was pleased to be told that I accused Mrs. Boswell unjustly, in supposing that she bears me ill-will. I love you so much, that I would be glad to love all that love you, and that you love; and I have love very ready for Mrs. Boswell, if she thinks it worthy of acceptance. I hope all the young ladies and gentlemen are well.

'I take a great liking to your brother. He tells me that his father received him kindly, but not fondly; however, you seemed to have lived well enough at Auchinleck, while you stayed. Make your father as happy as you can.

'You lately told me of your health: I can tell you in return, that my health has been for more than a year past, better than it has been for many years before. Perhaps it may please God to give us some time together before we are parted.—I am, dear sir, yours most affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Oct.* 17, 1780.'

TO THE REV. DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH

'SIR,—I hope you will forgive the liberty I take, in soliciting your interposition with his Grace the Archbishop: my first petition was successful, and I therefore venture on the second.

'The matron of the Chartreux is about to resign her place, and Mrs. Desmoulins, a daughter of the late Dr. Swinfen,[1] who was well known to your father, is desirous of succeeding her. She has been accustomed by keeping a boarding-school to the care of children, and I think is very likely to discharge her duty. She is in great distress, and therefore may probably receive the benefit of a charitable foundation. If you

[1] [See vol. i. p. 50.—M.]

wish to see her, she will be willing to give an account of herself.

'If you shall be pleased, sir, to mention her favourably to his Grace, you will do a great act of kindness to, sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*December* 30, 1780.'

Being disappointed in my hopes of meeting Johnson this year, so that I could hear none of his admirable sayings, I shall compensate for this want by inserting a collection of them, for which I am indebted to my worthy friend Mr. Langton, whose kind communications have been separately interwoven in many parts of this work. Very few articles of this collection were committed to writing by himself, he not having that habit; which he regrets, and which those who know the numerous opportunities he had of gathering the rich fruits of *Johnsonian* wit and wisdom, must ever regret. I however found, in conversation with him, that a good store of Johnsoniana was treasured in his mind; and I compared it to Herculaneum, or some old Roman field, which when dug fully rewards the labour employed. The authenticity of every article is unquestionable. For the expression, I, who wrote them down in his presence, am partly answerable.

'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 did 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 a 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 shows 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.'

'It may be questioned whether there is not some mistake as to the methods of employing the poor, seemingly on a supposition that there is a certain portion of work left undone for want of persons to do it; but if that is otherwise, and all the materials we have are actually worked up, or all the manufactures we can use or dispose of are already executed, then what is given to the poor, who are to be set at work, must be taken from some who now have it: as time must be taken for learning (according to Sir William Petty's observation), a certain part of those very materials that, as it is, are properly worked up, must be spoiled by the unskilfulness of novices. We may apply to well-meaning, but misjudging, persons in particulars of this nature, what Giannone said to a monk, who wanted what he called to *convert* him: "*Tu sei santo, ma tu non sei filosopho.*" It is an unhappy circumstance that one might give away five hundred pounds in a year to those that importune in the streets and not do any good.'

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

'Having asked Mr. Langton if his father and mother had sat for their pictures, which he thought it right for each generation of a family to do, and being told they had opposed it, he said, "Sir, among the anfractuosities of the human mind, I know not if it may not be one, that there is a superstitious reluctance to sit for a picture."'

'John Gilbert Cooper related that soon after the publication of his 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."'[1]

'Talking of expense, he observed with what munificence a great merchant will spend his money, both from his having it at command, and from his enlarged views by calculation of a good effect upon the whole. "Whereas (said he), you will hardly ever find a country gentleman who is not a good deal disconcerted at an unexpected occasion for his being obliged to lay out ten pounds."'

'When in good humour he would talk of his own writings with a wonderful frankness and candour, and would even criticise them with the closest severity. One day, having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr. Langton asked him how he liked that paper; he shook his head and answered, "too wordy." At another time, when one was reading his tragedy of *Irene* to a company at a house in the country, he left the room: and somebody having asked him the reason of this, he replied, "Sir, I thought it had been better."'

'Talking of a point of delicate scrupulosity of moral conduct, he said to Mr. Langton, "Men of harder minds than ours will do many things from which you and I would shrink; yet, sir, they will perhaps do

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[1] [See the *Dictionary* under *Giggler*.—A. B.]

more good in life than we. But let us try to help one another. If there be a wrong twist it may be set right. It is not probable that two people can be wrong the same way."'

'Of the preface to Capel's *Shakespeare* 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.'"'

'He related that he had once in a dream a contest of wit with some other person, and that he was very much mortified by imagining that his opponent had the better of him. "Now (said he), one may mark here the effect of sleep in weakening the power of reflection; for had not my judgment failed me I should have seen that the wit of this supposed antagonist, by whose superiority I felt myself depressed, was as much furnished by me as that which I thought I had been uttering in my own character."'

'One evening in company, an ingenious and learned gentleman read to him a letter of compliment which he had received from one of the professors of a foreign university. Johnson, in an irritable fit, thinking there was too much ostentation, said, "I never receive any of these tributes of applause from abroad. One instance I recollect of a foreign publication, in which mention is made of *l'illustre Lockman*."' [1]

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

'He repeated to Mr. Langton, with great energy in the Greek, our Saviour's gracious expression concern-

[1] Secretary to the British Herring Fishery, remarkable for an extraordinary number of occasional verses, not of eminent merit.

ing the forgiveness of Mary Magdalene, Ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην.—"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." He said, "The manner of this dismission is exceedingly affecting."'

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

'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, on 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."'

'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 anything at all."'

'He 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."'

'His friend Garrick was so busy in conducting the drama, that they could not have so much intercourse as Mr. Garrick used to profess an anxious wish that there should be.[1] There might, indeed, be something in the contemptuous severity as to the merit of acting, which this 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 mentioned one evening, "I met David coming off the stage, dressed in a woman's riding-hood, when he acted in *The Wonder*.[2] I came full upon him, and I believe he was not pleased."'

'Once he asked Tom Davies, whom he saw dressed in a fine suit of clothes, "and what art thou to-night?" Tom answered, "The Thane of Ross" (which it will be recollected is a very inconsiderable character); "O, brave!" said Johnson.'

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[1] [In a letter written by Johnson to a friend in Jan. 1742-3, he says, 'I never see Garrick.'—M.]

[2] [By Mrs. Centlivre.—A. B.]

'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."'

'Talking of the minuteness with which people will 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."'

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

'Mr. 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."'

'Dr. Goldsmith, upon occasion of Mrs. Lennox's bringing out a play,[1] said to Dr. Johnson at the Club that a person had advised him to go and hiss it, because she had attacked Shakespeare in her book called *Shakespeare Illustrated*. JOHNSON: "And did not you tell him that he was a rascal?" GOLDSMITH: "No, sir, I did not. Perhaps he did 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 are a rascal."'

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

'One night at the Club he produced a translation of an epitaph which Lord Elibank had written in English for his lady, and requested of Johnson to turn it into Latin for him. Having read *Domina de North et Gray*, he said to Dyer, "You see, sir, what barbarism 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

[1] [Probably *The Sisters*, a comedy performed one night only at Covent Garden in 1769. Dr. Goldsmith wrote an excellent epilogue to it. Mrs. Lennox, whose maiden name was Ramsay, died in London in distressed circumstances, in her eighty-fourth year, January 4, 1804.—M.]

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 the making a partial change, without a due regard to the general structure of the sentence, is a very frequent cause of error in composition."'

'Johnson was well acquainted with Mr. Dossie, author of a treatise on agriculture; and said of him, "Sir, of the objects which the Society of Arts have chiefly in view—the chemical 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."'

'Talking on the subject of toleration one day when some friends were with him in his study, he made his

usual remark, that the State has a right to regulate the religion of the people, who are the children of the State. A clergyman having readily acquiesced in this, Johnson, who loved discussion, observed, "But, sir, you must go round to other states than our own. You do not know what a Brahmin has to say for himself.[1] In short, sir, I have got no further than this: every man has a right to utter what he thinks truth, and every other man has a right to knock him down for it. Martyrdom is the test."'

'A man, he observed, should begin to write soon; for, if he waits till his judgment is matured, his inability, through want of practice, to express his conceptions will make the disproportion so great between what he sees and what he can attain, that he will probably be discouraged from writing at all. As a proof of the justness of this remark, we may instance what is related of the great Lord Granville;[2] 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."'

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

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[1] Here Lord Macartney remarks, 'A Brahmin or any caste of the Hindus will neither admit you to be of their religion nor be converted to yours—a thing which struck the Portuguese with the greatest astonishment when they first discovered the East Indies.'

[2] [John, Lord Carteret, and the first Earl Granville, who died January 2, 1763.—M.]

'Goldsmith one day brought to the Club a printed ode, which he, with others, had been hearing read by its author in a public room, at the rate of five shillings each for admission. One of the company having read it aloud, Dr. Johnson said, "Bolder words and more timorous meaning, I think, never were brought together."'

'Talking of Gray's *Odes*, he said, "They are forced plants, raised in a hotbed: and they are poor plants: they are but cucumbers after all." A gentleman present, who had been running down ode-writing in general as a bad species of poetry, unluckily said, "Had they been literally cucumbers, they had been better things than odes." "Yes, sir (said Johnson), for a *hog*."'

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

'He used to quote, with great warmth, the 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."'

'It is very remarkable that he retained in his memory very slight and trivial as well as important things. As an instance of this, it seems that an inferior domestic of the Duke of Leeds had attempted to celebrate his Grace's marriage in such homely rhymes as he could make: and this curious composition having been sung to Dr. Johnson, he got

it by heart, and used to repeat it in a very pleasant manner. Two of the stanzas were these:

> "When the Duke of Leeds shall married be
> To a fine young lady of high quality,
> How happy will that gentlewoman be
> In his Grace of Leeds's good company.
>
> She shall have all that 's fine and fair,
> And the best of silk and satin shall wear;
> And ride in a coach to take the air,
> And have a house in St. James's Square."[1]

To hear a man, of the weight and dignity of Johnson, repeating such humble attempts at poetry had a very amusing effect. He, however, seriously observed of the last stanza repeated by him, that it nearly comprised all the advantages that wealth can give.'

'An eminent foreigner, when he was shown the British Museum, was very troublesome with many absurd inquiries. "Now there, sir (said he), is the difference between an Englishman and a Frenchman. A Frenchman must be always talking, whether he

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[1] The correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* who subscribes himself Sciolus furnishes the following supplement:—

'A lady of my acquaintance remembers to have heard her uncle sing those homely stanzas more than forty-five years ago. He repeated the second thus:

> "She shall breed young lords and ladies fair,
> And ride abroad in a coach and three pair,
> And the best, etc.
> And have a house, etc."

and remembered a third, which seems to have been the introductory one, and is believed to have been the only remaining one:

> "When the Duke of Leeds shall have made his choice
> Of a charming young lady that 's beautiful and wise,
> She 'll be the happiest young gentlewoman under the skies,
> As long as the sun and moon shall rise;
> And how happy shall, etc."'

It is with pleasure I add, that this stanza could never be more truly applied than at this present time [1792].

knows anything of the matter or not; an Englishman is content to say nothing when he has nothing to say."'

'His unjust contempt for foreigners was, indeed, extreme. One evening, at Old Slaughter's coffee-house, when a number of them were talking loud about little matters, he said, "Does not this confirm old Meynell's observation, *For anything I see, foreigners are fools!*"'

'He said that once, when he had a violent tooth-ache, a Frenchman accosted him thus: "*Ah, Monsieur, vous étudiez trop.*"'

'Having spent an evening at Mr. Langton's with the Reverend 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.[1] 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."'

'We may fairly institute a criticism between Shakespeare 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 Shakespeare. It may be replied to what is said by one of the remarkers on Shakespeare, that though Darius's shade had *prescience*, it does not necessarily follow that he had all *past* particulars revealed to him.'

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[1] [When the Corporation of Norwich applied to Johnson to point out to them a proper master for their grammar-school, he recommended Dr. Parr, on his ceasing to be usher to Sumner at Harrow.—B.]

'Spanish plays, 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 ministering 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.'

'The man who 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," etc., but I don't know whether it might not be true of Lord ——, that from a too great eagerness of 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 was all alike.'

'For hospitality, as formerly practised, there is no longer the same reason; heretofore the poorer people were more numerous, and for want of commerce their means of getting a livelihood more difficult; therefore the supporting them was an act of great benevolence; now that the poor can find maintenance for themselves, and their labour is wanted, a general undiscerning hospitality tends to ill, by withdrawing them from their work to idleness and drunkenness. Then, formerly rents were received in kind, so that there was a great abundance of provisions in pos-

session of the owners of the lands, which, since the plenty of money afforded by commerce, is no longer the case.'

'Hospitality to strangers and foreigners in our country is now almost at an end, since, from the increase of them that come to us, there have been a sufficient number of people that have found an interest in providing inns and proper accommodations, which is in general a more expedient method for the entertainment of travellers. Where the travellers and strangers are few, more of that hospitality subsists, as it has not been worth while to provide places of accommodation. In Ireland there is still hospitality to strangers in some degree; in Hungary and Poland probably more.'

'Colman, in a note on his translation of Terence, talking of Shakespeare'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, Shakespeare had Latin enough to grammaticise his English."'

'A clergyman, whom he characterised as one who loved to say little oddities, was affecting one day, at a bishop's table, a sort of slyness and freedom not in character, and repeated, as if part of *The Old Man's Wish*, a song by Dr. Walter Pope, a verse bordering on licentiousness. Johnson rebuked him in the finest manner, by first showing that he did not know the passage he was aiming at, and thus humbling him: "Sir, that is not the song: it is thus." And he gave it right. Then looking steadfastly on him, "Sir, there is a part of that song

which I should wish to exemplify in my own life:

'May I govern my passions with absolute sway!"'[1]

'Being asked if Barnes knew a good deal of Greek, he answered, "I doubt, sir, he was *unoculus inter cæcos*."'

'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."'

'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 anybody 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 who knows anything 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."'

'Of Dodsley's *Public Virtue*, a poem, he said, "It

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[1] 'May I govern my passions with an absolute sway,
And grow wiser and better as my strength wears away
Without gout or stone by a gentle decay.'

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 him, 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 he 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."'[1]

'"Snatches of reading (said he) 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 anything that he takes a liking to, from a notion

[1] [This assertion concerning Johnson's insensibility to the pathetic powers of Otway, is *too round*. I once asked him, whether he did not think Otway frequently tender; when he answered, 'Sir, he is all tenderness.'—B.]

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."'

'Though he used to censure carelessness with great vehemence, he owned that he once, to avoid the trouble of locking up five guineas, hid them, he forgot where, so that he could not find them.'

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

'When the rumour was strong that we should have a war, because the French would assist the Americans, he rebuked a friend with some asperity for supposing it, saying, "No, sir, national faith is not yet sunk so low."'

'In the latter part of his life, in order to satisfy himself whether his mental faculties were impaired, he resolved that he would try to learn a new language, and fixed upon the Low Dutch for that purpose, and this he continued till he had read about one half of *Thomas à Kempis*; and finding that there appeared no abatement of his power of acquisition, he then desisted, as thinking the experiment had been duly tried. Mr. Burke justly observed that this was not the most vigorous trial, Low Dutch being a language so near to our own; had it been one of the languages entirely different, he might have been very soon satisfied.'

'Mr. Langton and he having gone to see a free-mason's funeral procession, when they were at

Rochester, and some solemn music being played on French horns, he said, "This is the first time that I have ever been affected by musical sound"; adding, "that the impression made upon him was of a melancholy kind." Mr. Langton saying that this effect was a fine one,—JOHNSON: "Yes, if it softens the mind so as to prepare it for the reception of salutary feelings, it may be good; but inasmuch as it is melancholy *per se*, it is bad."'[1]

'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 inquiry; 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 knowledge. Sir, he would bring home a grinding-barrow, which you see in every street in London, and think he had furnished a wonderful improvement."'

'Greek, sir (said he), is like lace; every man gets as much of it as he can.'[2]

'When Lord Charles Hay, after his return from America, was preparing his defence to be offered to the court-martial which he had demanded, having

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1 [The French horn, however, is so far from being melancholy *per se*, that when the strain is light, and in the field, there is nothing so cheerful! It was the funeral occasion, and probably the solemnity of the strain, that produced the plaintive effect here mentioned.—B.]

2 [It should be remembered, that this was said twenty-five or thirty years ago, when lace was very generally worn.—M.]

heard Mr. Langton as high in expressions of admiration of Johnson, as he usually was, he requested that Dr. Johnson might be introduced to him; and Mr. Langton having mentioned it to Johnson, he very kindly and readily agreed; and being presented by Mr. Langton to his Lordship, while under arrest, he saw him several times; upon one of which occasions Lord Charles read to him what he had prepared, which Johnson signified his approbation of, saying, "It is a very good soldierly defence." Johnson said that he had advised his Lordship, that as it was in vain to contend with those who were in possession of power, if they would offer him the rank of Lieutenant-General, and a government, it would be better judged to desist from urging his complaints. It is well known that his Lordship died before the sentence was made known.'

'Johnson one day gave high praise to Dr. Bentley's verses[1] in Dodsley's Collection, which he recited with

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[1] Dr. Johnson, in his *Life of Cowley*, says, that these are 'the only English verses which Bentley is known to have written.' I shall here insert them, and hope my readers will apply them.

> 'Who strives to mount Parnassus' hill
> And thence poetic laurels bring,
> Must first acquire due force and skill,
> Must fly with swan's or eagle's wing.
>
> Who Nature's treasures would explore,
> Her mysteries and arcana know;
> Must high as lofty Newton soar,
> Must stoop as delving Woodward low.
>
> Who studies ancient laws and rites,
> Tongues, arts, and arms, and history;
> Must drudge, like Selden, days and nights,
> And in the endless labour die.
>
> Who travels in religious jars
> (Truth mixt with error, shades with rays),
> Like Whitson, wanting pyx or stars,
> In ocean wide or sinks or strays.

his usual energy. Dr. Adam Smith, who was present, observed in his decisive professorial manner, "Very well—very well." Johnson however added, "Yes, they *are* very well, sir; but you may observe in what manner they are well. They are the forcible verses of a man of a strong mind, but not accustomed to write verse; for there is some uncouthness in the expression."'[1]

'Drinking tea one day at Garrick's with Mr. Langton, he was questioned if he was not somewhat of a

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But grant our hero's hope, long toil
  And comprehensive genius crown,
All sciences, all arts his spoil,
  Yet what reward, or what renown?

Envy, innate in vulgar souls,
  Envy steps in and stops his rise;
Envy with poison'd tarnish fouls
  His lustre, and his worth decries.

He lives inglorious or in want,
  To college and old books confined;
Instead of learn'd, he's call'd pedant,
  Dunces advanced, he's left behind:
Yet left content, a genuine Stoic he,
  Great without patron, rich without South Sea.'

[A different and probably more accurate copy of these spirited verses is to be found in *The Grove, or a Collection of Original Poems and Translations*, etc., 1721. In this miscellany the last stanza, which in Dodsley's copy is unquestionably uncouth, is thus exhibited:

'*Inglorious or by wants inthrall'd,*
  To college and old books confined,
A pedant from his learning call'd,
  Dunces advanced, he's left behind.'—J. BOSWELL, Junr.]

[1] The difference between Johnson and Smith is apparent even in this slight instance. Smith was a man of extraordinary application, and had his mind crowded with all manner of subjects; but the force, acuteness, and vivacity of Johnson were not to be found there. He had book-making so much in his thoughts, and was so chary of what might be turned to account in that way, that he once said to Sir Joshua Reynolds that he made it a rule when in company never to talk of what he understood. Beauclerk had, for a short time, a pretty high opinion of Smith's conversation. Garrick, after listening to him for a while, as to one of whom his expectations had been raised, turned slily to a friend, and whispered to him, 'What say you to this?—eh? *flabby*, I think.'

heretic as to Shakespeare; said Garrick, "I doubt he is a little of an infidel." "Sir (said Johnson), I will stand by the lines I have written on Shakespeare in my Prologue at the opening of your Theatre." Mr. Langton suggested that in the line

"And panting Time toil'd after him in vain";

Johnson might have had in his eye the passage in the *Tempest*, where Prospero says of Miranda,

"—— She will outstrip all praise,
And make it halt behind her."

Johnson said nothing. Garrick then ventured to observe, "I do not think that the happiest line in the praise of Shakespeare." Johnson exclaimed (smiling), "Prosaical rogues! next time I write, I'll make both time and space pant."'[1]

'It is well known that there was formerly a rude custom for those who were sailing upon the Thames, to accost each other as they passed, in the most abusive language they could invent; generally, however, with as much satirical humour as they were capable of producing. Addison gives a specimen of this ribaldry

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[1] I am sorry to see in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, vol. ii. 'An Essay on the Character of Hamlet,' written, I should suppose, by a very young man, though called 'Reverend'; who speaks with presumptuous petulance of the first literary character of his age. Amidst a cloudy confusion of words (which hath of late too often passed in Scotland for *Metaphysics*), he thus ventures to criticise one of the noblest lines in our language:—Dr. Johnson has remarked that 'time toiled after him in vain.' But I should apprehend that this is *entirely to mistake the character*. Time toils after *every great man*, as well as after Shakespeare. The *workings* of an ordinary mind *keep pace*, indeed with time; they move no faster; *they have their beginning, their middle, and their end*; and superior natures can *reduce these into a point*. They do not, indeed, *suppress* them; but they *suspend*, they *lock them up in the breast*.' The learned society, under whose sanction such gabble is ushered into the world, would do well to offer a premium to any one who will discover its meaning.

in Number 383 of *The Spectator*, when Sir Roger de Coverley and he are going to Spring Garden. Johnson was once eminently successful in this species of contest; a fellow having attacked him with some coarse raillery, Johnson answered him thus, "Sir, your wife, *under pretence of keeping a bawdy-house*, is a receiver of stolen goods." One evening when he and Mr. Burke and Mr. Langton were in company together, and the admirable scolding of Timon of Athens was mentioned, this instance of Johnson's was quoted, and thought to have at least equal excellence.'

'As Johnson always allowed the extraordinary talents of Mr. Burke, so Mr. Burke was fully sensible of the wonderful powers of Johnson. Mr. Langton recollects having passed an evening with both of them, when Mr. Burke repeatedly entered upon topics which it was evident he would have illustrated with extensive knowledge and richness of expression; but Johnson always seized upon the conversation, in which, however, he acquitted himself in a most masterly manner. As Mr. Burke and Mr. Langton were walking home, Mr. Burke observed that Johnson had been very great that night; Mr. Langton joined in this, but added, he could have wished to hear more from another person (plainly intimating that he meant Mr. Burke); "O, no (said Mr. Burke), it is enough for me to have rung the bell to him."'

'Beauclerk having observed to him of one of their friends, that he was awkward at counting money, "Why, sir, said Johnson, I am likewise awkward at counting money. But then, sir, the reason is plain; I have had very little money to count."'

'He had an abhorrence of affectation. Talking of

old Mr. Langton, of whom he said, "Sir, you will seldom see such a gentleman, such are his stores of literature, such his knowledge in divinity, and such his exemplary life"; he added, "and sir, he has no grimace, no gesticulation, no burst of admiration on trivial occasions; he never embraces you with an overacted cordiality."'

'Being in company with a gentleman who thought fit to maintain Dr. Berkeley's ingenious philosophy, that nothing exists but as perceived by some mind; when the gentleman was going away, Johnson said to him, "Pray, sir, don't leave us; for we may, perhaps, forget to think of you, and then you will cease to exist."'

'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 talent should be above attention to such distinctions. "Nay, sir, never mind that. *Nil te quæsiveris extra.*"'

'At the time when his pension was granted to him, he said, with a noble literary ambition, "Had this happened twenty years ago, I should have gone to Constantinople to learn Arabic, as Pococke did."'

