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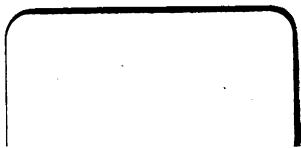
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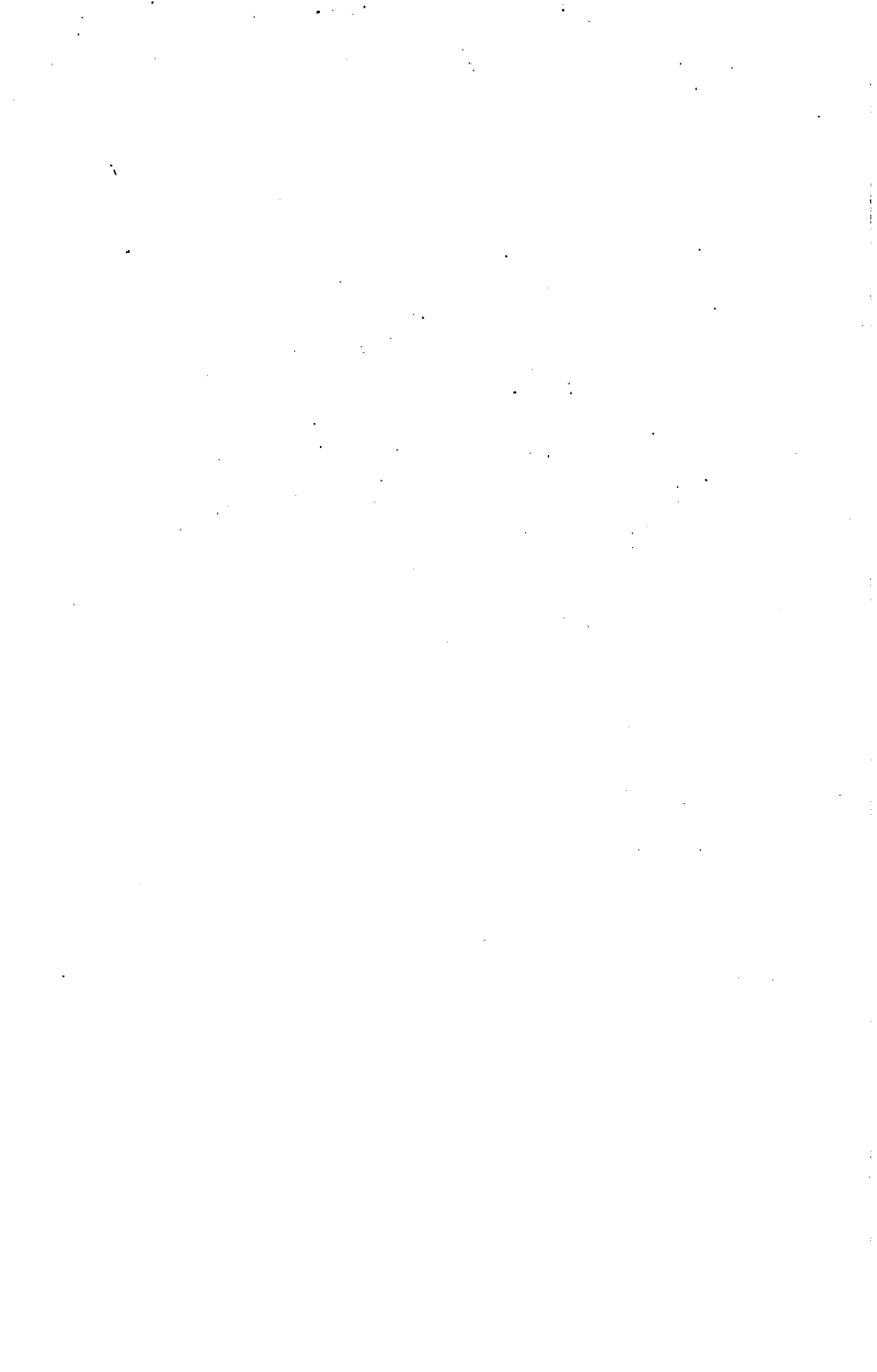
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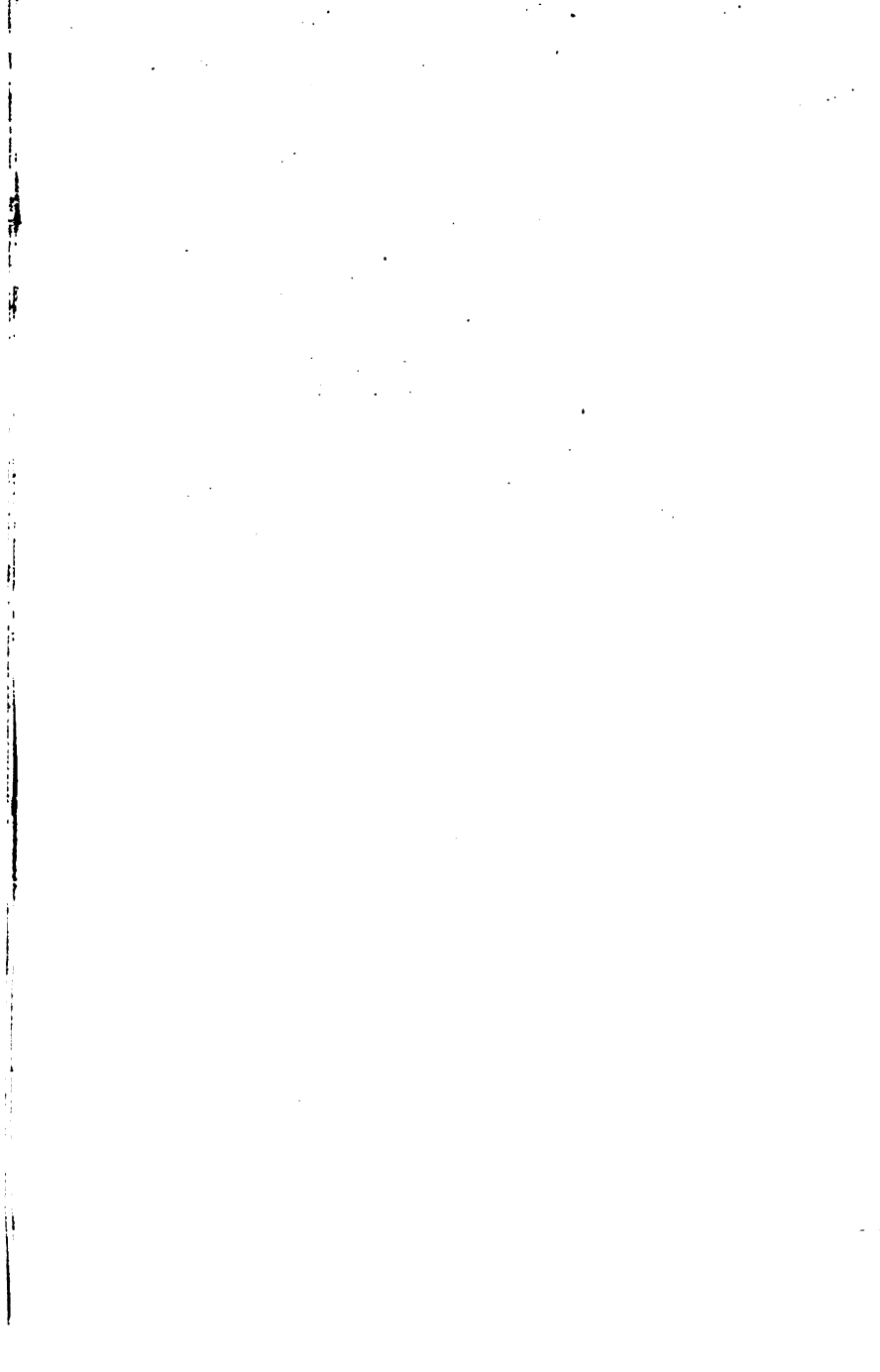
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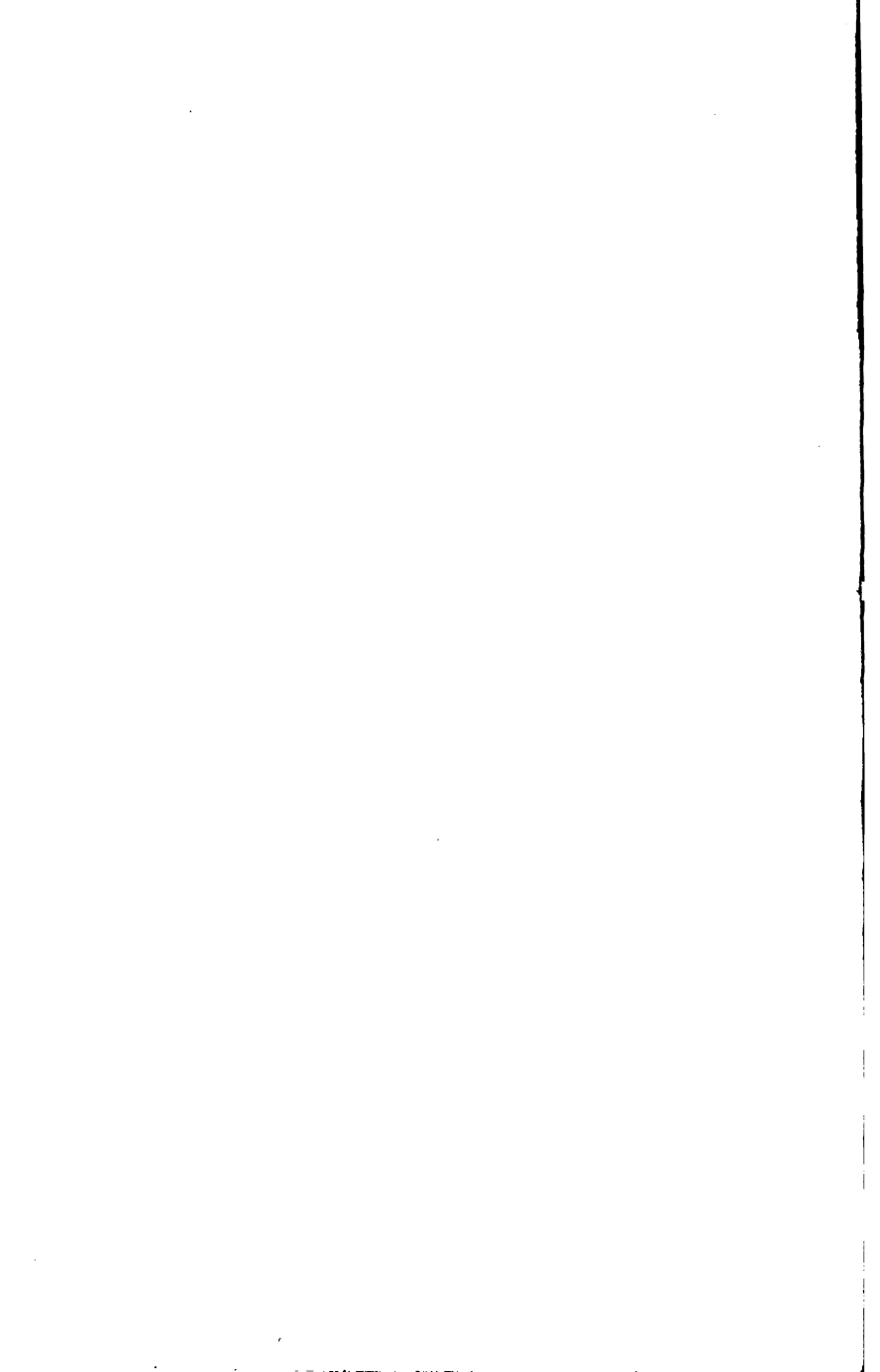
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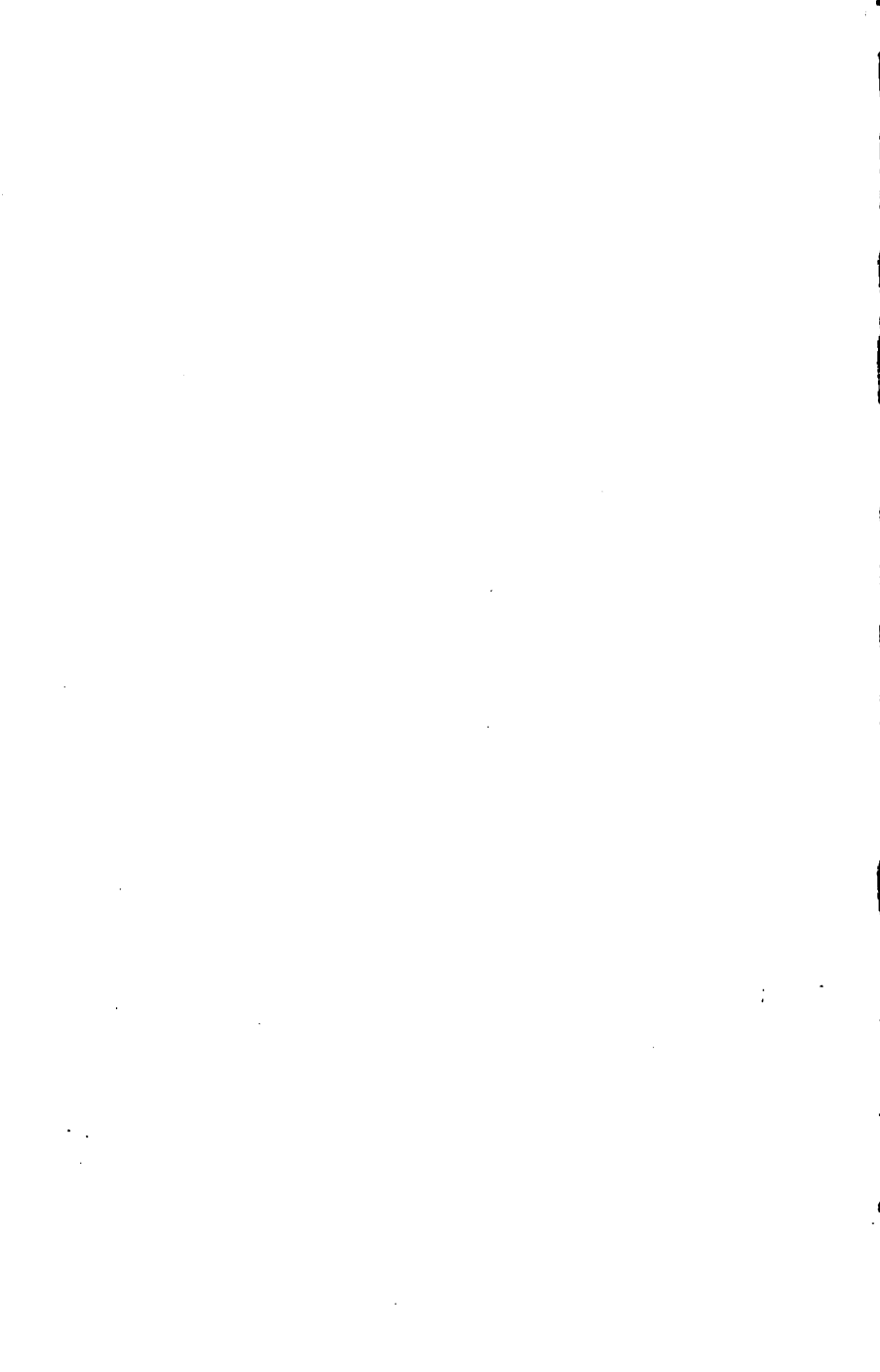
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**BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON**





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**BOSWELL'S  
LIFE OF JOHNSON**

**EDITED BY  
AUGUSTINE BIRRELL**

**AND ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS**

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**VOLUME VI**

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN VOL. VI.

	PAGE
<i>FRONTISPIECE—</i>	
GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, 1762-1830.	
‘The first gentleman in Europe.’ Cf. Darwin’s <i>Descent of Man</i> , Thackeray’s <i>Four Georges</i> , etc.	
<i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds</i> (1779). ( <i>National Gal- lery.</i> )	
SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS, 1728-1796, . . . . .	25
i. <i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds.</i> ( <i>National Portrait Gallery.</i> )	
ii. <i>Drawn by George Dance, R.A.</i>	
Architect of Somerset House.	
‘In yonder pile, by royal bounty plac’d The graphic Muse proclaims the theme of Taste!’	
FRANCES KEMBLE, SISTER OF MRS. SIDDONS, 1759- 1822, . . . . .	77
<i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds</i> (circa 1784).	
MRS. SIDDONS, 1755-1831, . . . . .	77
<i>Cut in paper by the Right Honourable Lady Templetown. P. W. Tomkins, direxit.</i>	
‘Yet, yet, endure; nor murmur, oh my soul!’	
MRS. SIDDONS, 1755-1831, . . . . .	77-78
<i>After Th. Beach, by William Dickinson.</i>	
WILLIAM PITT, 1708-1778, . . . . .	96 n.
<i>Drawn by Henry Edridge, A.R.A.</i>	

vi LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
DR. THOMAS NEWTON, DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, BISHOP OF BRETOL, 1704-1782, . . . . .	120
<i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds (1773).</i>	
HORACE WALPOLE, 1717-1797, . . . . .	148
<i>Drawn by George Dance, R.A. (National Portrait Gallery.)</i>	
CALEB WHITEFOORD, WIT AND WINE MERCHANT, 1737-1810, . . . . .	155
<i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds (1774).</i>	
GABRIEL PIOZZI, 1741-1809, . . . . .	174-81
MRS. PIOZZI, 1739-1821.	
<i>Drawn in 1793 by George Dance, R.A. (National Portrait Gallery.)</i>	
GEORGE JAMES CHOLMONDELEY, 1752-1830, . . . . .	178
Nephew of Peg Woffington; son-in-law of Sir Philip Francis.	
<i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds (1790).</i>	
RIGHT HON. WILLIAM WINDHAM, 1750-1810, . . . . .	189
<i>From a drawing by Sir Thomas Lawrence.</i>	
FANNY BURNEY (MADAME D'ARBLAY), 1752- 1840, . . . . .	223-24
<i>Engraved portraits, S. K. M.</i>	
DR. BROCKLESBY, 1722-1797, . . . . .	237
<i>Drawn by George Dance, R.A.</i>	
FRANCES REYNOLDS, 1729-1807, . . . . .	237 n.
<i>By Sir Joshua Reynolds (1759).</i>	



## THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

IN 1783, he was more severely afflicted than ever, as will appear in the course of his correspondence: but still the same ardour for literature, the same constant piety, the same kindness for his friends, and the same vivacity, both in conversation and writing, distinguished him.

Having given Dr. Johnson a full account of what I was doing at Auchinleck, and particularly mentioned what I knew would please him,—my having brought an old man of eighty-eight from a lonely cottage to a comfortable habitation within my enclosures, where he had good neighbours near to him,—I received an answer in February, of which I extract what follows:

'I am delighted with your account of your activity at Auchinleck, and wish the old gentleman, whom you have so kindly removed, may live long to promote your prosperity by his prayers. You have now a new character and new duties; think on them and practise them.

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

'I am glad to find that Mrs. Boswell grows well: and hope

that to keep her well, no care nor caution will be omitted. May you long live happily together.

'When you come hither, pray bring with you Baxter's *Anacreon*. I cannot get that edition in London.'<sup>1</sup>

On Friday, March 21, having arrived in London the night before, I was glad to find him at Mrs. Thrale's house, in Argyll Street, appearances of friendship between them being still kept up. I was shown into his room, and after the first salutation, he said, 'I am glad you are come: I am very ill.' He looked pale, and was distressed with a difficulty of breathing: but after the common inquiries he assumed his usual strong animated style of conversation. Seeing me now for the first time as a *Laird*, or proprietor of land, he began thus: 'Sir, the superiority of a country gentleman over the people upon his estate is very agreeable: and he who says he does not feel it to be agreeable, lies; for it must be agreeable to have a casual superiority over those who are by nature equal with us.' BOSWELL: 'Yet, sir, we see great proprietors of land who prefer living in London.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, the pleasure of living in London, the intellectual superiority that is enjoyed there, may counterbalance the other. Besides, sir, a man may prefer the state of the country gentleman upon the whole, and yet there may never be a moment when he is willing to make the change to quit London for it.' He said, 'It is better to have five per cent. out of land, than out of money, because it is more secure; but the readiness

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<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Johnson should seem not to have sought diligently for Baxter's *Anacreon*, for there are two editions of that book, and they are frequently found in the London Sale Catalogues.—M.]

of transfer, and promptness of interest, make many people rather choose the funds. Nay, there is another disadvantage belonging to land, compared with money. A man is not so much afraid of being a hard creditor, as of being a hard landlord.' BOSWELL: 'Because there is a sort of kindly connection between a landlord and his tenants.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir: many landlords with us never see their tenants. It is because if a landlord drives away his tenants, he may not get others; whereas the demand for money is so great, it may always be lent.'

He talked with regret and indignation of the factious opposition to Government at this time, and imputed it in a great measure to the Revolution. 'Sir (said he, in a low voice, having come nearer to me, while his old prejudices seemed to be fomenting in his mind), this Hanoverian family is *isolée* here. They have no friends. Now the Stuarts had friends who stuck by them so late as 1745. When the right of the King is not revered, there will not be reverence for those appointed by the King.'

His observation that the present royal family has no friends, has been too much justified by the very ungrateful behaviour of many who were under great obligations to his Majesty; at the same time there are honourable exceptions; and the very next year after this conversation, and ever since, the King has had as extensive and generous support as ever was given to any monarch, and has had the satisfaction of knowing that he was more and more endeared to his people.

He repeated to me his verses on Mr. Levett, with an emotion which gave them full effect; and then he was pleased to say, 'You must be as much with me as

you can. You have done me good. You cannot think how much better I am since you came in.'

He sent a message to acquaint Mrs. Thrale that I was arrived. I had not seen her since her husband's death. She soon appeared and favoured me with an invitation to stay to dinner, which I accepted. There was no other company but herself and three of her daughters, Dr. Johnson, and I. She, too, said she was very glad I was come, for she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr. Johnson before I came. This seemed to be attentive and kind; and I, who had not been informed of any change, imagined all to be as well as formerly. He was little inclined to talk at dinner, and went to sleep after it; but when he joined us in the drawing-room, he seemed revived, and was again himself.

Talking of conversation, he said, 'There must, in the first place, be knowledge, there must be materials;—in the second place, there must be a command of words;—in the third place, there must be imagination, to place things in such views as they are not commonly seen in;—and in the fourth place, there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that it is not to be overcome by failures; this last is an essential requisite; for want of it many people do not excel in conversation. Now I want it; I throw up the game upon losing a trick.' I wondered to hear him talk thus of himself, and said, 'I don't know, sir, how this may be; but I am sure you beat other people's cards out of their hands.' I doubt whether he heard this remark. While we went on talking triumphantly, I was fixed in admiration, and said to Mrs. Thrale, 'O for shorthand to take this down!' 'You'll carry it all

in your head (said she); a long head is as good as shorthand.'

It has been observed and wondered at that Mr. Charles Fox never talked with any freedom in the presence of Dr. Johnson; though it is well known, and I myself can witness, that his conversation is various, fluent, and exceedingly agreeable. Johnson's own experience, however, of that gentleman's reserve, was a sufficient reason for his going on thus: 'Fox never talks in private company; not from any determination not to talk, but because he has not the first motion. A man who is used to the applause of the House of Commons, has no wish for that of a private company. A man accustomed to throw for a thousand pounds, if set down to throw for sixpence, would not be at the pains to count his dice. Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full.'

He thus curiously characterised one of our old acquaintances: '—<sup>1</sup> is a good man, sir; but he is a vain man, and a liar. He, however, only tells lies of vanity; of victories, for instance, in conversation, which never happened.' This alluded to a story which I had repeated from that gentleman, to entertain Johnson with its wild bravado: 'This Johnson, sir (said he), whom you are all afraid of, will shrink if you come close to him in argument, and roar as loud as he. He once maintained the paradox that there is no beauty but in utility. "Sir (said I), what say you to the peacock's tail, which is one of the most beautiful objects in nature, but would have as much

<sup>1</sup> [The elder Sheridan is supposed to be this old acquaintance.—A. B.]

utility if its feathers were all of one colour." He *felt* what I thus produced, and had recourse to his usual expedient—ridicule: exclaiming, "A peacock has a tail, and a fox has a tail"; and then he burst out into a laugh. "Well, sir (said I, with a strong voice, looking him full in the face), you have unkennelled your fox; pursue him if you dare." He had not a word to say, sir.' Johnson told me that this was a fiction from beginning to end.<sup>1</sup>

After musing for some time, he said, 'I wonder how I should have any enemies; for I do harm to nobody.'<sup>2</sup> BOSWELL: 'In the first place, sir, you will be pleased to recollect that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies.' JOHNSON: 'Why, I own that by my definition of *oats* I meant to vex them.' BOSWELL: 'Pray, sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?' JOHNSON: 'I can not, sir.' BOSWELL: 'Old Mr. Sheridan says, it was because they sold Charles the First.' JOHNSON: 'Then, sir, old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason.'