'As an instance of the niceness of his taste, though he praised West's translation of Pindar, he pointed out the following passages as faulty, by expressing a circumstance so minute as to detract from the general dignity which should prevail:

> "Down, then, from thy glittering *nail*,
> Take, O muse, thy Dorian lyre."'

'When Mr. Vesey[1] was proposed as a member of the Literary Club, Mr. Burke began by saying that he was a man of gentle manners. "Sir," said Johnson, "you need say no more. When you have said a man of gentle manners, you have said enough."'

'The late Mr. Fitzherbert told Mr. Langton that Johnson said to him, "Sir, a man has no more right to *say* an uncivil thing than to *act* one; no more right to say a rude thing to another than to knock him down."'

'"My dear friend Dr. Bathurst (said he, with a warmth of approbation), declared, he was glad that his father, who was a West-Indian planter, had left his affairs in total ruin, because, having no estate, he was not under the temptation of having slaves."'

'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 Mr. Langton to see him, professed that he could bring him out into conversation, and used this illusive 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 of his *Clarissa* into German."'[2]

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[1] [The Right Honourable Agmondesham Vesey was elected a member of the Literary Club in 1773, and died in 1784.—M.]

[2] A literary lady has favoured me with a characteristic anecdote of Richardson. 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 ——,'

'Once when somebody produced a newspaper in which there was a letter of stupid abuse of Sir Joshua Reynolds, of 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?"'

'He had a strong prejudice against the political character of Secker, one instance of which appeared at Oxford, where 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 a certain noble Lord, he said, "Respect him you could not; for he had no mind of his own. Love him you could not; for that which you could do with him, every one else could."'

'Of Dr. Goldsmith he said, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."'

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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. Dr. Johnson was present, and appeared to enjoy it much.

'He told, in his lively manner, the following literary anecdote: "Green and Guthrie, an Irishman and a Scotchman, undertook a translation of Duhalde's *History of China.* Green said of Guthrie, that he knew no English, and Guthrie of Green, that he knew no French; and these two undertook to translate Duhalde's *History of China.* In this translation there was found 'the twenty-sixth day of the new moon.' Now, as the whole age of the moon is but twenty-eight days, the moon instead of being new, was nearly as old as it could be. The blunder arose from their mistaking the word *neuvième* (ninth) for *nouvelle* or *neuve* (new)."'

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

'On occasion of Dr. Johnson's publishing his pamphlet of *The False Alarm,* there came out a very angry answer (by many supposed to be by Mr. Wilkes). Dr. Johnson determined on not answering it; but, in conversation with Mr. Langton, mentioned a particular or two, which if he *had* replied to it, he might perhaps have inserted. In the answerer's pamphlet, it had been said with solemnity, "Do you consider, sir, that a House of Commons is to the people as a creature is to its Creator?" "To this question," said Dr. Johnson, "I could have replied, that, in the first place, the idea of a Creator must be such as that he has a power to unmake or annihilate his creature. Then, it cannot be conceived that a creature can make laws for its Creator."'[1]

[1] His profound adoration of the 'Great First Cause' was such as to set him above that 'philosophy and vain deceit,' with which men of

'"Depend upon it," said he, "that if a man *talks* of his misfortunes, there is something in them that is not disagreeable to him; for where there is nothing but pure misery, there never is any recourse to the mention of it."'

'A man must be a poor beast, that should *read* no more in quantity than he could *utter* aloud.'

'Imlac in *Rasselas*, I spelt with a *c* at the end, because it is less like English, which should always have the Saxon *k* added to the *c*.'[1]

'Many a man is mad in certain instances, and goes through life without having it perceived:—for example, a madness has seized a person of supposing himself obliged literally to pray continually; had the madness turned the opposite way, and the person thought it a crime ever to pray, it might not improbably have continued unobserved.'

'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.'

'Supposing (said he) a wife to be of a studious or argumentative turn, it would be very troublesome; for instance, if a woman should continually dwell upon the subject of the Arian heresy.'

'No man speaks concerning another, even suppose it be in his praise, if he thinks he does not hear him

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narrow conceptions have been infected. I have heard him strongly maintain that 'what is right is not so from any natural fitness, but because God wills it to be right'; and it is certainly so, because he has predisposed the relations of things so as that which he wills must be right.—BOSWELL.

[1] I hope the authority of the great Master of our language will stop that curtailing innovation by which we see *critic*, *public*, etc. frequently written instead of *critick*, *publick*, etc.

exactly as he would, if he thought he was within hearing.'

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

'He 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!'

'He observed once, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, that a beggar in the street will more readily ask alms from a *man*, though there should be no marks of wealth in his appearance, than from even a well-dressed *woman*;[1] which he accounted for from the great degree of carefulness as to money that is to be found in women; saying further upon it, that, the opportunities in general that they possess of improving their condition are much fewer than men have; and adding, as he

[1] Sterne is of a direct contrary opinion. See his *Sentimental Journey*, Article, 'The Mystery.'—BOSWELL.

looked round the company, which consisted of men only,—there is not one of us who does not think he might be richer, if he would use his endeavour.'

'He thus characterised an ingenious writer of his acquaintance: "Sir, he is an enthusiast by rule."'

'"*He may hold up that* SHIELD *against all his enemies,*" was an observation on Homer in reference to his description of the shield of Achilles, made by Mrs. Fitzherbert, wife to his friend Mr. Fitzherbert of Derbyshire, and respected by Dr. Johnson as a very fine one. He had in general a very high opinion of that lady's understanding.'

'An observation of Bathurst's may be mentioned, which Johnson repeated, appearing to acknowledge it to be well founded; namely, it was somewhat remarkable how seldom, on occasion of coming into the company of any new person, one felt any wish or inclination to see him again.'

This year the Reverend Dr. Francklin having published a translation of *Lucian*, inscribed to him the *Demonax* thus:

'To Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, the Demonax of the present age, this piece is inscribed by a sincere admirer of his respectable talents, THE TRANSLATOR.'

Though upon a particular comparison of Demonax and Johnson, there does not seem to be a great deal of similarity between them, this dedication is a just compliment from the general character given by Lucian of the ancient Sage, '*ἄριστον ὧν οἶδα ἐγω φιλοσόφων γενόμενον,* the best philosopher whom I have ever seen or known.'

In 1781, Johnson at last completed his *Lives of the Poets*, of which he gives this account: 'Some time in March I finished the *Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.' In a memorandum previous to this, he says of them: 'Written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety.'

This is the work which of all Dr. Johnson's writings will perhaps be read most generally, and with most pleasure. Philology and biography were his favourite pursuits, and those who lived most in intimacy with him, heard him upon all occasions, when there was a proper opportunity, take delight in expatiating upon the various merits of the English poets; upon the niceties of their characters, and the events of their progress through the world which they contribute to illuminate. His mind was so full of that kind of information, and it was so well arranged in his memory, that in performing what he had undertaken in this way, he had little more to do than to put his thoughts upon paper; exhibiting first each poet's life, and then subjoining a critical examination of his genius and works. But when he began to write, the subject swelled in such a manner, that instead of prefaces to each poet, of no more than a few pages, as he had originally intended,[1] he produced an ample, rich, and

[1] His design is thus announced in his *Advertisement*: 'The Booksellers having determined to publish a body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a preface to the works of each author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very tedious or difficult.

'My purpose was only to have allotted to every poet an Advertisement, like that which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates, and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure.'

most entertaining view of them in every respect. In this he resembled Quintilian, who tells us, that in the composition of his Institutions of Oratory, '*Latius se tamen apariente materia, plus quam imponebatur oneris sponte suscepi.*' The booksellers, justly sensible of the great additional value of the copyright, presented him with another hundred pounds, over and above two hundred, for which his agreement was to furnish such prefaces as he thought fit.

This was, however, but a small recompense for such a collection of biography, and such principles and illustrations of criticism, as, if digested and arranged in one system, by some modern Aristotle or Longinus, might form a code upon that subject, such as no other nation can show. As he was so good as to make me a present of the greatest part of the original and indeed only manuscript of this admirable work, I have an opportunity of observing with wonder the correctness with which he rapidly struck off such glowing composition. He may be assimilated to the Lady in Waller, who could impress with 'Love at first sight:'

> 'Some other nymphs with colours faint,
> And pencil slow, may Cupid paint,
> And a weak heart in time destroy;
> She has a stamp, and prints the boy.'

That he, however, had a good deal of trouble, and some anxiety in carrying on the work, we see from a series of letters to Mr. Nichols, the printer,[1] whose

[1] Thus:—'In the Life of Waller, Mr. Nichols will find a reference to the Parliamentary History, from which a long quotation is to be inserted. If Mr. Nichols cannot easily find the book, Mr. Johnson will send it from Streatham.'

'Clarendon is here returned.'

'By some accident, I laid *your* note upon Duke up so safely, that I cannot find it. Your informations have been of great use to me. I

variety of literary inquiry and obliging disposition, rendered him useful to Johnson. Mr. Steevens appears, from the papers in my possession, to have supplied him with some anecdotes and quotations; and I observe the fair hand of Mrs. Thrale as one of his copyists of select passages. But he was principally indebted to my steady friend, Mr. Isaac Reed, of Staple Inn, whose extensive and accurate knowledge of English literary history I do not express with exaggeration, when I say it is wonderful; indeed, his labours have proved it to the world; and all who have the pleasure of his acquaintance can bear testimony to the frankness of his communication in private society.

It is not my intention to dwell upon each of John-

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must beg it again; with another list of our authors, for I have laid that with the other. I have sent Stepney's Epitaph. Let me have the revises as soon as can be. Dec. 1778.'

'I have sent Philips, with his Epitaphs, to be inserted. The fragment of a preface is hardly worth the impression, but that we may seem to do something. It may be added to the Life of Philips. The Latin page is to be added to the Life of Smith. I shall be at home to revise the two sheets of Milton. March 1, 1779.'

'Please to get me the last edition of Hughes's *Letters*; and try to get Dennis upon Blackmore, and upon Cato, and anything of the same writer against Pope. Our materials are defective.'

'As Waller professed to have imitated Fairfax, do you think a few pages of Fairfax would enrich our edition? Few readers have seen it, and it may please them. But it is not necessary.'

'An account of the lives and works of some of the most eminent English Poets. By, etc.—"The English Poets, biographically and critically considered, by Sam. Johnson." Let Mr. Nichols take his choice, or make another to his mind. May 1781.'

'You somehow forgot the advertisement for the new edition. It was not enclosed. Of Gay's *Letters* I see not that any use can be made, for they give no information of anything. That he was a member of a Philosophical Society is something; but surely he could be but a corresponding member. However, not having his life here, I know not how to put it in, and it is of little importance.'

See several more in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1785. The editor of that miscellany, in which Johnson wrote for several years, seems justly to think that every fragment of so great a man is worthy of being preserved.

son's *Lives of the Poets*, or attempt an analysis of their merits, which, were I able to do it, would take up too much room in this work; yet I shall make a few observations upon some of them, and insert a few various readings.

The Life of Cowley he himself considered as the best of the whole, on account of the dissertation which it contains on the *Metaphysical Poets*. Dryden, whose critical abilities were equal to his poetical, had mentioned them in his excellent dedication of his *Juvenal*, but had barely mentioned them. Johnson has exhibited them at large, with such happy illustration from their writings, and in so luminous a manner, that indeed he may be allowed the full merit of novelty, and to have discovered to us, as it were, a new planet in the poetical hemisphere.

It is remarked by Johnson, in considering the works of a poet,[1] that 'amendments are seldom made without some token of a rent;' but I do not find that this is applicable to prose.[2] We shall see that though his amendments in this work are for the better, there is nothing of the *pannus assutus*; the texture is uniform: and indeed, what had been there at first, is very seldom unfit to have remained.

Various Readings[3] *in the Life of Cowley*

'All [future votaries of] *that may hereafter pant for* solitude.

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[1] *Life of Sheffield.*

[2] [See, however, p. 150 of this volume, where the same remark is made, and Johnson is there speaking of *prose*. In his Life of Dryden his observations in the opera of *King Arthur* furnish a striking instance of the truth of this remark.—M.]

[3] The original reading is enclosed in crotchets, and the present one is printed in italics.

'To conceive and execute the [agitation or perception] *pains and the pleasures* of other minds.

'The wide effulgence of [the blazing] *a summer* noon.'

In the Life of Waller, Johnson gives a distinct and animated narrative of public affairs in that variegated period, with strong yet nice touches of character; and having a fair opportunity to display his political principles, does it with an unqualified manly confidence, and satisfies his readers how nobly he might have executed a *Tory History* of his country.

So easy is his style in these *Lives* that I do not recollect more than three uncommon or learned words; one, when giving an account of the approach of Waller's mortal disease, he says, 'he found his legs grow *tumid*'; by using the expression, his legs *swelled*, he would have avoided this; and there would have been no impropriety in its being followed by the interesting question to his physician, 'What that *swelling* meant?' Another, when he mentions that Pope had *emitted* proposals, when *published* or *issued* would have been more readily understood; and a third, when he calls Orrery and Dr. Delany, writers both undoubtedly *veracious*; when *true, honest,* or *faithful,* might have been used. Yet it must be owned that none of these are *hard* or *too big* words: that custom would make them seem as easy as any others; and that a language is richer and capable of more beauty of expression by having a greater variety of synonyms.

His dissertation upon the unfitness of poetry for the awful subjects of our holy religion, though I do not entirely agree with him, has all the merit of originality, with uncommon force and reasoning.

Various Readings in the Life of Waller

Consented to [the insertion of their names] *their own nomination.*

'[After] *paying* a fine of ten thousand pounds.

'Congratulating Charles the Second on his [coronation] *recovered right.*

'He that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be [confessed to degrade his powers] *scorned as a prostituted mind.*

'The characters by which Waller intended to distinguish his writings are [elegance] *sprightliness* and dignity.

'Blossoms to be valued only as they [fetch] *foretell* fruit.

'Images such as the superficies of nature [easily] *readily* supplies.

'[His] *Some* applications [are sometimes] *may be thought* too remote and unconsequential.

'His images are [sometimes confused] *not always distinct.*

Against his Life of Milton the hounds of Whiggism have opened in full cry. But of Milton's great excellence as a poet, where shall we find such a blazon as by the hand of Johnson? I shall select only the following passage concerning *Paradise Lost*:

'Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current, through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting without impatience the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.'

Indeed even Dr. Towers, who may be considered as one of the warmest zealots of the Revolution Society itself, allows that 'Johnson has spoken in the highest terms of the abilities of that great poet, and has

bestowed on his principal poetical compositions the most honourable encomiums.'[1]

That a man, who venerated the Church and Monarchy as Johnson did, should speak with a just abhorrence of Milton as a politician, or rather as a daring foe to good polity, was surely to be expected; and to those who censure him, I would recommend his commentary on Milton's celebrated complaint of his situation, when by the lenity of Charles the Second, 'a lenity of which (as Johnson well observes) the world has had perhaps no other example, he, who had written in justification of the murder of his Sovereign, was safe under an *Act of Oblivion.*' 'No sooner is he safe than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, with darkness and with dangers compassed round.* This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen, indeed, on *evil days*; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues*

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[1] See *An Essay on the Life, Character, and Writings of Dr. Samuel Johnson*, London, 1787, which is very well written, making a proper allowance for the democratical bigotry of its author; whom I cannot however but admire for his liberality in speaking thus of my illustrious friend:

'He possessed extraordinary powers of understanding, which were much cultivated by study, and still more by meditation and reflection. His memory was remarkably retentive, his imagination uncommonly vigorous, and his judgment keen and penetrating. He had a strong sense of the importance of religion; his piety was sincere, and sometimes ardent; and his zeal for the interests of virtue was often manifested in his conversation and in his writings. The same energy which was displayed in his literary productions was exhibited also in his conversation, which was various, striking, and instructive; and perhaps no man ever equalled him for nervous and pointed repartee.

'His *Dictionary*, his moral Essays, and his productions in polite literature, will convey useful instruction, and elegant entertainment, as long as the language in which they are written shall be understood.'

for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach, or brutality of insolence.'

I have, indeed, often wondered how Milton, 'an acrimonious and surly Republican,'[1]—'a man who, in his domestic relations, was so severe and arbitrary,'[2] and whose head was filled with the hardest and most dismal tenets of Calvinism, should have been such a poet; should not only have written with sublimity, but with beauty, and even gaiety; should have exquisitely painted the sweetest sensations of which our nature is capable; imaged the delicate raptures of connubial love; nay, seemed to be animated with all the spirit of revelry. It is a proof that in the human mind the departments of judgment and imagination, perception and temper, may sometimes be divided by strong partitions; and that the light and shade in the same character may be kept so distinct as never to be blended.[3]

In the Life of Milton, Johnson took occasion to maintain his own and the general opinion of the excellence of rhyme over blank verse, in English poetry; and quotes this apposite illustration of it by 'an ingenious critic,' *that it seems to be verse only to the eye.*[4] The gentleman whom he thus characterises, is (as he

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[1] Johnson's Life of Milton. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Mr. Malone thinks it is rather a proof that he felt nothing of those cheerful sensations which he has described; that on these topics it is the *poet*, and not the *man*, that writes.

[4] One of the most natural instances of the effect of blank verse occurred to the late Earl of Hopetoun. His Lordship observed one of his shepherds poring in the fields upon Milton's *Paradise Lost*; and having asked him what book it was, the man answered, 'An't please your Lordship, this is a very odd sort of an author; he would fain rhyme, but cannot get at it.'

told Mr. Seward) Mr. Locke, of Norbury Park, in Surrey, whose knowledge and taste in the fine arts is universally celebrated; with whose elegance of manners the writer of the present work has felt himself much impressed, and to whose virtues a common friend, who has known him long, and is not much addicted to flattery, gives the highest testimony.

Various Readings in the Life of Milton

'I cannot find any meaning but this which [his most bigoted advocates] *even kindness and reverence* can give.

'[Perhaps no] *Scarcely any* man ever wrote so much, and praised so few.

'A certain [rescue] *preservative* from oblivion.

'Let me not be censured for this digression, as [contracted] *pedantic* or paradoxical.

'Socrates rather was of opinion, that what we had to learn was how to [obtain and communicate happiness] *do good and avoid evil.*

'Its elegance [who can exhibit?] *is less attainable.*'

I could, with pleasure, expatiate upon the masterly execution of the Life of Dryden, which we have seen[1] was one of Johnson's literary projects at an early period, and which it is remarkable, that after desisting from it, from a supposed scantiness of materials, he should, at an advanced age, have exhibited so amply.

His defence of that great poet against the illiberal attacks upon him, as if his embracing the Roman Catholic communion had been a time-serving measure, is a piece of reasoning at once able and candid. Indeed, Dryden himself, in his *Hind and Panther*,

[2] See vol. iv. p. 79.

hath given such a picture of his mind, that they who know the anxiety for repose as to the awful subject of our state beyond the grave, though they may think his opinion ill-founded, must think charitably of his sentiment:

> 'But, gracious God, how well dost thou provide
> For erring judgments an unerring guide?
> Thy throne is darkness in the abyss of light,
> A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
> O! teach me to believe thee thus conceal'd,
> And search no farther than thyself reveal'd;
> But Her alone for my director take,
> Whom thou hast promised never to forsake.
> My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires:
> My manhood, long misled by wand'ring fires,
> Follow'd false lights; and when their glimpse was gone,
> My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
> Such was I, such by nature still I am;
> Be thine the glory, and be mine the shame.
> Good life be now my task: my doubts are done;
> What more could shock my faith than Three in One?'

In drawing Dryden's character, Johnson has given, though I suppose unintentionally, some touches of his own. Thus:

> 'The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt; and produced sentiments not such as Nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted. He is, therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetic; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others.'

It may indeed be observed, that in all the numerous writings of Johnson, whether in prose or verse, and

even in his Tragedy, of which the subject is the distress of an unfortunate Princess, there is not a single passage that ever drew a tear.[1]

Various Readings in the Life of Dryden

'The reason of this general perusal, Addison has attempted to [find in] *derive from* the delights which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets.

'His best actions are but [convenient] *inability* of wickedness.

'When once he had engaged himself in disputation, [matter] *thoughts* flowed in on either side.

'The abyss of an un-ideal [emptiness] *vacancy.*

'These, like [many other harlots] *the harlots of other men,* had his love though not his approbation.

'He [sometimes displays] *descends to display* his knowledge with pedantic ostentation.

'French words which [were then used in] *had then crept into* conversation.'

The Life of Pope was written by Johnson *con amore,* both from the early possession which that writer had taken of his mind, and from the pleasure which he must have felt, in for ever silencing all attempts to lessen his poetical fame, by demonstrating his excellence, and pronouncing the following triumphant eulogium:

'After all this, it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, Whether Pope was a poet? otherwise than by asking in return, If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found? To circumscribe poetry by a definition, will only show the narrowness of the definer: though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily

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[1] [This is ill-considered criticism. Johnson, both in prose and verse, is not infrequently deeply pathetic. A little later on Boswell himself writes of the pathetic verses on Levett's death.—A. B.]

be made. Let us look round upon the present time, and back upon the past; let us inquire to whom the voice of mankind has decreed the wreath of poetry; let their productions be examined, and their claims stated, and the pretensions of Pope will be no more disputed.'

I remember once to have heard Johnson say, '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.

Johnson, who had done liberal justice to Warburton in his edition of Shakespeare, 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.[1]

[1] Of Johnson's conduct towards Warburton, a very honourable notice is taken by the editor of *Tracts by Warburton, and a Warburtonian, not admitted into the collection of their respective Works*. After an able and 'fond, though not undistinguishing,' consideration of Warburton's character, he says, 'In two immortal works, Johnson has stood forth in the foremost rank of his admirers. By the testimony of such a man, impertinence must be abashed, and malignity itself must be softened. Of literary merit, Johnson, as we all know, was a sagacious, but a most severe judge. Such was his discernment, that he pierced into the most secret springs of human actions; and such was his integrity, that he always weighed the moral characters of his fellow-creatures in the 'balance of the sanctuary.' He was too courageous to propitiate a rival, and too proud to truckle to a superior. Warburton he knew, as I know him, and as every man of sense and virtue would wish to be known,—I mean, both from his own writings, and from the writings of those who dissented from his principles, or who envied his reputation. But, as to favours, he had never received or asked any from the Bishop of Gloucester: and, if my memory fails me not, he had seen him only once, when they met almost without design, conversed without much effort, and parted without any lasting impression of hatred or affection. Yet, with all the ardour of sympathetic genius, Johnson had done that spontaneously and ably, which, by some writers, had been before attempted injudiciously, and which, by others, from whom more successful attempts might have

It seems strange that two such men as Johnson and Warburton, who lived in the same age and country, should not only not have been in any degree of intimacy, but been almost personally unacquainted. But such instances, though we must wonder at them, are not rare. If I am rightly informed, after a careful inquiry, they never met but once, which was at the house of Mrs. French, in London, well known for her elegant assemblies, and bringing eminent characters together. The interview proved to be mutually agreeable.

I am well informed that Warburton said of Johnson, 'I admire him, but I cannot bear his style': and that Johnson being told of this, said, 'That is exactly my case as to him.' The manner in which he expressed his admiration of the fertility of Warburton's genius and of the variety of his materials, was, 'The

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been expected, has not *hitherto* been done at all. He spoke well of Warburton, without insulting those whom Warburton despised. He suppressed not the imperfections of this extraordinary man, while he endeavoured to do justice to his numerous and transcendental excellencies. He defended him when living, amidst the clamours of his enemies; and praised him when dead, amidst the *silence of his friends*.'