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<sup>1</sup> Were I to insert all the stories which had been told of contests boldly maintained with him, imaginary victories obtained over him, of reducing him to silence, and of making him own that his antagonist had the better of him in argument, my volumes would swell to an immoderate size. One instance, I find, has circulated both in conversation and in print; that when he would not allow the Scotch writers to have merit, the late Dr. Rose of Chiswick asserted that he could name one Scotch writer whom Dr. Johnson himself would allow to have written better than any man of the age; and upon Johnson's asking who it was, answered, 'Lord Bute, when he signed the warrant for your pension.' Upon which, Johnson, struck with the repartee, acknowledged that this *was* true. When I mentioned it to Johnson, 'Sir (said he), if Rose said this, I never heard it.'

<sup>2</sup> This reflection was very natural in a man of a good heart, who was not conscious of any ill-will to mankind, though the sharp sayings which were sometimes produced by his discrimination and vivacity, which he perhaps did not recollect, were, I am afraid, too often remembered with resentment.

Surely the most obstinate and sulky rationality, the most determined aversion to this great and good man, must be cured, when he is seen thus playing with one of his prejudices, of which he candidly admitted that he could not tell the reason. It was, however, probably owing to his having had in his view the worst part of the Scottish nation, the needy adventurers, many of whom he thought were advanced above their merits by means which he did not approve. Had he in his early life been in Scotland, and seen the worthy, sensible, independent gentlemen, who live rationally and hospitably at home, he never could have entertained such unfavourable and unjust notions of his fellow-subjects. And, accordingly, we find that when he did visit Scotland, in the latter period of his life, he was fully sensible of all that it deserved, as I have already pointed out, when speaking of his *Journey to the Western Islands*.

Next day, Saturday, March 22, I found him still at Mrs. Thrale's, but he told me that he was to go to his own house in the afternoon. He was better, but I perceived he was an unruly patient, for Sir Lucas Pepys, who visited him while I was with him, said, 'If you were *tractable*, sir, I should prescribe for you.'

I related to him a remark which a respectable friend had made to me, upon the then state of Government, when those who had long been in opposition had attained to power, as it was supposed, against the inclination of the sovereign. 'You need not be uneasy (said this gentleman) about the King. He laughs at them all; he plays them one against another.' JOHNSON: 'Don't think so, sir. The King is as much

oppressed as a man can be. If he plays them one against another, he *wins* nothing.'

I had paid a visit to General Oglethorpe in the morning, and was told by him that Dr. Johnson saw company on Saturday evenings, and he would meet me at Johnson's that night. When I mentioned this to Johnson, not doubting that it would please him, as he had a great value for Oglethorpe, the fretfulness of his disease unexpectedly showed itself; his anger suddenly kindled, and he said with vehemence, 'Did not you tell him not to come? Am I to be *hunted* in this manner?' I satisfied him that I could not divine that the visit would not be convenient, and that I certainly could not take it upon me of my own accord to forbid the General.

I found Dr. Johnson in the evening in Mrs. Williams's room, at tea and coffee with her and Mrs. Desmoulins, who were also both ill; it was a sad scene, and he was not in a very good humour. He said of a performance that had lately come out, 'Sir, if you should search all the madhouses in England you would not find ten men who would write so and think it sense.'

I was glad when General Oglethorpe's arrival was announced, and we left the ladies. Dr. Johnson attended him in the parlour, and was as courteous as ever. The General said he was busy reading the writers of the middle age. Johnson said they were very curious. OGLETHORPE: 'The House of Commons has usurped the power of the nation's money, and used it tyrannically. Government is now carried on by corrupt influence instead of the inherent right in the King.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, the want of inherent right



in the King occasions all this disturbance. What we did at the Revolution was necessary : but it broke our constitution.’<sup>1</sup> OGLETHORPE : ‘My father did not think it necessary.’

On Sunday, March 23, I breakfasted with Dr. Johnson, who seemed much relieved, having taken opium the night before. He, however, protested against it as a remedy that should be given with the utmost reluctance and only in extreme necessity. I mentioned how commonly it was used in Turkey, and that therefore it could not be so pernicious as he apprehended. He grew warm and said, ‘Turks take opium and Christians take opium ; but Russell, in his account of Aleppo, tells us, that it is as disgraceful in Turkey to take too much opium as it is with us to get drunk. Sir, it is amazing how things are exaggerated. A gentleman was lately telling in a company where I was present, that in France as soon as a man of fashion marries he takes an opera girl into keeping ; and this he mentioned as a general custom. “Pray, sir (said I), how many opera girls may there be?” He answered, “About fourscore.” Well then, sir (said I), you see there can be no more than fourscore men of fashion who can do this.”’

Mrs. Desmoulins made tea ; and she and I talked before him upon a topic which he had once borne patiently from me when we were by ourselves,—his not complaining of the world because he was not called

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<sup>1</sup> I have, in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, fully expressed my sentiments upon this subject. The Revolution was *necessary*, but not a subject for *glory* ; because it for a long time blasted the generous feelings of *loyalty*. And now, when by the benignant effect of time the present Royal Family are established in our *affections*, how unwise is it to revive by celebrations the memory of a shock, which it would surely have been better that our constitution had not required !

to some great office nor had attained to great wealth. He flew into a violent passion, I confess with some justice, and commanded us to have done. 'Nobody (said he), has a right to talk in this manner, to bring before a man his own character and the events of his life, when he does not choose it should be done. I never have sought the world: the world was not to seek me. It is rather wonderful that so much has been done for me. All the complaints which are made of the world are unjust. I never knew a man of merit neglected: it was generally by his own fault that he failed of success. A man may hide his head in a hole: he may go into the country and publish a book now and then, which nobody reads, and then complain he is neglected. There is no reason why any person should exert himself for a man who has written a good book: he has not written it for any individual. I may as well make a present to a postman who brings me a letter. When patronage was limited, an author expected to find a Mæcenas, and complained if he did not find one. Why should he complain? This Mæcenas has others as good as he, or others who have got the start of him.' BOSWELL: 'But surely, sir, you will allow that there are men of merit at the bar who never get practice?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you are sure that practice is got from an opinion that the person employed deserves it best; so that if a man of merit at the bar does not get practice it is from error, not from injustice. He is not neglected. A horse that is brought to market may not be bought though he is a very good horse: but that is from ignorance, not from intention.'

There was in this discourse much novelty, ingenuity,

and discrimination, such as is seldom to be found. Yet I cannot help thinking that men of merit, who have no success in life, may be forgiven for *lamenting*, if they are not allowed to *complain*. They may consider it as *hard* that their merit should not have its suitable distinction. Though there is no intentional injustice towards them on the part of the world, their merit not having been perceived, they may yet repine against *fortune* or *fate*, or by whatever name they choose to call the supposed mythological power of *Destiny*. It has, however, occurred to me as a consolatory thought that men of merit should consider thus :—How much harder would it be if the same persons had both all the merit and all the prosperity. Would not this be a miserable distribution for the poor dunces? Would men of merit exchange their intellectual superiority, and the enjoyments arising from it, for external distinction and the pleasures of wealth? If they would not, let them not envy others, who are poor where they are rich, a compensation which is made to them. Let them look inwards and be satisfied; recollecting with conscious pride what Virgil finely says of *Corycius Senex*, and which I have, in another place,<sup>1</sup> with truth and sincerity applied to Mr. Burke :

‘Regum æquabat opes animis.’

On the subject of the right employment of wealth, Johnson observed, ‘A man cannot make a bad use of his money, so far as regards society, if he do not hoard it; for if he either spends it or lends it out,

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to the People of Scotland against the Attempt to diminish the Number of the Lords of Session, 1785.

society has the benefit. It is in general better to spend money than to give it away; for industry is more promoted by spending money than by giving it away. A man who spends his money is sure he is doing good with it: he is not sure when he gives it away. A man who spends ten thousand a year will do more good than a man who spends two thousand and gives away eight.'

In the evening I came to him again. He was somewhat fretful from his illness. A gentleman asked him whether he had been abroad to-day, 'Don't talk so childishly (said he). You may as well ask if I hanged myself to-day.' I mentioned politics. JOHNSON: 'Sir, I'd as soon have a man to break my bones as talk to me of public affairs, internal or external. I have lived to see things all as bad as they can be.'

Having mentioned his friend, the second Lord Southwell, he said, 'Lord Southwell was the highest bred man without insolence that I ever was in company with; the most *qualified* I ever saw. Lord Orrery was not dignified; Lord Chesterfield was, but he was insolent. Lord —<sup>1</sup> is a man of coarse manners, but a man of abilities and information. I don't say he is a man I would set at the head of a nation, though perhaps he may be as good as the next Prime Minister that comes; but he is a man to be at the head of a Club;—I don't say *our* Club;—for there's no such Club.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, was he not once a factious man?' JOHNSON: 'O yes, sir; as factious a fellow as could be found; one who was for sinking us all into the mob.' BOSWELL: 'How then, sir, did he get into favour with the King?' JOHNSON: 'Because, sir,

<sup>1</sup> [Lord Shelburne.—A. B.]

I suppose he promised the King to do whatever the King pleased.'

He said, 'Goldsmith's blundering speech to Lord Shelburne, which has been so often mentioned, and which he really did make to him, was only a blunder in emphasis :—" I wonder they should call your Lordship *Malagrida*, for *Malagrida* was a very good man ;"'<sup>1</sup>—meant, I wonder they should use *Malagrida* as a term of reproach.'

Soon after this time I had an opportunity of seeing, by means of one of his friends, a proof that his talents, as well as his obliging service to authors, were ready as ever. He had revised *The Village*, an admirable poem, by the Reverend Mr. Crabbe. Its sentiments as to the false notions of rustic happiness and rustic virtue were quite congenial with his own ; and he had taken the trouble not only to suggest slight corrections and variations, but to furnish some lines, when he thought he could give the writer's meaning better than in the words of the manuscript.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Malagrida* was a Jesuit put to death in 1761 for being mixed up in an attempt upon the life of the King of Portugal.—A. B.]

<sup>2</sup> I shall give an instance, marking the original by Roman, and Johnson's substitution in Italic characters.

In fairer scenes, where peaceful pleasures spring,  
Tityrus, the pride of Mantuan swains, might sing ;  
But charmed by him, or smitten with his views,  
Shall modern poets court the Mantuan muse ?  
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,  
Where Fancy leads, or Virgil led the way ?

*On Mincio's banks, in Casar's bounteous reign,  
If Tityrus found the golden age again,  
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,  
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song ?  
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,  
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way ?*

Here we find Johnson's poetical and critical powers undiminished. I must, however, observe that the aids he gave to this poem, as to *The Traveller* and *Deserted Village* of Goldsmith, were so small as by no means to impair the distinguishing merit of the author.

On Sunday, March 30, I found him at home in the evening, and had the pleasure to meet with Dr. Brocklesby, whose reading, and knowledge of life, and good spirits supply him with a never-failing source of conversation. He mentioned a respectable gentleman who became extremely penurious near the close of his life. Johnson said there must have been a degree of madness about him. 'Not at all, sir (said Dr. Brocklesby), his judgment was entire.' Unluckily, however, he mentioned that although he had a fortune of twenty-seven thousand pounds, he denied himself many comforts, from an apprehension that he could not afford them. 'Nay, sir (cried Johnson), when the judgment is so disturbed that a man cannot count, that is pretty well.'

I shall here insert a few of Johnson's sayings, without the formality of dates, as they have no reference to any particular time or place.

'The more a man extends and varies his acquaintance the better.' This, however, was meant with a just restriction; for he, on another occasion, said to me, 'Sir, a man may be so much of everything that he is nothing of anything.'

'Raising the wages of day-labourers is wrong; for it does not make them live better, but only makes them idler, and idleness is a very bad thing for human nature.'

'It is a very good custom to keep a journal for a man's own use; he may write upon a card a day all that is necessary to be written, after he has had experience of life. At first there is a great deal to be written, because there is a great deal of novelty; but when once a man has settled his opinions, there is seldom much to be set down.'

'There is nothing wonderful in the Journal<sup>1</sup> which we see Swift kept in London, for it contains slight topics, and it might soon be written.'

I praised the accuracy of an account-book of a lady whom I mentioned. JOHNSON: 'Keeping accounts, sir, is of no use when a man is spending his own money, and has nobody to whom he is to account. You won't eat less beef to-day, because you have written down what it cost yesterday.' I mentioned another lady who thought as he did, so that her husband could not get her to keep an account of the expense of the family, as she thought it enough that she never exceeded the sum allowed her. JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is fit she should keep an account, because her husband wishes it; but I do not see its use.' I maintained that keeping an account had this advantage, that it satisfies a man that his money has not been lost or stolen, which he might sometimes be apt to imagine, were there no written state of his expense; and besides, a calculation of economy so as not to exceed one's income cannot be made without a view of the different articles in figures, that one may see

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<sup>1</sup> [In his Life of Swift he thus speaks of this Journal:

'In the midst of his power and his politics he kept a journal of his visits, his walks, his interviews with ministers, and quarrels with his servant, and transmitted it to Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Dingley, to whom he knew that whatever befel him was interesting, and no account could be too minute. Whether these diurnal trifles were properly exposed to eyes which had never received any pleasure from the Dean may be reasonably doubted: they have, however, some odd attractions: the reader finding frequent mention of names which he has been used to consider as important, goes on in hope of information: and as there is nothing to fatigue attention, if he is disappointed, he can hardly complain.

It may be added, that the reader not only hopes to find, but does find, in this very entertaining Journal much curious information respecting persons and things which he will in vain seek for in other books of the same period.—M.]

how to retrench in some particulars less necessary than others.' This he did not attempt to answer.

Talking of an acquaintance of ours, whose narratives, which abounded in curious and interesting topics, were unhappily found to be very fabulous; I mentioned Lord Mansfield's having said to me, 'Suppose we believe one *half* of what he tells.' JOHNSON: 'Ay; but we don't know *which* half to believe. By his lying we lose not only our reverence for him, but all comfort in his conversation.' BOSWELL: 'May we not take it as amusing fiction?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, the misfortune is, that you will insensibly believe as much of it as you incline to believe.'

It is remarkable, that notwithstanding their congeniality in politics he never was acquainted with a late eminent noble judge, whom I have heard speak of him as a writer, with great respect. Johnson, I know not upon what degree of investigation, entertained no exalted opinion of his Lordship's intellectual character. Talking of him to me one day, he said, 'It is wonderful, sir, with how little real superiority of mind men can make an eminent figure in public life.' He expressed himself to the same purpose concerning another law-lord, who, it seems, once took a fancy to associate with the wits of London; but with so little success, that Foote said, 'What can he mean by coming among us? He is not only dull himself, but the cause of dulness in others.' Trying him by the test of his colloquial powers, Johnson had found him very defective. He once said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'This man now has been ten years about town, and has made nothing of it'; meaning as a companion.<sup>1</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> Knowing as well as I do what precision and elegance of oratory



said to me, 'I never heard anything from him in company that was at all striking; and depend upon it, sir, it is when you come close to a man in conversation that you discover what his real abilities are: to make a speech in a public assembly is a knack. Now I honour Thurlow, sir; Thurlow is a fine fellow; he fairly puts his mind to yours.'

After repeating to him some of his pointed, lively sayings, I said, 'It is a pity, sir, you don't always remember your own good things, that you may have a laugh when you will.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, it is better that I forget them, that I may be reminded of them, and have a laugh on their being brought to my recollection.'

When I recalled to him his having said as we sailed up Loch Lomond, 'That if he wore anything fine, it should be very fine.' I observed that all his thoughts were upon a great scale. JOHNSON: 'Depend upon it, sir, every man will have as fine a thing as he can get; as large a diamond for his ring.' BOSWELL: 'Pardon me, sir: a man of a narrow mind will not think of it, a slight trinket will satisfy him:

"Nec sufferre queat majoris pondera gemmæ."<sup>1</sup>

I told him I should send him some 'Essays' which I had written,<sup>2</sup> which I hoped he would be so good as to read, and pick out the good ones. JOHNSON: 'Nay,

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his Lordship can display, I cannot but suspect that his unfavourable appearance in a social circle, which drew such animadversions upon him, must be owing to a cold affectation of consequence from being reserved and stiff. If it be so, and he might be an agreeable man if he would, we cannot be sorry that he misses his aim.

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* i. 29.

<sup>2</sup> [Under the title of *The Hypochondriac.*—M.]

sir, send me only the good ones; don't make *me* pick them.'

I heard him once say, 'Though the proverb "*Nulhum numen abest, si sit prudentia*" does not always prove true, we may be certain of the converse of it, "*Nulhum numen adest, si sit imprudentia*."'

Once, when Mr. Seward was going to Bath, and asking his commands, he said, 'Tell Dr. Harrington that I wish he would publish another volume of the *Nugæ antiquæ*;<sup>1</sup> it is a very pretty book.'<sup>2</sup> Mr. Seward seconded this wish, and recommended to Dr. Harrington to dedicate it to Johnson, and take for his motto what Catullus says to Cornelius Nepos:

'namque tu solebas,  
Meas esse aliquid putare Nugas.'

As a small proof of his kindness and delicacy of feeling, the following circumstance may be mentioned: One evening when we were in the street together, and I told him I was going to sup at Mr. Beauclerk's, he said, 'I'll go with you.' After having walked part of the way, seeming to recollect something, he suddenly stopped and said, 'I cannot go,—but *I do not love Beauclerk the less*.'

On the frame of his portrait Mr. Beauclerk had inscribed,

'Ingenium ingens  
Inculto latet hoc sub corpore.'

<sup>1</sup> It has since appeared.

<sup>2</sup> [A new and greatly improved edition of this very curious collection was published by Mr. Park in 1804, in two volumes octavo. In this edition the letters are chronologically arranged, and the account of the bishops, which was formerly printed from a very corrupt copy, is taken from Sir John Harrington's original manuscript, which he presented to Henry, Prince of Wales, and is now in the Royal Library in the Museum.—M.]

<sup>3</sup> *Carw.* l. 3.

After Mr. Beauclerk's death, when it became Mr. Langton's property, he made the inscription be defaced. Johnson said complacently, 'It was kind in you to take it off'; and then, after a short pause, added, 'and not unkind in him to put it on.'

He said, 'How few of his friends' houses would a man choose to be at, when he is sick!' He mentioned one or two. I recollect only Thrals's.

He observed, 'There is a wicked inclination in most people to suppose an old man decayed in his intellects. If a young or middle-aged man, when leaving a company, does not recollect where he laid his hat, it is nothing; but if the same inattention is discovered in an old man, people will shrug up their shoulders, and say, "his memory is going."'

When I once talked to him of some of the sayings which everybody repeats, but nobody knows where to find, such as, *Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*; he told me that he was once offered ten guineas to point out from whence *Semel insanivimus omnes* was taken. He could not do it; but, many years afterwards, met with it by chance in *Johannes Baptistæ Mantuanus*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The words occur (as Mr. Bindley observes to me) in the First Eclogue of Mantuanus, *De honesto Amore*, etc.

*Id commune malum; semel insanivimus omnes.*

With the following elucidation of the other saying—*Quos Deus* (it should rather be *Quem Jupiter*) *vult perdere, prius dementat*—Mr. Boswell was furnished by Mr. Richard How of Aspley, in Bedfordshire, as communicated to that gentleman by his friend, Mr. John Pitts, late Rector of Great Brickhill, in Buckinghamshire:

'Perhaps no scrap of Latin whatever has been more quoted than this. It occasionally falls even from those who are scrupulous even to pedantry in their Latinity, and will not admit a word into their compositions, which has not the sanction of the first age. The word *demento* is of no authority, either as a verb active or neuter.—After a long search, for the purpose of deciding a bet, some gentlemen of Cambridge found it

I am very sorry that I did not take a note of an eloquent argument in which he maintained that the situation of the Prince of Wales was the happiest of any person's in the kingdom, even beyond that of the Sovereign. I recollect only the enjoyment of hope, the high superiority of rank, without the anxious cares of government, and a great degree of power, both from natural influence wisely used, and from the sanguine expectations of those who look forward to the chance of future favour.

Sir Joshua Reynolds communicated to me the following particulars :

Johnson thought the poems published as translations from Ossian had so little merit, that he said,

among the fragments of Euripides, in what edition I do not recollect where it is given as a translation of a Greek Iambic :

‘Ον Θέος θέλει ἀπολέσαι, κέρ’ ἀποφρανοί.

The above scrap was found in the handwriting of a suicide of fashion, Sir D. O., some years ago, lying on the table of the room where he had destroyed himself. The suicide was a man of classical acquirements: he left no other paper behind him.’

Another of these proverbial sayings,

*Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charybdim,*

I some years ago, in a note on a passage in *The Merchant of Venice*, traced to its source. It occurs (with a slight variation) in the *Alexandreis* of Philip Gualtier a poet of the thirteenth century), which was printed at Lyons in 1558. Darius is the person addressed :

‘ . . . Quo tendis inertem,  
Rex periture, fugam? nescis, heu! perditte, nescis  
Quem fugias: hostes incurris, dum fugis hostem:  
*Incidis in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charybdim.*’

The author of this line was first ascertained by Galeottus Martius, who died in 1476; as is observed in *Menagiana*, vol. iii. p. 130, edit. 1762.—For an account of Philip Gualtier, see Vossius *de Poet. Latin.*, p. 254, fol. 1697.

A line, not less frequently quoted than any of the preceding, was suggested for inquiry, several years ago, in a note on *The Rape of Lucrece* :

‘*Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris.*’

But the author of this verse has not, I believe, been discovered.—M.]

‘Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever, if he would *abandon* his mind to it.’

He said, ‘A man should pass a part of his time with the *laughers*, by which means anything ridiculous or particular about him might be presented to his view, and corrected.’ I observed, he must have been a bold laughers who would have ventured to tell Dr. Johnson of any of his particularities.<sup>1</sup>

Having observed the vain ostentatious importance of many people in quoting the authority of dukes and lords, as having been in their company, he said he went to the other extreme, and did not mention his authority when he should have done it, had it not been that of a duke or a lord.

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

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<sup>1</sup> I am happy, however, to mention a pleasing instance of his enduring with great gentleness to hear one of his most striking particularities pointed out:—Miss Hunter, a niece of his friend Christopher Smart, when a very young girl, struck by his extraordinary motions, said to him, ‘Pray, Dr. Johnson, why do you make such strange gestures?’—‘From bad habit (he replied). Do you, my dear, take care to guard against bad habits.’ This I was told by the young lady’s brother at Margate.

with whom we are accustomed to live, yet this sense will have a different colouring; and colouring is of much effect in everything else as well as in painting.'

Johnson used to say that he made it a constant rule to talk as well as he could, both as to sentiment and expression, by which means, what had been originally effort became familiar and easy. The consequence of this, Sir Joshua observed, was, that his common conversation in all companies was such as to secure him universal attention, as something above the usual colloquial style was expected.

Yet, though Johnson had this habit in company, when another mode was necessary, in order to investigate truth, he could descend to a language intelligible to the meanest capacity. An instance of this was witnessed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, when they were present at an examination of a little blackguard boy, by Mr. Saunders Welch, the late Westminster Justice. Welch, who imagined that he was exalting himself in Dr. Johnson's eyes by using big words, spoke in a manner that was utterly unintelligible to the boy; Dr. Johnson perceiving it, addressed himself to the boy, and changed the pompous phraseology into colloquial language. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was much amused by this procedure, which seemed a kind of reversing of what might have been expected from the two men, took notice of it to Dr. Johnson, as they walked away by themselves. Johnson said, that it was continually the case; and that he was always obliged to *translate* the justice's swelling diction (smiling), so as that his meaning might be understood by the vulgar, from whom information was to be obtained.

Sir Joshua once observed to him, that he had

talked above the capacity of some people with whom they had been in company together. 'No matter, sir (said Johnson); they consider it as a compliment to be talked to, as if they were wiser than they are. So true is this, sir, that Baxter made it a rule in every sermon that he preached, to say something that was above the capacity of his audience.'<sup>1</sup>

Johnson's dexterity in retort, when he seemed to be driven to an extremity by his adversary, was very remarkable. Of his power in this respect, our common friend, Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, has been pleased to furnish me with an eminent instance. However unfavourable to Scotland, he uniformly gave liberal praise to George Buchanan as a writer. In a conversation concerning the literary merits of the two countries, in which Buchanan was introduced, a Scotchman, imagining that on this ground he should have an undoubted triumph over him, exclaimed, 'Ah, Dr. Johnson, what would you have said of Buchanan, had he been an Englishman?'—'Why, sir (said Johnson after a little pause), I should *not* have said of Buchanan, had he been an *Englishman*, what I will now say of him as a *Scotchman*,—that he was the only man of genius his country ever produced.'