[1]Having availed myself of this editor's eulogy on my departed friend, for which I warmly thank him, let me not suffer the lustre of his reputation, honestly acquired by profound learning and vigorous eloquence, to be tarnished by a charge of illiberality. He has been accused of invidiously dragging again into light certain writings of a person respectable by his talents, his learning, his station, and his age, which were published a great many years ago, and have since, it is said, been silently given up by their author. But when it is considered that these writings were not *sins of youth*, but deliberate works of one well advanced in life, overflowing at once with flattery to a great man of great interest in the Church, and with unjust and acrimonious abuse of two men of eminent merit; and that, though it would have been unreasonable to expect an humiliating recantation, no apology whatever has been made in the cool of the evening, for the oppressive fervour of the heat of the day; no slight relenting indication has appeared in any note, or any corner of later publications; is it not fair to understand him as superciliously persevering? When he allows the shafts to remain in the wounds, and will not stretch forth a lenient hand, is it wrong, is it not generous to become an indignant avenger?

table is always full, sir. He brings things from the north, and the south, and from every quarter. In his *Divine Legation* you are always entertained. He carries you round and round, without carrying you forward to the point; but then you have no wish to be carried forward.' He said to the Rev. Mr. Strahan, 'Warburton is perhaps the last man who has written with a mind full of reading and reflection.'

It is remarkable that in the Life of Broome, Johnson takes notice of Dr. Warburton using a mode of expression which he himself used, and that not seldom, to the great offence of those who did not know him. Having occasion to mention a note, stating the different parts which were executed by the associated translators of the *Odyssey*, he says, 'Dr. Warburton told me, in his warm language, that he thought the relation given in the note *a lie*. The language is *warm* indeed; and I must own, cannot be justified in consistency with a decent regard to the established forms of speech.' Johnson had accustomed himself to use the word *lie* to express a mistake or an error in relation; in short, when the *thing was not so as told*, though the relator did not *mean* to deceive. When he thought there was intentional falsehood in the relator, his expression was, 'He *lies*, and he *knows* he *lies*.'

Speaking of Pope's not having been known to excel in conversation, 'Johnson observes that traditional memory retains no sallies of raillery, or sentences of observation; nothing either pointed or solid, wise or merry; and that one apophthegm only is recorded.' In this respect, Pope differed widely from Johnson, whose conversation was, perhaps, more admirable than even his writings, however excellent. Mr. Wilkes

has, however, favoured me with one repartee of Pope, of which Johnson was not informed. Johnson, after justly censuring him for having 'nursed in his mind a foolish disesteem of Kings,' tells us, 'yet a little regard shown him by the Prince of Wales melted his obduracy; and he had not much to say when he was asked by his Royal Highness, *how he could love a Prince, while he disliked Kings*?' The answer which Pope made was, 'The young lion is harmless, and even playful; but when his claws are full grown he becomes cruel, dreadful, and mischievous.'

But although we have no collection of Pope's sayings, it is not therefore to be concluded that he was not agreeable in social intercourse; for Johnson has been heard to say that 'the happiest conversation is that of which nothing is distinctly remembered, but a general effect of pleasing impression.' The late Lord Somerville,[1] who saw much of great and brilliant life, told me that he had dined in company with Pope, and that after dinner the *little man*, as he called him, drank his bottle of Burgundy, and was exceedingly gay and entertaining.

I cannot withhold from my great friend a censure of at least culpable inattention to a nobleman who, it has been shown, behaved to him with uncommon

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[1] [James, Lord Somerville, who died in 1766.—M.]

Let me here express my grateful remembrance of Lord Somerville's kindness to me, at a very early period. He was the first person of high rank that took particular notice of me in the way most flattering to a young man fondly ambitious of being distinguished for his literary talents; and by the honour of his encouragement made me think well of myself, and aspire to deserve it better. He had a happy art of communicating his varied knowledge of the world, in short remarks and anecdotes, with a quiet pleasant gravity that was exceedingly engaging. Never shall I forget the hours which I enjoyed with him at his apartments in the Royal Palace of Holyrood House, and at his seat near Edinburgh, which he himself had formed with an elegant taste.

politeness. He says, 'Except Lord Bathurst, none of Pope's noble friends were such as that a good man would wish to have his intimacy with them known to posterity.' This will not apply to Lord Mansfield, who was not ennobled in Pope's lifetime; but Johnson should have recollected that Lord Marchmont was one of those noble friends. He includes his Lordship along with Lord Bolingbroke in a charge of neglect of the papers which Pope left by his will, when, in truth, as I myself pointed out to him, before he wrote that poet's life, the papers were 'committed to *the sole care and judgment* of Lord Bolingbroke, unless he (Lord Bolingbroke) shall not survive me'; so that Lord Marchmont had no concern whatever with them. After the first edition of the *Lives*, Mr. Malone, whose love of justice is equal to his accuracy, made in my hearing the same remark to Johnson; yet he omitted to correct the erroneous statement.[1] These particulars I mention in the belief that there was only forgetfulness in my friend; but I owe this much to the Earl of Marchmont's reputation, who, were there no other memorials, will be immortalised by that line of Pope, in the verses on his Grotto:

> 'And the bright flame was shot through Marchmont's soul.'

Various Readings in the Life of Pope

'[Somewhat free] *sufficiently bold* in his criticism.
'All the gay [niceties] *varieties* of diction.
'Strikes the imagination with far [more] *greater* force.

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1 [This neglect, however, assuredly did not arise from any ill-will towards Lord Marchmont, but from inattention; just as he neglected to correct the statement concerning the family of Thomson the poet, after it had been shown to be erroneous.—M.]

'It is [probably] *certainly* the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen.

'Every sheet enabled him to write the next with [less trouble] *more facility*.

'No man sympathises with [vanity depressed] *the sorrows of vanity*.

'It had been [criminal] *less easily excused*.

'When he [threatened to lay down] *talked of laying down* his pen.

'Society [is so named emphatically in opposition to], *politically regulated, is a state contra-distinguished from* a state of nature.

'A fictitious life of an [absurd] *infatuated* scholar.

'A foolish [contempt, disregard] *discsteem* of Kings.

'His hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows [were like those of other mortals] *acted strongly upon his mind*.

'Eager to pursue knowledge and attentive to [accumulate] *retain it*.

'A mind [excursive] *active*, ambitious, and adventurous.

'In its [noblest] *widest* searches still longing to go forward

'He wrote in such a manner as might expose him to few [neglects] *hazards*.

'The [reasonableness] *justice* of my determination.

'A [favourite] *dclicious* employment of the poets.

'More terrific and more powerful [beings] *phantoms* perform on the stormy ocean.

'The inventor of [those] *this* petty [beings] *nation*.

'The [mind] *heart* naturally loves truth.'

In the Life of Addison we find an unpleasing account of his having lent Steele a hundred pounds, and 'reclaimed his loan by an execution.' In the new edition of the *Biographia Britannica* the authenticity of this anecdote is denied. But Mr. Malone has obliged me with the following note concerning it:

Many persons having doubts concerning this fact, I applied to Dr. Johnson, to lcarn on what authority he asserted it. He told me he had it from Savage, who lived in intimacy with

Steele, and who mentioned that Steele told him the story with tears in his eyes. Ben Victor, Dr. Johnson said, likewise informed him of this remarkable transaction, from the relation of Mr. Wilkes, the comedian, who was also an intimate of Steele's.[1] Some, in defence of Addison, have said that "the act was done with the good-natured view of rousing Steele, and correcting that profusion which always made him necessitous." "If that were the case (said Johnson), and that he only wanted to alarm Steele, he would afterwards have *returned* the money to his friend, which it is not pretended he did." "This, too (he added), might be retorted by an advocate for Steele, who might allege, that he did not repay the loan *intentionally*, merely to see whether Addison would be mean and ungenerous enough to make use of legal process to recover it. But of such speculations there is no end; we cannot dive into the hearts of men; but their actions are open to observation.

'I then mentioned to him that some people thought that Mr. Addison's character was so pure, that the fact, *though true*, ought to have been suppressed. He saw no reason for this. "If nothing but the bright side of characters should be shown, we should sit down in despondency, and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in *anything*. The sacred writers (he observed) related the vicious as well as the virtuous actions of men; which had this moral effect, that it kept mankind from *despair*, into which otherwise they would naturally fall, were they not supported by the recollection that others had offended like themselves, and by penitence and amendment of life had been restored to the favour of Heaven. E. M.

'*March* 15, 1782.'

The last paragraph of this note is of great importance; and I request that my readers may consider it with particular attention. It will be afterwards referred to in this work.

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[1] [The late Mr. Burke informed me in 1792 that Lady Dorothea Primrose, who died at a great age, I think in 1768, and had been well acquainted with Steele, told him the same story.—M.]

Various Readings in the Life of Addison

'[But he was our first example] *He was, however, one of our earliest examples* of correctness.

'And [overlook] *despise* their masters.

'His instructions were such as the [state] *character* of his [own time] *readers* made [necessary] *proper.*

'His purpose was to [diffuse] *infuse* literary curiosity by gentle and unsuspected conveyance [among] *into* the gay, the idle, and the wealthy.

'Framed rather for those that [wish] *are learning* to write.

'Domestic [manners] *scenes.*'

In his Life of Parnell, I wonder that Johnson omitted to insert an epitaph which he had long before composed for that amiable man, without ever writing it down, but which he was so good as, at my request, to dictate to me, by which means it has been been preserved:

Hic requiescit Thomas Parnell, S.T.P.

'Qui sacerdos pariter et poeta,
Utrasque partes ita implevit,
Ut neque sacerdoti suavitas poetæ,
Nec poetæ sacerdotis sanctitas, deesset.'

Various Readings in the Life of Parnell

'About three years [after] *afterwards.*

'[Did not much want] *Was in no great need of* improvement.

'But his prosperity *did not last long* [was clouded with that which took away all his powers of enjoying either profit or pleasure, the death of his wife, whom he is said to have lamented with such sorrow, as hastened his end.][1] His end, whatever was the cause, was now approaching.

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[1] I should have thought that Johnson, who had felt the severe affliction from which Parnell never recovered, would have preserved this passage. [He omitted it, doubtless, because he afterwards learned that, however he might have lamented his wife, his end was hastened by other means.—M.]

'In the *Hermit*, the [composition] *narrative*, as it is less airy, is less pleasing.'

In the Life of Blackmore we find that writer's reputation generously cleared by Johnson from the cloud of prejudice which the malignity of contemporary wits have raised around it. In this spirited exertion of justice he has been imitated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his praise of the architecture of Vanbrugh.

We trace Johnson's own character in his observations on Blackmore's 'magnanimity as an author': 'The incessant attacks of his enemies, whether serious or merry, are never discovered to have disturbed his quiet, or to have lessened his confidence in himself.' Johnson, I recollect, once told me, laughing heartily, that he understood it had been said of him, '*He appears* not to feel: but when he is *alone*, depend upon it, he *suffers sadly*.' I am as certain as I can be of any man's real sentiments, that he *enjoyed* the perpetual shower of little hostile arrows as evidences of his fame.

Various Readings in the Life of Blackmore

'To [set] *engage* poetry [on the side] *in the cause* of virtue.

'He likewise [established] *enforced* the truth of Revelation.

'[Kindness] *Benevolence* was ashamed to favour.

'His practice, which was once [very extensive] *invidiously great*.

'There is scarcely any distemper of dreadful name [of] which he has not [shown] *taught his reader* how [it is to be opposed] *to oppose*.

'Of this [contemptuous] *indecent* arrogance.

'[He wrote] *But produced* likewise a work of a different kind.

'At least [written] *compiled* with integrity.

'Faults which many tongues [were desirous] *would have made haste* to publish.

'But though he [had not] *could not boast of* much critical knowledge.

'He [used] *waited for* no felicities of fancy.

'Or had ever elated his [mind] *views*, born to that ideal perfection which every [mind] *genius* born to excel is condemned always to pursue and never overtake.

'The [first great] *fundamental* principle of wisdom and of virtue.'

Various Readings in the Life of Phillips

'His dreadful [rival] *antagonist* Pope.

'They [have not often much] *are not loaded with* thought.

'In his translation from Pindar, he [will not be denied to have reached] *found the art of reaching* all the obscurity of the Theban bard.'

Various Readings in the Life of Congreve

'Congreve's conversation must surely have been *at least* equally pleasing with his writings.

'It apparently [requires] *presupposes* a familiar knowledge of many characters.

'Reciprocation of [similes] *conceits.*

'The dialogue is quick and [various] *sparkling.*

'Love for love; a comedy [more drawn from life] *of nearer alliance to life.*

'The general character of his Miscellanies is, that they show little wit and [no] *little* virtue.

'[Perhaps] *Certainly* he had not the fire requisite for the higher species of lyric poetry.'

Various Readings in the Life of Tickell

'[Longed] *Long wished* to peruse it.

'At the [accession] *arrival* of King George.

'Fiction [unnaturally] *unskilfully* compounded of Grecian deities and Gothic fairies.'

Various Readings in the Life of Akenside

'For [another] *a different* purpose.
'[A furious] *An unnecessary* and outrageous zeal.
'[Something which] *What* he called and thought liberty.
'A [favourer of innovation] *lover of contradiction.*
'Warburton's [censure] *objections.*
'His rage [for liberty] *of patriotism.*
'Mr. Dyson with a [zeal] *an ardour* of friendship.'

In the Life of Lyttelton Johnson seems to have been not favourably disposed towards that nobleman. Mrs. Thrale suggests that he was offended by Molly Aston's preference of his Lordship to him.[1] I can by no means join in the censure bestowed by Johnson on

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[1] Let not my readers smile to think of Johnson's being a candidate for female favour. Mr. Peter Garrick assured me that he was told by a lady that in her opinion Johnson was 'a very *seducing man.*' Disadvantages of person and manner may be forgotten where intellectual pleasure is communicated to a susceptible mind; and that Johnson was capable of feeling the most delicate and disinterested attachment appears from the following letter, which is published by Mrs. Thrale, with some others to the same person, of which the excellence is not so apparent:

TO MISS BOOTHBY

'*January* 1775.

'DEAREST MADAM,—Though I am afraid your illness leaves you little leisure for the reception of airy civilities, yet I cannot forbear to pay you my congratulations on the new year, and to declare my wishes that your years to come may be many and happy. In this wish, indeed, I include myself, who have none but you on whom my heart reposes; yet surely I wish your good, even though your situation were such as should permit you to communicate no gratifications to, dearest, dearest madam, your, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.'

[There is still a slight mistake in the text. It was not Molly Aston, but Hill Boothby, for whose affections Johnson and Lord Lyttelton were rival candidates. See Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes*. After mentioning the death of Mrs. Fitzherbert (who was a daughter of Mr. Meynel of Bradley in Derbyshire) and Johnson's high admiration of her, she adds, 'The friend of this lady, Miss Boothby, succeeded her in the management of Mr. Fitzherbert's family and in the esteem of Dr. Johnson: though he told me she pushed her piety to bigotry, her devotion to enthusiasm; that she somewhat disqualified herself for the duties of *this* life by her perpetual aspirations after the *next*; such was, however, the purity of her mind, he said, and such the graces of her manner, that Lord Lyttelton and he used to strive for her preference

his Lordship, whom he calls 'poor Lyttelton,' for returning thanks to the *Critical Reviewers* for having 'kindly recommended' his *Dialogues of the Dead.* Such 'acknowledgments (says my friend) never can be proper, since they must be paid either for flattery or for justice.' In my opinion the most upright man, who has been tried on a false accusation, may, when he is acquitted, make a bow to his jury. And when those who are so much the arbiters of literary merit, as in a considerable degree to influence the public opinion, review an author's work *placido lumine*, when I am afraid mankind in general are better pleased with severity, he may surely express a grateful sense of their civility.

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with an emulation that occasioned hourly disgust and ended in lasting animosity. You may see (said he to me, when the Poets' Lives were printed) that dear Boothby is at my heart still.'

Miss Hill Boothby, who was the only daughter of Brook Boothby, Esq., and his wife, Elizabeth Fitzherbert, was somewhat older than Johnson. She was born October 27, 1708, and died January 16, 1756. Six letters addressed to her by Johnson in the year 1755 are printed in Mrs. Piozzi's collection; and a prayer composed by him on her death may be found in his *Prayers and Meditations*. His affection for her induced him to preserve and bind up in a volume thirty-three of her letters, which were purchased from the widow of his servant, Francis Barber, and published by R. Phillips in 1805.

But highly as he valued this lady, his attachment to Miss Molly Aston (afterwards Mrs. Brodie) appears to have been still more ardent. He burned (says Mrs. Piozzi) many letters in the last week [of his life], I am told, and those written by his mother drew from him a flood of tears when the paper they were written on was all consumed. Mr. Sastres saw him cast a melancholy look upon their ashes, which he took up and examined, to see if a word was still legible. Nobody has ever mentioned what became of Miss Aston's letters, though he once told me himself they should be the last papers he would destroy, and added these lines with a very faltering voice:

> 'Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,
> And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart:
> Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,
> The muse forgot, and thou beloved no more.'

Additions to Mrs. Piozzi's Collection of Dr. Johnson's Letters.—M.]

Various Readings in the Life of Lyttelton

'He solaced [himself] *his grief* by writing a long poem to her memory.

'The production rather [of a mind that means well than thinks vigorously] *as it seems of leisure than of study, rather effusions than compositions.*

'His last literary [work] *production.*

'[Found the way] *Undertook* to persuade.'

As the introduction to his critical examination of the genius and writings of Young, he did Mr. Herbert Croft, then a Barrister of Lincoln's Inn, now a clergyman, the honour to adopt a *Life of Young* written by that gentleman, who was the friend of Dr. Young's son, and wished to vindicate him from some very erroneous remarks to his prejudice. Mr. Croft's performance was subjected to the revision of Dr. Johnson, as appears from the following note to Mr. John Nichols:[1]

'This *Life of Dr. Young* was written by a friend of his son. What is crossed with black is expunged by the author, what is crossed by red is expunged by me. If you find anything more that can be well omitted, I shall not be sorry to see it yet shorter.'

It has always appeared to me to have a considerable share of merit, and to display a pretty successful imitation of Johnson's style. When I mentioned this to a very eminent literary character,[2] he opposed me vehemently, exclaiming, 'No, no, it is *not* a good imitation of Johnson; it has all his pomp without his force; it has all the nodosities of the oak without its strength.' This was an image so happy, that one

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iv. p. 10.

[2] [The late Mr. Burke.—M.]

might have thought he would have been satisfied with it; but he was not. And setting his mind again to work, he added, with exquisite felicity, 'It has all the contortions of the Sibyl, without the inspiration.'

Mr. Croft very properly guards us against supposing that Young was a gloomy man; and mentions that 'his parish was indebted to the good-humour of the author of the *Night Thoughts* for an assembly and a bowling-green.' A letter from a noble foreigner is quoted, in which he is said to have been 'very pleasant in conversation.'

Mr. Langton, who frequently visited him, informs me that there was an air of benevolence in his manner, but that he could obtain from him less information than he had hoped to receive from one who had lived so much in intercourse with the brightest men of what has been called the Augustan age of England; and that he showed a degree of eager curiosity concerning the common occurrences that were then passing, which appeared somewhat remarkable in a man of such intellectual stores, of such an advanced age, and who had retired from life with declared disappointment in his expectations.

An instance at once of his pensive turn of mind, and his cheerfulness of temper, appeared in a little story which he himself told to Mr. Langton, when they were walking in his garden: 'Here (said he) I had put a handsome sun-dial, with this inscription, *Eheu fugaces!* which (speaking with a smile) was sadly verified, for by the next morning my dial had been carried off.'[1]

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[1] The late Mr. James Ralph told Lord Macartney that he passed an evening with Dr. Young at Lord Melcombe's (then Mr. Doddington)

It gives me much pleasure to observe that however Johnson may have casually talked, yet when he sits as 'an ardent judge zealous to his trust, giving sentence' upon the excellent works of Young, he allows 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.'

But I was most anxious concerning Johnson's decision upon *Night Thoughts*, which I esteem as a mass of the grandest and richest poetry that human genius has ever produced: and was delighted to find this character of that work: 'In his *Night Thoughts* he has exhibited a very wide display of original poetry, variegated with deep reflection 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 rhyme but with disadvantage.' And afterwards, '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.'

But there is in this poem not only all that Johnson so well brings in view, but a power of the *pathetic* beyond almost any example that I have seen. He who does not feel his nerves shaken, and his heart

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at Hammersmith. The Doctor happening to go out into the garden, Mr. Doddington observed to him, on his return, that it was a dreadful night, as in truth it was, there being a violent storm of rain and wind. 'No, sir (replied the Doctor), it is a very fine night. The Lord is abroad.'

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*.

In the Life of Swift it appears to me that Johnson had a certain degree of prejudice against that extraordinary man, of which I have elsewhere had occasion to speak. Mr. Thomas Sheridan imputed it to a supposed apprehension in Johnson that Swift had not been sufficiently active in obtaining for him an Irish degree when it was solicited,[1] but of this there was not sufficient evidence; and let me not presume to charge Johnson with injustice, because he did not think so highly of the writings of this author, as I have done from my youth upwards. Yet that he had an unfavourable bias is evident, were it only from that passage in which he speaks of Swift's practice of

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[1] See vol. i. p. 98.

saving as 'first ridiculous and at last detestable,' and yet after some examination of circumstances, finds himself obliged to own that 'it will perhaps appear that he only liked one mode of expense better than another, and saved merely that he might have something to give.'

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 mind disdains to hold anything 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.'

Various Readings in the Life of Swift

'Charity may be persuaded to think that it might be written by a man of *a* peculiar [opinions] *character*, without ill intention.

'He did not [disown] *deny* it.

'[To] *By* whose kindness it is not unlikely that he was [indebted for] *advanced to* his benefices.

'[With] *For* this purpose he had recourse to Mr. Harley.

'Sharpe, whom he [represents] *describes* as "the harmless tool of others' hate."

'Harley was slow because he was [irresolute] *doubtful.*

'When [readers were not many] *we were not yet a nation of readers.*

'[Every man who] *He that could say* he knew him.

'Every man of known influence has so many [more] peti-

tions [than] *which* he [can] *cannot* grant, that he must necessarily offend more than he [can gratify] *gratifies.*

'Ecclesiastical [preferments] *benefices.*

Swift [procured] *contrived* an interview.

'[As a writer] *In his works* he has given very different specimens.

'On all common occasions he habitually [assumes] *affects* a style of [superiority] *arrogance.*

'By the [omission] *neglect* of those ceremonies.

'That their merits filled the world [and] *or that* there was no [room for] *hope of* more.'

I have not confined myself to the order of the *Lives* in making my few remarks. Indeed, a different order is observed in the original publication, and in the collection of Johnson's *Works.* And should it be objected that many of my various readings are inconsiderable, those who make an objection will be pleased to consider that such small particulars are intended for those who are nicely critical in composition, to whom they will be an acceptable selection.

Spence's *Anecdotes,* which are frequently quoted and referred to in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets,* are in a manuscript collection, made by the Reverend Mr. Joseph Spence,[1] containing a number of particulars concerning eminent men. To each anecdote is marked the name of the person on whose authority it is mentioned. This valuable collection is the property of the Duke of Newcastle, who, upon the application of Sir Lucas Pepys, was pleased to permit it to be put into the hands of Dr. Johnson, who I am sorry to think made but an awkward return. 'Great assistance (says he)

[1] [The Rev. Joseph Spence, A.M., rector of Great Harwood in Buckinghamshire, and Prebendary of Durham, died at Byfleet in Surrey, August 20, 1768. He was a Fellow of New College, in Oxford, and held the office of Professor of Poetry in that University from 1728 to 1738.—M.]

has been given me by Mr. Spence's collection, of which I consider the communication as a favour worthy of public acknowledgment'; but he has not owned to whom he was obliged; so that the acknowledgment is unappropriated to his Grace.