And this brings to my recollection another instance of the same nature. I once reminded him that when Dr. Adam Smith was expatiating on the beauty of Glasgow, he had cut him short by saying, 'Pray, sir,

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<sup>1</sup> The justness of this remark is confirmed by the following story, for which I am indebted to Lord Elliot: A country parson, who was remarkable for quoting scraps of Latin in his sermons, having died, one of his parishioners was asked how he liked his successor: 'He is a very good preacher (was his answer), but no *latinier*.'

have you ever seen Brentford?' and I took the liberty to add, 'My dear sir, surely that was *shocking*.'— 'Why then, sir (he replied), you have never seen Brentford.'

Though his usual phrase for conversation was *talk*, yet he made a distinction; for when he once told me that he dined the day before at a friend's house, with 'a very pretty company'; and I asked him if there was good conversation, he answered, 'No, sir; we had *talk* enough, but no *conversation*; there was nothing *discussed*.'

Talking of the success of the Scotch in London, he imputed it in a considerable degree to their spirit of nationality. 'You know, sir (said he), that no Scotchman publishes a book, or has a play brought upon the stage, but there are five hundred people ready to applaud him.'

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

Such was his sensibility, and so much was he affected by pathetic poetry, that when he was reading Dr. Beattie's *Hermit*, in my presence, it brought tears into his eyes.<sup>1</sup>

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

Mr. Hoole told him he was born in Moorfields, and had received part of his early instruction in

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<sup>1</sup> [The particular passage which excited this strong emotion was, as I have heard from my father, the third stanza, 'Tis night,' etc.— J. BOSWELL, Junior.]



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*Sir William Chambers*

II

Great Street. 'Sir,' said Johnson, smiling, 'you don't look *unacquainted* educated.' Hering asked who was his instructor, and Mr. Hoole kindly answered, 'My father, sir, who was a tailor'; Johnson recollecting himself, said, 'Sir, I know him, we called him the *tailor's draughtsman*. He was of a club in Old Street, with me and George Richardson and some others: he prays, sir, was he a good fellow?' Mr. Hoole replied, 'I am assured that he believed he was a mathematician, and used to draw squares and triangles on his shop-board, so that he did not excel in the art of a tailor.'—'I am sorry for it,' said Johnson, 'for I would have every man to be master of his own business.'

In the same reference to himself and Mr. Hoole, as mentioned by the authors, he often said, 'Let you and I, sir, go together, and eat a good steak in Great Street.'

Sir William Chambers, that great architect, whose works show a celebrity of genius at 17 who is esteemed by all who know him, for his social, hospitable, and generous qualities, committed the translation of his *Discourse of Architecture* to Dr. Johnson's pen. Johnson was much pleased with it, and said, 'It wants no addition or correction, but a few lines of introduction,' which he furnished, and Sir William accepted.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The title of a new edition of this noble but neglected work is given by Johnson in this volume in a note on a writing table. Great care was taken in the translation to be the most sensible, being not only a translation from Greek, but a copy ever was written on this point.

<sup>4</sup> The translation of this work is given in the volume, and should prove to be a most valuable and interesting one, as it is the first of its kind in the English language, and is a work which will be highly interesting to every reader, and will be highly valued by every scholar.

<sup>5</sup> The work is to be numbered in the original of the first volume. I could not find it, but it was only in a copy

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Grub Street. 'Sir (said Johnson, smiling), you have been *regularly* educated.' Having asked who was his instructor, and Mr. Hoole having answered, 'My uncle, sir, who was a tailor'; Johnson recollecting himself, said, 'Sir, I knew him; we called him the *metaphysical tailor*. He was of a club in Old Street, with me and George Psalmanazar, and some others: but pray, sir, was he a good tailor?' Mr. Hoole having answered that 'he believed he was too mathematical, and used to draw squares and triangles on his shop-board, so that he did not excel in the cut of a coat';—'I am sorry for it (said Johnson), for I would have every man to be master of his own business.'

In pleasant reference to himself and Mr. Hoole, as brother authors, he often said, 'Let you and I, sir, go together, and eat a beef-steak in Grub Street.'

Sir William Chambers, that great architect<sup>1</sup> whose works show a sublimity of genius, and who is esteemed by all who know him, for his social, hospitable, and generous qualities, submitted the manuscript of his *Chinese Architecture* to Dr. Johnson's perusal. Johnson was much pleased with it, and said, 'It wants no addition or correction, but a few lines of introduction,' which he furnished, and Sir William adopted.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Honourable Horace Walpole, late Earl of Orford, thus bears testimony to this gentleman's merit as a writer: 'Mr. Chambers's *Treatise on Civil Architecture* is the most sensible book, and the most exempt from prejudices, that ever was written on that science.'—Preface to *Anecdotes of Painting in England*.

<sup>2</sup> The introductory lines are these: 'It is difficult to avoid praising too little or too much. The boundless panegyrics which have been lavished upon the Chinese learning, policy, and arts, show with what power novelty attracts regard, and how naturally esteem swells into admiration.'

<sup>3</sup> I am far from desiring to be numbered among the exaggerators of Chinese excellence. I consider them as great, or wise, only in compari-

He said to Sir William Scott, 'The age is running mad after innovation; and all the business of the world is to be done in a new way; men are to be hanged in a new way; Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation.' It having been argued that this was an improvement—'No, sir (said he eagerly), it is *not* an improvement; they object that the old method drew together a number of spectators. Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they do not draw spectators they don't answer their purpose. The old method was most satisfactory to all parties; the public was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it. Why is all this to be swept away?' I perfectly agree with Dr. Johnson upon this head, and am persuaded that executions now, the solemn procession being discontinued, have not nearly the effect which they formerly had. Magistrates both in London and elsewhere have, I am afraid, in this had too much regard to their own ease.

Of Dr. Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, Johnson said to a friend: 'Hurd, sir, is one of a set of men who account for everything systematically; for instance, it has been a fashion to wear scarlet breeches; these men would tell you that according to causes and effects, no other wear could at that time have been chosen.' He, however, said of him at another time

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son with the nations that surround them: and have no intention to place them in competition either with the ancients or with the moderns of this part of the world; yet they must be allowed to claim our notice as a distinct and very singular race of men; as the inhabitants of a region divided by its situation from all civilised countries, who have formed their own manners and invented their own arts without the assistance of example.'

to the same gentleman, 'Hurd, sir, is a man whose acquaintance is a valuable acquisition.'

That learned and ingenious Prelate it is well known published at one period of his life, *Moral and Political Dialogues*, with a wofully whiggish cast. Afterwards, his Lordship having thought better, came to see his error, and republished the work with a more constitutional spirit. Johnson, however, was unwilling to allow him full credit for his political conversion. I remember when his Lordship declined the honour of being Archbishop of Canterbury, Johnson said, 'I am glad he did not go to Lambeth; for after all, I fear he is a Whig in his heart.'

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

Such was the heat and irritability of his blood that not only did he pare his nails to the quick, but scraped the joints of his fingers with a penknife, till they seemed quite red and raw.

The heterogeneous composition of human nature was

remarkably exemplified in Johnson. His liberality in giving his money to persons in distress was extraordinary: yet there lurked about him a propensity to paltry saving. One day I owed to him that 'I was occasionally troubled with a fit of narrowness.' 'Why, sir (said he), so am I. *But I do not tell it.*' He has now and then borrowed a shilling of me; and when I asked him for it again seemed to be rather out of humour. A droll little circumstance once occurred:—As if he meant to reprimand my minute exactness as a creditor, he thus addressed me: 'Boswell, *lend me sixpence—not to be repaid.*'

The great man's attention to small things was very remarkable. As an instance of it, he one day said to me, 'Sir, when you get silver in change for a guinea, look carefully at it; you may find some curious piece of coin.'

Though a stern *true-born Englishman*, and fully prejudiced against all other nations, he had discernment enough to see, and candour enough to censure, the cold reserve too common among Englishmen towards strangers: 'Sir (said he), two men of any other nation who are shown into a room together, at a house where they are both visitors, will immediately find some conversation. But two Englishmen will probably go each to a different window, and remain in obstinate silence. Sir, we as yet do not enough understand the common rights of humanity.'

Johnson was at a certain period of his life a good deal with the Earl of Shelburne, now Marquis of Lansdowne, as he doubtless could not but have a due value for that nobleman's activity of mind, and uncommon acquisitions of important knowledge, how-



ever much he might disapprove of other parts of his Lordship's character, which were widely different from his own.

Maurice Morgann, Esq., author of the very ingenious *Essay on the Character of Falstaff*,<sup>1</sup> being a particular friend of his Lordship, had once an opportunity of entertaining Johnson for a day or two at Wycombe, when this Lord was absent, and by him I have been favoured with two anecdotes.

One is not a little to the credit of Johnson's candour. Mr. Morgann and he had a dispute pretty late at night, in which Johnson would not give up, though he had the wrong side, and, in short, both kept the field. Next morning when they met in the breakfast-room, Dr. Johnson accosted Mr. Morgann thus: 'Sir, I have been thinking on our dispute last night—*You were in the right.*'

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

Once, when checking my boasting too frequently of myself in company, he said to me, 'Boswell, you often vaunt so much as to provoke ridicule. You put me in mind of a man who was standing in the kitchen of an

<sup>1</sup> Johnson being asked his opinion of this Essay, answered, 'Why, sir, we shall have the man come forth again; and as he has proved Falstaff to be no coward, he may prove Iago to be a very good character.'

inn with his back to the fire, and thus accosted the person next him: "Do you know, sir, who I am?" "No, sir (said the other), I have not that advantage." "Sir (said he), I am the *great Twalmley*, who invented the New Floodgate Iron."<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Killaloe, on my repeating the story to him, defended Twalmley by observing that he was entitled to the epithet of *great*; for Virgil in his group of worthies in the Elysian fields—

*Hic manus, ob patriam pugnando vulnera passi,*<sup>1</sup> etc. mentions

*Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes.*

He was pleased to say to me one morning when we were left alone in his study, 'Boswell, I think I am easier with you than with almost anybody.'

He would not allow Mr. David Hume any credit for his political principles, though similar to his own, saying of him, 'Sir, he was a Tory by chance.'

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

My readers will probably be surprised to hear that the great Dr. Johnson could amuse himself with so slight and playful a species of composition as a charade. I have recovered one which he made on Dr. Barnard,

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<sup>1</sup> What the *great Twalmley* was so proud of having invented was neither more nor less than a kind of box-iron for smoothing linen.

[Dr. Hill thinks he has traced the *great Twalmley* into the Bankruptcy Court. See his edition of the *Life*, vol. iv. p. 193, note 2. See also Southey's *Doctor*, vol. iv. p. 249.—A. B.]

<sup>2</sup> *Æn.* vi. 660.

now Lord Bishop of Killaloe,<sup>1</sup> who has been pleased for many years to treat me with so much intimacy and social ease, that I may presume to call him not only my right reverend, but my very dear friend. I therefore with peculiar pleasure give to the world a just and elegant compliment thus paid to his Lordship by Johnson.

## CHARADE

'My *first*<sup>2</sup> shuts out thieves from your house or your room,  
 'My *second*<sup>3</sup> expresses a Syrian perfume;  
 'My *whole*<sup>4</sup> is a man in whose converse is shared  
 'The strength of a Bar and the sweetness of Nard.'

Johnson asked Richard Owen Cambridge, Esq., if he had read the Spanish translation of Sallust, said to be written by a Prince of Spain, with the assistance of his tutor, who is professedly the author of a treatise annexed, on the Phœnician language.

Mr. Cambridge commended the work, particularly as he thought the translator understood his author better than is commonly the case with translators; but said he was disappointed in the purpose for which he borrowed the book; to see whether a Spaniard could be better furnished with inscriptions from monuments, coins, or other antiquities, which he might more probably find on a coast, so immediately opposite to Carthage, than the antiquaries of any other countries. JOHNSON: 'I am very sorry you were not gratified in your expectations.' CAMBRIDGE: 'The language would have been of little use, as there is no history existing in that tongue to balance the partial

<sup>1</sup> [Afterwards translated to the See of Limerick.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> Bar.

<sup>3</sup> Nard.

<sup>4</sup> Barnard.

accounts which the Roman writers have left us.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir. They have not been *partial*, they have told their own story, without shame or regard to equitable treatment of their injured enemy; they had no compunction, no feeling for a Carthaginian. Why, sir, they would never have borne Virgil's description of Æneas's treatment of Dido, if she had not been a Carthaginian.'

I gratefully acknowledge this and other communications from Mr. Cambridge, whom, if a beautiful villa on the banks of the Thames, a few miles distant from London, a numerous and excellent library which he accurately knows and reads, a choice collection of pictures which he understands and relishes, an easy fortune, an amiable family, an extensive circle of friends and acquaintance, distinguished by rank, fashion, and genius, a literary fame, various, elegant, and still increasing, colloquial talents rarely to be found, and with all these means of happiness, enjoying when well advanced in years, health and vigour of body, serenity and animation of mind, do not entitle to be addressed *fortunate senex!* I know not to whom in any age that expression could with propriety have been used. Long may he live to hear and to feel it!<sup>1</sup>

Johnson's love of little children, which he discovered upon all occasions, calling them 'pretty dears,' and giving them sweetmeats, was an undoubted proof of the real humanity and gentleness of his disposition.

His uncommon kindness to his servants, and serious

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<sup>1</sup> [Mr. Cambridge enjoyed all the blessings here enumerated for many years after this passage was written. He died at his seat near Twickenham, Sept. 17, 1802, in his eighty-sixth year.—M.]

concern, not only for their comfort in this world, but their happiness in the next, was another unquestionable evidence of what all who were intimately acquainted with him knew to be true.

Nor would it be just under this head to omit the fondness which he showed for animals which he had taken under his protection. I never shall forget the indulgence with which he treated Hodge, his cat; for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am unluckily one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of the same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr. Johnson's breast apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend, smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying, 'Why yes, sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this'; and then, as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed.'

This reminds me of the ludicrous account which he gave Mr. Langton, of the despicable state of a young gentleman of good family. 'Sir, when I heard of him last, he was running about town shooting cats.' And then in a sort of kindly reverie, he bethought himself of his own favourite cat, and said, 'But Hodge shan't be shot: no, no, Hodge shall not be shot.'

He thought Mr. Beauclerk made a shrewd and judicious remark to Mr. Langton, who, after having

been for the first time in company with a well-known wit about town, was warmly admiring and praising him,—‘See him again,’ said Beauclerk.

His respect for the hierarchy, and particularly the dignitaries of the Church, has been more than once exhibited in the course of this work. Mr. Seward saw him presented to the Archbishop of York, and described his *bow to an Archbishop*, as such a studied elaboration of homage, such an extension of limb, such a flexion of body, as have seldom if ever been equalled.

I cannot help mentioning with much regret, that by my own negligence I lost an opportunity of having the history of my family from its founder Thomas Boswell, in 1504, recorded and illustrated by Johnson’s pen. Such was his goodness to me, that when I presumed to solicit him for so great a favour, he was pleased to say, ‘Let me have all the materials you can collect, and I will do it both in Latin and English; then let it be printed, and copies of it be deposited in various places for security and preservation.’ I can now only do the best I can to make up for this loss, keeping my great master steadily in view. Family histories, like the *imagines majorum* of the ancients, excite to virtue; and I wish that they who really have blood, would be more careful to trace and ascertain its course. Some have affected to laugh at the history of the house of Yvery;<sup>1</sup> it would be well if many others would transmit their pedigrees to posterity, with the same accuracy and generous zeal, with which the noble Lord, who compiled that work, has honoured and perpetuated his ancestry.

On Thursday, April 10, I introduced to him, at his

<sup>1</sup> [Written by John, Earl of Egmont.—M.]

house in Bolt Court, the Honourable and Reverend William Stuart,<sup>1</sup> son of the Earl of Bute; a gentleman truly worthy of being known to Johnson; being, with all the advantages of high birth, learning, travel, and elegant manners, an exemplary parish priest in every respect.

After some compliments on both sides, the tour which Johnson and I had made to the Hebrides was mentioned. JOHNSON: 'I got an acquisition of more ideas by it than by anything that I remember. I saw quite a different system of life.' BOSWELL: 'You would not like to make the same journey again?' JOHNSON: 'Why no, sir; not the same: it is a tale told. Gravina, an Italian critic, observes, that every man desires to see that of which he has read, but no man desires to read an account of what he has seen: so much does description fall short of reality. Description only excites curiosity: seeing satisfies it. Other people may go and see the Hebrides.' BOSWELL: 'I should wish to go and see some country totally different from what I have been used to; such as Turkey, where religion and everything else are different.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; there are two subjects of curiosity,—the Christian world, and the Mohammedan world. All the rest may be considered as barbarous.' BOSWELL: 'Pray, sir, is the *Turkish Spy* a genuine book?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir. Mrs. Manley in her *Life*, says, that her father wrote the first two volumes: and in another book, Dunton's *Life and Errors*, we find that the rest was written by

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<sup>1</sup>[At that time Vicar of Luton in Bedfordshire, where he lived for some years, and fully merited the character given of him in the text; now (1806) Lord Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland.—M.]

one Sault, at two guineas a sheet, under the direction of Dr. Midgeley.<sup>1</sup>

BOSWELL: 'This has been a very factious reign, owing to the too great indulgence of Government.'

JOHNSON: *I think so, sir. What at first was lenity, grew timidity. Yet this is reasoning à posteriori, and may not be just. Supposing a few had at first been punished, I believe faction would have been crushed; but it might have been said, that it was a sanguinary reign. A man cannot tell à priori what will be best for Government to do. This reign has been very unfortunate. We have had an unsuccessful war; but that does not prove that we have been ill governed. One side or other must prevail in war, as one or other must win at play. When we beat Louis, we were not better governed; nor were the French better governed, when Louis beat us.'*

On Saturday, April 12, I visited him, in company with Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, whom, though a Whig, he highly valued. One of the best things he ever said was to this gentleman; who before he set out for Ireland as secretary to Lord Northington, when Lord Lieutenant, expressed to the sage some modest and virtuous doubts, whether he could bring himself to practise those arts which it is supposed a person in that situation has occasion to employ. 'Don't be afraid, sir (said Johnson, with a pleasant smile), you will soon make a very pretty rascal.'

<sup>1</sup> [The *Turkish Spy* was pretended to have been written originally in Arabic; from Arabic translated into Italian, and thence into English. The real author of the work, which was in fact originally written in Italian, was I. P. Marana, a Genoese, who died at Paris in 1693.

John Dunton, in his *Life*, says, that 'Mr. William Bradshaw received from Mr. Midgeley forty shillings a sheet for writing part of the *Turkish Spy*; but I do not find that he anywhere mentions Sault as engaged in that work.—M.]



He talked to-day a good deal of the wonderful extent and variety of London, and observed that men of curious inquiry might see in it such modes of life as very few could even imagine. He in particular recommended to us to *explore Wapping*, which we resolved to do.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lowe, the painter, who was with him, was very much distressed that a large picture which he had painted was refused to be received into the Exhibition of the Royal Academy. Mrs. Thrale knew Johnson's character so superficially, as to represent him as unwilling to do small acts of benevolence: and mentions, in particular, that he would hardly take the trouble to write a letter in favour of his friends. The truth, however, is, that he was remarkable, in an extraordinary degree, for what she denies to him; and, above all, for this very sort of kindness, writing letters for those to whom his solicitations might be of service. He now gave Mr. Lowe the following, of which I was diligent enough, with his permission, to take copies at the next coffee-house, while Mr. Windham was so good as to stay by me.<sup>2</sup>

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'SIR,—Mr. Lowe considers himself as cut off from all credit and all hope, by the rejection of his picture from the Exhibition. Upon this work he has exhausted all his powers, and suspended all his expectations; and, certainly, to be refused an opportunity of taking the opinion of the public, is in it—

<sup>1</sup> We accordingly carried our scheme into execution, in October 1798; but whether from that uniformity which has in modern times, in a great degree, spread through every part of the metropolis, or from our want of sufficient exertion, we were disappointed.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction, p. xv.

self a very great hardship. It is to be condemned without a trial.

'If you could procure the revocation of this incapacitating edict, you would deliver an unhappy man from great affliction. The Council has sometimes reversed its own determination; and I hope, that by your interposition this luckless picture may be got admitted.—I am, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'April 12, 1783.'

TO MR. BARRY

'SIR,—Mr. Lowe's exclusion from the Exhibition gives him more trouble than you and the other gentlemen of the Council could imagine or intend. He considers disgrace and ruin as the inevitable consequence of your determination.

'He says, that some pictures have been received after rejection; and if there be any such precedent, I earnestly entreat that you will use your interest in his favour. Of his work I can say nothing; I pretend not to judge of painting; and this picture I never saw; but I conceive it extremely hard to shut out any man from the possibility of success; and therefore I repeat my request that you will propose the re-consideration of Mr. Lowe's case; and if there be any among the Council with whom my name can have any weight, be pleased to communicate to them the desire of, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'April 12, 1783.'

Such intercession was too powerful to be resisted; and Mr. Lowe's performance was admitted at Somerset Place. The subject, as I recollect, was the Deluge, at that point of time when the water was verging to the top of the last uncovered mountain. Near to the spot was seen the last of the antediluvian race, exclusive of those who were saved in the ark of Noah. This was one of those giants, then the inhabitants of the earth, who had still strength to swim, and with one of his hands held aloft his infant child. Upon

the small remaining dry spot appeared a famished lion, ready to spring at the child and devour it. Mr. Lowe told me that Johnson said to him, 'Sir, your picture is noble and probable.' 'A compliment, indeed (said Mr. Lowe), from a man who cannot lie, and cannot be mistaken.'

About this time he wrote to Mrs. Lucy Porter, mentioning his bad health, and that he intended a visit to Lichfield. 'It is (says he) with no great expectation of amendment that I make every year a journey into the country; but it is pleasant to visit those whose kindness has been often experienced.'

On April 18 (being Good Friday), I found him at breakfast in his usual manner upon that day, drinking tea without milk, and eating a cross-bun to prevent faintness; we went to St. Clement's Church, as formerly. When we came home from church, he placed himself on one of the stone seats at his garden door, and I took the other, and thus in the open air, and in a placid frame of mind, he talked away very easily. JOHNSON: 'Were I a country gentleman, I should not be very hospitable, I should not have crowds in my house.' BOSWELL: 'Sir Alexander Dick tells me, that he remembers having a thousand people in a year to dine at his house; that is, reckoning each person as one, each time that he dined there.' JOHNSON: 'That, sir, is about three a day.' BOSWELL: 'How your statement lessens the idea!' JOHNSON: 'That, sir, is the good of counting. It brings everything to a certainty, which before floated in the mind indefinitely.' BOSWELL: 'But *Omne ignotum pro magifico est*: one is sorry to have this diminished.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, you should not allow yourself to be delighted

with error.' BOSWELL: 'Three a day seem but few.'  
 JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, he who entertains three a day does very liberally. And if there is a large family, the poor entertain those three, for they eat what the poor would get; there must be superfluous meat; it must be given to the poor, or thrown out.' BOSWELL: 'I observe in London, that the poor go about and gather bones, which I understand are manufactured.'  
 JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, they boil them, and extract a grease from them for greasing wheels and other purposes. Of the best pieces they make a mock ivory, which is used for hafts to knives, and various other things; the coarser pieces they burn and pound, and sell the ashes.' BOSWELL: 'For what purpose, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, for making a furnace for the chemists for melting iron. A paste made of burnt bones will stand a stronger heat than anything else. Consider, sir, if you are to melt iron, you cannot line your pot with brass, because it is softer than iron, and would melt sooner; nor with iron, for though malleable iron is harder than cast iron, yet it would not do; but a paste of burnt bones will not melt.' BOSWELL: 'Do you know, sir, I have discovered a manufacture to a great extent, of what you only piddle at,—scraping and drying the peel of oranges.<sup>1</sup> At a place in Newgate Street, there is a prodigious quantity prepared, which they sell to the distillers.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I believe they make a higher thing out of them than a spirit; they make

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<sup>1</sup> It is suggested to me by an anonymous annotator on my work, that the reason why Dr. Johnson collected the peels of squeezed oranges, may be found in the 358th Letter in Mrs. Piozzi's Collection, where it appears that he recommended 'dried orange-peel, finely powdered,' as a medicine.

what is called orange-butter, the oil of the orange inspissated, which they mix perhaps with common pomatum, and make it fragrant. The oil does not fly off in the drying.'