While the world in general was filled with admiration of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, there were narrow circles in which prejudice and resentment were fostered, and from which attacks of different sorts issued against him.[1] By some violent Whigs he was arraigned of injustice to Milton; by some Cambridge men of depreciating Gray; and his expressing with a dignified freedom what he really thought of George, Lord Lyttelton, gave offence to some of the friends of that nobleman, and particularly produced a declaration of war against him from Mrs. Montagu, the ingenious essayist on Shakespeare, between whom and his Lordship a commerce of reciprocal compliments had long been carried on. In this war the smallest powers in alliance with him were of course led to engage, at least on the defensive, and thus I for one was excluded from the enjoyment of 'A Feast for Reason,' such as Mr. Cumberland has described, with a keen, yet just and delicate pen, in his *Observer*. These minute inconveniences gave not the least disturbance to Johnson. He nobly said, when I talked to him of the feeble, though shrill outcry which had been raised, 'Sir, I considered myself as intrusted

[1] From this disreputable class, I except an ingenious, though not satisfactory, defence of Hammond, which I did not see till lately, by the favour of its author, my amiable friend, the Reverend Mr. Bevill, who published it without his name. It is a juvenile performance, but elegantly written, with classical enthusiasm of sentiment, and yet with a becoming modesty, and great respect for Dr. Johnson.

with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely; let them show me where they think me wrong.'

While my friend is thus contemplated in the splendour derived from his last and perhaps most admirable work, I introduce him with peculiar propriety as the correspondent of Warren Hastings—a man whose regard reflects dignity even upon Johnson; a man, the extent of whose abilities was equal to that of his power; and who, by those who are fortunate enough to know him in private life, is admired for his literature and taste, and beloved for the candour, moderation, and mildness of his character. Were I capable of paying a suitable tribute of admiration to him, I should certainly not withhold it at a moment[1] when it is not possible that I should be suspected of being an interested flatterer. But how weak would be my voice after that of the millions whom he governed! His condescending and obliging compliance with my solicitation I with humble gratitude acknowledge; and while by publishing his letter to me, accompanying the valuable communication, I do eminent honour to my great friend, I shall entirely disregard any invidious suggestions, that as I in some degree participate in the honour, I have, at the same time, the gratification of my own vanity in view.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'*Park Lane, Dec.* 2, 1790.

'SIR,—I have been fortunately spared the troublesome suspense of a long search, to which, in performance of my

[1] January 1791.

promise, I had devoted this morning, by lighting upon the objects of it among the first papers that I laid my hands on: my veneration for your great and good friend, Dr. Johnson, and the pride, or I hope something of a better sentiment, which I indulge in possessing such memorials of his good-will towards me, having induced me to bind them in a parcel containing other select papers, and labelled with the titles appertaining to them. They consist but of three letters, which I believe were all that I ever received from Dr. Johnson. Of these, one, which was written in quadruplicate, under the different dates of its respective despatches, has already been made public, but not from any communication of mine. This, however, I have joined to the rest; and have now the pleasure of sending them to you for the use to which you informed me it was your desire to destine them.

'My promise was pledged with the condition, that if the letters were found to contain anything which should render them improper for the public eye, you would dispense with the performance of it. You will have the goodness, I am sure, to pardon my recalling this stipulation to your recollection, as I shall be loath to appear negligent of that obligation which is always implied in an epistolary confidence. In the reservation of that right I have read them over with the most scrupulous attention, but have not seen in them the slightest cause on that ground to withhold them from you. But, though not on that, yet on another ground I own I feel a little, yet but a little, reluctance to part with them; I mean on that of my own credit, which I fear will suffer by the information conveyed by them, that I was early in the possession of such valuable instructions for the beneficial employment of the influence of my late station, and (as it may seem) have so little availed myself of them. Whether I could, if it were necessary, defend myself against such an imputation, it little concerns the world to know. I look only to the effect which these relics may produce, considered as evidences of the virtues of their author: and believing that they will be found to display an uncommon warmth of private friendship, and a mind ever attentive to the improvement and extension of useful knowledge, and solicitous for the interests of mankind, I can cheerfully submit to the little sacrifice of

my own fame, to contribute to the illustration of so great and venerable a character. They cannot be better applied, for that end, than by being intrusted to your hands. Allow me, with this offering, to infer from it a proof of the very great esteem with which I have the honour to profess myself, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

'WARREN HASTINGS.'

'*P.S.*—At some future time, and when you have no further occasion for these papers, I shall be obliged to you if you will return them.'

The last of the three letters thus graciously put into my hands, and which has already appeared in public, belongs to this year; but I shall previously insert the first two in the order of their dates. They altogether form a grand group in my biographical picture.

TO THE HONOURABLE WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.

'SIR,—Though I have had but little personal knowledge of you, I have had enough to make me wish for more; and though it be now a long time since I was honoured by your visit, I had too much pleasure from it to forget it. By those whom we delight to remember, we are unwilling to be forgotten; and therefore I cannot omit this opportunity of reviving myself in your memory by a letter which you will receive from the hands of my friend Mr. Chambers;[1] a man whose purity of manners and vigour of mind are sufficient to make everything welcome that he brings.

'That this is my only reason for writing, will be too apparent by the uselessness of my letter to any other purpose. I have no questions to ask; not that I want curiosity after either the ancient or present state of religions, in which have been seen all the power and splendour of wide-extended empire; and which, as by some grant of natural superiority, supply the rest of the world with almost all that pride desires,

[1] Afterwards Sir Robert Chambers, one of his Majesty's Judges in India.

and luxury enjoys. But my knowledge of them is too scanty to furnish me with proper topics of inquiry; I can only wish for information; and hope, that a mind comprehensive like yours will find leisure amidst the cares of your important station, to inquire into many subjects of which the European world either thinks not at all, or thinks with deficient intelligence and uncertain conjecture. I shall hope, that he who once intended to increase the learning of his country by the introduction of the Persian language, will examine nicely the traditions and histories of the East; that he will survey the wonders of its ancient edifices, and trace the vestiges of its ruined cities; and that, at his return, we shall know the arts and opinions of a race of men, from whom very little has been hitherto derived.

'You, sir, have no need of being told by me, how much may be added by your attention and patronage to experimental knowledge and natural history. There are arts of manufacture practised in the countries in which you preside, which are yet very imperfectly known here, either to artificers or philosophers. Of the natural productions, animate and inanimate, we yet have so little intelligence, that our books are filled, I fear, with conjectures about things which an Indian peasant knows by his senses.

'Many of those things my first wish is to see; my second to know, by such accounts as a man like you will be able to give.

'As I have not skill to ask proper questions, I have likewise no such access to great men as can enable me to send you any political information. Of the agitations of an unsettled government, and the struggles of a feeble ministry, care is doubtless taken to give you more exact accounts than I can obtain. If you are inclined to interest yourself much in public transactions, it is no misfortune to you to be distant from them.

'That literature is not totally forsaking us, and that your favourite language is not neglected, will appear from the book,[1] which I should have pleased myself more with sending, if I could have presented it bound: but time was want-

[1] Jones's *Persian Grammar*.

ing. I beg, however, sir, that you will accept it from a man very desirous of your regard; and that if you think me able to gratify you by anything more important you will employ me.

'I am now going to take leave, perhaps a very long leave, of my dear Mr. Chambers. That he is going to live where you govern, may justly alleviate the regard of parting; and the hope of seeing both him and you again, which I am not willing to mingle with doubt, must at present, comfort as it can, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*March* 30, 1774.'

TO THE HON. WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.

'SIR,—Being informed that, by the departure of a ship, there is now an opportunity of writing to Bengal, I am unwilling to slip out of your memory by my own negligence, and therefore take the liberty of reminding you of my existence, by sending you a book which is not yet made public.

'I have lately visited a region less remote, and less illustrious than India, which afforded some occasions for speculation; what has occurred to me I have put into the volume,[1] of which I beg your acceptance.

'Men in your station seldom have presents totally disinterested; my book is received, let me now make my request.

'There is, sir, somewhere within your government, a young adventurer, one Chauncey Lawrence, whose father is one of my oldest friends. Be pleased to show the young man what countenance is fit, whether he wants to be restrained by your authority, or encouraged by your favour. His father is now President of the College of Physicians, a man venerable for his knowledge, and more venerable for his virtue.

'I wish you a prosperous government, a safe return, and a long enjoyment of plenty and tranquillity.—I am, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON,

'*London, Dec.* 20, 1774.'

TO THE SAME

'*Jan.* 9, 1781.

'SIR,—Amidst the importance and multiplicity of affairs in which your great office engages you, I take the liberty of

[1] *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland.*

recalling your attention for a moment to literature, and will not prolong the interruption by an apology which your character makes needless.

'Mr. Hoole, a gentleman long known, and long esteemed in the India House, after having translated Tasso, has undertaken Ariosto. How well he is qualified for his undertaking he has already shown. He is desirous, sir, of your favour in promoting his proposals, and flatters me by supposing that my testimony may advance his interest.

'It is a new thing for a clerk of the India House to translate poets;—it is new for a Governor of Bengal to patronise learning. That he may find his ingenuity rewarded, and that learning may flourish under your protection, is the wish of, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.'

I wrote to him in February, complaining of having been troubled by a recurrence of the perplexing question of Liberty and Necessity;—and mentioning that I hoped soon to meet him again in London.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I hoped you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with Liberty and Necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it? Do not doubt but I shall be most heartily glad to see you here again, for I love every part about you but your affectation of distress.

'I have at last finished my *Lives*, and have laid up for you a load of copy, all out of order, so that it will amuse you for a long time to set it right. Come to me, my dear Bozzy, and let us be as happy as we can. We will go again to the Mitre, and talk old times over.—I am, dear sir, yours affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*March* 14, 1781.'

On Monday, March 19, I arrived in London, and on Tuesday, the 20th, met him in Fleet Street, walking, or rather indeed moving along; for his peculiar

march is thus described in a very just and picturesque manner, in a short Life[1] of him published very soon after his death: 'When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet.' That he was often much stared at while he advanced in this manner, may easily be believed; but it was not safe to make sport of one so robust as he was. Mr. Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absence, by a sudden start, drive the load off a porter's back, and walk forward briskly, without being conscious of what he had done. The porter was very angry, but stood still, and eyed the huge figure with much earnestness, till he was satisfied that his wisest course was to be quiet, and take up his burden again.

Our accidental meeting in the street, after a long separation, was a pleasing surprise to us both. He stepped aside with me into Falcon Court, and made kind inquiries about my family, and as we were in a hurry going different ways, I promised to call on him next day; he said he was engaged to go out in the morning. 'Early, sir?' said I. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, a London morning does not go with the sun.'

I waited on him next evening, and he gave me a great portion of his original manuscript of his *Lives of the Poets*, which he had preserved for me.

I found on visiting his friend, Mr. Thrale, that he

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[1] Published by Kearsley, with this well-chosen motto:

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

was now very ill, and had removed, I suppose by the solicitation of Mrs. Thrale, to a house in Grosvenor Square. I was sorry to see him sadly changed in his appearance.

He told me I might now have the pleasure to see Dr. Johnson drink wine again, for he had lately returned to it. When I mentioned this to Johnson, he said, 'I drink it now sometimes, but not socially.' The first evening that I was with him at Thrale's, I observed he poured a large quantity of it into a glass, and swallowed it greedily. Everything about his character and manners was forcible and violent; there never was any moderation; many a day did he fast; many a year did he refrain from wine; but when he did eat, it was voraciously; when he did drink wine, it was copiously. He could practise abstinence, but not temperance.

Mrs. Thrale and I had a dispute, whether Shakespeare or Milton had drawn the most admirable picture of a man.[1] I was for Shakespeare; Mrs. Thrale for Milton; and after a fair hearing, Johnson decided for my opinion.[2]

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[1] Shakespeare makes Hamlet thus describe his father:

> 'See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
> A station like the herald Mercury
> New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
> A combination and a form indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.'

Milton thus portrays our first parent, Adam:

> 'His fair large front and eye sublime declared
> Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
> Round from his parted forelock manly hung
> Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad.'

[2] [It is strange, that the picture drawn by the unlearned Shakespeare should be full of classical images, and that by the learned Milton,

I told him of one of Mr. Burke's playful sallies upon Dean Marlay:[1] 'I don't like the Deanery of *Ferns*, it sounds so like a *barren* title.'—'Dr. *Heath* should have it,' said I. Johnson laughed, and condescending to trifle in the same mode of conceit, suggested Dr. *Moss*.

He said, 'Mrs. Montagu has dropped me. Now, sir, there are people whom one should like very well to drop, but would not wish to be dropped by.' He certainly was vain of the society of ladies, and could make himself very agreeable to them, when he chose it; Sir Joshua Reynolds agreed with me that he could. Mr. Gibbon, with his usual sneer, controverted it, perhaps in resentment of Johnson's having talked with some disgust of his ugliness, which one would think a *philosopher* would not mind.[2] Dean Marlay wittily observed: 'A lady may be vain, when she can turn a wolf-dog into a lap-dog.'

The election for Ayrshire, my own county, was this spring tried upon a petition, before a Committee of the House of Commons. I was one of the counsel for the sitting member, and took the liberty of previously stating different points to Johnson, who never failed to see them clearly, and to supply me with some good hints. He dictated to me the following note upon the registration of deeds:

'All laws are made for the convenience of the community;

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void of them.—Milton's description appears to me more picturesque.—KEARNEY].

[1] [Dr. Richard Marlay, afterwards Lord Bishop of Waterford, a very amiable, benevolent, and ingenious man. He was chosen a member of the Literary Club in 1777, and died in Dublin, July 2, 1802, in his seventy-fifth year.—M.]

[2] ['He (Gibbon) is an ugly, affected, disgusting fellow, and poisons our Literary Club to me.'—Boswell's *Letters*.—A. B.]

what is legally done, should be legally recorded, that the state of things may be known, and that wherever reverence is requisite, evidence may be had. For this reason, the obligation to frame and establish a legal register is enforced by a legal penalty, which penalty is the want of that perfection and plenitude of right which a register would give. Thence it follows, that this is not an objection merely legal; for the reason on which the law stands being equitable, makes it an equitable objection.'

'This (said he) you must enlarge on, when speaking to the Committee. You must not argue there, as if you were arguing in the schools; close reasoning will not fix their attention; you must say the same thing over and over again, in different words. If you say it but once, they miss it in a moment of inattention. It is unjust, sir, to censure lawyers for multiplying words when they argue; it is often *necessary* for them to multiply words.'

His notion of the duty of a member of Parliament, sitting upon an election-committee, was very high; and when he was told of a gentleman upon one of those committees, who read the newspapers part of the time, and slept the rest, while the merits of a vote were examined by the counsel; and as an excuse, when challenged by the chairman for such behaviour, bluntly answered, 'I had made up my mind upon that case';—Johnson, with an indignant contempt, said, 'If he was such a rogue as to make up his mind upon a case without hearing it, he should not have been such a fool as to tell it.' 'I think (said Mr. Dudley Long, now North) the Doctor has pretty plainly made him out to be both rogue and fool.'

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.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, every tavern does not admit women.' JOHNSON: 'Depend upon it, sir, any tavern will admit a well-dressed man and a well-dressed woman; they will not perhaps admit a woman whom they see every night walking by their door, in the street. But a well-dressed man may lead in a well-dressed woman to any tavern in London. Taverns sell meat and drink, and will sell them to anybody who can eat and can drink. You may as well say, that a mercer will not sell silks to a woman of the town.'

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 ——[1] 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

[1] [Probably the Bishop of St. Asaph, Dr. Shipley, a very gay prelate. Sir William Jones married his daughter.—A. B.]

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 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 mighty 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 us 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 me, and which indeed he showed 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 the 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 inquiry 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 that 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.[1]

On Friday, March 30, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the Earl of Charlemont, Sir Annesley Stewart, Mr. Eliot, of Port Eliot, Mr. Burke, Dean Marlay, Mr. Langton; a most agreeable day, of which I regret that every circumstance is not preserved; but it is unreasonable to require such a multiplication of felicity.

Mr. Eliot, with whom Dr. Walter Harte had travelled, talked to us of his *History of Gustavus Adolphus*, which he said was a very good book in the German translation. JOHNSON: '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

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[1] *London Chronicle*, May 2, 1769. This respectable man is there mentioned to have died on the 3rd of April, that year, at Cofflect, the seat of Thomas Veale, Esq., in his way to London.

the same day with Robertson's *History of Scotland.* His husbandry, however, is good.' BOSWELL: 'So he was fitter for that than for heroic history: he did well, when he turned his sword into a ploughshare.'

Mr. Eliot mentioned a curious liquor peculiar to his country, which the Cornish fishermen drink. They call it *Mahogany*; and it is made of two parts gin, and one part treacle, well beaten together. I begged to have some of it made, which was done with proper skill by Mr. Eliot. I thought it very good liquor; and said it was a counterpart of what is called *Athol Porridge* in the Highlands of Scotland, which is a mixture of whisky and honey. Johnson said, 'That must be a better liquor than the Cornish, for both its component parts are better.' He also observed, '*Mahogany* must be a modern name; for it is not long since the wood called mahogany was known in this country.' I mentioned his scale of liquors:—claret for boys,—port for men,—brandy for heroes. 'Then (said Mr. Burke) let me have claret: I love to be a boy; to have the careless gaiety of boyish days.' JOHNSON: 'I should drink claret too, if it would give me that; but it does not: it neither makes boys men, nor men boys. You 'll be drowned by it before it has any effect upon you.'

I ventured to mention a ludicrous paragraph in the newspapers, that Dr. Johnson was learning to dance of Vestris. Lord Charlemont, wishing to excite him to talk, proposed in a whisper that he should be asked whether it was true. 'Shall I ask him?' said his Lordship. We were, by a great majority, clear for the experiment. Upon which his Lordship very gravely, and with a courteous air, said, 'Pray, sir, is it true

that you are taking lessons of Vestris?' This was risking a good deal, and required the boldness of a general of Irish volunteers to make the attempt. Johnson was at first startled, and in some heat answered, 'How can your Lordship ask so simple a question?' But immediately recovering himself, whether from unwillingness to be deceived, or to appear deceived, or whether from real good humour, he kept up the joke: 'Nay, but if anybody were to answer the paragraph, and contradict it, I'd have a reply, and would say, that he who contradicted it was no friend either to Vestris or me. For why should not Dr. Johnson add to his other powers a little corporeal agility? Socrates learned to dance at an advanced age, and Cato learned Greek at an advanced age. Then it might proceed to say that this Johnson, not content with dancing on the ground, might dance on the rope; and they might introduce the elephant dancing on the rope. A nobleman[1] wrote a play, called *Love in a Hollow Tree.* He found out that it was a bad one, and therefore wished to buy up all the copies, and burn them. The Duchess of Marlborough had kept one; and when he was against her at an election, she had a new edition of it printed, and prefixed to it, as a frontispiece, an elephant dancing on a rope, to show that his Lordship's writing comedy was as awkward as an elephant dancing on a rope.'

On Sunday, April 1, I dined with him at Mr. Thrale's with Sir Philip Jennings' clerk and Mr. Perkins, who had the superintendence of Mr. Thrale's brewery,

[1] William, the first Viscount Grimston.

with a salary of five hundred pounds a year. Sir Philip had the appearance of a gentleman of ancient family, well advanced in life. He wore his own white hair in a bag of goodly size, a black velvet coat, with an embroidered waistcoat, and very rich laced ruffles, which Mrs. Thrale said were old-fashioned, but which, for that reason, I thought the more respectable, more like a Tory; yet Sir Philip was then in Opposition in Parliament. 'Ah, sir (said Johnson), ancient ruffles and modern principles do not agree.' Sir Philip defended the opposition to the American War ably and with temper, and I joined him. He said the majority of the nation was against the ministry. JOHNSON: '*I*, sir, am against the ministry; but it is for having too little of that of which Opposition thinks they have too much. Were I minister, if any man wagged his finger against me, he should be turned out; for that which it is in the power of Government to give at pleasure to one or to another, should be given to the supporters of Government. If you will not oppose at the expense of losing your place, your opposition will not be honest, you will feel no serious grievance; and the present opposition is only a contest to get what others have. Sir Robert Walpole acted as I would do. As to the American War, the *sense* of the nation is *with* the ministry. The majority of those who can *understand* is with it; the majority of those who can only *hear* is against it; and as those who can only hear are more numerous than those who can understand, and opposition is always loudest, a majority of the rabble will be for opposition.'

This boisterous vivacity entertained us: but the truth in my opinion was that those who could under-

stand the best were against the American War, as almost every man now is, when the question has been coolly considered.

Mrs. Thrale gave high praise to Mr. Dudley Long (now North). JOHNSON: 'Nay, my dear lady, don't talk so. Mr. Long's character is very *short.* It is nothing. He fills a chair. He is a man of genteel appearance, and that is all.[1] I know nobody who blasts by praise as you do: for whenever there is exaggerated praise, everybody is set against a character. They are provoked to attack it. Now there is Pepys;[2] you praised that man with such disproportion that I was incited to lessen him, perhaps more than he deserves. His blood is upon your head. By the same principle your malice defeats itself; for your censure is too violent. And yet (looking to her with a leering smile) she is the first woman in the world, could she but restrain that wicked tongue of hers;—she would be the only woman, could she but command that little whirligig.'

Upon the subject of exaggerated praise I took the liberty to say, that I thought there might be very high praise given to a known character which deserved it,

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[1] Here Johnson condescended to play upon the words *long* and *short*. But little did he know that, owing to Mr. Long's reserve in his presence, he was talking thus of a gentleman distinguished amongst his acquaintance for acuteness of wit, one to whom I think the French expression, *Il petille d'esprit*, is particularly suited. He has gratified me by mentioning that he heard Dr. Johnson say, 'Sir, if I were to lose Boswell, it would be a limb amputated.'

[2] William Weller Pepys, Esq., one of the Masters in the High Court of Chancery, and well known in polite circles. My acquaintance with him is not sufficient to enable me to speak of him from my own judgment. But I know that both at Eton and Oxford he was the intimate friend of the late Sir James Macdonald, the *Marcellus* of Scotland, whose extraordinary talents, learning, and virtues will ever be remembered with admiration and regret.

and therefore it would not be exaggerated. Thus, one might say of Mr. Edmund Burke, he is a very wonderful man. JOHNSON: 'No, sir, you would not be safe, if another man had a mind perversely to contradict. He might answer, "Where is all the wonder? Burke is, to be sure, a man of uncommon abilities, with a great quantity of matter in his mind, and a great fluency of language in his mouth. But we are not to be stunned and astonished by him." So you see, sir, even Burke would suffer, not from any fault of his own, but from your folly.'

Mrs. Thrale mentioned a gentleman who had acquired a fortune of £4000 a year in trade, but was absolutely miserable, because he could not talk in company; so miserable that he was impelled to lament his situation in the street to ——, whom he hates, and who he knows despises him. 'I am a most unhappy man (said he). I am invited to conversations. I go to conversations; but, alas! I have no conversation.' JOHNSON: 'Man commonly cannot be successful in different ways. This gentleman has spent, in getting £4000 a year, the time in which he might have learned to talk; and now he cannot talk.' Mr. Perkins made a shrewd and droll remark: 'If he had got his £4000 a year as a mountebank, he might have learned to talk at the same time that he was getting his fortune.'

Some other gentlemen came in. The conversation concerning the person whose character Dr. Johnson had treated so slightingly, as he did not know his merit, was resumed. Mrs. Thrale said, 'You think so of him, sir, because he is quiet, and does not exert himself with force. You'll be saying the same thing

of Mr. —— there, who sits as quiet——' This was not well bred; and Johnson did not let it pass without correction. 'Nay, madam, what right have you to talk thus? Both Mr. —— and I have reason to take it ill. *You* may talk so of Mr. ——; but why do you make *me* do it? Have I said anything against Mr. ——? You have *set* him that I might shoot him: but I have not shot him.'