BOSWELL: 'I wish to have a good walled garden.'  
 JOHNSON: 'I don't think it would be worth the expense to you. We compute in England a park wall at a thousand pounds a mile; now a garden wall must cost at least as much. You intend your trees should grow higher than a deer will leap. Now let us see;—for a hundred pounds you could only have forty-four square yards, which is very little; for two hundred pounds, you may have eighty-four square yards, which is very well. But when will you get the value of two hundred pounds of walls, in fruit, in your climate? No, sir, such contention with nature is not worth while. I would plant an orchard, and have plenty of such fruit as ripen well in your country. My friend, Dr. Madden, of Ireland, said, that, "in an orchard there should be enough to eat, enough to lay up, enough to be stolen, and enough to rot upon the ground." Cherries are an early fruit, you may have them; and you may have the early apples and pears.'  
 BOSWELL: 'We cannot have nonpareils.'  
 JOHNSON: 'Sir, you can no more have nonpareils than you can have grapea.'  
 BOSWELL: 'We have them, sir; but they are very bad.'  
 JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, never try to have a thing merely to show that you *cannot* have it. From ground that would let for forty shillings you may have a large orchard; and you see it costs you only forty shillings. Nay, you may graze the ground when the trees are grown up; you cannot while they are young.'  
 BOSWELL: 'Is not a good garden a

very common thing in England, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Not so common, sir, as you imagine. In Lincolnshire there is hardly an orchard; in Staffordshire very little fruit.' BOSWELL: 'Has Langton no orchard?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir.' BOSWELL: 'How so, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, from the general negligence of the county. He has it not, because nobody else has it.' BOSWELL: 'A hot-house is a certain thing; I may have that.' JOHNSON: 'A hot-house is pretty certain; but you must first build it, then you must keep fires in it, and you must have a gardener to take care of it.' BOSWELL: 'But if I have a gardener at any rate?' JOHNSON: 'Why, yes.' BOSWELL: 'I'd have it near my house; there is no need to have it in the orchard.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, I'd have it near my house. I would plan a great many currants; the fruit is good, and they make a pretty sweetmeat.'

I record this minute detail, which some may think trifling, in order to show clearly how this great man, whose mind could grasp such large and extensive subjects, as he has shown in his literary labours, was yet well-informed in the common affairs of life, and loved to illustrate them.

Mr. Walker, the celebrated master of elocution, came in, and then we went up-stairs into the study. I asked him if he had taught many clergymen. JOHNSON: 'I hope not.' WALKER: 'I have taught only one, and he is the best reader I ever heard, not by my teaching, but by his own natural talents.' JOHNSON: 'Were he the best reader in the world, I would not have it told that he was taught.' Here was one of his peculiar prejudices. Could it be any disadvan-

tage to the clergyman to have it known that he was taught an easy and graceful delivery? BOSWELL: 'Will you not allow, sir, that a man may be taught to read well?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, so far as to read better than he might do without being taught, yes. Formerly it was supposed that there was no difference in reading, but that one read as well as another.' BOSWELL: 'It is wonderful to see old Sheridan as enthusiastic about oratory as ever.' WALKER: 'His enthusiasm as to what oratory will do, may be too great: but he reads well.' JOHNSON: 'He reads well, but he reads low; and you know it is much easier to read low than to read high, for when you read high, you are much more limited, your loudest note can be but one, and so the variety is less in proportion to the loudness. Now some people have occasion to speak to an extensive audience, and must speak loud to be heard.' WALKER: 'The art is to read strong, though low.'

Talking of the origin of language;—JOHNSON: 'It must have come by inspiration. A thousand, nay, a million of children could not invent a language. While the organs are pliable, there is not understanding enough to form a language; by the time that there is understanding enough, the organs are become stiff. We know that after a certain age we cannot learn to pronounce a new language. No foreigner, who comes to England when advanced in life, ever pronounces English tolerably well; at least such instances are very rare. When I maintain that language must have come by inspiration, I do not mean that inspiration is required for rhetoric, and all the beauties of language; for when once man has

language, we can conceive that he may gradually form modifications of it. I mean only that inspiration seems to me to be necessary to give man the faculty of speech; to inform him that he may have speech; which I think he could no more find out without inspiration, than cows or hogs would think of such a faculty.' WALKER: 'Do you think, sir, that there are any perfect synonyms in any language?' JOHNSON: 'Originally there were not; but by using words negligently, or in poetry, one word comes to be confounded with another.'

He talked of Dr. Dodd. 'A friend of mine (said he) came to me and told me, that a lady wished to have Dr. Dodd's picture in a bracelet, and asked me for a motto. I said I could think of no better than *Currat Lex*. I was very willing to have him pardoned, that is, to have the sentence changed to transportation; but, when he was once hanged, I did not wish he should be made a saint.'

Mrs. Burney, wife of his friend Dr. Burney, came in, and he seemed to be entertained with her conversation.

Garrick's funeral was talked of as extravagantly expensive. Johnson, from his dislike to exaggeration, would not allow that it was distinguished by any extraordinary pomp. 'Were there not six horses to each coach?' said Mrs. Burney. JOHNSON: 'Madam, there were no more six horses than six phoenixes.'

Mrs. Burney wondered that some very beautiful new buildings should be erected in Moorfields, in so shocking a situation as between Bedlam and St. Luke's Hospital; and said she could not live there. JOHNSON:



'Nay, madam, you see nothing there to hurt you. You no more think of madness by having windows that look to Bedlam, than you think of death by having windows that look to a churchyard.' MRS. BURNNEY: 'We may look to a churchyard, sir; for it is right that we should be kept in mind of death.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, madam, if you go to that, it is right that we should be kept in mind of madness, which is occasioned by too much indulgence of imagination. I think a very moral use may be made of these new buildings: I would have those who have heated imaginations live there, and take warning.' MRS. BURNNEY: 'But, sir, many of the poor people that are mad have become so from disease, or from distressing events. It is, therefore, not their fault, but their misfortune; and, therefore, to think of them is a melancholy consideration.'

Time passed on in conversation till it was too late for the service of the church at three o'clock. I took a walk, and left him alone for some time; then returned, and we had coffee and conversation again by ourselves.

I stated the character of a noble friend of mine, as a curious case for his opinion:—'He is the most inexplicable man to me that I ever knew. Can you explain him, sir? He is, I really believe, noble-minded, generous, and princely. But his most intimate friends may be separated from him for years, without his ever asking a question concerning them. He will meet them with a formality, a coldness, a stately indifference; but when they come close to him, and fairly engage him in conversation, they find him as easy, pleasant, and kind, as they could wish.

One then supposes that what is so agreeable will soon be renewed ; but stay away from him for half a year, and he will neither call on you, nor send to inquire about you.' JOHNSON : ' Why, sir, I cannot ascertain his character exactly, as I do not know him ; but I should not like to have such a man for my friend. He may love study, and wish not to be interrupted by his friends ; *Amici fures temporis*. He may be a frivolous man, and be so much occupied with petty pursuits, that he may not want friends. Or he may have a notion that there is a dignity in appearing indifferent, while he in fact may not be more indifferent at his heart than another.'

We went to evening prayers at St. Clement's, at seven, and then parted.

On Sunday, April 20, being Easter Day, after attending solemn service at St. Paul's, I came to Dr. Johnson, and found Mr. Lowe, the painter, sitting with him. Mr. Lowe mentioned the great number of new buildings of late in London, yet that Dr. Johnson had observed, that the number of inhabitants was not increased. JOHNSON : ' Why, sir, the bills of mortality prove that no more people die now than formerly ; so it is plain no more live. The register of births proves nothing, for not one-tenth of the people of London are born there.' BOSWELL : ' I believe, sir, a great many of the children born in London die early.' JOHNSON : ' Why yes, sir.' BOSWELL : ' But those who do live are as stout and strong people as any : Dr. Price says, they must be naturally strong to get through.' JOHNSON : ' That is system, sir. A great traveller observes, that it is said there are no weak or deformed people among the Indians ; but he with much sagacity assigns

the reason of this, which is, that the hardship of their life as hunters and fishers, does not allow weak or diseased children to grow up. Now had I been an Indian, I must have died early; my eyes would not have served me to get food. I indeed now could fish, give me English tackle; but had I been an Indian I must have starved, or they would have knocked me on the head, when they saw I could do nothing.’

BOSWELL: ‘Perhaps they would have taken care of you: we are told they are fond of oratory; you would have talked to them.’

JOHNSON: ‘Nay, sir, I should not have lived long enough to be fit to talk; I should have been dead before I was ten years old. Depend upon it, sir, a savage, when he is hungry, will not carry about with him a looby of nine years old, who cannot help himself. They have no affection, sir.’

BOSWELL: ‘I believe natural affection, of which we hear so much, is very small.’

JOHNSON: ‘Sir, natural affection is nothing; but affection from principle and established duty is sometimes wonderfully strong.’

LOWE: ‘A hen, sir, will feed her chickens in preference to herself.’

JOHNSON: ‘But we don’t know that the hen is hungry; let the hen be fairly hungry, and I’ll warrant she’ll peck the corn herself. A cock, I believe, will feed hens instead of himself; but we don’t know that the cock is hungry.’

BOSWELL: ‘And that, sir, is not from affection but gallantry. But some of the Indians have affection.’

JOHNSON: ‘Sir, that they help some of their children is plain; for some of them live, which they could not do without being helped.’

I dined with him; the company were Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Desmoulins, and Mr. Lowe. He seemed not to

be well, talked little, grew drowsy soon after dinner, and retired, upon which I went away.

Having next day gone to Mr. Burke's seat in the country, from whence I was recalled by an express, that a near relation of mine had killed his antagonist in a duel, and was himself dangerously wounded, I saw little of Dr. Johnson till Monday, April 28th, when I spent a considerable part of the day with him, and introduced the subject, which then chiefly occupied my mind. JOHNSON: 'I do not see, sir, that fighting is absolutely forbidden in Scripture; I see revenge forbidden, but not self-defence.' BOSWELL: 'The Quakers say it is; "Unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek, offer him also the other."' JOHNSON: 'But stay, sir; the text is meant only to have the effect of moderating passion; it is plain that we are not to take it in a literal sense. We see this from the context, where there are other recommendations, which I warrant you the Quaker will not take literally; as, for instance, "From him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away." Let a man whose credit is bad come to a Quaker, and say, "Well, sir, lend me a hundred pounds"; he'll find him as unwilling as any other man. No, sir, a man may shoot the man who invades his character, as he may shoot him who attempts to break into his house.<sup>1</sup> So in 1745, my

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<sup>1</sup> I think it necessary to caution my readers against concluding that in this or any other conversation of Dr. Johnson, they have his serious and deliberate opinion on the subject of duelling. In my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit. p. 386, it appears that he made this frank confession: 'Nobody at times talks more laxly than I do'; and, *ibid.* p. 231, 'He fairly owned he could not explain the rationality of duelling.' We may, therefore, infer, that he could not think that justifiable, which seems so inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time it must be confessed, that from the prevalent notions of honour, a gentleman who receives a challenge is reduced to a dreadful alternative.

friend, Tom Cumming, the Quaker, said he would not fight, but he would drive an ammunition cart; and we know that the Quakers have sent flannel waistcoats to our soldiers, to enable them to fight better.' BOSWELL: 'When a man is the aggressor, and by ill-usage forces on a duel in which he is killed, have we not little ground to hope that he has gone to a state of happiness?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, we are not to judge determinately of the state in which a man leaves this life. He may in a moment have repented effectually, and it is possible may have been accepted of God. There is in Camden's *Remains*, an epitaph upon a very wicked man, who was killed by a fall from his horse, in which he is supposed to say,

"Between the stirrup and the ground,  
I mercy asked, I mercy found."<sup>1</sup>

BOSWELL: 'Is not the expression in the burial-service, "in the *sure* and *certain* hope of a blessed resurrection," too strong to be used indiscriminately, and indeed, sometimes when those over whose bodies it is said, have been notoriously profane?' JOHNSON: 'It is sure and certain *hope*, sir; not *belief*.' I did not insist further; but cannot help thinking that less positive words would be more proper.<sup>2</sup>

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A remarkable instance of this is furnished by a clause in the will of the late Colonel Thomas, of the Guards, written the night before he fell in a duel, September 3, 1783: 'In the first place, I commit my soul to Almighty God, in hopes of his mercy and pardon for the irreligious step I now (in compliance with the unwarrantable customs of this wicked world) put myself under the necessity of taking.'

<sup>1</sup> [In repeating this epitaph Johnson improved it. The original runs thus:

'Betwixt the stirrup and the ground,  
Mercy I asked, mercy I found.'—M.]

<sup>2</sup> Upon this objection the Reverend Mr. Ralph Churton, Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, has favoured me with the following satis-

Talking of a man who was grown very fat, so as to be incommoded with corpulency; he said, 'He eats too much, sir.' BOSWELL: 'I don't know, sir; you will see one man fat who eats moderately, and another lean who eats a great deal.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, whatever may be the quantity that a man eats, it is plain that if he is too fat, he has eaten more than he should have done. One man may have a digestion that consumes food better than common; but it is certain that solidity is increased by putting something to it.' BOSWELL: 'But may not solids swell and be distended?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, they may swell and be distended; but that is not fat.'

We talked of the accusation against a gentleman for supposed delinquencies in India. JOHNSON: 'What foundation there is for accusation I know not, but they will not get at him. Where bad actions are committed at so great a distance, a delinquent can obscure the evidence till the scent becomes cold; there is a cloud between which cannot be penetrated; therefore all distant power is bad. I am clear that the best plan for the government of India is a despotic governor; for if he be a good man, it is evidently the best government; and supposing him to be a

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factory observation. 'The passage in the burial-service does not mean the resurrection of the person interred, but the general resurrection; it is in sure and certain hope of *the* resurrection; not *his* resurrection. Where the deceased is really spoken of, the expression is very different, "as our hope is this our brother doth" [rest in Christ], a mode of speech consistent with everything but absolute certainty that the person departed doth *not* rest in Christ, which no one can be assured of, without immediate revelation from Heaven. In the first of these places also, "eternal life" does not necessarily mean eternity of bliss, but merely the eternity of the state, whether in happiness or in misery, to ensue upon the resurrection; which is probably the sense of "the life everlasting," in the Apostles' Creed. See Wheatly and Bennet on the 'Common Prayer.'

bad man, it is better to have one plunderer than many. A governor, whose power is checked, lets others plunder, that he himself may be allowed to plunder; but if despotic, he sees that the more he lets others plunder, the less there will be for himself, so he restrains them; and though he himself plunders, the country is a gainer, compared with being plundered by numbers.'

I mentioned the very liberal payment which had been received for reviewing; and, as evidence of this, that it had been proved in a trial, that Dr. Shebbeare had received six guineas a sheet for that kind of literary labour. JOHNSON: 'Sir, he might get six guineas for a particular sheet, but not *communibus sheetibus*.' BOSWELL: 'Pray, sir, by a sheet of review is it meant that it shall be all of the writer's own composition? or are extracts, made from the book reviewed, deducted?' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; it is a sheet, no matter of what.' BOSWELL: 'I think that it is not reasonable.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, it is. A man will more easily write a sheet all his own, than read an octavo volume to get extracts.' To one of Johnson's wonderful fertility of mind, I believe writing was really easier than reading and extracting; but with ordinary men the case is very different. A great deal, indeed, will depend upon the care and judgment with which extracts are made. I can suppose the operation to be tedious and difficult; but in many instances we must observe crude morsels cut out of books, as if at random; and when a large extract is made from one place, it surely may be done with very little trouble. One, however, I must acknowledge, might be led, from the practice of

reviewers, to suppose that they take a pleasure in original writing; for we often find, that instead of giving an accurate account of what has been done by the author whose work they are reviewing, which is surely the proper business of a literary journal, they produce some plausible and ingenious conceits of their own, upon the topics which have been discussed.

Upon being told that old Mr. Sheridan, indignant at the neglect of his oratorical plans, had threatened to go to America;—JOHNSON: ‘I hope he will go to America.’ BOSWELL: ‘The Americans don’t want oratory.’ JOHNSON: ‘But we can want Sheridan.’

On Monday, April 29, I found him at home in the forenoon, and Mr. Seward with him. Horace having been mentioned;—BOSWELL: ‘There is a great deal of thinking in his works. One finds there almost everything but religion.’ SEWARD: ‘He speaks of his returning to it, in his Ode *Parvus Deorum cultor et infrequens*.’ JOHNSON: ‘Sir, he was not in earnest; this was merely poetical.’ BOSWELL: ‘There are, I am afraid, many people who have no religion at all.’ SEWARD: ‘And sensible people too.’ JOHNSON: ‘Why, sir, not sensible in that respect. There must be either a natural or a moral stupidity, if one lives in a total neglect of so very important a concern.’ SEWARD: ‘I wonder that there should be people without religion.’ JOHNSON: ‘Sir, you need not wonder at this, when you consider how large a proportion of almost every man’s life is passed without thinking of it. I myself was for some years totally regardless of religion. It had dropped out of my mind. It was at an early part of my life. Sickness brought it back, and I hope I



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

I mentioned a worthy friend of ours whom we valued much, but observed that he was too ready to introduce religious discourse upon all occasions. JOHNSON: 'Why yes, sir, he will introduce religious discourse without seeing whether it will end in instruction and improvement, or produce some profane jest. He would introduce it in the company of Wilkes, and twenty more such.'

I mentioned Dr. Johnson's excellent distinction between liberty of conscience and liberty of teaching. JOHNSON: 'Consider, sir, if you have children whom you wish to educate in the principles of the Church of England, and there comes a Quaker who tries to pervert them to his principles, you would drive away the Quaker. You would not trust to the predomination of right, which you believe is in your opinions; you will keep wrong out of their heads. Now the vulgar are the children of the State. If any one attempts to teach them doctrines contrary to what the State approves, the magistrate may and ought to restrain him.' SEWARD: 'Would you restrain private con-

versation, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, it is difficult to say where private conversation begins, and where it ends. If we three should discuss even the great question concerning the existence of a Supreme Being by ourselves, we should not be restrained; for that would be to put an end to all improvement. But if we should discuss it in the presence of ten boarding-school girls, and as many boys, I think the magistrate would do well to put us in the stocks, to finish the debate there.'

Lord Hailes had sent him a present of a curious little printed poem, on repairing the University of Aberdeen, by David Malloch, which he thought would please Johnson, as affording clear evidence that Mallet had appeared even as a literary character by the name of Malloch; his changing which to one of softer sound, had given Johnson occasion to introduce him into his *Dictionary*, under the article *Alias*.<sup>1</sup> This piece was, I suppose, one of Mallet's first essays. It is preserved in his works, with several variations. Johnson having read aloud, from the beginning of it, where there were some commonplace assertions as to the superiority of ancient times;—'How false (said he) is all this, to say that in ancient times learning was not

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<sup>1</sup> [Malloch, as Mr. Bindley observes to me, 'continued to write his name thus, *after he came to London*. His verses prefixed to the second edition of Thomson's *Winter* are so subscribed, and so are his letters written in London, and published a few years ago in the *European Magazine*; but he soon afterwards adopted the alteration to Mallet, for he is so called in the list of subscribers to Savage's *Miscellanies*, printed in 1726; and thenceforward uniformly Mallet, in all his writings.'—M.]

[A notion has been entertained that no such exemplification of *Alias* is to be found in Johnson's *Dictionary*, and that the whole story was waggishly fabricated by Wilkes in the *North Briton*. The real fact is, that it is not to be found in the folio or quarto editions, but was added by Johnson in his own *octavo* abridgment, in 1756.—J. BOSWELL, Junior.]

a disgrace to a Peer as it is now. In ancient times a Peer was as ignorant as any one else. He would have been angry to have it thought he could write his name. Men in ancient times dared to stand forth with a degree of ignorance with which nobody would dare now to stand forth. I am always angry, when I hear ancient times praised at the expense of modern times. There is now a great deal more learning in the world than there was formerly; for it is universally diffused. You have, perhaps, no man who knows as much Greek and Latin as Bentley; no man who knows as much mathematics as Newton; but you have many more men who know Greek and Latin, and who know mathematics.'

On Thursday, May 1, I visited him in the evening along with young Mr. Burke. He said, 'It is strange that there should be so little reading in the world and so much writing. People in general do not willingly read if they can have anything else to amuse them. There must be an external impulse; emulation, or vanity, or avarice. The progress which the understanding makes through a book has more pain than pleasure in it. Language is scanty and inadequate to express the nice gradations and mixtures of our feelings. No man reads a book of science from pure inclination. The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions, which contain a quick succession of events. However, I have this year read all Virgil through. I read a book of the *Æneid* every night, so it was done in twelve nights, and I had a great delight in it. The *Georgics* did not give me so much pleasure, except the fourth book. The *Eclogues* I have almost all by heart. I do not think the story

of the *Æneid* interesting. I like the story of the *Odyssey* much better; and this not on account of the wonderful things which it contains; for there are wonderful things enough in the *Æneid*;—the ships of the Trojans turned to sea-nymphs,—the tree at Polydorus's tomb dropping blood. The story of the *Odyssey* is interesting, as a great part of it is domestic. It has been said there is pleasure in writing, particularly in writing verses. I allow, you may have pleasure from writing, after it is over, if you have written well;<sup>1</sup> but you don't go willingly to it again. I know when I have been writing verses I have run my finger down the margin to see how many I had made and how few I had to make.'

He seemed to be in a very placid humour, and although I have no note of the particulars of young Mr. Burke's conversation, it is but justice to mention in general, that it was such that Dr. Johnson said to me afterwards, 'He did very well indeed; I have a mind to tell his father.'

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'DEAR SIR,—The gentleman who waits on you with this is Mr. Cruikshanks, who wishes to succeed his friend Dr. Hunter, as Professor of Anatomy in the Royal Academy. His qualifications are very generally known, and it adds dignity to the institution that such men<sup>2</sup> are candidates.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.  
'May 2, 1783.'

I have no minute of any interview with Johnson till Thursday, May 15th, when I find what follows:

<sup>1</sup> [Dum pingit, fruitur arte; postquam pinxerit, fruitur fructu artis.—*Seneca*.—KEARNEY.]

<sup>2</sup> Let it be remembered by those who accuse Dr. Johnson of illiberality that both were *Scotchmen*.

BOSWELL: 'I wish much to be in Parliament, sir.'

JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, unless you come resolved to support any administration you would be the worse for being in Parliament, because you would be obliged to live more expensively.' BOSWELL: 'Perhaps, sir,

I should be the less happy for being in Parliament. I never would sell my vote, and I should be vexed if things went wrong.'

JOHNSON: 'That's cant, sir. It would not vex you more in the House than in the gallery: public affairs vex no man.'

BOSWELL: 'Have not they vexed yourself a little, sir? Have not you been vexed by all the turbulence of this reign, and by that absurd vote of the House of Commons, "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished!"'

JOHNSON: 'Sir, I have never slept an hour less nor ate an ounce less meat. I would have knocked the factious dogs on the head, to be sure; but I was not vexed.'

BOSWELL: 'I declare, sir, upon my honour, I did imagine I was vexed, and took a pride in it; but it *was*, perhaps, cant; for I own I neither ate less nor slept less.'

JOHNSON: 'My dear friend, clear your *mind* of cant. You may *talk* as other people do: you may say to a man, "Sir, I am your most humble servant."

You are *not* his most humble servant. You may say, "These are bad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times." You don't mind the times.

You tell a man, "I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet." You don't care sixpence whether he is wet or dry.

You may *talk* in this manner; it is a mode of talking in Society: but don't *think* foolishly."

I talked of living in the country. JOHNSON: 'Don't

set up for what is called hospitality : it is a waste of time and a waste of money ; you are eaten up, and not the more respected for your liberality. If your house be like an inn, nobody cares for you. A man who stays a week with another makes him a slave for a week.' BOSWELL : 'But there are people, sir, who make their houses a home to their guests, and are themselves quite easy.' JOHNSON : 'Then, sir, home must be the same to the guests, and they need not come.'

Here he discovered a notion common enough in persons not much accustomed to entertain company, that there must be a degree of elaborate attention, otherwise company will think themselves neglected ; and such attention is no doubt very fatiguing. He proceeded : 'I would not, however, be a stranger in my own country ; I would visit my neighbours, and receive their visits ; but I would not be in haste to return visits. If a gentleman comes to see me I tell him he does me a great deal of honour. I do not go to see him perhaps for ten weeks ; then we are very complaisant to each other. No, sir, you will have much more influence by giving or lending money where it is wanted than by hospitality.'

On Saturday, May 17, I saw him for a short time. Having mentioned that I had that morning been with old Mr. Sheridan, he remembered their former intimacy with a cordial warmth, and said to me, 'Tell Mr. Sheridan I shall be glad to see him and shake hands with him.' BOSWELL : 'It is to me very wonderful that resentment should be kept up so long.' JOHNSON : 'Why, sir, it is not altogether resentment that he does not visit me ; it is partly falling out of

the habit,—partly disgust, as one has at a drug that has made him sick. Besides, he knows that I laugh at his oratory.’

Another day I spoke of one of our friends, of whom he, as well as I, had a very high opinion. He expatiated in his praise; but added, ‘Sir, he is a cursed Whig, a *bottomless* Whig, as they all are now.’

I mentioned my expectations from the interest of an eminent person then in power; adding, ‘but I have no claim but the claim of friendship; however, some people will go a great way for that motive.’ JOHNSON: ‘Sir, they will go all the way from that motive.’ A gentleman talked of retiring. ‘Never think of that,’ said Johnson. The gentleman urged, ‘I should then do no ill.’ JOHNSON: ‘Nor no good either. Sir, it would be a civil suicide.’

On Monday, May 26, I found him at tea, and the celebrated Miss Burney, the author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, with him. I asked if there would be any speakers in Parliament if there were no places to be obtained. JOHNSON: ‘Yes, sir. Why do you speak here? Either to instruct and entertain, which is a benevolent motive; or for distinction, which is a selfish motive.’ I mentioned *Cecilia*. JOHNSON (with an air of animated satisfaction): ‘Sir, if you talk of *Cecilia*, talk on.’

We talked of Mr. Barry’s exhibition of his pictures. JOHNSON: ‘Whatever the hand may have done the mind has done its part. There is a grasp of mind there which you find nowhere else.’<sup>1</sup>

I asked, whether a man naturally virtuous, or one

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<sup>1</sup> In Mr. Barry’s printed analysis, or description of these pictures, he speaks of Johnson’s character in the highest terms.

who has overcome wicked inclinations, is the best. JOHNSON: 'Sir, to *you*, the man who has overcome wicked inclinations is not the best. He has more merit to *himself*: I would rather trust my money to a man who has no hands, and so a physical impossibility to steal, than to a man of the most honest principles. There is a witty satirical story of Foote. He had a small bust of Garrick placed upon his bureau. "You may be surprised (said he) that I allow him to be so near my gold;—but you will observe, he has no hands."'

On Friday, May 30, being to set out for Scotland next morning, I passed a part of the day with him in more than usual earnestness; as his health was in a more precarious state than at any time when I had parted from him. He, however, was quick and lively, and critical, as usual. I mentioned one who was a very learned man. JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir, he has a great deal of learning; but it never lies straight. There is never one idea by the side of another; 'tis all entangled: and then he drives it so awkwardly upon conversation!'

I stated to him an anxious thought, by which a sincere Christian might be disturbed, even when conscious of having lived a good life, so far as is consistent with human infirmity; he might fear that he should afterwards fall away and be guilty of such crimes as would render all his former religion vain. Could there be, upon this awful subject, such a thing as balancing of accounts; suppose a man who has led a good life for seven years commits an act of wickedness and instantly dies; will his former good life have any effect in his favour? JOHNSON: 'Sir, if a man



has led a good life for seven years, and then is hurried by passion to do what is wrong, and is suddenly carried off, depend upon it he will have the reward of his seven years' good life: God will not take a catch of him. Upon this principle Richard Baxter believes that a suicide may be saved. "If (says he) it should be objected that what I maintain may encourage suicide, I answer, I am not to tell a lie to prevent it." BOSWELL: 'But does not the text say, "As the tree falls, so it must lie?"' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; as the tree falls: but (after a little pause) that is meant as to the general state of the tree, not what is the effect of a sudden blast.' In short, he interpreted the expression as referring to condition, not to position. The common notion, therefore, seems to be erroneous, and Shenstone's witty remark on divines trying to give the tree a jerk upon a death-bed, to make it lie favourably, is not well founded.

I asked him what works of Richard Baxter's I should read. He said, 'Read any of them; they are all good.'

He said, 'Get as much force of mind as you can. Live within your income. Always have something saved at the end of the year. Let your imports be more than your exports, and you'll never go far wrong.'

I assured him, that in the extensive and various range of his acquaintance there never had been any one who had a more sincere respect and affection for him than I had. He said, 'I believe it, sir. Were I in distress, there is no man to whom I should sooner come than to you. I should like to come and have a cottage in your park, toddle about, live mostly on

milk, and be taken care of by Mrs. Boswell. She and I are good friends now; are we not?’

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

He embraced me and gave me his blessing, as usual when I was leaving him for any length of time. I walked from his door to-day with a fearful apprehension of what might happen before I returned.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM WINDHAM

‘SIR,—The bringer of this letter is the father of Miss Philips,<sup>1</sup> a singer, who comes to try her voice on the stage at Dublin.

‘Mr. Philips is one of my old friends; and as I am of opinion that neither he nor his daughter will do anything that can disgrace their benefactors, I take the liberty of entreating you to countenance and protect them so far as may be suitable to your station<sup>2</sup> and character; and shall consider myself as obliged by any favourable notice which they shall have the honour of receiving from you.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘*London, May 31, 1783.*’

The following is another instance of his active benevolence:

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

‘DEAR SIR,—I have sent you some of my godson’s<sup>3</sup> performances, of which I do not pretend to form any opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Now the celebrated Mrs. Crouch.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Windham was at this time in Dublin, Secretary to the Earl of Northington, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

<sup>3</sup> Son of Mr. Samuel Patterson.

When I took the liberty of mentioning him to you, I did not know what I have since been told, that Mr. Moser had admitted him among the students of the Academy. What more can be done for him, I earnestly entreat you to consider; for I am very desirous that he should derive some advantage from my connection with him. If you are inclined to see him I will bring him to wait on you at any time that you shall be pleased to appoint.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'June 2, 1783.'

My anxious apprehensions at parting with him this year proved to be but too well founded; for not long afterwards he had a dreadful stroke of the palsy, of which there are very full and accurate accounts in letters written by himself, to show with what composure of mind and resignation to the Divine Will his steady piety enabled him to behave.

TO MR. EDMUND ALLEN

'DEAR SIR,—It has pleased God this morning to deprive me of the powers of speech; and as I do not know but that it may be his farther good pleasure to deprive me soon of my senses, I request you will on the receipt of this note, come to me, and act for me, as the exigencies of my case may require.—I am, sincerely yours,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'June 17, 1783.'

TO THE REV. DR. JOHN TAYLOR

'DEAR SIR,—It has pleased God, by a paralytic stroke in the night, to deprive me of speech.

'I am very desirous of Dr. Heberden's assistance, as I think my case is not past remedy. Let me see you as soon as it is possible. Bring Dr. Heberden with you, if you can; but come yourself at all events. I am glad you are so well when I am so dreadfully attacked.

'I think that by a speedy application of stimulants much may be done. I question if a vomit, vigorous and rough,

would not rouse the organs of speech to action. As it is too early to send, I will try to recollect what I can that can be suspected to have brought on this dreadful distress.

'I have been accustomed to bleed frequently for an asthmatic complaint; but have forborne for some time by Dr. Pepys's persuasion, who perceived my legs beginning to swell. I sometimes alleviate a painful, or more properly an oppressive, constriction of my chest by opiates; and have lately taken opium frequently, but the last, or two last times, in smaller quantities. My largest dose is three grains, and last night I took but two. You will suggest these things (and they are all that I can call to mind) to Dr. Heberden.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'June 17, 1783.'

Two days after he wrote thus to Mrs. Thrale:

'On Monday, the 16th, I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has been long my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God that however he might afflict my body he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good: I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

'Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it.

'In order to rouse the vocal organs I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it; but all was vain. I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive

what I should do. Though God stopped my speech he left me my hand; I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands.

'I then wrote a card to Mr. Allen that I might have a discreet friend at hand to act as occasion should require. In penning this note I had some difficulty; my hand, I knew not how nor why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr. Taylor to come to me and bring Dr. Heberden: and I sent to Dr. Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly and give me great hopes; but you may imagine my situation. I have so far recovered my vocal powers as to repeat the Lord's Prayer with no very imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was; but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty.'

TO MR. THOMAS DAVIES

'DEAR SIR,—I have had, indeed, a very heavy blow; but God, who yet spares my life, I humbly hope will spare my understanding and restore my speech. As I am not at all helpless I want no particular assistance, but am strongly affected by Mrs. Davies's tenderness; and when I think she can do me good shall be very glad to call upon her. I had ordered friends to be shut out; but one or two have found the way in; and if you come you shall be admitted; for I know not whom I can see that will bring more amusement on his tongue or more kindness in his heart.—I am, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'June 18, 1783.'

It gives me great pleasure to preserve such a memorial of Johnson's regard for Mr. Davies, to whom I was indebted for my introduction to him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Poor Derrick, however, though he did not himself introduce me to Dr. Johnson, as he promised, had the merit of introducing me to Davies, the immediate introducer.

He indeed loved Davies cordially, of which I shall give the following little evidence. One day when he had treated him with too much asperity, Tom, who was not without pride and spirit, went off in a passion ; but he had hardly reached home when Frank, who had been sent after him, delivered this note :—‘Come, come, dear Davies, I am always sorry when we quarrel : send me word that we are friends.’

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

‘DEAR SIR,—Your anxiety about my health is very friendly and very agreeable with your general kindness. I have, indeed, had a very frightful blow. On the 17th of last month, about three in the morning, as near as I can guess, I perceived myself almost totally deprived of speech. I had no pain. My organs were so obstructed that I could say *no*, but could scarcely say *yes*. I wrote the necessary directions, for it pleased God to spare my hand, and sent for Dr. Heberden and Dr. Brocklesby. Between the time in which I discovered my own disorder, and that in which I sent for the doctors, I had, I believe, in spite of my surprise and solicitude, a little sleep, and Nature began to renew its operations. They came and gave the directions which the disease required, and from that time I have been continually improving in articulation. I can now speak, but the nerves are weak, and I cannot continue discourse long ; but strength, I hope, will return. The physicians consider me as cured. I was last Sunday at church. On Tuesday I took an airing to Hampstead and dined with the Club, where Lord Palmerston was proposed, and, against my opinion, was rejected.<sup>1</sup> I designed to go next week with Mr. Langton to Rochester, where I purpose to stay about ten days and then try some other air. I have many kind invitations. Your brother has very frequently inquired after me. Most of my friends have, indeed, been very attentive. Thank dear Lord Hales for his present.

<sup>1</sup> His Lordship was soon after chosen, and is now a member of the Club.

'I hope you found at your return everything gay and prosperous, and your lady, in particular, quite recovered and confirmed. Pay her my respects.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, July 3, 1783.'

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'DEAR MADAM,—The account which you give of your health is but melancholy. May it please God to restore you. My disease affected my speech, and still continues, in some degree, to obstruct my utterance; my voice is distinct enough for a while; but the organs being still weak are quickly weary: but in other respects I am, I think, rather better than I have lately been; and can let you know my state without the help of any other hand.

'In the opinion of my friends, and in my own, I am gradually mending. The physicians consider me as cured, and I had leave four days ago to wash the cantharides from my head. Last Tuesday I dined at the Club.

'I am going next week into Kent, and purpose to change the air frequently this summer; whether I shall wander so far as Staffordshire I cannot tell. I should be glad to come. Return my thanks to Mrs. Cobb and Mr. Pearson, and all that have shown attention to me.

'Let us, my dear, pray for one another, and consider our sufferings as notices mercifully given us to prepare ourselves for another state.

'I live now but in a melancholy way. My old friend Mr. Levett is dead, who lived with me in the house, and was useful and companionable; Mrs. Desmoulins is gone away; and Mrs. Williams is so much decayed that she can add little to another's gratifications. The world passes away and we are passing with it; but there is, doubtless, another world, which will endure for ever. Let us all fit ourselves for it.—I am,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, July 5, 1783.'

Such was the general vigour of his constitution that he recovered from this alarming and severe attack

with wonderful quickness ; so that in July he was able to make a visit to Mr. Langton at Rochester, where he passed about a fortnight, and made little excursions as easily as at any time of his life. In August he went as far as the neighbourhood of Salisbury, to Heale, the seat of William Bowles, Esq., a gentleman whom I have heard him praise for exemplary religious order in his family. In his diary I find a short but honourable mention of this visit :—‘ August 28, I came to Heale without fatigue. 30. I am entertained quite to my mind.’<sup>1</sup>

## TO DR. BROOKLEBY

‘*Heale, near Salisbury, Aug. 29, 1783.*

‘DEAR SIR,—Without appearing to want a just sense of your kind attention, I cannot omit to give an account of the day which seemed to appear in some sort perilous. I rose at five and went out at six ; and having reached Salisbury about nine, went forward a few miles in my friend’s chariot. I was no more wearied with the journey, though it was a high-hung,

<sup>1</sup> [In his letter to Mrs. Thrale, written on the 13th of August, we find the following melancholy paragraph :

‘I am now broken with disease, without the alleviation of familiar friendship or domestic society : I have no middle state between clamour and silence, between general conversation and self-tormenting solitude. Levett is dead, and poor Williams is making haste to die : I know not if she will ever more come out of her chamber.’

In a subsequent letter (August 26) he adds, ‘Mrs. Williams fancies now and then that she grows better, but her vital powers appear to be slowly burning out. Nobody thinks, however, that she will very soon be quite wasted, and as she suffers me to be of very little use to her, I have determined to pass some time with Mr. Bowles near Salisbury, and have taken a place for Thursday.

‘Some benefit may be perhaps received from change of air, some from change of company, and some from mere change of place. It is not easy to grow well in a chamber where one has long been sick, and where everything seen and every person speaking revives and impresses images of pain. Though it be true, that no man can run away from himself, yet he may escape from many causes of useless uneasiness. That *the mind is its own place*, is the boast of a fallen angel that had learned to lie. External locality has great effects, at least upon all embodied beings. I hope this little journey will afford me at least some suspense of melancholy.’—M.]



rough coach, than I should have been forty years ago. We shall now see what air will do. The country is all a plain; and the house in which I am, so far as I can judge from my window, for I write before I have left my chamber, is sufficiently pleasant.

'Be so kind as to continue your attention to Mrs. Williams; it is great consolation to the well, and still greater to the sick, that they find themselves not neglected; and I know that you will be desirous of giving comfort even where you have no great hope of giving help.

'Since I wrote the former part of the letter, I find that by the course of the post I cannot send it before the thirty-first.—I am, etc.,  
SAM. JOHNSON.'

While he was here, he had a letter from Dr. Brocklesby, acquainting him of the death of Mrs. Williams,<sup>1</sup> which affected him a great deal. Though for several years her temper had not been complacent, she had valuable qualities, and her departure left a blank in his house. Upon this occasion he, according to his habitual course of piety, composed a prayer.<sup>2</sup>

I shall here insert a few particulars concerning him, with which I have been favoured by one of his friends.

'He had once conceived the design of writing the

<sup>1</sup> [In his letter to Miss Susanna Thrale, Sept. 9, 1783, he thus writes: 'Pray show mamma this passage of a letter from Dr. Brocklesby. "Mrs. Williams, from mere inanition, has at length paid the great debt of nature about three o'clock this morning. (Sept. 6.) She died without a struggle, retaining her faculties to the very last, and, as she expressed it, having set her house in order, was prepared to leave it at the last summons of nature."']

In his letter to Mrs. Thrale, Sept. 22, he adds, 'Poor Williams has, I hope, seen the end of her afflictions. She acted with prudence, and she bore with fortitude. She has left me.

"Thou thy weary task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages."

Had she had good humour and prompt elocution, her universal curiosity and comprehensive knowledge would have made her the delight of all that knew her. She has left her little to your charity-school.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 226.

life of Oliver Cromwell, saying that he thought it must be highly curious to trace his extraordinary rise to the supreme power, from so obscure a beginning. He at length laid aside his scheme, on discovering that all that can be told of him is already in print; and that it is impracticable to procure any authentic information in addition to what the world is already possessed of.<sup>1</sup>

‘He had likewise projected, but at what part of his life is not known, a work to show how small a quantity of real fiction there is in the world; and that the same images, with very little variation, have served all the authors who have ever written.’

‘His thoughts in the latter part of his life were frequently employed on his deceased friends. He often muttered these, or suchlike sentences: “Poor man! and then he died.”’

‘Speaking of a certain literary friend, “He is a very pompous, puzzling fellow (said he); he lent me a letter once that somebody had written to him, no matter what it was about; but he wanted to have the letter back, and expressed a mighty value for it; he hoped it was to be met with again, he would not lose it for a thousand pounds. I laid my hand upon it

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Malone observes, ‘This, however, was entirely a mistake, as appears from the *Memoirs* published by Mr. Noble. Had Johnson been furnished with the materials which the industry of that gentleman has procured, and with others which, it is believed, are yet preserved in manuscript, he would, without doubt, have produced a most valuable and curious history of Cromwell’s life.’

[I may add that had Johnson given us a Life of Cromwell we should not have been disgusted in numberless instances with, ‘My Lord Protector’ and ‘My Lady Protectress,’ and certainly the brutal ruffian who presided in the bloody assembly that murdered their sovereign would have been characterised by very different epithets than those which are applied to him in this work, where we find him described as the bold and determined Bradshaw.—M.]

soon afterwards, and gave it him. I believe I said I was very glad to have met with it. Oh, then he did not know that it signified anything. So you see, when the letter was lost it was worth a thousand pounds, and when it was found it was not worth a farthing.”

‘The style and character of his conversation is pretty generally known ; it was entirely conducted in conformity with a precept of Lord Bacon, but it is not clear, I apprehend, that this conformity was either perceived or intended by Johnson. The precept alluded to is as follows : “In all kinds of speech, either pleasant, grave, severe, or ordinary, it is convenient to speak leisurely, and rather drawlingly than hastily : because hasty speech confounds the memory, and oftentimes, besides the unseemliness, drives a man either to stammering, a nonplus, or harping on that which should follow ; whereas a slow speech confirmeth the memory, addeth a conceit of wisdom to the hearers, besides a seemliness of speech and countenance.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson’s method of conversation was certainly calculated to excite attention, and to amuse and instruct (as it happened), without wearying or confusing his company. He was always most perfectly clear and perspicuous ; and his language was so accurate, and his sentences so neatly constructed, that his conversation might have been all printed without any correction. At the same time, it was easy and natural ; the accuracy of it had no appearance of labour, constraint, or stiffness ; he seemed more correct than others, by the force of habit, and the customary exercises of his powerful mind.’

<sup>1</sup> [‘Hints for Civil Conversation’—Bacon’s *Works*, 4to, vol. i. p. 371.—M.]

‘He spoke often in praise of French literature. “The French are excellent in this (he would say), they have a book on every subject.” From what he had seen of them he denied them the praise of superior politeness, and mentioned, with very visible disgust, the custom they have of spitting on the floors of their apartments. “This (said the Doctor) is as gross a thing as can well be done; and one wonders how any man, or set of men, can persist in so offensive a practice for a whole day together; one should expect that the first effort towards civilisation would remove it, even among savages.”’

‘Baxter’s *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, he thought, contained the best collection of the evidences of the divinity of the Christian system.’

‘Chemistry was always an interesting pursuit with Dr. Johnson. While he was in Wiltshire, he attended some experiments that were made by a physician at Salisbury, on the new kinds of air. In the course of the experiments frequent mention being made of Dr. Priestley, Dr. Johnson knit his brows, and in a stern manner inquired, “Why do we hear so much of Dr. Priestley?”<sup>1</sup> He was very properly answered, “Sir,

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<sup>1</sup> I do not wonder at Johnson’s displeasure when the name of Dr. Priestley was mentioned; for I know no writer who has been suffered to publish more pernicious doctrines. I shall instance only three. First, *Materialism*, by which *mind* is denied to human nature; which, if believed, must deprive us of every elevated principle. Secondly, *Necessity*, or the doctrine that every action, whether good or bad, is included in an unchangeable and unavoidable system; a notion utterly subversive of moral government. Thirdly, that we have no reason to think that the *future* world (which, as he is pleased to *inform* us, will be adapted to our *merely improved* nature) will be materially different from *this*; which, if believed, would sink wretched mortals into despair, as they could no longer hope for the ‘rest that remaineth for the people of God,’ or for that happiness which is revealed to us as something beyond our present conceptions; but would feel themselves doomed to a continuation of the uneasy state under which they now

because we are indebted to him for these important discoveries." On this Dr. Johnson appeared well content; and replied, "Well, well, I believe we are; and let every man have the honour he has merited."

'A friend was one day, about two years before his death, struck with some instance of Dr. Johnson's great candour. "Well, sir (said he), I will always say that you are a very candid man." "Will you? (replied the Doctor); I doubt then you will be very singular. But, indeed, sir (continued he), I look upon myself to be a man very much misunderstood. I am not an uncandid, nor am I a severe man. I sometimes say more than I mean in jest; and people are apt to believe me serious: however, I am more candid than I was when I was younger. As I know

groan. I say nothing of the petulant intemperance with which he dares to insult the venerable establishments of his country.

As a specimen of his writings, I shall quote the following passage, which appears to me equally absurd and impious, and which might have been retorted upon him by the men who were prosecuted for burning his house. 'I cannot (says he), as a *necessarian* (meaning *necessitarian*), hate *any man*; because I consider him as *being*, in all respects, just what God has *made him to be*; and also as *doing with respect to me* nothing but what he was *expressly designed and appointed to do*: God being the *only cause*, and men nothing more than the *instruments* in his hands to *execute all his pleasure*.—*Illustrations of Philosophical Necessity*, p. 111.

The Reverend Dr. Parr, in a late tract, appears to suppose that *Dr. Johnson not only endured, but almost solicited, an interview with Dr. Priestley*. In justice to Dr. Johnson, I declare my firm belief that he never did. My illustrious friend was particularly resolute in not giving countenance to men whose writings he considered as pernicious to society. I was present at Oxford when Dr. Price, even before he had rendered himself so generally obnoxious by his zeal for the French Revolution, came into a company where Johnson was, who instantly left the room. Much more would he have reprobated Dr. Priestley.

Whoever wishes to see a perfect delineation of this *Literary Jack of all Trades* may find it in an ingenious tract, entitled *A Small Whole-Length of Dr. Priestley*, printed for Rivingtons, in St. Paul's Church yard.

[A fairer record of the work of this famous man will be found under his name in the *National Dictionary of Biography*.—A. B.]

more of mankind, I expect less of them, and am ready now to call a man a *good man* upon easier terms than I was formerly.”

On his return from Heale he wrote to Dr. Burney :

‘I came home on the 18th of September, at noon, to a very disconsolate house. You and I have lost our friends; but you have more friends at home. My domestic companion is taken from me. She is much missed, for her acquisitions were many, and her curiosity universal; so that she partook of every conversation. I am not well enough to go much out; and to sit, and eat, or fast alone, is very wearisome. I always mean to send my compliments to all the ladies.’

His fortitude and patience met with severe trials during this year. The stroke of the palsy has been related circumstantially; but he was also afflicted with the gout, and was besides troubled with a complaint which not only was attended with immediate inconvenience, but threatened him with a surgical operation, from which most men would shrink. The complaint was a *sarcocoele*, which Johnson bore with uncommon firmness, and was not at all frightened while he looked forward to amputation. He was attended by Mr. Pott and Mr. Cruikshank. I have before me a letter of the 30th of July this year, to Mr. Cruikshank, in which he says, ‘I am going to put myself into your hands’: and another accompanying a set of his *Lives of the Poets*, in which he says, ‘I beg your acceptance of these volumes, as an acknowledgment of the great favours which you have bestowed on, sir, your most obliged and most humble servant.’ I have in my possession several more letters from him to Mr. Cruikshank, and also to Dr. Mudge at Plymouth, which it would be improper to insert, as they are

filled with unpleasing technical details. I shall, however, extract from his letters to Dr. Mudge such passages as show either a felicity of expression or the undaunted state of his mind.

'My conviction of your skill, and my belief of your friendship, determine me to entreat your opinion and advice.'—'In this state I with great earnestness desire you to tell me what is to be done. Excision is doubtless necessary to the cure, and I know not any means of palliation. The operation is doubtless painful; but is it dangerous? The pain I hope to endure with decency; but I am loth to put life into much hazard.'—'By representing the gout as an antagonist to the palsy, you have said enough to make it welcome. This is not strictly the first fit, but I hope it is as good as the first; for it is the second that ever confined me; and the first was ten years ago, much less fierce and fiery than this.'—'Write, dear sir, what you can to inform or encourage me. The operation is not delayed by any fears or objections of mine.'

TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—You may very reasonably charge me with insensibility of your kindness, and that of Lady Rothes, since I have suffered so much time to pass without paying any acknowledgment. I now, at last, return my thanks; and why I did it not sooner I ought to tell you. I went into Wiltshire as soon as I well could, and was there much employed in palliating my own malady. Disease produces much selfishness. A man in pain is looking after ease, and lets most other things go as chance shall dispose of them. In the meantime I have lost a companion,<sup>1</sup> to whom I have had recourse for domestic amusement for thirty years, and whose

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Anna Williams.

variety of knowledge never was exhausted; and now return to a habitation vacant and desolate. I carry about a very troublesome and dangerous complaint, which admits of no cure but the chyrurgical knife. Let me have your prayers.— I am, etc.

SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, Sept. 29, 1783.'

Happily the complaint abated without his being put to the torture of amputation. But we must surely admire the manly resolution which he discovered, while it hung over him.

In a letter to the same gentleman he writes: 'The gout has within these four days come upon me with a violence which I never experienced before. It made me helpless as an infant.' And in another, having mentioned Mrs. Williams, he says: 'Whose death, following that of Levett, has now made my house a solitude. She left her little substance to a charity-school. She is, I hope, where there is neither darkness, nor want, nor sorrow.'

I wrote to him, begging to know the state of his health, and mentioned that 'Baxter's *Anacreon*, which is in the library at Auchinleck, was, I find, collated by my father in 1727 with the ms. belonging to the University of Leyden, and he has made a number of notes upon it. Would you advise me to publish a new edition of it?'