One of the gentlemen said he had seen three folio volumes of Dr. Johnson's sayings collected by me. 'I must put you right, sir (said I); for I am very exact in authenticity. You could not see folio volumes, for I have none: you might have seen some in quarto and octavo. This is an inattention which one should guard against.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is a want of concern about veracity. He does not know that he saw *any* volumes. If he had seen them he could have remembered their size.'

Mr. Thrale appeared very lethargic to-day. I saw him again on Monday evening, at which time he was not thought to be in immediate danger; but early in the morning of Wednesday the 4th he expired. Johnson was in the house, and thus mentions the event: 'I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect and benignity.'[1] Upon that day there was a call of the Literary Club, but Johnson apologised for his absence by the following note:

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[1] [Johnson's expressions on this occasion remind us of Isaac Walton's eulogy on Whitgift, in his *Life of Hooker*:—'He lived . . . to be present at the expiration of her (Queen Elizabeth's) last breath, and to behold the closing of those eyes that had long looked upon him with reverence and affection.'—KEARNEY.]

'Mr. Johnson knows that Sir Joshua Reynolds and the other gentlemen will excuse his incompliance with the call, when they are told that Mr. Thrale died this morning.

'*Wednesday.*'

Mr. Thrale's death was a very essential loss to Johnson, who, although he did not foresee all that afterwards happened, was sufficiently convinced that the comforts which Mr. Thrale's family afforded him would now in a great measure cease. He, however, continued to show a kind attention to his widow and children as long as it was acceptable; and he took upon him, with a very earnest concern, the office of one of his executors, the importance of which seemed greater than usual to him, from his circumstances having been always such that he had scarcely any share in the real business of life. His friends of the Club were in hopes that Mr. Thrale might have made a liberal provision for him for his life, which, as Mr. Thrale left no son and a very large fortune, it would have been highly to his honour to have done; and, considering Dr. Johnson's age, could not have been of long duration; but he bequeathed him only two hundred pounds, which was the legacy given to each of his executors. I could not but be somewhat diverted by hearing Johnson talk in a pompous manner of his new office, and particularly of the concerns of the brewery, which it was at last resolved should be sold. Lord Lucan tells a very good story, which, if not precisely exact, is certainly characteristical: that when the sale of Thrale's brewery was going forward, Johnson appeared bustling about with an inkhorn and pen in his button-hole, like an exciseman; and on being asked what he really considered to be the

value of the property which was to be disposed of, answered, 'We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.'

On Friday, April 6, he carried me to dine at a club, which, at his desire, had been lately formed at the Queen's Arms, in St. Paul's Churchyard. He told Mr. Hoole that he wished to have a City Club, and asked him to collect one; but, said he, 'Don't let them be *patriots*.' The company were to-day very sensible, well-behaved men. I have preserved only two particulars of his conversation. He said he was glad Lord George Gordon had escaped, rather than that a precedent should be established for hanging a man for *constructive treason*; which, in consistency with his true, manly, constitutional Toryism, he considered would be a dangerous engine of arbitrary power. And upon its being mentioned that an opulent and very indolent Scotch nobleman, who totally resigned the management of his affairs to a man of knowledge and abilities, had claimed some merit by saying, 'The next best thing to managing a man's own affairs well is being sensible of incapacity and not attempting it, but having full confidence in one who can do it.' Johnson: 'Nay, sir, this is paltry. There is a middle course. Let a man give application, and depend upon it, he will soon get above a despicable state of helplessness, and attain the power of acting for himself.'

On Saturday, April 7, I dined with him at Mr. Hoole's with Governor Bouchier and Captain Orme, both of whom had been long in the East Indies; and being men of good sense and observation, were very

entertaining. Johnson defended the oriental regulation of different *castes* of men,[1] which was objected to as totally destructive to the hopes of rising in society by personal merit. He showed that there was a *principle* in it sufficiently plausible by analogy. 'We see (said he) in metals that there are different species; and so likewise in animals, though one species may not differ very widely from another, as in the species of dogs—the cur, the spaniel, and the mastiff. The Brahmins are the mastiffs of mankind.'

On Thursday, April 12, I dined with him at a bishop's, where were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Berenger, and some more company. He had dined the day before at another bishop's. I have unfortunately recorded none of his conversation at the bishop's where we dined together; but I have preserved his ingenious defence of his dining twice abroad in Passion-week; a laxity in which I am convinced he would not have indulged himself at the time when he wrote his solemn paper in the *Rambler* upon that awful season. It appeared to me that by being much more in company; and enjoying more luxurious living, he had contracted a keener relish for pleasure, and was consequently less rigorous in his religious rites. This he would not acknowledge; but he reasoned with admirable sophistry as follows: 'Why, sir, a bishop's calling company together in this week is, to use the vulgar phrase, not *the thing.* But you must consider laxity is a bad thing; but preciseness is also a bad thing; and your general character may be more hurt by preciseness than by dining with a bishop in Passion-week. There

[1] [Rajapouts, the military caste; the Brahmins, pacific and abstemious.—KEARNEY.]

might be a handle for reflection. It might be said, "He refuses to dine with a bishop in Passion-week, but was three Sundays absent from church."' Boswell: 'Very true, sir. But suppose a man to be uniformly of good conduct, would it not be better that he should refuse to dine with a bishop in this week, and so not encourage a bad practice by his example?' Johnson: 'Why, sir, you are to consider whether you might not do more harm by lessening the influence of a bishop's character by your disapprobation in refusing him than by going to him.'

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'Dear Madam,—Life is full of troubles. I have just lost my dear friend Thrale. I hope he is happy; but I have had a great loss. I am otherwise pretty well. I require some care of myself, but that care is not ineffectual; and when I am out of order I think it often my own fault.

'The spring is now making quick advances. As it is the season in which the whole world is enlivened and invigorated, I hope that both you and I shall partake of its benefits. My desire is to see Lichfield; but being left executor to my friend, I know not whether I can be spared; but I will try, for it is now long since we saw one another, and how little we can promise ourselves many more interviews we are taught by hourly examples of mortality. Let us try to live so as that mortality may not be an evil. Write to me soon, my dearest; your letters will give me great pleasure.

'I am sorry that Mr. Porter has not had his box; but by sending it to Mr. Mathias, who very readily undertook its conveyance, I did the best I could, and perhaps before now he has it.

'Be so kind as to make my compliments to my friends; I have a great value for their kindness, and hope to enjoy it before summer is past. Do write to me.—I am, dearest love, your most humble servant, Sam. Johnson.

'*London, April* 12, 1781.'

On Friday, April 13, being Good Friday, I went to St. Clement's Church with him as usual. There I saw again his old fellow-collegian Edwards, to whom I said, 'I think, sir, Dr. Johnson and you meet only at church.' 'Sir (said he), it is the best place we can meet in, except Heaven, and I hope we shall meet there too.' Dr. Johnson told me that there was very little communication between Edwards and him, after their unexpected renewal of acquaintance. 'But (said he, smiling) he met me once, and said, "I am told you have written a very pretty book called the *Rambler*." I was unwilling that he should leave the world in total darkness, and sent him a set.'

Mr. Berenger[1] visited him to-day, and was very pleasing. We talked of an evening society for conversation at a house in town, of which we were all members, but of which Johnson said, 'It will never do, sir. There is nothing served about there, neither tea, nor coffee, nor lemonade, nor anything whatever; and depend upon it, sir, a man does not love to go to a place from whence he comes out exactly as he went in.' I endeavoured, for argument's sake, to maintain that men of learning and talents might have very good intellectual society, without the aid of any little gratifications of the senses. Berenger joined with Johnson, and said, that without these any meeting would be dull and insipid. He would therefore have all the slight refreshments; nay, it would not be amiss to have some cold meat, and a bottle of wine upon a sideboard. 'Sir (said Johnson to me, with an air of

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[1] [Richard Berenger, Esq., many years Gentleman of the Horse to his present Majesty, and author of *The History and Art of Horsemanship*, in two volumes, 4to, 1771.—M.]

triumph), Mr. Berenger knows the world. Everybody loves to have good things furnished to them without any trouble. I told Mrs. Thrale once, that as she did not choose to have card-tables, she should have a profusion of the best sweetmeats, and she would be sure to have company enough come to her.' I agreed with my illustrious friend upon this subject; for it has pleased God to make man a composite animal, and where there is nothing to refresh the body, the mind will languish.

On Sunday, April 15, being Easter Day, after solemn worship in St. Paul's Church, I found him alone; Dr. Scott,[1] of the Commons, came in. He talked of its having been said, that Addison wrote some of his best papers in the *Spectator* when warm with wine. Dr. Johnson 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.

I told him that in a company where I had lately been, a desire was expressed to know his authority for the shocking 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 to me by alleging that he did it in order to cover Steele's goods from other creditors, who were going to seize them.

[1] [Afterwards Lord Stowell, himself a famous man for the bottle. —A. B.]

We talked of the difference between the mode of education at Oxford, and that in those colleges where instruction is chiefly conveyed by lectures. JOHNSON: '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 the lecture, it is lost; you cannot go back as you do upon a book.' Dr. Scott agreed with him. 'But yet (said I), Dr. Scott, you yourself gave lectures at Oxford.' He smiled. 'You laughed (then said I) at those who came to you.'

Dr. Scott left us, and soon afterwards we went to dinner. Our company consisted of Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Desmoulins, Mr. Levett, Mr. Allen, the printer, [Mr. Macbean,] and Mrs. Hall, sister of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, and resembling him, as I thought, both in figure and manner. Johnson produced now, for the first time, some handsome silver salvers, which he told me he had bought fourteen years ago; so it was a great day. I was not a little amused by observing Allen perpetually struggling to talk in the manner of Johnson, like the little frog in the fable blowing himself up to resemble the stately ox.

I mentioned a kind of religious Robinhood society, which met every Sunday evening at Coachmakers' Hall, for free debate; and that the subject for this night was the text which relates, with other miracles 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 said it was a very curious subject, and she should like to hear it dis-

cussed. JOHNSON (somewhat warmly): '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.' I, however, resolved that I would go. '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. JOHNSON: 'Nay, madam, 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.' She seemed desirous of knowing more, but he left the question in obscurity.

Of apparitions,[1] he observed, '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.'

He mentioned a thing as not unfrequent, of which

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1 [As this subject frequently recurs in these volumes, the reader may be led erroneously to suppose that Dr. Johnson was so fond of such discussions, as frequently to introduce them. But the truth is, that the author himself delighted in talking concerning ghosts, and what he has frequently denominated *the mysterious*; and therefore took every opportunity of *leading* Johnson to converse on such subjects.—M.]

I had never heard before,—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, 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.' 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 Lichfield; but nothing ensued. This phenomenon is, I think, as wonderful as any other mysterious fact, which many people are very slow to believe, or rather, indeed, reject with an obstinate contempt.

Some time after this, upon his making a remark which escaped my attention, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Hall were both together striving to answer him. He grew angry, and called out loudly, 'Nay, when you both speak at once, it is intolerable.' But checking himself, and softening, he said, 'This one may say, though you *are* ladies.' Then he brightened into gay humour, and addressed them in the words of one of the songs in the *Beggar's Opera*:

'But two at a time there's no mortal can bear.'

'What, sir (said I), are you going to turn Captain Macheath?' There was something as pleasantly ludicrous in this scene as can be imagined. The contrast between Macheath, Polly, and Lucy—and Dr. Samuel

Johnson; blind, peevish Mrs. Williams; and lean, lank, preaching Mrs. Hall, was exquisite.

I stole away to Coachmakers' Hall, and heard the difficult text of which he had talked, discussed with great decency, and some intelligence, by several speakers. There was a difference of opinion as to the appearance of ghosts in modern times, though the arguments for it, supported by Mr. Addison's authority, preponderated. The immediate subject of debate was embarrassed by the *bodies* of the saints having been said to rise, and by the question what became of them afterwards:—did they return to their graves? or were they translated to heaven? Only one evangelist mentions the fact,[1] and the commentators whom I have looked at do not make the passage clear. There is, however, no occasion for our understanding it further, than to know that it was one of the extraordinary manifestations of divine power, which accompanied the most important event that ever happened.

On Friday, April 20, I spent with him one of the happiest days that I remember to have enjoyed in the whole course of my life. Mrs. Garrick, whose grief for the loss of her husband was, I believe, as sincere as wounded affection and admiration could produce, had this day, for the first time since his death, a select party of his friends to dine with her. The company was, Miss Hannah More, who lived with her, and whom she called her Chaplain; Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Burney, Dr. Johnson, and myself. We found ourselves very elegantly entertained at her house in the Adelphi,

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[1] St. Matthew xxvii. 52, 53.

where I have passed many a pleasing hour with him, 'who gladdened life.' She looked well, talked of her husband with complacency, and while she cast her eyes on his portrait, which hung over the chimney-piece, said, that 'death was now the most agreeable object to her.' The very semblance of David Garrick was cheering. Mr. Beauclerk, with happy propriety, inscribed under that fine portrait of him, which by Lady Diana's kindness is now the property of my friend Mr. Langton, the following passage from his beloved Shakespeare:

> 'A merrier man,
> Within the limit of becoming mirth,
> I never spent an hour's talk withal.
> His eye begets occasion for his wit;
> For every object that the one doth catch,
> The other turns to a mirth-moving jest;
> Which his fair tongue (Conceit's expositor)
> Delivers in such apt and gracious words,
> That aged ears play truant at his tales,
> And younger hearings are quite ravished;
> So sweet and voluble is his discourse.'

We were all in fine spirits; and I whispered tc Mrs. Boscawen, 'I believe this is as much as can be made of life.' In addition to a splendid entertainment, we were regaled with Lichfield ale, which had a peculiar appropriate value. Sir Joshua, and Dr. Burney, and I, drank cordially of it to Dr. Johnson's health; and though he would not join us, he as cordially answered, 'Gentlemen, I wish you all as well as you do me.'

The general effect of this day dwells upon my mind in fond remembrance; but I do not find much con-

versation recorded. What I have preserved shall be faithfully given.

One of the company mentioned Mr. Thomas Hollis, the strenuous Whig, who used to send over Europe presents of democratical books, with their boards stamped with daggers and caps of liberty. Mrs. Carter said, 'He was a bad man; he used to talk uncharitably.' JOHNSON: 'Poh! poh! madam; who is the worse for being talked of uncharitably? Besides, he was a dull poor creature as ever lived; and I believe he would not have done harm to a man whom he knew to be of very opposite principles to his own. I remember once at the Society of Arts, when an advertisement was to be drawn up, he pointed me out as the man who could do it best. This, you will observe, was kindness to me. I however slipped away and escaped it.'

Mrs. Carter having said of the same person, 'I doubt he was an atheist.' JOHNSON: 'I don't know that. He might perhaps have become one, if he had had time to ripen (smiling). He might have *exuberated* into an atheist.'

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 than he can make into meal; he opens a wide prospect, but it is so distant, it is indistinct. I love Blair's *Sermons*. Though the dog is a Scotchman, and a Presbyterian, and everything 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.' JOHNSON: 'Why, madam, let us com-

pound the matter; let us ascribe it to my candour, and his merit.'

In the evening we had a large company in the drawing-room; several ladies, the Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Percy, Mr. Chamberlayne of the Treasury, etc. etc. Somebody said the life of a mere literary man could not be very entertaining. JOHNSON: '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.

Talking of a very respectable author, he told us a curious circumstance in his life, which was, that he had married a printer's devil. REYNOLDS: 'A printer's devil, sir! Why, I thought a printer's devil was a creature with a black face and in rags.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir. But I suppose he had her face washed, and put clean clothes on her. (Then looking very serious and very earnest:) And she did not disgrace him; the woman had a bottom of good sense.' The word *bottom* thus introduced was so ludicrous when contrasted with his gravity, that most of us could not forbear tittering and laughing, though I recollect that the Bishop of Killaloe kept his countenance with perfect steadiness, while Miss Hannah More slily hid her face behind a lady's back who sat on the same settee with her. His pride could not bear that any expression of his should excite ridicule when he did

not intend it; he therefore resolved to assume and exercise despotic power, glanced sternly around, and called out in a strong tone, 'Where's the merriment?' Then collecting himself, and looking awful, to make us feel how he could impose restraint, and as it were searching his mind for a still more ludicrous word, he slowly pronounced, 'I say the *woman* was *fundamentally* sensible,' as if he had said, 'Hear this now, and laugh if you dare.' We all sat composed as at a funeral.

He and I walked away together; we stopped a little while by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames; and I said to him, with some emotion, that I was now thinking of two friends we had lost, who once lived in the buildings behind us, Beauclerk and Garrick. 'Ay, sir (said he tenderly), and two such friends as cannot be supplied.'

For some time after this day I did not see him very often, and of the conversation which I did enjoy, I am sorry to find I have preserved but little. I was at this time engaged in a variety of other matters, which required exertion and assiduity, and necessarily occupied almost all my time.

One day, having spoken very freely of those who were then in power, he said to me, 'Between ourselves, sir, I do not like to give Opposition the satisfaction of knowing how much I disapprove of the ministry.' And when I mentioned that Mr. Burke had boasted how quiet the nation was in George the Second's reign, when Whigs were in power, compared with the present reign, when Tories governed;—'Why, sir (said he), you are to consider that Tories, having more reverence for government, will not oppose

with the same violence as Whigs, who, being unrestrained by that principle, will oppose by any means.'

This month he lost not only Mr. Thrale, but another friend, Mr. William Strahan, junior, printer, the eldest son of his old and constant friend, printer to his Majesty.

TO MRS. STRAHAN

'DEAR MADAM,—The grief which I feel for the loss of a very kind friend is sufficient to make me know how much you suffer from the death of an amiable son: a man, of whom I think it may be truly said, that no one knew him who does not lament him. I look upon myself as having a friend, another friend, taken from me.

'Comfort, dear madam, I would give you if I could: but I know how little the forms of consolation can avail. Let me, however, counsel you not to waste your health in unprofitable sorrow, but go to Bath, and endeavour to prolong your own life; but when we have all done all that we can, one friend must in time lose the other.—I am, dear madam, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*April* 23, 1781.'

On Tuesday, May 8, I had the pleasure of again dining with him and Mr. Wilkes at Mr. Dilly's. No *negotiation* was now required to bring them together; for Johnson was so well satisfied with the former interview that he was very glad to meet Wilkes again, who was this day seated between Dr. Beattie and Dr. Johnson (between *Truth* and *Reason*, as General Paoli said, when I told him of it). WILKES: 'I have been thinking, Dr. Johnson, that there should be a Bill brought into Parliament that the controverted elections for Scotland should be tried in that country, at their own Abbey of Holyrood House, and not here; for

the consequence of trying them here is, that we have an inundation of Scotchmen, who come up and never go back again. Now here is Boswell, who is come upon the election for his own county, which will not last a fortnight.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, I see no reason why they should be tried at all; for, you know, one Scotchman is as good as another.' WILKES: 'Pray, Boswell, how much may be got in a year by an advocate at the Scotch bar?' BOSWELL: 'I believe, two thousand pounds.' WILKES: 'How can it be possible to spend that money in Scotland?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, the money may be spent in England; but there is a harder question. If one man in Scotland gets possession of two thousand pounds, what remains for all the rest of the nation?' WILKES: 'You know, in the last war, the immense booty which Thurot carried off by the complete plunder of seven Scotch isles; he re-embarked with *three and sixpence.*' Here again Johnson and Wilkes joined in extravagant sportive raillery upon the supposed poverty of Scotland, which Dr. Beattie and I did not think it worth our while to dispute.

The subject of quotation being introduced, Mr. Wilkes censured it as pedantry. JOHNSON: '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. Shakespeare is chiefly quoted here; and we quote also Pope, Prior, Butler, Waller, and sometimes Cowley.'

We talked of letter-writing.—JOHNSON: '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.'

BOSWELL: 'Do what you will, sir, 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."'

He gave us an entertaining account of Bet Flint, a woman of the town, who, with some eccentric talents and much effrontery, forced herself upon his acquaintance. 'Bet (said he) wrote her own life in verse,[1] which she brought to me, wishing that I would furnish her with a Preface to it (laughing). I used to say of her, that she was generally slut and drunkard;—occasionally, whore 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.[2] After which, Bet said, with a gay and

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[1] Johnson, whose memory was wonderfully retentive, remembered the first four lines of this curious production, which have been communicated to me by a young lady of his acquaintance:

> '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.'

[2] [The account which Johnson had received on this occasion was not quite accurate. Bet was tried at the Old Bailey in September 1758, not by the Chief Justice here alluded to [Willes] (who, however, tried another cause on the same day), but before Sir William Moreton, Recorder; and she was acquitted, not in consequence of any *favourable summing up* of the judge, but because the prosecutrix, Mary Walthow, could not prove that the goods charged to have been stolen [a counterpane, a silver spoon, two napkins, etc.] were her property.

Bet does not appear to have lived at that time in a very *genteel* style; for she paid for her ready-furnished *room* in Meard's Court, Dean Street, Soho, from which these articles were alleged to be stolen, only *five shillings* a week.

Mr. James Boswell took the trouble to examine the Sessions Paper, to ascertain these particulars.—M.]

satisfied air, "Now that the counterpane is *my own*, I shall make a petticoat of it."'

Talking of oratory, Mr. Wilkes described it as accompanied with all the charms of poetical expression. JOHNSON: 'No, sir; oratory is the power of beating down your adversary's arguments, and putting better in their place.' WILKES: 'But this does not move the passions.' JOHNSON: 'He must be a weak man, who is to be so moved.' WILKES (naming a celebrated orator): 'Amidst all the brilliancy of ——'s [1] imagination, and the exuberance of his wit, there is a strange want of *taste*. It was observed of Apelles's *Venus*,[2] that her flesh seemed as if she had been nourished by roses; his oratory would sometimes make one suspect that he eats potatoes and drinks whisky.'

Mr. Wilkes observed, how tenacious we are of forms in this country; and gave as an instance, the vote of the House of Commons for remitting money to pay the army in America *in Portugal pieces*, when, in reality, the remittance is made not in Portugal money, but in our specie. JOHNSON: 'Is there not a law, sir, against exporting the current coin of the realm?' WILKES: 'Yes, sir; but might not the House of Commons, in case of real evident necessity, order our own current coin to be sent into our own colonies?' Here Johnson, with that quickness of recollection which distinguished him so eminently, gave the Middlesex Patriot an admirable retort upon his own ground: 'Sure, sir, *you* don't think a *resolution of*

1 [Burke.—A. B.]

2 [Mr. Wilkes mistook the objection of Euphranor to the Theseus of Parrhasius for a description of the Venus of Apelles.—*Vide* Plutarch, *Bellone an pace clariores Athenienses*.— KEARNEY.]

the House of Commons equal to *the law of the land*?' WILKES (at once perceiving the application): 'God forbid, sir!' To hear what had been treated with such violence in *The False Alarm*, now turned into pleasant repartee, was extremely agreeable. Johnson went on: 'Locke observes well, that a prohibition to export the current coin is impolitic; for when the balance of trade happens to be against a state, the current coin *must* be exported.'

Mr. Beauclerk's great library was this season 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. JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, 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 them 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.'

Mr. Wilkes said to me, loud enough for Dr. Johnson to hear, 'Dr. Johnson should make me a present of his *Lives of the Poets*, as I am a poor patriot, who cannot afford to buy them.' Johnson seemed to take no notice of this hint; but in a little while he called to Mr. Dilly, 'Pray, sir, be so good as to send a set

of my *Lives* to Mr. Wilkes, with my compliments.' This was accordingly done; and Mr. Wilkes paid Dr. Johnson a visit, was courteously received, and sat with him a long time.