His answer was dated September 30:

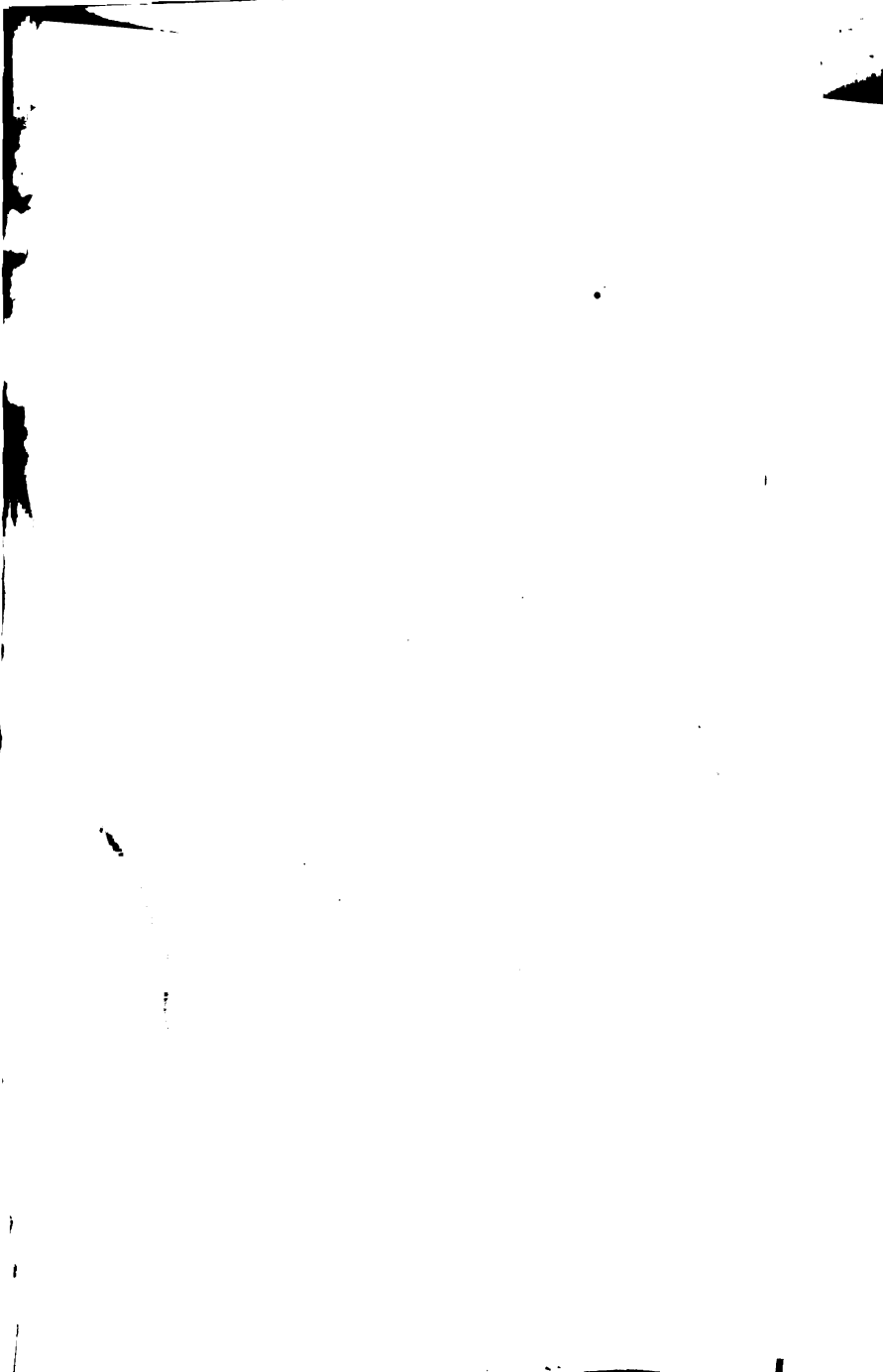
'You should not make your letters such rarities, when you know, or might know, the uniform state of my health. It is very long since I heard from you; and that I have not answered is a very insufficient reason for the silence of a friend. Your *Anacreon* is a very uncommon book; neither London nor Cambridge can supply a copy of that edition. Whether it should be reprinted, you cannot do better than consult Lord

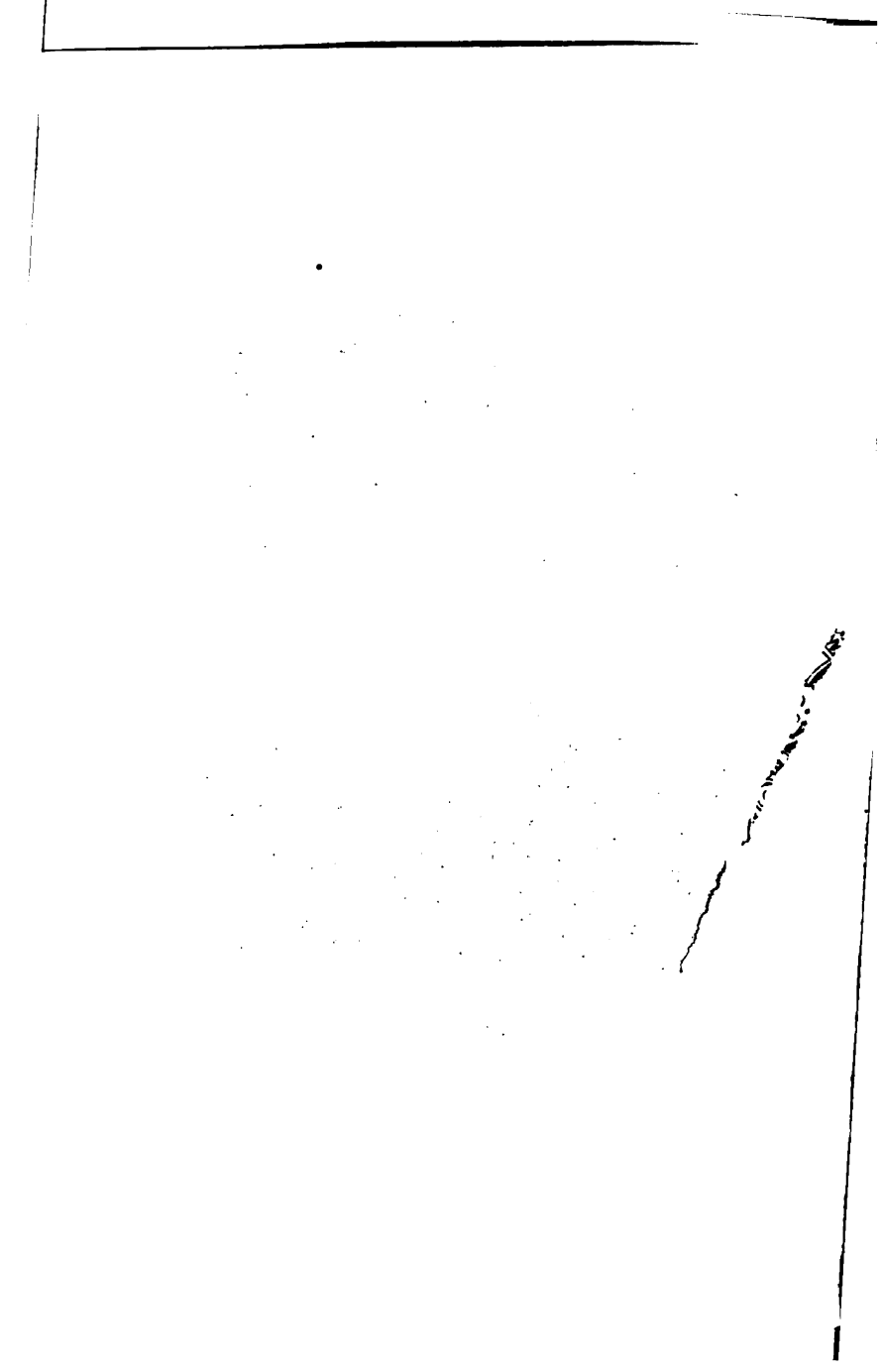


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1945

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the war. It is a very interesting and informative account of the events of the year.

2. The second part of the report deals with the economic situation of the country. It is a very detailed and thorough analysis of the economic conditions and the measures taken to improve them.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation of the country. It is a very comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the social conditions and the efforts to improve them.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the political situation of the country. It is a very clear and concise summary of the political events and the policies of the government.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the cultural situation of the country. It is a very interesting and enlightening study of the cultural life and the efforts to promote it.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the foreign relations of the country. It is a very detailed and thorough analysis of the international situation and the policies of the government.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the military situation of the country. It is a very comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the military forces and the progress of the war.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the administrative situation of the country. It is a very clear and concise summary of the administrative structure and the efforts to improve it.

9. The ninth part of the report deals with the financial situation of the country. It is a very detailed and thorough analysis of the financial conditions and the measures taken to improve them.

10. The tenth part of the report deals with the legal situation of the country. It is a very comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the legal system and the efforts to improve it.



Hailes.—Besides my constant and radical disease, I have been for these ten days much harassed with the gout; but that has now remitted. I hope God will yet grant me a little longer life, and make me less unfit to appear before him.'

He this autumn received a visit from the celebrated Mrs. Siddons. He gives this account of it in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale [October 27]: 'Mrs. Siddons, in her visit to me, behaved with great modesty and propriety, and left nothing behind her to be censured or despised. Neither praise nor money, the two powerful corrupters of mankind, seems to have depraved her. I shall be glad to see her again. Her brother Kemble calls on me, and pleases me very well. Mrs. Siddons and I talked of plays; and she told me her intention of exhibiting this winter the characters of Constance, Katharine, and Isabella in Shakespeare.'

Mr. Kemble has favoured me with the following minute of what passed at this visit.

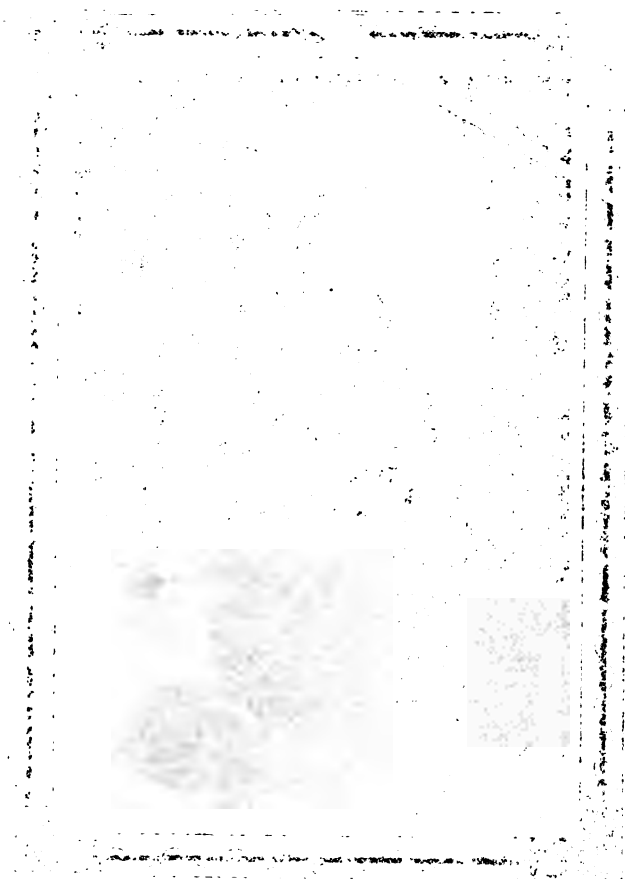
'When Mrs. Siddons came into the room, there happened to be no chair ready for her, which he observing, said with a smile, "Madam, you who so often occasion a want of seats to other people, will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself.'

'Having placed himself by her, he with great good humour entered upon a consideration of the English drama; and, among other inquiries, particularly asked her which of Shakespeare's characters she was most pleased with. Upon her answering that she thought the character of Queen Katharine in *Henry the Eighth* the most natural: "I think so too, madam (said he); and whenever you perform it I will once more hobble out to the theatre myself." Mrs. Sid-

dons promised she would do herself the honour of acting his favourite part for him; but many circumstances happened to prevent the representation of *King Henry the Eighth* during the Doctor's life.

'In the course of the evening he thus gave his opinion upon the merits of some of the principal performers whom he remembered to have seen upon the stage. "Mrs. Porter, in the vehemence of rage, and Mrs. Clive, in the sprightliness of humour, I have never seen equalled. What Clive did best, she did better than Garrick; but could not do half so many things well; she was a better romp than any I ever saw in nature. Pritchard, in common life, was a vulgar idiot; she would talk of her *gownd*; but when she appeared upon the stage, seemed to be inspired by gentility and understanding.—I once talked with Colley Cibber, and thought him ignorant of the principles of his art. Garrick, madam, was no declaimer; there was not one of his own scene-shifters who could not have spoken, *To be, or not to be*, better than he did; yet he was the only actor I ever saw whom I could call a master both in tragedy and comedy; though I liked him best in comedy. A true conception of character, and natural expression of it, were his distinguished excellencies." Having expatiated, with his usual force and eloquence, on Mr. Garrick's extraordinary eminence as an actor, he concluded with this compliment to his social talents: "And after all, madam, I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table."

Johnson, indeed, had thought more upon the subject of acting than might be generally supposed. Talking of it one day to Mr. Kemble, he said, 'Are



*Mrs. Sidline*

ASTOR, LENOX  
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you, sir, one of those enthusiasts who believe yourself transformed into the very character you represent?' Upon Mr. Kemble's answering that he had never felt so strong a persuasion himself; 'To be sure not, sir (said Johnson);' the thing is impossible. And if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it.'<sup>1</sup>

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'DEAR MADAM,—The death of poor Mr. Porter, of which your maid has sent an account, must have very much surprised you. The death of a friend is almost always unexpected: we do not love to think of it, and therefore are not prepared for its coming. He was, I think, a religious man, and therefore that his end was happy.

'Death has likewise visited my mournful habitation. Last month died Mrs. Williams, who had been to me for thirty

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<sup>1</sup> My worthy friend, Mr. John Nichols, was present when Mr. Henderson, the actor, paid a visit to Dr. Johnson; and was received in a very courteous manner. See *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1791.

I found among Dr. Johnson's papers the following letter to him from the celebrated Mrs. Bellamy:

TO DR. JOHNSON

'SIR,—The flattering remembrance of the partiality you honoured me with, some years ago, as well as the humanity you are known to possess, has encouraged me to solicit your patronage at my benefit.

'By a long Chancery suit, and a complicated train of unfortunate events, I am reduced to the greatest distress; which obliges me, once more, to request the indulgence of the public.

'Give me leave to solicit the honour of your company, and to assure you, if you grant my request, the gratification I shall feel from being patronised by Dr. Johnson will be infinitely superior to any advantage that may arise from the benefit: as I am, with the profoundest respect, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

G. A. BELLAMY.

*No. 10 Duke Street, St. James's,*

*May 11, 1783'*

I am happy in recording these particulars, which prove that my illustrious friend lived to think much more favourably of players than he appears to have done in the early part of his life.

years in the place of a sister: her knowledge was great, and her conversation pleasing. I now live in cheerless solitude.

'My two last years have passed under the pressure of successive diseases. I have lately had the gout with some severity. But I wonderfully escaped the operation which I mentioned, and am upon the whole restored to health beyond my own expectation.

'As we daily see our friends die around us, we that are left must cling closer, and, if we can do nothing more, at least pray for one another; and remember, that as others die we must die too, and prepare ourselves diligently for the last great trial.—I am, madam, yours affectionately,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street,*  
'Nov. 10, 1783.'

A pleasing instance of the generous attention of one of his friends has been discovered by the publication of Mrs. Thrale's collection of Letters. In a letter to one of the Miss Thrales,<sup>1</sup> he writes: 'A friend, whose name I will tell when your mamma has tried to guess it, sent to my physician to inquire whether this long train of illness had brought me into difficulties for want of money, with an invitation to send to him for what occasion required. I shall write this night to thank him, having no need to borrow.' And afterwards, in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, 'Since you can not guess, I will tell you that the generous man was Gerard Hamilton. I returned him a very thankful and respectful letter.'<sup>2</sup>

I applied to Mr. Hamilton by a common friend, and he has been so obliging as to let me have Johnson's letter to him upon this occasion, to adorn my collection.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM GERARD  
HAMILTON

'DEAR SIR,—Your kind inquiries after my affairs, and your generous offers, have been communicated to me by Dr. Brocklesby. I return thanks with great sincerity, having lived long enough to know what gratitude is due to your friendship; and entreat that my refusal may not be imputed to sullenness or pride. I am, indeed, in no want. Sickness is, by the generosity of my physicians, of little expense to me. But if any unexpected exigence should press me, you shall see, dear sir, how cheerfully I can be obliged to so much liberality.—I am, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'Nov. 19, 1783.'

I find in this, as in former years, notices of his kind attention to Mrs. Gardiner, who, though in the humble station of a tallow-chandler upon Snow Hill, was a woman of excellent good sense, pious, and charitable.<sup>1</sup> She told me she had been introduced to him by Mrs. Masters, the poetess, whose volumes he revised, and, it is said, illuminated here and there with a ray of his own genius. Mrs. Gardiner was very zealous for the support of the Ladies' charity-school, in the parish of St. Sepulchre. It is confined to females; and, I am told, it afforded a hint for the story of Betty Broom in the *Idler*. Johnson this year, I find, obtained for it a sermon from the late Bishop of St. Asaph, Dr. Shipley, whom he, in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale, characterises as 'knowing and conversible,' and whom all who knew his Lordship, even those who

<sup>1</sup> [In his Will Dr. Johnson left her a book 'at her election, to keep as a token of remembrance.'—M.]

[This excellent woman died September 13, 1789, aged seventy-four.]

differed from him in politics, remember with much respect.

The Earl of Carlisle having written a tragedy, entitled *The Father's Revenge*, some of his Lordship's friends applied to Mrs. Chapone to prevail on Dr. Johnson to read and give his opinion of it, which he accordingly did, in a letter to that lady. Sir Joshua Reynolds having informed me that this letter was in Lord Carlisle's possession, though I was not fortunate enough to have the honour of being known to his Lordship, trusting to the general courtesy of literature, I wrote to him, requesting the favour of a copy of it, and to be permitted to insert it in my *Life of Dr. Johnson*. His Lordship was so good as to comply with my request, and has thus enabled me to enrich my work with a very fine piece of writing, which displays both the critical skill and politeness of my illustrious friend; and perhaps the curiosity which it will excite may induce the noble and elegant author to gratify the world by the publication<sup>1</sup> of a performance, of which Dr. Johnson has spoken in such terms.

TO MRS. CHAPONE

'MADAM,—By sending the tragedy to me a second time,<sup>2</sup> I think that a very honourable distinction has been shown me, and I did not delay the perusal, of which I am now to tell the effect.

'The construction of the play is not completely regular; the stage is too often vacant, and the scenes are not sufficiently connected. This, however, would be called by Dryden only

<sup>1</sup> A few copies only of this tragedy have been printed, and given to the author's friends.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson having been very ill when the tragedy was first sent to him, had declined the consideration of it.



a mechanical defect ; which takes away little from the power of the poem, and which is seen rather than felt.

'A rigid examiner of the diction might, perhaps, wish some words changed, and some lines more vigorously terminated. But from such petty imperfections what writer was ever free ?

'The general form and force of the dialogue is of more importance. It seems to want that quickness of reciprocation which characterises the English drama, and is not always sufficiently fervid or animated.

'Of the sentiments, I remember not one that I wished omitted. In the imagery I cannot forbear to distinguish the comparison of joy succeeding grief to light rushing on the eye accustomed to darkness. It seems to have all that can be desired to make it please. It is new, just, and delightful.<sup>1</sup>

'With the characters, either as conceived or preserved, I have no fault to find ; but was much inclined to congratulate a writer, who, in defiance of prejudice and fashion, made the Archbishop a good man, and scorned all thoughtless applause, which a vicious churchman would have brought him.

'The catastrophe is affecting. The father and daughter both culpable, both wretched, and both penitent, divide between them our pity and our sorrow.

'Thus, madam, I have performed what I did not willingly undertake, and could not decently refuse. The noble writer will be pleased to remember that sincere criticism ought to raise no resentment, because judgment is not under the control of will ; but involuntary criticism, as it has still less of choice, ought to be more remote from possibility of offence.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'Nov. 23, 1783.'

I consulted him on two questions of a very different nature : one, Whether the unconstitutional influence

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<sup>1</sup> ' I could have borne my woes ; that stranger Joy  
Wounds while it smiles :—The long-imprison'd wretch,  
Emerging from the night of his damp cell,  
Shrinks from the sun's bright beams ; and that which flings  
Gladness o'er all, to him is agony.'

exercised by the Peers of Scotland in the election of the representatives of the Commons, by means of fictitious qualifications, ought not to be resisted? the other, What in propriety and humanity should be done with old horses unable to labour? I gave him some account of my life at Auchinleck : and expressed my satisfaction that the gentlemen of the county had, at two public meetings, elected me their *Præses* or Chairman.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—Like all other men who have great friends, you begin to feel the pangs of neglected merit; and all the comfort that I can give you is, by telling you that you have probably more pangs to feel, and more neglect to suffer. You have, indeed, begun to complain too soon; and I hope I am the only confidant of your discontent. Your friends have not yet had leisure to gratify personal kindness; they have hitherto been busy in strengthening the ministerial interest. If a vacancy happens in Scotland, give them early intelligence: and as you can serve Government as powerfully as any of your probable competitors, you may make in some sort a warrantable claim.

'Of the exaltations and depressions of your mind you delight to talk, and I hate to hear. Drive all such fancies from you.

'On the day when I received your letter, I think, the foregoing page was written; to which one disease or another has hindered me from making any additions. I am now a little better. But sickness and solitude press me very heavily. I could bear sickness better, if I were relieved from solitude.<sup>1</sup>

'The present dreadful confusion of the public ought to make you wrap yourself up in your hereditary possessions, which, though less than you may wish, are more than you can want; and in an hour of religious retirement return

<sup>1</sup>['I spent two hours with that great man, Dr. Johnson, who is sinking into the grave by a gentle decay.'—John Wesley's *Journal*, under date December 18, 1783.—A. B.]

thanks to God, who has exempted you from any strong temptation to faction, treachery, plunder, and dialoyalty.

'As your neighbours distinguish you by such honours as they can bestow, content yourself with your station, without neglecting your profession. Your estate and the Courts will find you full employment, and your mind, well occupied, will be quiet.

'The usurpation of the nobility, for they apparently usurp all the influence they gain by fraud and misrepresentation, I think it certainly lawful, perhaps your duty, to resist. What is not their own, they have only by robbery.

'Your question about the horses gives me more perplexity. I know not well what advice to give you. I can only recommend a rule which you do not want;—give as little pain as you can. I suppose that we have a right to their service while their strength lasts; what we can do with them afterwards, I cannot so easily determine. But let us consider. Nobody denies, that man has a right first to milk the cow, and to shear the sheep, and then to kill them for his table. May he not, by parity of reason, first work a horse, and then kill him the easiest way, that he may have the means of another horse, or food for cows and sheep? Man is influenced in both cases by different motives of self-interest. He that rejects the one must reject the other.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'London,' Dec. 24, 1783.

'A happy and pious Christmas; and many happy years to you, your lady, and children.'

The late ingenious Mr. Mickle, some time before his death, wrote me a letter concerning Dr. Johnson, in which he mentions, 'I was upwards of twelve years acquainted with him, was frequently in his company, always talked with ease to him, and can truly say, that I never received from him one rough word.'

In this letter he relates his having, while engaged in translating the *Lusiad*, had a dispute of considerable length with Johnson, who, as usual, declaimed upon

the misery and corruption of a sea life, and used this expression: 'It had been happy for the world, sir, if your hero Gama, Prince Henry of Portugal, and Columbus, had never been born, or that their schemes had never gone farther than their own imaginations.' 'This sentiment (says Mr. Mickle), which is to be found in his Introduction to the *World Displayed*, I, in my Dissertation prefixed to the *Lusiad*, have controverted; and though authors are said to be bad judges of their own works, I am not ashamed to own to a friend, that that dissertation is my favourite above all that I ever attempted in prose. Next year, when the *Lusiad* was published, I waited on Dr. Johnson, who addressed me with one of his good-humoured smiles: "Well, you have remembered our dispute about Prince Henry, and have cited me too. You have done your part very well indeed: you have made the best of your argument: but I am not convinced yet."

'Before publishing the *Lusiad*, I sent Mr. Hoole a proof of that part of the introduction, in which I make mention of Dr. Johnson, yourself, and other well-wishers to the work, begging it might be shown to Dr. Johnson. This was accordingly done; and in place of the simple mention of him which I had made, he dictated to Mr. Hoole the sentence as it now stands.

'Dr. Johnson told me in 1772, that, about twenty years before that time, he himself had a design to translate the *Lusiad*, of the merit of which he spoke highly, but had been prevented by a number of other engagements.'

Mr. Mickle reminds me in this letter, of a conver-

sation at dinner one day at Mr. Hoole's with Dr. Johnson, when Mr. Nicol, the King's bookseller, and I, attempted to controvert the maxim, 'better that ten guilty should escape, than one innocent person suffer'; and were answered by Dr. Johnson with great power of reasoning and eloquence. I am very sorry that I have no record of that day: but I well recollect my illustrious friend's having ably shown that unless civil institutions ensure protection to the innocent, all the confidence which mankind should have in them would be lost.