The company gradually dropped away. Mr. Dilly himself was called down-stairs upon business; I left the room for some time; when I returned, I was struck with observing Dr. Samuel Johnson and John Wilkes, Esq., literally *tête-à-tête*; for they were reclined upon their chairs, with their heads leaning almost close to each other, and talking earnestly, in a kind of confidential whisper, of the personal quarrel between George the Second and the King of Prussia. Such a scene of perfectly easy sociality between two such opponents in the war of political controversy, as that which I now beheld, would have been an excellent subject for a picture. It presented to my mind the happy days which are foretold in Scripture, when the lion shall lie down with the kid.[1]

After this day there was another pretty long interval, during which Dr. Johnson and I did not meet. When I mentioned it to him with regret, he was pleased to say, 'Then, sir, let us live double.'

About this time it was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and ingenious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were dominated *Blue-stocking Clubs*; the origin of which title being little known, it may be

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[1] When I mentioned this to the Bishop of Killaloe, 'With the *goat*,' said his Lordship. Such, however, was the engaging politeness and pleasantry of Mr. Wilkes, and such the social good-humour of the Bishop, that when they dined together at Mr. Dilly's, where I also was, they were mutually agreeable.

worth while to relate it. One of the most eminent members of those societies, when they first commenced, was Mr. Stillingfleet,[1] whose dress was remarkably grave, and in particular it was observed that he wore blue stockings. Such was the excellence of his conversation, that his absence was felt as so great a loss, that it used to be said, 'We can do nothing without the *blue-stockings*'; and thus by degrees the title was established. Miss Hannah More has admirably described a *blue-stocking club* in her *Bas Bleu*, a poem in which many of the persons who were most conspicuous there are mentioned.

Johnson was prevailed with to come sometimes into these circles, and did not think himself too grave even for the lively Miss Monckton (now Countess of Cork), who used to have the finest *bit of blue* at the house of her mother, Lady Galway. Her vivacity enchanted the sage, and they used to talk together with all imaginable ease. A singular instance happened one evening, when she insisted that some of Sterne's writings were very pathetic. Johnson bluntly denied it. 'I am sure (said she) they have affected *me*.' 'Why (said Johnson, smiling, and rolling himself about), that is, because, dearest, you're a dunce.' When she some time afterwards mentioned this to him, he said with equal truth and politeness, 'Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it.'

Another evening, Johnson's kind indulgence towards me had a pretty difficult trial. I had dined at the Duke of Montrose's with a very agreeable party, and his Grace, according to his usual custom, had cir-

[1] Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, author of tracts relating to natural history, etc.

culated the bottle very freely. Lord Graham and I went together to Miss Monckton's, where I certainly was in extraordinary spirits, and above all fear or awe. In the midst of a great number of persons of the first rank, amongst whom I recollect with confusion, a noble lady of the most stately decorum, I placed myself next to Johnson, and thinking myself now fully his match, talked to him in a loud and boisterous manner, desirous to let the company know how I could contend with *Ajax*. I particularly remember pressing him upon the value of the pleasures of the imagination, and as an illustration of my argument, asking him, 'What, sir, supposing I were to fancy that the —— (naming the most charming Duchess in his Majesty's dominions) were in love with me, should I not be very happy?' My friend, with much address, evaded my interrogatories, and kept me as quiet as possible; but it may easily be conceived how he must have felt.[1]

[1] Next day I endeavoured to give what had happened the most ingenious turn I could, by the following verses:

TO THE HONOURABLE MISS MONCKTON

Not that with th' excellent Montrose
  I had the happiness to dine:
Not that I late from table rose;
  From Graham's wit, from generous wine:
It was not these alone which led
  On sacred manners to encroach;
And made me feel what most I dread,
  Johnson's just frown, and self-reproach:
But when I enter'd, not abash'd,
  From your bright eyes were shot such rays,
At once intoxication flash'd,
  And all my frame was in a blaze!
But not a brilliant blaze I own,
  Of the dull smoke I 'm yet ashamed;
I was a dreary ruin grown,
  And not enlighten'd, though inflamed.
Victim at once to wine and love,
  I hope, Maria, you 'll forgive;
While I invoke the powers above,
  That henceforth I may wiser live.'

The lady was generously forgiving, returned me an obliging answer,

However, when a few days afterwards I waited upon him and made an apology, he behaved with the most friendly gentleness.

While I remained in London this year, Johnson and I dined together at several places. I recollect a placid day at Dr. Butter's, who had now removed from Derby to Lower Grosvenor Street, London: but of his conversation on that and other occasions during this period, I neglected to keep any regular record, and shall therefore insert here some miscellaneous articles which I find in my Johnsonian notes.

His disorderly habits, when 'making provision for the day that was passing over him,' appear from the following anecdote, communicated to me by Mr. John Nichols: 'In the year 1763, a young bookseller, who was an apprentice to Mr. Whiston, waited on him with a subscription to his *Shakespeare*; and observing that the Doctor made no entry in any book of the subscriber's name, ventured diffidently to ask whether he would please to have the gentleman's address, that it might be properly inserted in the printed list of subscribers. "*I shall print no List of Subscribers*," said Johnson, with great abruptness; but almost immediately recollecting himself, added very complacently, "Sir, I have two very cogent reasons for not printing any list of subscribers;—one, that I have lost all the names,—the other, that I have spent all the money."'

Johnson could not brook appearing to be worsted in argument, even when he had taken the wrong side, to show the force and dexterity of his talents. When,

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and I thus obtained an *Act of Oblivion*, and took care never to offend again.

therefore, he perceived that his opponent gained ground, he had recourse to some sudden mode of robust sophistry. Once when I was pressing upon him with visible advantage, he stopped me thus: 'My dear Boswell, let's have no more of this; you'll make nothing of it. I'd rather have you whistle a Scotch tune.'

Care, however, must be taken to distinguish between Johnson when he 'talked for victory,' and Johnson when he had no desire but to inform and illustrate. 'One of Johnson's principal talents (says an eminent friend of his[1]) was shown in maintaining the wrong side of an argument, and in a splendid perversion of the truth. If you could contrive to have his fair opinion on a subject, and without any bias from personal prejudice, or from a wish to be victorious in argument, it was wisdom itself, not only convincing, but overpowering.'

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

He disliked much all speculative desponding considerations, which tended to discourage men from diligence and exertion. He was in this like Dr. Shaw,

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[1] [The late Right Hon. William Gerrard Hamilton.—M.]

the great traveller, who, Mr. Daines Barrington told me, used to say, 'I hate a *cui bono* man.' Upon being asked by a friend what he should think of a man who was apt to say *non est tanti*;—'That he's a stupid fellow, sir (answered Johnson). What would these *tanti* men be doing the while?' When I, in a low-spirited fit, was talking to him with indifference of the pursuits which generally engage us in a course of action, and inquiring a *reason* for taking so much trouble; 'Sir (said he, in an animated tone), it is driving on the system of life.'

He told me that he was glad that I had, by General Oglethorpe's means, become acquainted with Dr. Shebbeare. Indeed 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[1] were frequently named together, as having in former reigns had no predilection for the family of Hanover. The author of the celebrated *Heroic 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 me, to read it to him from beginning to end, and did not refuse his praise to its execution.

Goldsmith could sometimes take adventurous liber-

[1] I recollect a ludicrous paragraph in the newspapers, that the King had pensioned both a *He*-bear and a *She*-bear.

ties with him, and escape unpunished. Beauclerk told me that when Goldsmith 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, 'Ay, ay, this may be nothing to you, who can now shelter yourself behind the corner of a pension'; and Johnson bore this with good humour.

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. My friend was of opinion that when a man of rank appeared in that character, he deserved to have his merit handsomely allowed.[1] In this I think he was

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[1] Men of rank and fortune, however, should be pretty well assured of having a real claim to the approbation of the public, as writers, before they venture to stand forth. Dryden, in his preface to *All for Love*, thus expresses himself:

'Men of pleasant conversation (at least esteemed so), and endued with a trifling kind of fancy, perhaps helped out by a smattering of Latin, are ambitious to distinguish themselves from the herd of gentlemen, by their poetry:

> 'Rarus enim ferme sensus communis in illa
> Fortuna.' —Juv. *Sat.* viii. 73.

And is not this a wretched affectation, not to be contented with what fortune has done for them, and sit down quietly with their estates, but they must call their wits in question, and needlessly expose their nakedness to public view? Not considering that they are not to expect the same approbation from sober men, which they have found from their flatterers after the third bottle. If a little glittering in discourse has passed them on us for witty men, where was the necessity of undeceiving the world? Would a man, who has an ill title to an estate, but yet is in possession of it, would he bring it out of his own accord to be tried at Westminster? We who write, if we want the talents, yet have the excuse that we do it for a poor subsistence; but what can be urged in their defence, who, not having the vocation of poverty to scribble, out of mere wantonness take pains to make themselves ridiculous? Horace was certainly in the right where he said, 'That no man is satisfied with his own condition.' A poet is not pleased because he is not rich; and the rich are discontented because the poets will not admit them of their number.

more liberal than Mr. William Whitehead, in his *Elegy to Lord Villiers*, in which, under the pretext of 'superior toils,' demanding all their care, he discovers a jealousy of the great paying their court to the Muses:

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

Johnson had called twice on the Bishop of Killaloe before his Lordship set out for Ireland, having missed him the first time. He said, 'It would have hung heavy on my heart if I had not seen him. No man ever paid more attention to another than he has done to me;[1] and I have neglected him, not wilfully, but from being otherwise occupied. Always, sir, set a high value on spontaneous kindness. He whose inclination prompts him to cultivate your friendship of his own accord, will love you more than one whom you have been at pains to attach to you.'

Johnson told me that he was once much pleased

[1] This gave me very great pleasure, for there had been once a pretty smart altercation between Dr. Barnard and him, upon a question, whether a man could improve himself after the age of forty-five; when Johnson, in a hasty humour, expressed himself in a manner not quite civil. Dr. Barnard made it the subject of a copy of pleasant verses, in which he supposed himself to learn different perfections from different men. They concluded with delicate irony:

> 'Johnson shall teach me how to place
> In fairest light each borrow'd grace;
> From him I 'll learn to write:
> Copy his clear familiar style,
> And by the roughness of his file
> Grow, like *himself*, *polite*.'

I know not whether Johnson ever saw the poem, but I had occasion to find that as Dr. Barnard and he knew each other better, their mutual regard increased.

to find that a carpenter, who lived near him, was very ready to show him some things in his business which he wished to see: 'It was paying (said he) respect to literature.'

I asked him if he was not dissatisfied with having so small a share of wealth, and none of those distinctions in the state which are the objects of ambition. He had only a pension of three hundred a year. Why was he not in such circumstances as to keep his coach? Why had he not some considerable office? JOHNSON: 'Sir, I have never complained of the world; nor do I think that I have reason to complain. It is rather to be wondered at that I have so much. My pension is more out of the usual course of things than any instance that I have known. Here, sir, was a man avowedly no friend to Government at the time, who got a pension without asking for it. I never courted the great; they sent for me; but I think they now give me up. They are satisfied: they have seen enough of me.' Upon my observing that I could not believe this, for they must certainly be highly pleased by his conversation; conscious of his own superiority, he answered, 'No, sir; great lords and great ladies don't love to have their mouths stopped.' This was very expressive of the effect which the force of his understanding and brilliancy of his fancy could not but produce; and, to be sure, they must have found themselves strangely diminished in his company. When I warmly declared how happy I was at all times to hear him;—'Yes, sir (said he); but if you were Lord Chancellor, it would not be so: you would then consider your own dignity.'

There was much truth and knowledge of human

nature in this remark. But certainly one should think that in whatever elevated state of life a man who *knew* the value of the conversation of Johnson might be placed, though he might prudently avoid a situation in which he might appear lessened by comparison; yet he would frequently gratify himself in private with the participation of the rich intellectual entertainment which Johnson could furnish. Strange, however, it is to consider how few of the great sought his society; so that if one were disposed to take occasion for satire on that account, very conspicuous objects present themselves. His noble friend, Lord Elibank, well observed that if a great man procured an interview with Johnson, and did not wish to see him more, it showed a mere idle curiosity, and a wretched want of relish for extraordinary powers of mind. Mrs. Thrale, justly and wittily, accounted for such conduct by saying that Johnson's conversation was by much too strong for a person accustomed to obsequiousness and flattery; it was *mustard in a young child's mouth!*

One day, when I told him that I was a zealous Tory, but not enough 'according to knowledge,' and should be obliged to him for 'a reason,' he was so candid, and expressed himself so well, that I begged of him to repeat what he had said, and I wrote down as follows:

OF TORY AND WHIG

'A wise Tory and a wise Whig, I believe, will agree. Their principles are the same, though their modes of thinking are different. A high Tory makes government unintelligible: it is lost in the clouds. A violent Whig makes it impracticable: he is for allowing so much liberty to every man, that there is not power enough to govern any man. The prejudice of the

Tory is for establishment; the prejudice of the Whig is for innovation. A Tory does not wish to give more real power to Government, but that Government should have more reverence. Then they differ as to the Church. The Tory is not for giving more legal power to the Clergy, but wishes they should have a considerable influence founded upon the opinion of mankind: the Whig is for limiting and watching them with a narrow jealousy.'

TO MR. PERKINS

'SIR,—However often I have seen you I have hitherto forgotten the note, but I have now sent it; with my good wishes for the prosperity of you and your partner,[1] of whom, from our short conversation, I could not judge otherwise than favourably.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*June* 2, 1781.'

On Saturday, June 2, I set out for Scotland, and had promised to pay a visit, in my way, as I sometimes did, at Southill, in Bedfordshire, at the hospitable mansion of Squire Dilly, the elder brother of my worthy friends, the booksellers, in the Poultry. Dr. Johnson agreed to be of the party this year, with Mr. Charles Dilly and me, and to go and see Lord Bute's seat at Luton Hoe. He talked little to us in the carriage, being chiefly occupied in reading Dr. Watson's[2] second volume of *Chemical Essays*, which

[1] Mr. Barclay, a descendant of Robert Barclay of Ury, the celebrated apologist of the people called Quakers, and remarkable for maintaining the principles of his venerable progenitor, with as much of the elegance of modern manners as is consistent with primitive simplicity.

[2] Now Bishop of Llandaff, one of the *poorest* bishoprics in this kingdom. His Lordship has written with much zeal to show the propriety of *equalising* the revenues of bishops. He has informed us that he has burned all his chemical papers. The friends of our excellent constitution, now assailed on every side by innovators and levellers, would have less regretted the suppression of some of his Lordship's other writings.

he liked very well, and his own *Prince of Abyssinia*, on which he seemed to be intensely fixed; having told us, that he had not looked at it since it was first published. I happened to take it out of my pocket this day, and he seized upon it with avidity. He pointed out to me the following remarkable passage: 'By what means (said the prince) are the Europeans thus powerful; or why, since they can so easily visit Asia and Africa for trade or conquest, cannot the Asiatics and Africans invade their coasts, plant colonies in their ports, and give laws to their natural princes? The same wind that carried them back would bring us thither.' 'They are more powerful, sir, than we (answered Imlac), because they are wiser. Knowledge will always predominate over ignorance, as man governs the other animals. But why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reason can be given, but the unsearchable will of the Supreme Being.' He said, 'This, sir, no man can explain otherwise.'

We stopped at Welwin, where I wished much to see, in company with Johnson, the residence of the author of *Night Thoughts*, which was then possessed by his son, Mr. Young. Here some address was requisite, for I was not acquainted with Mr. Young, and had I proposed to Dr. Johnson that we should send to him he would have checked my wish, and perhaps been offended. I therefore concerted with Mr. Dilly that I should steal away from Dr. Johnson and him, and try what reception I could procure from Mr. Young; if unfavourable, nothing was to be said; but if agreeable, I should return and notify it to them. I hastened to Mr. Young's, found he was at home, sent in word that a gentleman desired to wait

upon him, and was shown into a parlour, where he and a young lady, his daughter, were sitting. He appeared to be a plain, civil, country gentleman; and when I begged pardon for presuming to trouble him, but that I wished much to see his place, if he would give me leave; he behaved very courteously, and answered, 'By all means, sir; we are just going to drink tea; will you sit down?' I thanked him, but said that Dr. Johnson had come with me from London, and I must return to the inn to drink tea with him; that my name was Boswell; I had travelled with him in the Hebrides. 'Sir (said he), I should think it a great honour to see Dr. Johnson here. Will you allow me to send for him?' Availing myself of this opening, I said that 'I would go myself and bring him, when he had drunk tea; he knew nothing of my calling here.' Having been thus successful, I hastened back to the inn, and informed Dr. Johnson that 'Mr. Young, son of Dr. Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*, whom I had just left, desired to have the honour of seeing him at the house where his father lived.' Dr. Johnson luckily made no inquiry how this invitation had arisen, but agreed to go, and when we entered Mr. Young's parlour, he addressed him with a very polite bow, 'Sir, I had a curiosity to come and see this place. I had the honour to know that great man, your father.' We went into the garden, where we found a gravel walk, on each side of which was a row of trees, planted by Dr. Young, which formed a handsome Gothic arch. Dr. Johnson called it a fine grove. I beheld it with reverence.

We sat some time in the summer-house, on the outside wall of which was inscribed, '*Ambulantes in*

horto audiebant vocem Dei'; and in reference to a brook by which it is situated, '*Vivendi recte qui prorogat horam,*' etc. I said to Mr. Young that I had been told his father was cheerful. 'Sir (said he), he was too well-bred a man not to be cheerful in company; but he was gloomy when alone. He never was cheerful after my mother's death, and he had met with many disappointments.' Dr. Johnson observed to me afterward, 'That this was no favourable account of Dr. Young; for it is not becoming in a man to have so little acquiescence in the ways of Providence as to be gloomy because he has not obtained as much preferment as he expected; nor to continue gloomy for the loss of his wife. Grief has its time.' The last part of this censure was theoretically made. Practically, we know that grief for the loss of a wife may be continued very long, in proportion as affection has been sincere. No man knew this better than Dr. Johnson.

We went into the church, and looked at the monument erected by Mr. Young to his father. Mr. Young mentioned an anecdote, that his father had received several thousand pounds of subscription-money for his *Universal Passion*, but had lost it in the South Sea.[1] Dr. Johnson thought this must be a mistake; for he had never seen a subscription-book.

Upon the road we talked of the uncertainty of profit with which authors and booksellers engage in the publication of literary works. JOHNSON: 'My judgment I have found is no certain rule as to the

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[1] [This assertion is disproved by a comparison of dates. The first four satires of Young were published in 1725. The South Sea scheme (which appears to be meant) was in 1720.—M.]

sale of a book.' BOSWELL: 'Pray, sir, have you been much plagued with authors sending you their works to revise?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; I have been thought a sour, surly fellow.' BOSWELL: 'Very lucky for you, sir,—in that respect.' I must, however, observe that notwithstanding what he now said, which he no doubt imagined at the time to be the fact, there was perhaps no man who more frequently yielded to the solicitations even of very obscure authors, to read their manuscripts, or more liberally assisted them with advice and correction.

He found himself very happy at Squire Dilly's, where there is always abundance of excellent fare, and hearty welcome.

On Sunday, June 3, we all went to Southill Church, which is very near to Mr. Dilly's house. It being the first Sunday of the month, the holy sacrament was administered, and I stayed to partake of it. When I came afterwards into Dr. Johnson's room, he 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 I 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 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, or what is the same thing in effect, to *suppose* that he is not 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 tiger. But, sir, no man believes himself to be impelled irresistibly; we know that he who says he believes it, lies. Favourable impressions at particular moments as to the state 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 castaway.'

The opinion of a learned bishop of our acquaintance, as to there being merit in religious faith, being mentioned;—JOHNSON: '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.'

I talked to him of original sin,[1] in consequence of the fall of man, and of the atonement made by our Saviour. After some conversation, which he desired me to remember, he, at my request, dictated to me as follows:

'With respect to original sin, the inquiry 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

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[1] 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 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.'

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 irreconcilable 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 shows 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 inefficacy 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 foreshown; and the moral law, by precepts of greater purity and higher exaltation.'

[Here he said, 'God bless you with it.' I acknowledged myself much obliged to him; but I begged that he would go on as to the propitiation being the chief object of our most holy faith. He then dictated this one other paragraph :]

'The peculiar doctrine of Christianity is that of a universal sacrifice and perpetual propitiation. Other prophets only

proclaimed the will and the threatenings of God. Christ satisfied his justice.'

The Reverend Mr. Palmer,[1] Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge, dined with us. He expressed a wish that a better provision were made for parish clerks. JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, a parish clerk should be a man who is able to make a will, or write a letter for anybody in the parish.'

I mentioned Lord Monboddo's notion that the ancient Egyptians, with all their learning, and all their arts, were not only black, but woolly-haired. Mr. Palmer asked how did it appear upon examining the mummies? Dr. Johnson approved of this test.

Although upon most occasions I never heard a more strenuous advocate for the advantages of wealth than Dr. Johnson, he this day, I know not from what caprice, took the other side. 'I have not observed

[1] This unfortunate person, whose full name was Thomas Fysche Palmer, afterwards went to Dundee, in Scotland, where he officiated as minister to a congregation of the sect who call themselves *Unitarians*, from a notion that they distinctively worship one God, because they *deny* the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. They do not advert that the great body of the Christian Church in maintaining that mystery, maintain also the *Unity* of the Godhead: the 'Trinity in Unity!—three persons and one God.' The Church humbly adores the Divinity as exhibited in the Holy Scriptures. The Unitarian sect vainly presumes to comprehend and define the Almighty. Mr. Palmer having heated his mind with political speculations, became so much dissatisfied with our excellent Constitution, as to compose, publish, and circulate writings, which were found to be so seditious and dangerous, that upon being found guilty by a jury, the Court of Justiciary in Scotland sentenced him to transportation for fourteen [seven] years. A loud clamour against this sentence was made by some members of both Houses of Parliament; but both Houses approved of it by a great majority; and he was conveyed to the settlement for convicts in New South Wales.

[Mr. T. F. Palmer was of Queens' College, in Cambridge, where he took the degree of Master of Arts in 1772, and that of S. T. B. in 1781. He died on his return from Botany Bay in the year 1803.—M.]

[The visitor to Edinburgh may now notice the column in the burying-ground below the Calton Hill, raised to the memory of Muir, Palmer, and the other prisoners who were sent across the seas for advocating the abolition of rotten boroughs.—A. B.]

(said he) that men of very large fortunes enjoy anything extraordinary that makes happiness. What has the Duke of Bedford? What has the Duke of Devon shire? The only great instance that I have ever known of the enjoyment of wealth was that of Jamaica Dawkins, who, going to visit Palmyra, and hearing that the way was infested by robbers, hired a troop of Turkish horse to guard him.'

Dr. Gibbons, the dissenting minister, being mentioned, he said, 'I took to Dr. Gibbons.' And addressing himself to Mr. Charles Dilly, added: 'I shall be glad to see him. Tell him if he'll call on me, and dawdle over a dish of tea in an afternoon, I shall take it kind.'[1]

The Reverend Mr. Smith, Vicar of Southill, a very respectable man, with a very agreeable family, sent an invitation to us to drink tea. I remarked Dr. Johnson's very respectful politeness. Though always fond of changing the scene, he said, 'We must have Mr. Dilly's leave. We cannot go from your house, sir, without your permission.' We all went, and were well satisfied with our visit. I however remember nothing particular, except a nice distinction which Dr. Johnson made with respect to the power of memory, maintaining that forgetfulness was a man's own fault. 'To remember and to recollect (said he) are different things. A man has not the power to recollect what is not in his mind; but when a thing is in his mind he may remember it.'

The remark was occasioned by my leaning back on a chair, which a little before I had perceived to be

[1] [This is an excellent example of Johnson's colloquial manner.—A. B.]

broken, and pleading forgetfulness as an excuse; 'Sir (said he), its being broken was certainly in your mind.'

When I observed that a householder was in general very timorous;—JOHNSON: 'No wonder, sir; he is afraid of being shot getting *into* a house, or hanged when he has got *out* of it.'

He told us that he had in one day written six sheets of a translation from the French; adding, 'I should be glad to see it now. I wish that I had copies of all the pamphlets written against me, as it is said Pope had. Had I known that I should make so much noise in the world, I should have been at pains to collect them. I believe there is hardly a day in which there is not something about me in the newspapers.'

On Monday, June 4, we all went to Luton Hoe, to see Lord Bute's magnificent seat, for which I had obtained a ticket. As we entered the park I talked in a high style of my old friendship with Lord Mountstuart, and said, 'I shall probably be much at this place.' The sage, aware of human vicissitudes, gently checked me: 'Don't you be too sure of that.' He made two or three peculiar observations; as when shown the botanical garden, 'Is not *every* garden a botanical garden?' When told that there was a shrubbery to the extent of several miles: 'That is making a very foolish use of the ground; a little of it is very well.' When it was proposed that we should walk on the pleasure-ground: 'Don't let us fatigue ourselves. Why should we walk there? Here's a fine tree; let's get to the top of it.' But upon the whole, he was very much pleased. He said, 'This is one of the places I do not regret having come to see. It is a very

stately place, indeed; in the house magnificence is not sacrificed to convenience, nor convenience to magnificence. The library is very splendid; the dignity of the rooms is very great; and the quantity of pictures is beyond expectation, beyond hope.'

It happened, without any previous concert, that we visited the seat of Lord Bute upon the King's birthday; we dined and drank his Majesty's health at an inn in the village of Luton.

In the evening I put him in mind of his promise to favour me with a copy of his celebrated Letter to the Earl of Chesterfield, and he was at last pleased to comply with this earnest request, by dictating it to me from his memory; for he believed that he himself had no copy. There was an animated glow in his countenance while he thus recalled his high-minded indignation.

He laughed heartily at a ludicrous action in the Court of Session in which I was counsel. The Society of *Procurators*, or Attorneys, entitled to practise in the inferior courts at Edinburgh, had obtained a royal charter in which they had taken care to have their ancient designation of *Procurators* changed into that of *Solicitors*, from a notion, as they supposed, that it was more *genteel*; and this new title they displayed by public advertisement for a *General Meeting* at their Hall.

It has been said that the Scottish nation is not distinguished for humour; and, indeed, what happened on this occasion may in some degree justify the remark; for although this society had contrived to make themselves a very prominent object for the ridicule of such as might stoop to it, the only joke to which it

gave rise, was the following paragraph sent to the newspaper called the *Caledonian Mercury*:

'A correspondent informs us that the Worshipful Society of *Chaldeans*, *Cadies*, or *Running Stationers* of this city are resolved, in imitation, and encouraged by the singular success of their brethren, of an *equally respectable* Society, to apply for a Charter of their Privileges, particularly of the sole privilege of PROCURING, in the most extensive sense of the word, exclusive of chairmen, porters, penny-post men, and other *inferior* ranks; their brethren the R—Y—L S—L—RS, *alias* P—C—RS, *before the* Inferior Courts of this City, always excepted.

'Should the Worshipful Society be successful, they are further resolved not to be *puffed up* thereby, but to demean themselves with more equanimity and decency than their *R—y—l*, *learned*, and *very modest* brethren above-mentioned have done, upon their late dignification and exaltation.'

A majority of the members of the society prosecuted Mr. Robertson, the publisher of the paper, for damages; and the first judgment of the whole court very wisely dismissed the action: *Solventur risu tabulæ, tu missus abibis.* But a new trial or review was granted upon a petition, according to the forms in Scotland. This petition I was engaged to answer, and Dr. Johnson, with great alacrity, furnished me this evening with what follows:

'All injury is either of the person, the fortune, or the fame. Now it is a certain thing, it is proverbially known, that *a jest breaks no bones.* They never had gained half-a-crown less in the whole profession since this mischievous paragraph has appeared; and, as to their reputation, What is their reputation but an instrument of getting money? If, therefore, they have lost no money, the question upon reputation may be answered by a very old position,—*De minimis non curat Prætor.*

'Whether there was or was not an *animus injuriandi*, is not worth inquiring, if no *injuria* can be proved. But the truth is, there was no *animus injuriandi*. It was only an *animus irritandi*,[1] which happening to be exercised upon a *genus irritabile* produced unexpected violence of resentment. Their irritability arose only from an opinion of their own importance, and their delight in their new exaltation. What might have been borne by a *Procurator* could not be borne by a *Solicitor*. Your Lordships well know that *honores mutant mores*. Titles and dignities play strongly on the fancy. As a madman is apt to think himself grown suddenly great, so he that grows suddenly great is apt to borrow a little from the madman. To co-operate with their resentment would be to promote their frenzy: nor is it possible to guess to what they might proceed, if to the new title of Solicitor should be added the elation of victory and triumph.

'We consider your Lordships as the protectors of our rights, and the guardians of our virtues; but believe it not included in your high office that you should flatter our vices, or solace our vanity; and, as vanity only dictates this prosecution, it is humbly hoped your Lordships will dismiss it.

'If every attempt, however light or ludicrous, to lessen another's reputation is to be punished by a judicial sentence, what punishment can be sufficiently severe for him who attempts to diminish the reputation of the Supreme Court of Justice, by reclaiming upon a cause already determined, without any change in the state of the question? Does it not imply hopes that the judges will change their opinion? Is not uncertainty and inconstancy in the highest degree disreputable to a Court? Does it not suppose that the former judgment was temerarious or negligent? Does it not lessen the confidence of the public? Will it not be said that *jus est aut incognitum, aut vagum*? and will not the consequence be drawn *misera est servitus*? Will not the rules of action be obscure? Will not he who knows himself wrong to-day hope that the Courts of Justice will think him right to-morrow? Surely, my Lords, these are attempts of dangerous tendency, which the Solicitors, as men versed in the law, should have

[1] Mr. Robertson altered this word to *jocandi*, he having found in Blackstone that to *irritate* is actionable.

foreseen and avoided. It was natural for an ignorant printer to appeal from the Lord Ordinary; but from lawyers, the descendants of lawyers, who have practised for three hundred years, and have now raised themselves to a higher denomination, it might be expected that they should know the reverence due to a judicial determination; and having been once dismissed should sit down in silence.'

I am ashamed to mention, that the court, by a plurality of voices, without having a single additional circumstance before them, reversed their own judgment, made a serious matter of this dull and foolish joke, and adjudged Mr. Robertson to pay to the society five pounds (sterling money) and costs of suit. The decision will seem strange to English lawyers.

On Tuesday, June 5, Johnson was to return to London. He was very pleasant at breakfast; I mentioned a friend of mine having resolved never to marry a pretty woman. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is a very foolish resolution to resolve not to marry a pretty woman. Beauty is of itself very estimable. No, sir, I would prefer a pretty woman, unless there are objections to her. A pretty woman may be foolish; a pretty woman may be wicked; a pretty woman may not like me. But there is no such danger in marrying a pretty woman as is apprehended; she will not be persecuted if she does not invite persecution. A pretty woman, if she has a mind to be wicked, can find a readier way than another; and that is all.'

I accompanied him in Mr. Dilly's chaise to Shefford, where, talking of Lord Bute's never going to Scotland, he said, 'As an Englishman, I should wish all the Scotch gentlemen should be educated in England;

Scotland would become a province; they would spend all their rents in England.' This is a subject of much consequence, and much delicacy. The advantage of an English education is unquestionably very great to Scotch gentlemen of talents and ambition; and regular visits to Scotland, and perhaps other means, might be effectually used to prevent them from being totally estranged from their native country, any more than a Cumberland or Northumberland gentleman, who has been educated in the south of England. I own, indeed, that it is no small misfortune for Scotch gentlemen who have neither talents nor ambition, to be educated in England, where they may be perhaps distinguished only by a nickname, lavish their fortune in giving expensive entertainments to those who laugh at them, and saunter about as mere idle, insignificant hangers-on even upon the foolish great; when, if they had been judiciously brought up at home, they might have been comfortable and creditable members of society.

At Shefford I had another affectionate parting from my revered friend, who was taken up by the Bedford coach and carried to the metropolis. I went with Messieurs Dilly to see some friends at Bedford; dined with the officers of the militia of the county; and next day proceeded on my journey.

TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—How welcome your account of yourself and your invitation to your new house was to me I need not tell you, who consider our friendship not only as formed by choice, but as matured by time. We have been now long enough acquainted to have many images in common, and

therefore to have a source of conversation which neither the learning nor the wit of a new companion can supply.

'My *Lives* are now published; and if you will tell me whither I shall send them, that they may come to you, I will take care that you shall not be without them.

'You will, perhaps, be glad to hear that Mrs. Thrale is disencumbered of her brewhouse; and that it seemed to the purchaser so far from an evil that he was content to give for it a hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds. Is the nation ruined?

'Please to make my respectful compliments to Lady Rothes, and keep me in the memory of all the little dear family, particularly Mrs. Jane.—I am, sir, your affectionate humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, June* 16, 1781.'

Johnson's charity to the poor was uniform and extensive, both from inclination and principle. He not only bestowed liberally out of his own purse, but what is more difficult as well as rare, would beg from others, when he had proper objects in view. This he did judiciously as well as humanely. Mr. Philip Metcalfe tells me, that when he has asked him for some money for persons in distress, and Mr. Metcalfe has offered what Johnson thought too much, he insisted on taking less, saying, 'No, no, sir; we must not *pamper* them.'

I am indebted to Mr. Malone, one of Sir Joshua Reynolds' executors, for the following note, which was found among his papers after his death, and which, we may presume, his unaffected modesty prevented him from communicating to me with the other letters from Dr. Johnson with which he was pleased to furnish me However slight in itself, as it does honour to that illustrious painter, and most amiable man, I am happy to introduce it.

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'DEAR SIR,—It was not before yesterday that I received your splendid benefaction. To a hand so liberal in distributing I hope nobody will envy the power of acquiring.—I am, dear sir, your obliged and most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*June* 23, 1781.'

TO THOMAS ASTLE, ESQ.

'SIR,—I am ashamed that you have been forced to call so often for your books, but it has been no fault on either side. They have never been out of my hands, nor have I ever been at home without seeing you; for to see a man so skilful in the antiquities of my country is an opportunity of improvement not willingly to be missed.

Your notes on Alfred[1] appear to me very judicious and accurate, but they are too few. Many things familiar to you are unknown to me and to most others: and you must not think too favourably of your readers; by supposing them knowing, you will leave them ignorant. Measure of land, and value of money, it is of great importance to state with care. Had the Saxons any gold coin?

'I have much curiosity after the manners and transactions of the middle ages, but have wanted either diligence or opportunity, or both. You, sir, have great opportunities, and I wish you both diligence and success.—I am, sir, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 17, 1781.'

The following curious anecdote I insert in Dr. Burney's own words: 'Dr. Burney related to Dr. Johnson the partiality which his writings had excited in a friend of Dr. Burney's, the late Mr. Bewley, well known in Norfolk by the name of the *Philosopher of*

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[1] The will of King Alfred, alluded to in this letter, from the original Saxon in the library of Mr. Astle, has been printed at the expense of the University of Oxford.

Massingham: who, from the *Ramblers* and Plan of his *Dictionary*, and long before the author's fame was established by the *Dictionary* itself, or any other work, had conceived such a reverence for him, that he earnestly begged Dr. Burney to give him the cover of his first letter he had received from him, as a relic of so estimable a writer. This was in 1755. In 1760, when Dr. Burney visited Dr. Johnson at the Temple in London, where he had then chambers, he happened to arrive there before he was up; and being shown into the room where he was to breakfast, finding himself alone, he examined the contents of the apartment, to try whether he could undiscovered steal anything to send to his friend Bewley, as another relic of the admirable Dr. Johnson. But finding nothing better to his purpose, he cut some bristles off his hearth-broom, and enclosed them in a letter to his country enthusiast, who received them with due reverence. The Doctor was so sensible of the honour done him by a man of genius and science, to whom he was an utter stranger, that he said to Dr. Burney, "Sir, there is no man possessed of the smallest portion of modesty, but must be flattered with the admiration of such a man. I'll give him a set of my *Lives*, if he will do me the honour to accept of them." In this he kept his word; and Dr. Burney had not only the pleasure of gratifying his friend with a present more worthy of his acceptance than the segment from the hearth-broom, but soon after introducing him to Dr. Johnson himself in Bolt Court, with whom he had the satisfaction of conversing a considerable time, not a fortnight before his death; which happened in St. Martin's Street, during his visit to Dr. Burney, in the

house where the great Sir Isaac Newton had lived and died before.'

In one of his little memorandum-books is the following minute:

'August 9, 3 P.M., ætat. 72, in the summer-house at Streatham.

'After innumerable resolutions formed and neglected, I have retired hither, to plan a life of greater diligence, in hope that I may yet be useful, and be daily better prepared to appear before my Creator and my Judge, from whose infinite mercy I humbly call for assistance and support.

'My purpose is,

'To pass eight hours every day in some serious employment.

'Having prayed, I purpose to employ the next six weeks upon the Italian language for my settled study.'

How venerably pious does he appear in these moments of solitude, and how spirited are his resolutions for the improvement of his mind, even in elegant literature, at a very advanced period of life, and when afflicted with many complaints.

In autumn he went to Oxford, Birmingham, Lichfield, and Ashbourne, for which very good reasons might be given in the conjectural yet positive manner of writers, who are proud to account for every event which they relate. He himself, however, says, 'The motives of my journey I hardly know; I omitted it last year, and am not willing to miss it again.'[1] But some good considerations arise, amongst which is the kindly recollection of Mr. Hector, surgeon of Birmingham. 'Hector is likewise an old friend, the only companion of my childhood that passed through the school with me. We have always loved one another;

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 201.

perhaps we may be made better by some serious conversation, of which however I have no distant hope.'

He says too, 'At Lichfield, my native place, I hope to show a good example by frequent attendance on public worship.'

My correspondence with him during the rest of this year was, I know not why, very scanty, and all on my side. I wrote him one letter to introduce Mr. Sinclair (now Sir John), the member for Caithness, to his acquaintance; and informed him in another, that my wife had again been affected with alarming symptoms of illness.

In 1782 his complaints increased, and the history of his life this year is little more than a mournful recital of the variations of his illness, in the midst of which, however, it will appear from his letters, that the powers of his mind were in no degree impaired.

JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'Dear Sir,—I sit down to answer your letter on the same day in which I received it, and am pleased that my first letter of the year is to you. No man ought to be at ease while he knows himself in the wrong; and I have not satisfied myself with my long silence. The letter relating to Mr. Sinclair, however, was, I believe, never brought.

'My health has been tottering this last year: and I can give no very laudable account of my time. I am always hoping to do better than I have ever hitherto done.

'My journey to Ashbourne and Staffordshire was not pleasant; for what enjoyment has a sick man visiting the sick?—Shall we ever have another frolic like our journey to the Hebrides?

'I hope that dear Mrs. Boswell will surmount her complaints; in losing her you will lose your anchor, and be

tossed, without stability, by the waves of life.[1] I wish both her and you very many years, and very happy.

'For some months past I have been so withdrawn from the world that I can send you nothing particular. All your friends, however, are well, and will be glad of your return to London.—I am, dear sir, yours most affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*January* 5, 1782.'

At a time when he was less able than he had once been to sustain a shock, he was suddenly deprived of Mr. Levett, which event he thus communicated to Dr. Lawrence:

'SIR,—Our old friend Mr. Levett, who was last night eminently cheerful, died this morning. The man who lay in the same room, hearing an uncommon noise, got up and tried to make him speak, but without effect. He then called Mr. Holder, the apothecary, who, though when he came he thought him dead, opened a vein, but could draw no blood. So has ended the long life of a very useful and very blameless man.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*January* 17, 1782.'

In one of his memorandum-books in my possession is the following entry:

'*January* 20, *Sunday*. Robert Levett was buried in the churchyard of Bridewell, between one and two in the afternoon. He died on Thursday 17, about seven in the morning, by an instantaneous death. He was an old and faithful friend; I have known him from about '46. *Commendavi.* May God have mercy on him. May he have mercy on me.'

Such was Johnson's affectionate regard for Levett[2]

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[1] The proof of this has been proved by sad experience. [Mrs. Boswell died June 4, 1789.—M.]

[2] See an account of him in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1785.

that he honoured his memory with the following pathetic verses:

> 'Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mine,
> As on we toil from day to day,
> By sudden blast or slow decline
> Our social comforts drop away.
>
> Well tried through many a varying year,
> See Levett to the grave descend;
> Officious, innocent, sincere,
> Of every friendless name the friend.
>
> Yet still he fills affection's eye,
> Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind,
> Nor, letter'd arrogance,[1] deny
> Thy praise to merit unrefined.
>
> When fainting Nature call'd for aid,
> And hov'ring Death prepared the blow,
> His vigorous remedy display'd
> The power of art without the show.
>
> In Misery's darkest caverns known,
> His ready help was ever nigh,
> Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
> And lonely Want retired to die.[2]
>
> No summons mock'd by chill delay,
> No petty gains disdain'd by pride;
> The modest wants of every day
> The toil of every day supplied.
>
> His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
> Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
> And sure the eternal Master found
> His single talent well employ'd.

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[1] In both editions of Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Dr. Johnson*, 'letter'd *ignorance*' is printed.

[2] Johnson repeated this line to me thus:

> 'And Labour steals an hour to die.'

But he afterwards altered it to the present reading.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
  Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm, his powers were bright,
  Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,
  No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
  And freed his soul the nearest way.'

In one of Johnson's registers of this year, there occurs the following curious passage: 'Jan. 20. The Ministry is dissolved. I prayed with Francis, and gave thanks.'[1] It has been the subject of discussion, whether there are two distinct particulars mentioned here? or that we are to understand the giving of thanks to be in consequence of the dissolution of the Ministry? In support of the last of these conjectures may be urged his mean opinion of that Ministry, which has frequently appeared in the course of this work; and it is strongly confirmed by what he said on the subject to Mr. Seward: 'I am glad the Ministry is removed. Such a bunch of imbecility never disgraced a country. If they sent a messenger into the city to take up a printer, the messenger was taken up instead of the printer, and committed by the sitting alderman. If they sent one army to the relief of another, the first army was defeated and taken before the second arrived. I will not say that what they did was always wrong; but it was always done at a wrong time.'

TO MRS. STRAHAN

'DEAR MADAM,—Mrs. Williams showed me your kind letter. This little habitation is now but a melancholy place, clouded

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 209.

with the gloom of disease and death. Of the four inmates, one has been suddenly snatched away: two are oppressed by very afflictive and dangerous illness; and I tried yesterday to gain some relief by a third bleeding, from a disorder which has for some time distressed me, and I think myself to-day much better.

'I am glad, dear madam, to hear that you are so far recovered as to go to Bath. Let me once more entreat you to stay till your health is not only obtained but confirmed. Your fortune is such as that no moderate expense deserves your care; and you have a husband, who, I believe, does not regard it. Stay, therefore, till you are quite well. I am, for my part, very much deserted; but complaint is useless. I hope God will bless you, and I desire you to form the same wish for me.—I am, dear madam, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*February* 4, 1782.'

TO EDMOND MALONE, ESQ.

'SIR,—I have for many weeks been so much out of order that I have gone out only in a coach to Mrs. Thrale's, where I can use all the freedom that sickness requires. Do not, therefore, take it amiss that I am not with you and Dr. Farmer. I hope hereafter to see you often.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Feb.* 27, 1782.'

TO THE SAME

'DEAR SIR,—I hope I grow better, and shall soon be able to enjoy the kindness of my friends. I think this wild adherence to Chatterton[1] more unaccountable than the

[1] [This note was in answer to one which accompanied one of the earliest pamphlets on the subject of Chatterton's forgery, entitled *Cursory Observations on the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley*, etc. Mr. Thomas Warton's very able *Inquiry* appeared about three months afterwards: and Mr. Tyrwhitt's admirable *Vindication of his Appendix* in the summer of the same year left the believers in his daring imposture nothing but 'the resolution to say again what had been said before.' Daring, however, as this fiction was, and wild as was the adherence to Chatterton, both were greatly exceeded in 1795 and the following year, by a still more audacious imposture, and the pertinacity of one of its adherents, who has immortalised his name by publishing

obstinate defence of Ossian. In Ossian there is a national pride, which may be forgiven, though it cannot be applauded. In Chatterton there is nothing but the resolution to say again what has once been said.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*March* 2, 1782.'

These short letters show the regard which Dr. Johnson entertained for Mr. Malone, who the more he is known is the more highly valued. It is much to be regretted that Johnson was prevented from sharing the elegant hospitality of that gentleman's table, at which he would in every respect have been fully gratified. Mr. Malone, who has so ably succeeded him as an editor of Shakespeare, has, in his Preface, done great and just honour to Johnson's memory.

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'DEAR MADAM,—I went away from Lichfield ill, and have had a troublesome time with my breath; for some weeks I have been disordered by a cold, of which I could not get the violence abated till I had been let blood three times. I have not, however, been so bad but that I could have written, and am sorry that I neglected it.

'My dwelling is but melancholy; both Williams and Desmoulins and myself are very sickly: Frank is not well; and poor Levett died in his bed the other day by a sudden stroke; I suppose not one minute passed between health and death; so uncertain are human things.

'Such is the appearance of the world about me. I hope your scenes are more cheerful. But whatever befalls us, though it is wise to be serious, it is useless and foolish, and perhaps sinful, to be gloomy. Let us, therefore, keep ourselves as easy as we can; though the loss of friends will be

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a bulky volume, of which the direct and manifest object was to prove the authenticity of certain papers attributed to Shakespeare, after the fabricator of the spurious trash had publicly acknowledged the imposture!—M.]

felt, and poor Levett had been a faithful adherent for thirty years.

'Forgive me, my dear love, the omission of writing; I hope to mend that and my other faults. Let me have your prayers.

'Make my compliments to Mrs. Cobb and Miss Adey and Mr. Pearson, and the whole company of my friends.—I am, my dear, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, March* 2, 1782.'

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER

'DEAR MADAM,—My last was but a dull letter, and I know not that this will be much more cheerful; I am, however, willing to write, because you are desirous to hear from me.

'My disorder has now begun its ninth week, for it is not yet over. I was last Thursday blooded for the fourth time, and have since found myself much relieved, but I am very tender, and easily hurt; so that since we parted I have had but little comfort, but I hope that the spring will recover me; and that in the summer I shall see Lichfield again, for I will not delay my visit another year to the end of autumn.

'I have, by advertising, found poor Mr. Levett's brothers in Yorkshire, who will take the little he has left, it is but little, yet it will be welcome, for I believe they are of very low condition.

'To be sick, and to see nothing but sickness and death, is but a gloomy state; but I hope better times, even in this world, will come, and whatever this world may withhold or give, we shall be happy in a better state. Pray for me, my dear Lucy.

'Make my compliments to Mrs. Cobb and Miss Adey, and my old friend Hetty Bailey, and to all the Lichfield ladies. —I am, dear madam, yours affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street,*
'*March* 19, 1782.'

On the day on which this letter was written, he thus feelingly mentions his respected friend, and

physician, Dr. Lawrence: 'Poor Lawrence has almost lost the sense of hearing; and I have lost the conversation of a learned, intelligent, and communicative companion, and a friend whom long familiarity has much endeared. Lawrence is one of the best men whom I have known. *Nostrum omnium miserere Deus.*'

It was Dr. Johnson's custom when he wrote to Dr. Lawrence concerning his own health, to use the Latin language. I have been favoured by Miss Lawrence with one of these letters as a specimen:

T. LAWRENCIO, *Medico, S.*

'*Novum frigus, nova tussis, nova spirandi difficultas, novam sanguinis missionem suadent, quam tamen te inconsulto nolim fieri. Ad te venire vix possum, nec est cur ad me venias. Licere vel non licere uno verbo dicendum est; cætera mihi et Holdero*[1] *reliqueris. Si per te licet, imperatur nuncio Holderum ad me deducere.*

'*Maiis Calendis*, 1782.