I shall here mention what, in strict chronological arrangement, should have appeared in my account of last year; but may more properly be introduced here, the controversy having not been closed till this. The Reverend Mr. Shaw, a native of one of the Hebrides, having entertained doubts of the authenticity of the poems ascribed to Ossian, divested himself of national bigotry; and having travelled in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and also in Ireland, in order to furnish himself with materials for a Gaelic Dictionary, which he afterwards compiled, was so fully satisfied that Dr. Johnson was in the right upon the question, that he candidly published a pamphlet, stating his conviction, and the proofs and reasons on which it was founded. A person at Edinburgh, of the name of Clark, answered this pamphlet with much zeal, and much abuse of its author. Johnson took Mr. Shaw under his protection, and gave him his assistance in writing a reply, which has been admired by the best judges, and by many been considered as conclusive. A few paragraphs, which sufficiently mark their great author, shall be selected.

'My assertions are, for the most part, purely negative: I deny the existence of Fingal, because in a long and curious peregrination through the Gaelic regions I have never been able to find it. What I could not see myself I suspect to be equally invisible to others; and I suspect with the more reason, as among all those who have seen it no man can show it.

'Mr. Clark compares the obstinacy of those who disbelieve the genuineness of Ossian to a blind man, who should dispute the reality of colours, and deny that the British troops are clothed in red. The blind man's doubt would be rational, if he did not know by experience that others have a power which he himself wants: but what perspicacity has Mr. Clark which Nature has withheld from me or the rest of mankind?

'The true state of the parallel must be this. Suppose a man, with eyes like his neighbours, was told by a boasting corporal that the troops, indeed, wore red clothes for their ordinary dress, but that every soldier had likewise a suit of black velvet, which he put on when the King reviews them. This he thinks strange, and desires to see the fine clothes, but finds nobody in forty thousand men that can produce either coat or waistcoat. One, indeed, has left them in his chest at Port Mahon; another has always heard that he ought to have velvet clothes somewhere; and a third has heard somebody say, that soldiers ought to wear velvet. Can the inquirer be blamed if he goes away believing that a soldier's red coat is all that he has?

'But the most obdurate incredulity may be shamed or silenced by facts. To overpower contradictions, let the soldier show his velvet coat, and the Fingalist the original of Ossian.

'The difference between us and the blind man is this: the blind man is unconvinced, because he cannot see; and we, because though we can see, we find that nothing can be shown.'

Notwithstanding the complication of disorders under which Johnson now laboured, he did not resign himself to despondency and discontent, but with wisdom and spirit endeavoured to console and amuse his mind with as many innocent enjoyments as he could pro-

cure. Sir John Hawkins has mentioned the cordiality with which he insisted that such of the members of the old club in Ivy Lane as survived, should meet again and dine together, which they did, twice at a tavern, and once at his house : and in order to ensure himself society in the evening for three days in the week, he instituted a club at the Essex Head, in Essex Street, then kept by Samuel Greaves, an old servant of Mr. Thrals's.

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'DEAR SIR,—It is inconvenient to me to come out; I should else have waited on you with an account of a little evening Club which we are establishing in Essex Street, in the Strand, and of which you are desired to be one. It will be held at the Essex Head, now kept by an old servant of Thrals's. The company is numerous and, as you will see by the list, miscellaneous. The terms lax, and the expenses light. Mr. Barry was adopted by Dr. Brocklesby, who joined with me in forming the plan. We meet thrice a week, and he who misses forfeits threepence.

'If you are willing to become a member, draw a line under your name. Return the list. We meet for the first time on Monday at eight.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'Dec. 4, 1783.'

It did not suit Sir Joshua to be one of this club. But when I mention only Mr. Daines Barrington, Dr. Brocklesby, Mr. Murphy, Mr. John Nichols, Mr. Cooke, Mr. Joddrel, Mr. Paradise, Dr. Horsley, Mr. Windham,<sup>1</sup> I shall sufficiently obviate the misrepre

<sup>1</sup> I was in Scotland when this Club was founded, and during all the winter. Johnson, however, declared I should be a member, and invented a word upon the occasion: 'Boswell (said he) is a very *clubbable* man.' When I came to town, I was proposed by Mr. Barrington, and chosen. I believe there are few societies where there is better conversation or more decorum. Several of us resolved to continue it after our great founder was removed by death. Other members were added; and now, about eight years since that loss, we go on happily.

sentation of it by Sir John Hawkins, as if it had been a low alehouse association, by which Johnson was degraded. Johnson himself, like his namesake Old Ben, composed the Rules of his Club.<sup>1</sup>

In the end of this year he was seized with a spasmodic asthma of such violence, that he was confined to the house in great pain, being sometimes obliged to sit all night in his chair, a recumbent posture being so hurtful to his respiration, that he could not endure lying in bed; and there came upon

<sup>1</sup> RULES.

'To-day deep thoughts with me resolve to drench  
In mirth, which after no repenting draws.'—*Milton*.

'The Club shall consist of four-and-twenty.

'The meetings shall be on the Monday, Thursday, and Saturday of every week; but in the week before Easter there shall be no meeting.

'Every member is at liberty to introduce a friend once a week, but not oftener.

'Two members shall oblige themselves to attend in their turn every night from eight to ten, or to procure two to attend in their room.

'Every member present at the Club shall spend at least sixpence; and every member who stays away shall forfeit threepence.

'The master of the house shall keep an account of the absent members: and deliver to the President of the night a list of the forfeits incurred.

'When any member returns after absence, he shall immediately lay down his forfeits; which, if he omits to do, the President shall require.

'There shall be no general reckoning, but every man shall adjust his own expenses.

'The night of indispensable attendance will come to every member once a month. Whoever shall for three months together omit to attend himself, or by substitution, nor shall make any apology in the fourth month, shall be considered as having abdicated the Club.

'When a vacancy is to be filled, the name of the candidate, and of the member recommending him, shall stand in the Clubroom three nights. On the fourth he may be chosen by ballot; six members at least being present, and two-thirds of the ballot being in his favour; or the majority, should the numbers be not divisible by three.

'The master of the house shall give notice, six days before, to each of those members whose turn of necessary attendance is come.

'The notice may be in these words: "Sir, On \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, will be your turn of presiding at the Essex Head. Your company is therefore earnestly requested."

'One penny shall be left by each member for the waiter.'

Johnson's definition of a Club in this sense in his *Dictionary*, is, 'An assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions.'



him at the same time that oppressive and fatal disease, a dropsy. It was a very severe winter, which probably aggravated his complaints; and the solitude in which Mr. Levett and Mrs. Williams had left him, rendered his life very gloomy. Mrs. Desmoulins, who still lived, was herself so very ill, that she could contribute very little to his relief. He, however, had none of that unsocial shyness which we commonly see in people afflicted with sickness. He did not hide his head from the world in solitary abstraction; he did not deny himself to the visits of his friends and acquaintances; but at all times, when he was not overcome by sleep, was ready for conversation as in his best days.

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'DEAR MADAM,—You may perhaps think me negligent that I have not written to you again upon the loss of your brother; but condolences and consolations are such common and such useless things, that the omission of them is no great crime; and my own diseases occupy my mind, and engage my care. My nights are miserably restless, and my days, therefore, are heavy. I try, however, to hold up my head as high as I can.

'I am sorry that your health is impaired; perhaps the spring and the summer may, in some degree, restore it; but if not, we must submit to the inconveniences of time, as to the other dispensations of Eternal Goodness. Pray for me, and write to me, or let Mr. Pearson write for you.—I am, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Nov. 29, 1783.*'

And now I am arrived at the last year of the life of Samuel Johnson; a year in which, although passed in severe indisposition, he nevertheless gave many evidences of the continuance of those wondrous powers of mind, which raised him so high in the intellectual

world. His conversation and his letters of this year were in no respect inferior to those of former years.

The following is a remarkable proof of his being alive to the most minute curiosities of literature :—

TO MR. DILLY, BOOKSELLER, IN THE POULTRY

'SIR,—There is in the world a set of books which used to be sold by the booksellers on the bridge, and which I must entreat you to procure me. They are called Burton's Books ;<sup>1</sup> the title of one is *Admirable Curiosities, Rarities, and Wonders in England*. I believe there are about five or six of them ; they seem very proper to allure backward readers : be so kind as to get them for me, and send me them, with the best printed edition of Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*.—I am, etc.,

SAM JOHNSON.

'Jan. 6, 1784.'

TO MR. PERKINS

'DEAR SIR,—I was very sorry not to see you when you were so kind as to call on me ; but to disappoint friends, and if they are not very good-natured, to disoblige them, is one of the evils of sickness. If you will please to let me know which of the afternoons in this week I shall be favoured with another visit by you and Mrs. Perkins, and the young people, I will take all the measures that I can to be pretty well at that time.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'Jan. 21, 1784.'

<sup>1</sup> [The following list comprises several of these books ; but probably is incomplete :—

1. Historical Remarks on London and Westminster, 1681.
2. Wars in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1681.
3. Wonderful Prodigies, 1681.
4. English Empire in America, 1685.
5. Surprising Miracles of Nature and Art, 1685.
6. History of Scotland and Ireland, 1685.
7. Nine Worthies of the World, 1687.
8. The English Hero, or Sir Francis Drake, 1687.
9. Memorable Accidents, and unheard-of Transactions, 1693.
10. History of Oliver Cromwell, 1698.
11. Unparalleled Varieties, 1699.

—M.]

His attention to the Essex Head Club appears from the following letter to Mr. Alderman Clark, a gentleman for whom he deservedly entertained a great regard :—

TO RICHARD CLARK, ESQ.

‘DEAR SIR,—You will receive a requisition, according to the rules of the Club, to be at the house as president of the night. This turn comes once a month, and the member is obliged to attend, or send another in his place. You were enrolled in the Club by my invitation, and I ought to introduce you; but as I am hindered by sickness, Mr. Hoole will very properly supply my place as introducer, or yours as President. I hope in milder weather to be a very constant attendant.—I am, sir, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘Jan. 27, 1784.’

‘You ought to be informed that the forfeits began with the year, and that every night of non-attendance incurs the mulct of threepence, that is, ninepence a week.’

On the 8th of January I wrote to him, anxiously inquiring as to his health, and enclosing my ‘Letter to the People of Scotland, on the present State of the Nation.’ ‘I trust (said I), that you will be liberal enough to make allowance for my differing from you on two points [the Middlesex election, and the American War], when my general principles of government are according to your own heart, and when, at a crisis of doubtful event, I stand forth with honest zeal as an ancient and faithful Briton. My reason for introducing those two points was, that as my opinions with regard to them had been declared at the periods when they were least favourable, I might have the credit of a man who is not a worshipper of ministerial power.’

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I hear of many inquiries which your kindness has disposed you to make after me. I have long intended you a long letter, which perhaps the imagination of its length hindered me from beginning. I will, therefore, content myself with a shorter.

'Having promoted the institution of a new Club in the neighbourhood, at the house of an old servant of Thrale's, I went thither to meet the company, and was seized with a spasmodic asthma, so violent, that with difficulty I got to my own house, in which I have been confined eight or nine weeks, and from which I know not when I shall be able to go even to church. The asthma, however, is not the worst. A dropsy gains ground upon me; my legs and thighs are very much swollen with water, which I should be content if I could keep there, but I am afraid that it will soon be higher. My nights are very sleepless and very tedious. And yet I am extremely afraid of dying.

'My physicians try to make me hope, that much of my malady is the effect of cold, and that some degree at least of recovery is to be expected from vernal breezes and summer suns. If my life is prolonged to autumn, I should be glad to try a warmer climate; though how to travel with a diseased body, without a companion to conduct me, and with very little money, I do not well see. Ramsay has recovered his limbs in Italy; and Fielding was sent to Lisbon, where, indeed, he died; but he was, I believe, past hope when he went. Think for me what I can do.

'I received your pamphlet, and when I write again may perhaps tell you some opinion about it; but you will forgive a man struggling with disease his neglect of disputes, politics, and pamphlets. Let me have your prayers. My compliments to your lady, and young ones. Ask your physicians about my case: and desire Sir Alexander Dick to write me his opinion. —I am, dear sir, etc.,

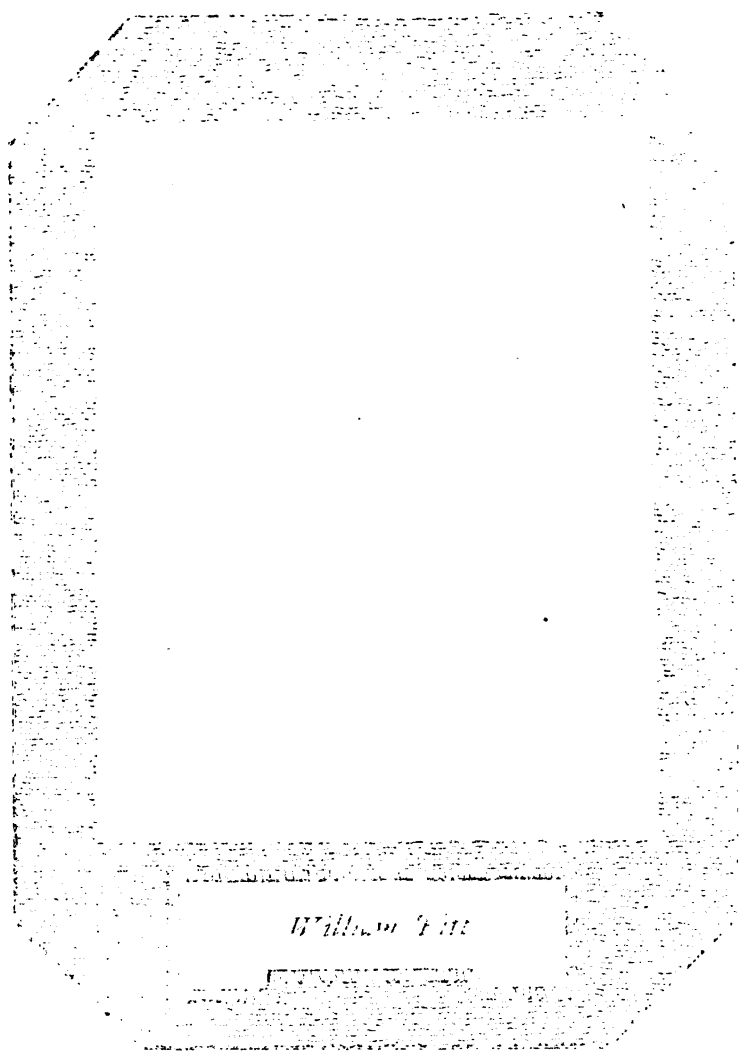
SAM. JOHNSON.

'Feb. 11, 1784.'

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'MY DEAREST LOVE,—I have been extremely ill of an asthma and dropsy, but received, by the mercy of God, sudden and

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*William Pitt*

unexpected relief last Thursday, by the discharge of twenty pints of water. Whether I shall continue free, or shall fill again, cannot be told. Pray for me.

'Death, my dear, is very dreadful; let us think nothing worth our care but how to prepare for it; what we know amiss in ourselves let us make haste to amend, and put our trust in the mercy of God, and the intercession of our Saviour. —I am, dear madam, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'Feb. 23, 1784.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I have just advanced so far towards recovery as to read a pamphlet; and you may reasonably suppose that the first pamphlet which I read was yours. I am very much of your opinion, and, like you, feel great indignation at the indecency with which the King is every day treated. Your paper contains very considerable knowledge of history and of the constitution, very properly produced and applied. It will certainly raise your character,<sup>1</sup> though perhaps it may not make you a Minister of State.

'I desire you to see Mrs. Stewart once again, and tell her, that in the letter-case was a letter relating to me, for which I will give her, if she is willing to give it to me, another guinea. The letter is of consequence only to me.—I am, dear sir, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, Feb. 27, 1784.

In consequence of Johnson's request that I should ask our physicians about his case, and desire Sir

<sup>1</sup> I sent it to Mr. Pitt, with a letter, in which I thus expressed myself: 'My principles may appear to you too monarchical: but I know and am persuaded, they are not inconsistent with the true principles of liberty. Be this as it may, you, sir, are now the Prime Minister, called by the Sovereign to maintain the right of the Crown, as well as those of the people, against a violent faction. As such, you are entitled to the warmest support of every good subject in every department.' He answered, 'I am extremely obliged to you for the sentiments you do me the honour to express, and have observed with great pleasure the *zealous and able support* given to the Cause of the Public in the work you were so good to transmit me.'

Alexander Dick to send his opinion, I transmitted him a letter from that very amiable Baronet, then in his eighty-first year, with his faculties as entire as ever; and mentioned his expressions to me in the note accompanying it,—‘With my most affectionate wishes for Dr. Johnson’s recovery, in which his friends, his country, and all mankind have so deep a stake’; and at the same time a full opinion upon his case by Dr. Gillespie, who, like Dr. Cullen, had the advantage of having passed through the gradations of surgery and pharmacy, and by study and practice had attained to such skill, that my father settled on him two hundred pounds a year for five years, and fifty pounds a year during his life, as an *honorarium* to secure his particular attendance. The opinion was conveyed in a letter to me, beginning, ‘I am sincerely sorry for the bad state of health your very learned and illustrious friend, Dr. Johnson, labours under at present.’

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

‘DEAR SIR,—Presently after I had sent away my last letter, I received your kind medical packet. I am very much obliged both to you and to your physicians for your kind attention to my disease. Dr. Gillespie has sent me an excellent *consilium medicum*, all solid practical experimental knowledge. I am at present in the opinion of my physicians (Dr. Heberden and Dr. Brocklesby), as well as my own, going on very hopefully. I have just begun to take vinegar of squills. The powder hurt my stomach so much, that it could not be continued.

‘Return Sir Alexander Dick my sincere thanks for his kind letter; and bring with you the rhubarb<sup>1</sup> which he so tenderly offers me.

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<sup>1</sup> From his garden at Prestonfield, where he cultivated that plant with such success, that he was presented with a gold medal by the Society of London for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce.



'I hope dear Mrs. Boswell is now quite well, and that no evil, either real or imaginary, now disturbs you.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, March 2, 1784.'

I also applied to three of the eminent physicians who had chairs in our celebrated school of medicine at Edinburgh, Doctors Cullen, Hope, and Munro, to each of whom I sent the following letter :

'DEAR SIR,—Dr. Johnson has been very ill for some time ; and in a letter of anxious apprehension he writes to me, " Ask your physicians about my case."

'This, you see, is not authority for a regular consultation : but I have no doubt of your readiness to give your advice to a man so eminent, and who, in his Life of Garth, has paid your profession a just and elegant compliment : " I believe every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusions of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art, where there is no hope of lucre."

'Dr. Johnson is aged seventy-four. Last summer he had a stroke of the palsy, from which he recovered almost entirely. He had, before that, been troubled with a catarrhus cough. This winter he was seized with a spasmodic asthma, by which he has been confined to his house for about three months. Dr. Brocklesby writes to me, that upon the least admission of cold, there is such a constriction upon his breast, that he cannot lie down in his bed, but is obliged to sit up all night, and gets rest and sometimes sleep, only by means of laudanum and syrup of poppies ; and that there are œdematous tumours in his legs and thighs. Dr. Brocklesby trusts a good deal to the return of mild weather. Dr. Johnson says, that a dropsy gains ground upon him ; and he seems to think that a warmer climate would do him good. I understand he is now rather better, and is using vinegar of squills.—I am, with great esteem, dear sir, your most obedient humble servant,

JAMES BOSWELL.

'March 7, 1784.'

All of them paid the most polite attention to my

letter, and its venerable object. Dr. Cullen's words concerning him were: 'It would give me the greatest pleasure to be of any service to a man whom the public properly esteem, and whom I esteem and respect as much as I do Dr. Johnson.' Dr. Hope's: 'Few people have a better claim on me than your friend, as hardly a day passes that I do not ask his opinion about this or that word.' Dr. Munro's: 'I most sincerely join you in sympathising with that very worthy and ingenious character, from whom his country has derived much instruction and entertainment.'

Dr. Hope corresponded with his friend Dr. Brocklesby. Doctors Cullen and Munro wrote their opinions and prescriptions to me, which I afterwards carried with me to London, and so far as they were encouraging, communicated to Johnson. The liberality on one hand, and grateful sense of it on the other, I have great satisfaction in recording.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I am too much pleased with the attention which you and your dear lady<sup>1</sup> show to my welfare, not to be diligent in letting you know the progress which I make towards health. The dropsy, by God's blessing, has now run almost totally away by natural evacuation: and the asthma, if not irritated by cold, gives me little trouble. While I am writing this, I have not any sensation of debility or disease. But I do not yet venture out, having been confined to the house from the 13th of December, now a quarter of a year.

'When it will be fit for me to travel as far as Auchinleck, I am not able to guess; but such a letter as Mrs. Boswell's might draw any man, not wholly motionless, a great way. Pray tell the dear lady how much her civility and kindness have touched and gratified me.

<sup>1</sup> Who had written him a very kind letter.

'Our Parliamentary tumults have now begun to subside, and the King's authority is in some measure re-established. Mr. Pitt will have great power; but you must remember, that what he has to give, must, at least for some time, be given to those who gave, and those who preserve, his power. A new minister can sacrifice little to esteem or friendship; he must, till he is settled, think only of extending his interest.

'If you come hither through Edinburgh, send for Mrs. Stewart, and give for me another guinea for the letter in the old case, to which I shall not be satisfied with my claim, till she gives it me.

'Please to bring with you Baxter's *Anacreon*; and if you procure heads of Hector Boece, the historian, and Arthur Johnston, the poet, I will put them in my room; or any other of the fathers of Scottish literature.

'I wish you an easy and happy journey, and hope I need not tell you that you will be welcome to, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, March 18, 1784.*'

I wrote to him, March 28, from York, informing him that I had a high gratification in the triumph of monarchical principles over aristocratical influence in that great county, in an address to the King; that I was thus far on my way to him, but that news of the dissolution of Parliament having arrived, I was to hasten back to my own country, where I had carried an address to his Majesty by a great majority, and had some intention of being a candidate to represent the county in Parliament.

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—You could do nothing so proper as to hasten back when you found the Parliament dissolved. With the influence which your address must have gained you, it may reasonably be expected that your presence will be of importance, and your activity of effect.

'Your solicitude for me gives me that pleasure which every man feels from the kindness of such a friend; and it is with delight I relieve it by telling, that Dr. Brocklesby's account is true, and that I am, by the blessing of God, wonderfully relieved.

You are entering upon a transaction which requires much prudence. You must endeavour to oppose without exasperating; to practise temporary hostility, without producing enemies for life. This is, perhaps, hard to be done; yet it has been done by many, and seems most likely to be effected by opposing merely upon general principles, without descending to personal or particular censures or objections. One thing I must enjoin you, which is seldom observed in the conduct of elections:—I must entreat you to be scrupulous in the use of strong liquors. One night's drunkenness may defeat the labours of forty days well employed. Be firm, but not clamorous; be active, but not malicious; and you may form such an interest, as may not only exalt yourself, but dignify your family.

'We are, as you may suppose, all busy here. Mr. Fox resolutely stands for Westminster, and his friends say will carry the election. However that be, he will certainly have a seat. Mr. Hoole has just told me, that the city leans towards the King.

'Let me hear, from time to time, how you are employed, and what progress you make.

'Make dear Mrs. Boswell, and all the young Boswells, the sincere compliments of, sir, your affectionate humble servant,  
'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, March 30, 1784.*'

To Mr. Langton he wrote with that cordiality which was suitable to the long friendship which had subsisted between him and that gentleman.

'*March 27.* Since you left me, I have continued, in my own opinion, and in Dr. Brocklesby's, to grow better with respect to all my formidable and dangerous distempers; though to a body battered and shaken as mine hath lately been, it is to be feared that weak attacks may be sometimes mischievous.

I have, indeed, by standing carelessly at an open window, got a very troublesome cough, which it has been necessary to appease by opium, in larger quantities than I like to take, and I have not found it give way so readily as I expected; its obstinacy, however, seems at last disposed to submit to the remedy, and I know not whether I should then have a right to complain of any morbid sensation. My asthma is, I am afraid, constitutional and incurable; but it is only occasional, and unless it be excited by labour or by cold, gives me no molestation, nor does it lay very close siege to life; for Sir John Floyer, whom the physical race consider as author of one of the best books upon it, panted on to ninety, as was supposed; and why were we content with supposing a fact so interesting, of a man so conspicuous? because he corrupted, at perhaps seventy or eighty, the register, that he might pass for younger than he was. He was not much less than eighty, when to a man of rank who modestly asked his age, he answered, "Go look"; though he was in general a man of civility and elegance.

'The ladies, I find, are at your house all well, except Miss Langton, who will probably soon recover her health by light suppers. Let her eat at dinner as she will, but not take a full stomach to bed. Pay my sincere respects to dear Miss Langton in Lincolnshire; let her know that I mean not to break our league of friendship, and that I have a set of *Lives* for her, when I have the means of sending it.