'*Postquam tu discesseris, quo me vertam?*'[2]

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[1] Mr. Holder, in the Strand, Dr. Johnson's apothecary.

[2] Soon after the above letter Dr. Lawrence left London, but not before the palsy had made so great a progress as to render him unable to write for himself. The following are extracts from letters addressed by Dr. Johnson to one of his daughters:

'You will easily believe with what gladness I read that you had heard once again that voice to which we have all so often delighted to attend. May you often hear it. If we had his mind and his tongue we could spare the rest.

'I am not vigorous, but much better than when dear Dr. Lawrence held my pulse the last time. Be so kind as to let me know, from one little interval to another, the state of his body. I am pleased that he remembers me, and hope that it never can be possible for me to forget him. July 22, 1782.'

'I am much delighted even with the small advances which dear Dr. Lawrence makes towards recovery. If we could have again but his mind and his tongue in his mind, and his right hand, we should not much lament the rest. I should not despair of helping the swelled hand by electricity, if it were frequently and diligently supplied.

'Let me know from time to time whatever happens; and I hope I

TO CAPTAIN LANGTON,[1] IN ROCHESTER

'DEAR SIR,—It is now long since we saw one another; and, whatever has been the reason, neither you have written to me nor I to you. To let friendship die away by negligence and silence is certainly not wise. It is voluntarily to throw away one of the greatest comforts of this weary pilgrimage, of which when it is, as it must be taken finally away, he that travels on alone will wonder how his esteem could be so little. Do not forget me; you see that I do not forget you. It is pleasing in the silence of solitude to think that there is one at least, however distant, of whose benevolence there is little doubt, and whom there is yet hope of seeing again.

'Of my life, from the time we parted, the history is mournful. The spring of last year deprived me of Thrale, a man whose eye for fifteen years had scarcely been turned upon me but with respect or tenderness; for such another friend the general course of human things will not suffer man to hope. I passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale; and having idled away the summer with a weakly body and neglected mind, I made a journey to Staffordshire on the edge of winter. The season was dreary, I was sickly, and found the friends sickly whom I went to see. After a sorrowful sojourn I returned to a habitation possessed for the present by two sick women, where my dear old friend, Mr. Levett, to whom, as he used to tell me, I owe your acquaintance, died a few weeks ago suddenly in his bed; there passed not, I believe, a minute between health and death. At night, as at Mrs. Thrale's, I was musing in my chamber; I thought with uncommon earnestness that however I might alter my mode

need not tell you how much I am interested in every change. Aug. 26, 1782.'

'Though the account with which you favoured me in your last letter could not give me the pleasure that I wished, yet I was glad to receive it; for my affection to my dear friend makes me desirous of knowing his state, whatever it be. I beg, therefore, that you continue to let me know, from time to time, all that you observe.

'Many fits of severe illness have, for about three months past, forced my kind physician often upon my mind. I am now better; and hope gratitude, as well as distress, can be a motive to remembrance. Bolt Court, Fleet Street, Feb. 4, 1783.'

[1] Mr. Langton being at this time on duty at Rochester he is addressed by his military title.

of life, or whithersoever I might remove, I would endeavour to retain Levett about me; in the morning my servant brought me word that Levett was called to another state, a state for which, I think, he was not unprepared, for he was very useful to the poor. How much soever I valued him, I now wish that I had valued him more.[1]

'I have myself been ill more than eight weeks of a disorder from which, at the expense of about fifty ounces of blood, I hope I am now recovering.

'You, dear sir, have, I hope, a more cheerful scene; you see George fond of his book, and the pretty misses airy and lively, with my own little Jenny equal to the best: and in whatever can contribute to your quiet or pleasure, you have Lady Rothes ready to concur. May whatever you enjoy of good be increased, and whatever you suffer of evil be diminished.—I am, dear sir, your humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street,*
'*March* 20, 1782.'

TO MR. HECTOR, IN BIRMINGHAM[2]

'DEAR SIR,—I hope I do not very grossly flatter myself to imagine that you and dear Mrs. Careless will be glad to hear some account of me. I performed the journey to London with very little inconvenience, and came safe to my habitation, where I found nothing but ill health, and, of consequence, very little cheerfulness. I then went to visit a little way into the country, where I got a complaint by a cold which has hung eight weeks upon me, and from which I am, at the expense of fifty ounces of blood, not yet free. I am afraid I must

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[1] Johnson has here expressed a sentiment similar to that contained in one of Shenstone's stanzas, to which in his life of that poet, he has given high praise:

'I prized every hour that went by,
Beyond all that had pleased me before;
But now they are gone and I sigh,
And I grieve that I prized them no more.'

J. BOSWELL, Junior.

[2] A part of this letter having been torn off, I have, from the evident meaning, supplied a few words and half words at the ends and beginnings of lines.

once more owe my recovery to warm weather, which seems to make no advances towards us.

'Such is my health, which will, I hope, soon grow better. In other respects I have no reason to complain. I know not that I have written anything more generally commended than the *Lives of the Poets*; and have found the world willing enough to caress me, if my health had invited me to be in much company; but this season I have been almost wholly employed in nursing myself.

'When summer comes I hope to see you again, and will not put off my visit to the end of the year. I have lived so long in London that I did not remember the difference of seasons.

'Your health, when I saw you, was much improved. You will be prudent enough not to put it in danger. I hope, when we meet again, we shall congratulate each other upon fair prospects of longer life; though what are the pleasures of the longest life when placed in comparison with a happy death?—I am, dear sir, yours most affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, March* 21, 1782.'

TO MR. HECTOR, IN BIRMINGHAM

[*Without a date, but supposed to be about this time.*]

'DEAR SIR,—That you and dear Mrs. Careless should have care or curiosity about my health gives me that pleasure which every man feels from finding himself not forgotten. In age we feel again that love of our native place and our early friends, which in the bustle or amusements of middle life, were overborne and suspended. You and I should now naturally cling to one another: we have outlived most of those who could pretend to rival us in each other's kindness. In our walk through life we have dropped our companions, and are now to pick up such as chance may offer us, or to travel on alone. You indeed have a sister with whom you can divide the day: I have no natural friend left; but Providence has been pleased to preserve me from neglect; I have not wanted such alleviations of life as friendship could

supply. My health has been, from my twentieth year, such as has seldom afforded me a single day of ease; but it is at least not worse: and I sometimes make myself believe that it is better. My disorders are, however, still sufficiently oppressive.

'I think of seeing Staffordshire again this autumn, and intend to find my way through Birmingham, where I hope to see you and dear Mrs. Careless well.—I am, sir, your affectionate friend, SAM. JOHNSON.'

I wrote to him at different dates; regretted that I could not come to London this spring, but hoped we should meet somewhere in the summer; mentioned the state of my affairs, and suggested hopes of some preferment; informed him, that as the *Beauties of Johnson* had been published in London, some obscure scribbler had published at Edinburgh, what he called the *Deformities of Johnson.*

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—The pleasure which we used to receive from each other on Good Friday and Easter Day we must be this year content to miss. Let us, however, pray for each other, and hope to see one another yet from time to time with mutual delight. My disorder has been a cold, which impeded the organs of respiration, and kept me many weeks in a state of great uneasiness; but by repeated phlebotomy it is now relieved; and next to the recovery of Mrs. Boswell, I flatter myself, that you will rejoice at mine.

'What we shall do in the summer it is yet too early to consider. You want to know what you shall do now; I do not think this time of bustle and confusion[1] like to produce any advantage to you. Every man has those to reward and gratify who have contributed to his advancement. To come hither with such expectations at the expense of borrowed money, which, I find, you know not where to borrow, can

[1] [On the preceding day the Ministry had been changed.—M.

hardly be considered prudent. I am sorry to find, what your solicitations seem to imply, that you have already gone the whole length of your credit. This is to set the quiet of your whole life at hazard. If you anticipate your inheritance you can at last inherit nothing; all that you receive must pay for the past. You must get a place, or pine in penury, with the empty name of a great estate. Poverty, my dear friend, is so great an evil, and pregnant with so much temptation and so much misery, that I cannot but earnestly enjoin you to avoid it. Live on what you have; live, if you can, on less; do not borrow either for vanity or pleasure; the vanity will end in shame, and the pleasure in regret: stay therefore at home till you have saved money for your journey hither.

'The *Beauties of Johnson* are said to have got money to the collector; if the *Deformities* have the same success, I shall be still a more extensive benefactor.

'Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, who is, I hope, reconciled to me; and to the young people, whom I have never offended.

'You never told me the success of your plea against the solicitors.—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate

'Sam. Johnson.

'*London, March* 28, 1782.'

Notwithstanding his afflicted state of body and mind this year, the following correspondence affords a proof not only of his benevolence and conscientious readiness to relieve a good man from error, but by his clothing one of the sentiments in his *Rambler* in different language, not inferior to that of the original, shows his extraordinary command of clear and forcible expression.

A clergyman at Bath wrote to him, that in the *Morning Chronicle*, a passage in the *Beauties of Johnson*, article Death, had been pointed out as supposed by some readers to recommend suicide, the words being, 'To die is the fate of man; but to die with lingering

anguish is generally his folly'; and respectfully suggesting to him, that such an erroneous notion of any sentence in the writings of an acknowledged friend of religion and virtue, should not pass uncontradicted.

Johnson thus answered the clergyman's letter:

TO THE REV. MR. ——, AT BATH

'SIR,—Being now in the country in a state of recovery, as I hope, from a very oppressive disorder, I cannot neglect the acknowledgment of your Christian letter. The book called the *Beauties of Johnson* is the production of I know not whom; I never saw it but by casual inspection, and considered myself as utterly disengaged from its consequences. Of the passage you mention, I remember some notice in some paper; but knowing that it must be misrepresented, I thought of it no more, nor do I know where to find it in my own books. I am accustomed to think little of newspapers; but an opinion so weighty and serious as yours has determined me to do what I should, without your seasonable admonition, have omitted: and I will direct my thought to be shown in its true state.[1] If I could find the passage I would direct you to it. I suppose the tenor is this:—'Acute diseases are the immediate and inevitable strokes of Heaven; but of them the pain is short, and the conclusion speedy; chronical disorders, by which we are suspended in tedious torture between life and death, are commonly the effect of our own misconduct and intemperance. To die, etc.'—This, sir, you see, is all true

[1] What follows appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of May 29 1782.—A correspondent having mentioned, in the *Morning Chronicle* of December 12, the last clause of the following paragraph, as seeming to favour suicide, we are requested to print the whole passage, that its true meaning may appear, which is not to recommend suicide but exercise:

'Exercise cannot secure us from that dissolution to which we are decreed; but while the soul and body continue united, it can make the association pleasing, and give probable hopes that they shall be disjoined by an easy separation. It was a principle among the ancients, that acute diseases are from Heaven, and chronical from ourselves; the dart of death, indeed, falls from Heaven, but we poison it by our own misconduct: to die is the fate of man; but to die with lingering anguish is generally his folly.'

and all blameless. I hope some time in the next week to have all rectified. My health has been lately much shaken; if you favour me with any answer, it will be a comfort to me to know that I have your prayers.—I am, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*May* 15, 1782.'

This letter, as might be expected, had its full effect, and the clergyman acknowledged it in grateful and pious terms.[1]

The following letters require no extracts from mine to introduce them:

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—The earnestness and tenderness of your letter is such, that I cannot think myself showing it more respect than it claims by sitting down to answer it on the day on which I received it.

'This year has afflicted me with a very irksome and severe disorder. My respiration has been much impeded, and much blood has been taken away. I am now harassed by a catarrhous cough, from which my purpose is to seek relief by change of air; and I am, therefore, preparing to go to Oxford.

'Whether I did right in dissuading you from coming to London this spring, I will not determine. You have not lost much by missing my company; I have scarcely been well for a single week. I might have received comfort from your kindness; but you would have seen me afflicted, and, perhaps, found me peevish. Whatever might have been your pleasure or mine, I know not how I could have honestly advised you to come hither with borrowed money. Do not accustom yourself to consider debt only as an inconvenience; you will find it a calamity. Poverty takes away so many means of doing good, and produces so much inability to resist evil, both natural and moral, that it is by all virtuous means to be

[1] The correspondence may be seen at length in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1786.

avoided. Consider a man whose fortune is very narrow; whatever be his rank by birth, or whatever his reputation by intellectual excellence, what can he do? or what evil can he prevent? That he cannot help the needy is evident; he has nothing to spare. But, perhaps, his advice or admonition may be useful. His poverty will destroy his influence: many more can find that he is poor, than that he is wise; and few will reverence the understanding that is of so little advantage to its owner. I say nothing of the personal wretchedness of a debtor, which, however, has passed into a proverb. Of riches it is not necessary to write the praise. Let it, however, be remembered, that he who has money to spare, has it always in his power to benefit others; and of such power a good man must always be desirous.

'I am pleased with your account of Easter.[1] We shall meet, I hope, in autumn, both well and both cheerful; and part each the better for the other's company.

'Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, and to the young charmers.—I am, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, June* 3, 1782.'

TO MR. PERKINS

'DEAR SIR,—I am much pleased that you are going a very long journey, which may, by proper conduct, restore your health and prolong your life.

'Observe these rules:

'1. Turn all care out of your head as soon as you mount the chaise.

'2. Do not think about frugality; your health is worth more than it can cost.

'3. Do not continue any day's journey to fatigue.

'4. Take now and then a day's rest.

'5. Get a smart sea-sickness if you can.

'6. Cast away all anxiety, and keep your mind easy.

'This last direction is the principal: with an unquiet mind, neither exercise, nor diet, nor physic, can be of much use.

[1] Which I celebrated in the Church of England chapel at Edinburgh, founded by Lord Chief Baron Smith, of respectable and pious memory.

'I wish you, dear sir, a prosperous journey, and a happy recovery.—I am, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*July* 28, 1782.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Being uncertain whether I should have any call this autumn into the country, I did not immediately answer your kind letter. I have no call; but if you desire to meet me at Ashbourne, I believe I can come thither; if you had rather come to London, I can stay at Streatham: take your choice.

'This year has been very heavy. From the middle of January to the middle of June I was battered by one disorder after another! I am now very much recovered, and hope still to be better. What happiness it is that Mrs. Boswell has escaped!

'My *Lives* are reprinting, and I have forgotten the author of Gray's character:[1] write immediately, and it may be perhaps yet inserted.

'Of London or Ashbourne you have your free choice; at any place I shall be glad to see you.—I am, dear sir, yours etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*August* 24, 1782.'

On the 30th of August, I informed him that my honoured father had died that morning; a complaint under which he had long laboured, having suddenly come to a crisis, while I was upon a visit at the seat of Sir Charles Preston, from whence I had hastened the day before, upon receiving a letter by express.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I have struggled through this year with so much infirmity of body, and such strong impressions of the fragility of life, that death, whenever it appears, fills me with

[1] The Reverend Mr. Temple, Vicar of St. Gluvias, Cornwall.

melancholy; and I cannot hear without emotion of the removal of any one, whom I have known, into another state.

'Your father's death had every circumstance that could enable you to bear it; it was at a mature age, and it was expected; and as his general life had been pious, his thoughts had doubtless for many years past been turned upon eternity. That you did not find him sensible must doubtless grieve you; his disposition towards you was undoubtedly that of a kind, though not of a fond father. Kindness, at least actual, is in our power, but fondness is not; and if by negligence or imprudence you had extinguished his fondness, he could not at will rekindle it. Nothing then remained between you but mutual forgiveness of each other's faults, and mutual desire of each other's happiness.

'I shall long to know his final disposition of his fortune.

'You, dear sir, have now a new station, and have therefore new cares and new employments. Life, as Cowley seems to say, ought to resemble a well-ordered poem; of which one rule generally received is, that the exordium should be simple, and should promise little. Begin your new course of life with the least show, and the least expense possible; you may at pleasure increase both, but you cannot easily diminish them. Do not think your estate your own, while any man can call upon you for money which you cannot pay; therefore, begin with timorous parsimony. Let it be your first care not to be in any man's debt.

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

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

'Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell; I think her expectations from air and exercise are the best that she can form. I hope she will live long and happily.

'I forgot whether I told you that Raasay has been here; we dined cheerfully together. I entertained lately a young gentleman from Corrichatachin.

'I received your letters only this morning.—I am, dear sir, yours, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Sept.* 7, 1782.'

In answer to my next letter, I received one from him, dissuading me from hastening to him as I had proposed; what is proper for publication is the following paragraph, equally just and tender:

'One expense, however, I would not have you to spare; let nothing be omitted that can preserve Mrs. Boswell, though it should be necessary to transplant her for a time into a softer climate. She is the prop and stay of your life. How much must your children suffer by losing her!

My wife was now so much convinced of his sincere friendship for me, and regard for her, that, without any suggestion on my part, she wrote him a very polite and grateful letter.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL

'DEAR LADY,—I have not often received so much pleasure as from your invitation to Auchinleck. The journey thither and back is, indeed, too great for the latter part of the year; but if my health were fully recovered, I would suffer no little heat and cold, nor a wet or a rough road to keep me from you. I am, indeed, not without hope of seeing Auchinleck again; but to make it a pleasant place, I must see its lady well, and brisk, and airy. For my sake, therefore, among many greater reasons, take care, dear madam, of your health, spare no expense, and want no attendance that can procure ease, or preserve it. Be very careful to keep your mind quiet,

and do not think it too much to give an account of your recovery to, madam, yours, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Sept.* 7, 1782.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Having passed almost this whole year in a succession of disorders, I went in October to Brighthelmstone, whither I came in a state of so much weakness, that I rested four times in walking between the inn and the lodging. By physic and abstinence I grew better, and am now reasonably easy, though at a great distance from health. I am afraid, however, that health begins, after seventy, and long before, to have a meaning different from that which it had at thirty. But it is culpable to murmur at the established order of the creation, as it is vain to oppose it; he that lives, must grow old; and he that would rather grow old than die, has God to thank for the infirmities of old age.

'At your long silence I am rather angry. You do not, since now you are the head of your house, think it worth your while to try whether you or your friend can live longer without writing, nor suspect that after so many years of friendship, that when I do not write to you, I forget you. Put all such useless jealousies out of your head, and disdain to regulate your own practice by the practice of another, or by any other principle than the desire of doing right.

'Your economy, I suppose, begins now to be settled; your expenses are adjusted to your revenue, and all your people in their proper places. Resolve not to be poor: whatever yon have, spend less. Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable, and others extremely difficult.

'Let me know the history of your life, since your accession to your estate. How many houses, how many cows, how much land in your own hand, and what bargains you make with your tenants.

. . . . .

'Of my *Lives of the Poets*, they have printed a new edition in octavo, I hear, of three thousand. Did I give a set to Lord Hailes? If I did not, I will do it out of these. What did you make of all your copy?

'Mrs. Thrale and the three misses are now for the winter in Argyll Street. Sir Joshua Reynolds has been out of order, but is well again; and I am, dear sir, your affectionate humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Dec.* 7, 1782.'

TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

'*Edinburgh, Dec.* 20, 1782.

'DEAR SIR,—I was made happy by your kind letter, which gave us the agreeable hopes of seeing you in Scotland again.

'I am much flattered by the concern you are pleased to take in my recovery. I am better, and hope to have it in my power to convince you by my attention of how much consequence I esteem your health to the world and to myself. —I remain, sir, with grateful respect, your obliged and obedient servant, MARGARET BOSWELL.'

The death of Mr. Thrale had made a very material alteration with respect to Johnson's reception in that family. The manly authority of the husband no longer curbed the lively exuberance of the lady; and as her vanity had been fully gratified, by having the Colossus of Literature attached to her for many years, she gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain; but it is plain that Johnson's penetration was alive to her neglect or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year, we find him making a 'parting use of the library' at Streatham, and pronouncing a prayer,[1] which he composed on leaving Mr. Thrale's family:

'Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness,

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[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 214.

remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest, and when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

'To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

One cannot read this prayer, without some emotions not very favourable to the lady whose conduct occasioned it.

In one of his memorandum-books I find, 'Sunday, went to church at Streatham. *Templo valedixi cum osculo.*'

He met Mr. Philip Metcalfe often at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and other places, and was a good deal with him at Brighthelmstone this autumn, being pleased at once with his excellent table and animated conversation. Mr. Metcalfe showed him great respect, and sent him a note that he might have the use of his carriage whenever he pleased. Johnson (3rd October, 1782) returned this polite answer:—'Mr. Johnson is very much obliged by the kind offer of the carriage, but he has no desire of using Mr. Metcalfe's carriage, except when he can have the pleasure of Mr. Metcalfe's company.' Mr. Metcalfe could not but be highly pleased that his company was thus valued by Johnson, and he frequently attended him in airings. They also went together to Chichester, and they visited Petworth, and Cowdry, the venerable seat of the Lords Montacute.[1] 'Sir (said Johnson), I should like to

[1] [This venerable mansion has since been totally destroyed by fire.—M.]

stay here four-and-twenty hours. We see here how our ancestors lived.

That his curiosity was still unabated, appears from two letters to Mr. John Nichols, of the 10th and 20th of October this year. In one he says, 'I have looked into your *Anecdotes*, and you will hardly thank a lover of literary history for telling you, that he has been much informed and gratified. I wish you would add your own discoveries and intelligence to those of Dr. Rawlinson, and undertake the Supplement to Wood. Think of it.' In the other, 'I wish, sir, you could obtain some fuller information of Jortin, Markland, and Thirlby. They were three contemporaries of great eminence.'

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'Dear Sir,—I heard yesterday of your late disorder, and should think ill of myself if I had heard of it without alarm. I heard likewise of your recovery, which I sincerely wish to be complete and permanent. Your country has been in danger of losing one of its brightest ornaments, and I of losing one of my oldest and kindest friends: but I hope you will still live long, for the honour of the nation; and that more enjoyment of your elegance, your intelligence, and your benevolence, is still reserved for, dear sir, your most affectionate, etc., Sam. Johnson.

'*Brighthelmstone*, *Nov.* 14, 1782.'

The Reverend Mr. Wilson having dedicated to him his *Archæological Dictionary*, that mark of respect was thus acknowledged:

TO THE REV. MR. WILSON, CLITHEROE, LANCASHIRE

'Reverend Sir,—That I have long omitted to return you thanks for the honour conferred upon me by your Dedication, I entreat you with great earnestness not to consider as more

faulty than it is. A very importunate and oppressive disorder has for some time debarred me from the pleasures, and obstructed me in the duties of life. The esteem and kindness of wise and good men is one of the last pleasures which I can be content to lose; and gratitude to those from whom this pleasure is received, is a duty of which I hope never to be reproached with the final neglect. I therefore now return you thanks for the notice which I have received from you, and which I consider as giving to my name not only more bulk, but more weight; not only as extending its superficies, but as increasing its value. Your book was evidently wanted, and will, I hope, find its way into the school, to which, however, I do not mean to confine it; for no man has so much skill in ancient rites and practices as not to want it. As I suppose myself to owe part of your kindness to my excellent friend, Dr. Patten, he has likewise a just claim to my acknowledgment, which I hope you, sir, will transmit. There will soon appear a new edition of my *Poetical Biography*; if you will accept of a copy to keep me in your mind, be pleased to let me know how it may be conveniently conveyed to you. This present is small, but it is given with good will by, reverend sir, your most, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.

'*December* 31, 1782.

END OF VOL. V

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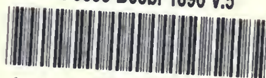

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