'April 8. I am still disturbed by my cough; but what thanks have I not to pay, when my cough is the most painful sensation that I feel? and from that I expect hardly to be released, while winter continues to grip us with so much pertinacity. The year has now advanced eighteen days beyond the equinox, and still there is very little remission of the cold. When warm weather comes, which surely must come at last, I hope it will help both me and your young lady.

'The man so busy about addresses is neither more nor less than our own Boswell, who had come as far as York towards London, but turned back on the dissolution, and is said now to stand for some place. Whether to wish him success, his best friends hesitate.

'Let me have your prayers for the completion of my recovery: I am now better than I ever expected to have been. May God add to his mercies the grace that may enable me to use them according to his will. My compliments to all.

'April 13. I had this evening a note from Lord Portmore,<sup>1</sup> desiring that I would give you an account of my health. You might have had it with less circumduction. I am, by God's blessing, I believe, free from all morbid sensations, except a cough, which is only troublesome. But I am still weak, and can have no great hope of strength till the weather shall be softer. The summer, if it be kindly, will, I hope, enable me to support the winter. God, who has so wonderfully restored me, can preserve me in all seasons.

'Let me inquire in my turn after the state of your family, great and little. I hope Lady Rothes and Miss Langton are both well. That is a good basis of content. Then how goes George on with his studies? How does Miss Mary? And how does my own Jenny? I think I owe Jenny a letter, which I will take care to pay. In the meantime tell her that I acknowledge the debt.

'Be pleased to make my compliments to the ladies. If Mrs. Langton comes to London, she will favour me with a visit, for I am not well enough to go out.'

TO OZIAS HUMPHRY,<sup>2</sup> ESQ.

'SIR,—Mr. Hoole has told me with what benevolence you listened to a request which I was almost afraid to make, of

<sup>1</sup> To which Johnson returned this answer :

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL OF PORTMORE

'Dr. Johnson acknowledges with great respect the honour of Lord Portmore's notice. He is better than he was; and will, as his Lordship directs, write to Mr. Langton.

'*Bolt Court, Fleet Street,*  
'*Apr. 13, 1784.*'

<sup>2</sup> The eminent painter, representative of the ancient family of Homfrey (now Humphry) in the west of England; who, as appears from their arms which they have invariably used, have been (as I have seen authenticated by the best authority) one of those among the knights and esquires of honour who were represented by Holinshed as having issued from the Tower of London on coursers apparelled for the jousts, accompanied by ladies of honour, leading every one a knight with a

leave to a young painter<sup>1</sup> to attend you from time to time in your painting room, to see your operations, and receive your instructions.

'The young man has perhaps good parts, but has been without a regular education. He is my godson, and therefore I interest myself in his progress and success, and shall think myself much favoured if I receive from you a permission to send him.

'My health is, by God's blessing, much restored; but I am not yet allowed by my physicians to go abroad; nor, indeed, do I think myself yet able to endure the weather.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'April 5, 1784.'

TO THE SAME

'SIR,—The bearer is my godson, whom I take the liberty of recommending to your kindness; which I hope he will deserve by his respect to your excellence, and his gratitude for your favours.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'April 10, 1784.'

TO THE SAME

'SIR,—I am very much obliged by your civilities to my godson, but must beg of you to add to them the favour of permitting him to see you paint, that he may know how a picture is begun, advanced, and completed.

'If he may attend you in a few of your operations, I hope he will show that the benefit has been properly conferred, both by his proficiency and his gratitude. At least I shall consider you as enlarging your kindness to, sir, your humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'May 31, 1784.'

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chain of gold, passing through the streets of London into Smithfield, on Sunday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, being the first Sunday after Michaelmas, in the fourteenth year of King Richard the Second. This family once enjoyed large possessions, but, like others, have lost them in the progress of ages. Their blood, however, remains to them well ascertained: and they may hope, in the revolution of events, to recover their rank in society for which, in modern times, fortune seems to be an indispensable requisite.

<sup>1</sup> Son of Mr. Samuel Patterson, eminent for his knowledge of books.

TO THE REV. DR. TAYLOR, ASHBOURNE, DERBYSHIRE

'DEAR SIR,—What can be the reason that I hear nothing from you? I hope nothing disables you from writing. What I have seen, and what I have felt, gives me reason to fear everything. Do not omit giving me the comfort of knowing, that after all my losses I have yet a friend left.

'I want every comfort. My life is very solitary and very cheerless. Though it has pleased God wonderfully to deliver me from the dropsy, I am yet very weak, and have not passed the door since the 12th of December. I hope for some help from warm weather, which will surely come in time.

'I could not have the consent of the physicians to go to church yesterday; I therefore received the holy sacrament at home, in the room where I communicated with dear Mrs. Williams, a little before her death. O! my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived to-day may live to-morrow. But let us learn to derive our hope only from God.

'In the meantime, let us be kind to one another. I have no friend now living but you<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Hector, that was the friend of my youth. Do not neglect, dear sir, yours affectionately,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*London, Easter Monday,*  
*April 12, 1784.'*

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD

'MY DEAR,—I write to you now, to tell you that I am so far recovered that on the 21st I went to church, to return thanks, after a confinement of more than four long months.

'My recovery is such as neither myself nor the physicians

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<sup>1</sup> [This friend of Johnson's youth survived him somewhat more than three years, having died Feb. 19, 1788.—M.]

[It is the tradition that Taylor, who was a wealthy and childless man, had made Johnson his heir.—A. B.]



at all expected, and is such as that very few examples have been known of the like. Join with me, my dear love, in returning thanks to God.

'Dr. Vyse has been with [me] this evening: he tells me that you likewise have been much disordered, but that you are now better. I hope that we shall sometime have a cheerful interview. In the meantime, let us pray for one another. —I am, madam, your humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, April 26, 1784.'

What follows is a beautiful specimen of his gentleness and complacency to a young lady, his godchild, one of the daughters of his friend Mr. Langton, then I think in her seventh year. He took the trouble to write it in a large round hand, nearly resembling printed characters, that she might have the satisfaction of reading it herself. The original lies before me, but shall be faithfully restored to her; and I daresay will be preserved by her as a jewel, as long as she lives.

TO MISS JANE LANGTON, IN ROCHESTER, KENT

'MY DEAREST MISS JENNY,—I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic; and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers and read your Bible.—I am, my dear, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'May 10, 1784.'

On Wednesday, May 5, I arrived in London, and next morning had the pleasure to find Dr. Johnson greatly recovered. I but just saw him, for a coach was waiting to carry him to Islington, to the house of his friend, the Reverend Mr. Strahan, where he went sometimes for the benefit of good air, which, notwithstanding his having formerly laughed at the general opinion upon the subject, he now acknowledged was conducive to health.

One morning afterwards, when I found him alone, he communicated to me, with solemn earnestness, a very remarkable circumstance which had happened in the course of his illness, when he was much distressed by the dropsy. He had shut himself up, and employed a day in particular exercises of religion—fasting, humiliation, and prayer. On a sudden he obtained extraordinary relief, for which he looked up to Heaven with grateful devotion. He made no direct inference from this fact; but from his manner of telling it, I could perceive that it appeared to him as something more than an incident in the common course of events. For my own part, I have no difficulty to avow that cast of thinking, which, by many modern pretenders to wisdom, is called *superstitious*. But here I think even men of dry rationality may believe that there was an intermediate interposition of divine providence, and that ‘the fervent prayer of this righteous man’ availed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Upon this subject there is a very fair and judicious remark in the Life of Dr. Abernethy, in the first edition of the *Biographia Britannica*, which I should have been glad to see in his Life which has been written for the second edition of that valuable work. ‘To deny the exercise of a particular providence in the Deity’s government of the world is certainly impious, yet nothing serves the cause of the scoerner

On Sunday, May 9, I found Colonel Vallancy, the celebrated antiquary and engineer of Ireland, with him. On Monday, the 10th, I dined with him at Mr. Paradise's, where was a large company; Mr. Bryant, Mr. Joddrel, Mr. Hawkins Browne, etc. On Thursday, the 13th, I dined with him at Mr. Joddrel's, with another large company; the Bishop of Exeter, Lord Monboddo,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Murphy, etc.

On Saturday, May 15, I dined with him at Dr. Brocklesby's, where were Colonel Vallancy, Mr. Murphy, and that ever-cheerful companion, Mr. Devaynes, apothecary to his Majesty. Of these days, and others on which I saw him, I have no memorials, except the general recollection of his being able and animated in conversation, and appearing to relish society as much as the youngest man. I find only these three small particulars:—When a person was mentioned who said, 'I have lived fifty-one years in this world without having had ten minutes of uneasiness,' he exclaimed, 'The man

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more than an incautious forward zeal in determining the particular instances of it.'

In confirmation of my sentiments, I am also happy to quote that sensible and elegant writer, Mr. Melmoth, in Letter VIII. of his collection, published under the name of *Fitzosborns*. 'We may safely assert that the belief of a particular Providence is founded upon such probable reasons as may well justify our assent. It would scarce, therefore, be wise to renounce an opinion which affords so firm a support to the soul in those seasons wherein she stands in most need of assistance, merely because it is not possible, in questions of this kind, to solve every difficulty which attends them.'

<sup>1</sup> I was sorry to observe Lord Monboddo avoid any communication with Dr. Johnson. I flattered myself that I had made them very good friends (see *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, third edition, page 67), but unhappily his Lordship had resumed and cherished a violent prejudice against my illustrious friend, to whom I must do the justice to say, there was on his part not the least anger, but a good-humoured sportiveness. Nay, though he knew of his Lordship's indisposition towards him, he was even kindly; as appeared from his inquiring of me after him, by an abbreviation of his name, 'Well, how does *Monny*!'

who says so lies: he attempts to impose on human credulity.' The Bishop of Exeter<sup>1</sup> in vain observed that men were very different. His Lordship's manner was not impressive; and I learned afterwards that Johnson did not find out that the person who talked to him was a prelate; if he had, I doubt not that he would have treated him with more respect; for once, talking of George Psalmanazar, whom he revered for his piety, he said, 'I should as soon think of contradicting a bishop.' One of the company provoked him greatly by doing what he could least of all bear, which was quoting something of his own writing against what he then maintained. 'What, sir (cried the gentleman), do you say to

"The busy day, the peaceful night  
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by"?'<sup>2</sup>

Johnson, finding himself thus presented as giving an instance of a man who had lived without uneasiness, was much offended, for he looked upon such a quotation as unfair. His anger burst out in an unjustifiable retort, insinuating that the gentleman's remark was a sally of ebriety; 'Sir, there is one passion I would advise you to command: when you have drunk out that glass, don't drink another.' Here was exemplified what Goldsmith said of him, with the aid of a very witty image from one of Cibber's comedies: 'There is no arguing with Johnson; for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it.'

Another was this: when a gentleman of eminence

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<sup>1</sup> [Dr. John Ross.]

<sup>2</sup> Verses on the death of Mr. Levett.

in the literary world was violently censured for attacking people by anonymous paragraphs in newspapers, he, from the spirit of contradiction, as I thought, took up his defence, and said, 'Come, come, this is not so terrible a crime; he means only to vex them a little. I do not say that I should do it; but there is a great difference between him and me; what is fit for Hephæstion is not fit for Alexander.' Another, when I told him that a young and handsome countess had said to me, 'I should think that to be praised by Dr. Johnson would make one a fool all one's life'; and that I answered, 'Madam, I shall make him a fool to-day, by repeating this to him'; he said, 'I am too old to be made a fool; but if you say I am made a fool, I shall not deny it. I am much pleased with a compliment, especially from a pretty woman.'

On the evening of Saturday, May 15, he was in fine spirits at our Essex Head Club. He told us, 'I dined yesterday at Mrs. Garrick's with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney. Three such women are not to be found; I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all.' BOSWELL: 'What! had you them all to yourself, sir?' JOHNSON: 'I had them all, as much as they were had; but it might have been better had there been more company there.' BOSWELL: 'Might not Mrs. Montagu have been a fourth?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, Mrs. Montagu does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montagu is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning.' BOSWELL: 'Mr. Burke has a constant stream of conversation.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; if a man were to go

by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed to shun a shower, he would say, "This is an extraordinary man." If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse dressed, the ostler would say, "We have had an extraordinary man here." BOSWELL: 'Foote was a man who never failed in conversation. If he had gone into a stable——' JOHNSON: 'Sir, if he had gone into the stable, the ostler would have said, "Here has been a comical fellow," but he would not have respected him.' BOSWELL: 'And, sir, the ostler would have answered him, would have given him as good as he brought, as the common saying is.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; and Foote would have answered the ostler. When Burke does not descend to be merry, his conversation is very superior indeed. There is no proportion between the powers which he shows in serious talk and in jocularly. When he lets himself down to that, he is in the kennel.' I have in another place opposed, and I hope with success, Dr. Johnson's very singular and erroneous notion as to Mr. Burke's pleasantries.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Windham now said low to me that he differed from our great friend in this observation; for that Mr. Burke was often very happy in his merriment. It would not have been right for either of us to have contradicted Johnson at this time, in a society all of whom did not know and value Mr. Burke as much as we did. It might have occasioned something more rough, and at any rate would probably have checked the flow of Johnson's good-humour. He called to us with a sudden air of exultation, as the thought started into his mind, 'O!

<sup>1</sup> [Mr. John Morley quotes this *dictum* of Johnson as to Burke's pleasantries with approval.—A. B.]

gentlemen, I must tell you a very great thing. The Empress of Russia has ordered the *Rambler* to be translated into the Russian language;<sup>1</sup> so I shall be read on the banks of the Wolga. Horace boasts that his fame would extend as far as the banks of the Rhone; now the Wolga is farther from me than the Rhone was from Horace.' BOSWELL: 'You must certainly be pleased with this, sir.' JOHNSON: 'I am pleased, sir, to be sure. A man is pleased to find he has succeeded in that which he has endeavoured to do.'

One of the company mentioned his having seen a noble person driving in his carriage, and looking exceedingly well, notwithstanding his great age. JOHNSON: 'Ah, sir, that is nothing. Bacon observes that a stout, healthy old man is like a tower undermined.'

On Sunday, May 16, I found him alone; he talked of Mrs. Thrale with much concern, saying, 'Sir, she has done everything wrong since Thrale's bridle was off her neck'; and was proceeding to mention some circumstances which have since been the subject of public discussion, when he was interrupted by the arrival of Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury.

Dr. Douglas, upon this occasion, refuted a mistaken notion which is very common in Scotland, that the ecclesiastical discipline of the Church of England, though duly enforced, is insufficient to preserve the morals of the clergy, inasmuch as all delinquents may be screened by appealing to the Convocation, which

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<sup>1</sup> I have since heard that the report was not well founded; but the elation discovered by Johnson in the belief that it was true showed a noble ardour for literary fame.

being never authorised by the King to sit for the despatch of business, the appeal never can be heard. Dr. Douglas observed that this was founded upon ignorance; for that the bishops have sufficient power to maintain discipline, and that the sitting of the Convocation was wholly immaterial in this respect, it being not a Court of Judicature, but like a Parliament, to make canons and regulations as times may require.

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

In one of his little manuscript diaries, about this time, I find a short notice, which marks his amiable disposition more certainly than a thousand studied declarations.—'Afternoon spent cheerfully and elegantly, I hope without offence to God or man; though in no holy duty, yet in the general exercise and cultivation of benevolence.'

On Monday, May 17, I dined with him at Mr. Dilly's, where were Colonel Vallancy, the Reverend Dr. Gibbons, and Mr. Capel Lofft, who, though a most zealous Whig, has a mind so full of learning and knowledge, and so much exercised in various departments, and withal so much liberality, that the stupendous powers of the literary Goliath, though they did not frighten this little David of popular spirit, could not but excite his admiration. There was also Mr. Braithwaite of the Post Office, that



amiable and friendly man, who, with modest and unassuming manners, has associated with many of the wits of the age. Johnson was very quiescent to-day. Perhaps, too, I was indolent. I find nothing more of him in my notes, but that when I mentioned that I had seen in the King's library sixty-three editions of my favourite, Thomas à Kempis,—amongst which it was in eight languages, Latin, German, French, Italian, Spanish, English, Arabic, and Armenian,—he said he thought it unnecessary to collect many editions of a book which were all the same, except as to the paper and print; he would have the original, and all the translations, and all the editions which had any variations in the text. He approved of the famous collection of editions of Horace by Douglas, mentioned by Pope, who is said to have had a closet filled with them; and he added, 'Every man should try to collect one book in that manner and present it to a public library.'

On Tuesday, May 18, I saw him for a short time in the morning. I told him that the mob had called out as the King passed, 'No Fox—No Fox,' which I did not like. He said, 'They were right, sir.' I said I thought not; for it seemed to be making Mr. Fox the King's competitor. There being no audience, so that there could be no triumph in a victory, he fairly agreed with me. I said it might do very well if explained thus: 'Let us have no Fox,' understanding it as a prayer to his Majesty not to appoint that gentleman minister.

On Wednesday, May 19, I sat a part of the evening with him, by ourselves. I observed that the death of our friends might be a consolation against the fear of

our own dissolution, because we might have more friends in the other world than in this. He perhaps felt this as a reflection upon his apprehension as to death, and said with heat, 'How can a man know *where* his departed friends are, or whether they will be his friends in the other world? How many friendships have you known formed upon principles of virtue? Most friendships are formed by caprice or by chance, mere confederacies in vice or leagues in folly.'

We talked of our worthy friend Mr. Langton. He said, 'I know not who will go to heaven if Langton does not. Sir, I could almost say, *Sit anima mea cum Langtono.*' I mentioned a very eminent friend as a virtuous man. JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; but — has not the evangelical virtue of Langton. —, I am afraid, would not scruple to pick up a wench.'

He however charged Mr. Langton with what he thought want of judgment upon an interesting occasion. 'When I was ill (said he), I desired he would tell me sincerely in what he thought my life was faulty. Sir, he brought me a sheet of paper on which he had written down several texts of Scripture, recommending Christian charity. And when I questioned him what occasion I had given for such an animadversion, all that he could say amounted to this—that I sometimes contradicted people in conversation. Now, what harm does it do to any man to be contradicted?' BOSWELL: 'I suppose he meant the *manner* of doing it; roughly and harshly.' JOHNSON: 'And who is the worse for that?' BOSWELL: 'It hurts people of weaker nerves.' JOHNSON: 'I know no such weak-nerved people.' Mr. Burke, to whom I related this conference, said, 'It is well if,

when a man comes to die, he has nothing heavier upon his conscience than having been a little rough in conversation.'

Johnson, at the time when the paper was presented to him, though at first pleased with the attention of his friend, whom he thanked in an earnest manner, soon exclaimed in a loud and angry tone, 'What is your drift, sir?' Sir Joshua Reynolds pleasantly observed that it was a scene for a comedy, to see a penitent get into a violent passion and belabour his confessor.<sup>1</sup>

I have preserved no more of his conversation at the times when I saw him during the rest of this month, till Sunday, the 30th of May, when I met him in the evening at Mr. Hoole's, where there was a large company both of ladies and gentlemen. Sir James Johnston happened to say that he paid no regard to the arguments of counsel at the bar of the House of Commons, because they were paid for speaking. JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, argument is argument. You cannot help paying regard to their arguments, if they are good. If it were testimony, you might disregard it, if you knew that it were purchased. There is a

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<sup>1</sup> After all, I cannot but be of opinion that, as Mr. Langton was seriously requested by Dr. Johnson to mention what appeared to him erroneous in the character of his friend, he was bound as an honest man to intimate what he really thought, which he certainly did in the most delicate manner, so that Johnson himself, when in a quiet frame of mind, was pleased with it. The texts suggested are now before me, and I shall quote a few of them. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'—Matt. v. 5. 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.'—Eph. iv. 1, 2. 'And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.'—Col. iii. 14. 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked.'—1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

beautiful image in Bacon<sup>1</sup> upon this subject: testimony is like an arrow shot from a long bow; the force of it depends on the strength of the hand that draws it. Argument is like an arrow from a cross-bow, which has equal force, though shot by a child.<sup>2</sup>

He had dined that day at Mr. Hoole's, and Miss Helen Maria Williams being expected in the evening, Mr. Hoole put into his hands her beautiful *Ode on the Peace*<sup>3</sup>; Johnson read it over, and when this elegant and accomplished young lady<sup>3</sup> was presented to him, he took her by the hand in a most courteous manner, and repeated the finest stanza of her poem; this was the most delicate and pleasing compliment he could pay. Her respectable friend, Dr. Kippis, from whom I had this anecdote, was standing by, and was not a little gratified.

Miss Williams told me that the only other time she was fortunate enough to be in Dr. Johnson's company, he asked her to sit down by him, which she did, and upon her inquiring how he was, he answered,

<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Johnson's memory deceived him. The passage referred to is not Bacon's, but Boyle's: and may be found with a slight variation, in Johnson's *Dictionary*, under the word *Crossbow*. So happily selected are the greater part of the examples in that incomparable work, that if the most striking passages found in it were collected by one of our modern book-makers, under the title of the *Beauties of Johnson's Dictionary*, they would form a very pleasing and popular volume.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> The peace made by that very able statesman, the Earl of Shelburne, now Marquis of Lansdowne, which may fairly be considered as the foundation of all the prosperity of Great Britain since that time.

<sup>3</sup> In the first edition of my work, the epithet *amiable* was given. I was sorry to be obliged to strike it out; but I could not in justice suffer it to remain, after this young lady had not only written in favour of the savage anarchy with which France has been visited, but had (as I have been informed by good authority) walked without horror over the ground at the Tuileries when it was strewed with the naked bodies of the faithful Swiss guards, who were barbarously massacred for having bravely defended, against a crew of ruffians, the Monarch whom they had taken an oath to defend. From Dr. Johnson she could now expect not endearment but repulsion.

‘I am very ill indeed, madam. I am very ill even when you are near me; what should I be were you at a distance?’

He had now a great desire to go to Oxford, as his first jaunt after his illness; we talked of it for some days, and I had promised to accompany him. He was impatient and fretful to-night, because I did not at once agree to go with him on Thursday. When I considered how ill he had been, and what allowance should be made for the influence of sickness upon his temper, I resolved to indulge him, though with some inconvenience to myself, as I wished to attend the musical meeting in honour of Handel, in Westminster Abbey, on the following Saturday.

In the midst of his own diseases and pains, he was ever compassionate to the distresses of others, and actively earnest in procuring them aid, as appears from a note to Sir Joshua Reynolds, of June, in these words: ‘I am ashamed to ask for some relief for a poor man, to whom, I hope, I have given what I can be expected to spare. The man importunes me, and the blow goes round. I am going to try another air on Thursday.’

On Thursday, June 3, the Oxford post-coach took us up in the morning at Bolt Court. The other two passengers were Mrs. Beresford and her daughter, two very agreeable ladies from America; they were going to Worcestershire, where they then resided. Frank had been sent by his master the day before to take places for us; and I found from the way-bill that Dr. Johnson had made our names be put down. Mrs. Beresford, who had read it, whispered me, ‘Is this the great Dr. Johnson?’ I told her it was; so she

was then prepared to listen. As she soon happened to mention in a voice so low that Johnson did not hear it, that her husband had been a member of the American Congress, I cautioned her to beware of introducing that subject, as she must know how very violent Johnson was against the people of that country. He talked a great deal. But I am sorry I have preserved little of the conversation. Miss Beresford was so much charmed, that she said to me aside, 'How he does talk! Every sentence is an essay.' She amused herself in the coach with knotting; he would scarcely allow this species of employment any merit. 'Next to mere idleness (said he), I think knotting is to be reckoned in the scale of insignificance; though I once attempted to learn knotting. Dempster's sister (looking to me) endeavoured to teach me it; but I made no progress.'

I was surprised at his talking without reserve in the public post-coach of the state of his affairs: 'I have (said he) about the world I think above a thousand pounds, which I intend shall afford Frank an annuity of seventy pounds a year.' Indeed his openness with people at a first interview was remarkable. He said once to Mr. Langton, 'I think I am like 'Squire Richard in the *Journey to London*,<sup>1</sup> *I'm never strange in a strange place.*' He was truly social. He strongly censured what is much too common in England among persons of condition,—maintaining an absolute silence, when unknown to each other; as, for instance, when occasionally brought together in a room before the master or mistress of the house has appeared. 'Sir,

<sup>1</sup> [Better known as *The Provoked Husband*, by Vanbrugh and Cibber.—A. B.]

that is being so uncivilised as not to understand the common rights of humanity.'

At the inn where we stopped he was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which he had for dinner. The ladies, I saw, wondered to see the great philosopher, whose wisdom and wit they had been admiring all the way, get into ill-humour from such a cause. He scolded the waiter, saying, 'It is as bad as bad can be: it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-dressed.'

He bore the journey very well, and seemed to feel himself elevated as he approached Oxford, that magnificent and venerable seat of learning, orthodoxy, and Toryism. Frank came in the heavy coach, in readiness to attend him; and we were received with the most polite hospitality at the house of his old friend, Dr. Adams, Master of Pembroke College, who had given us a kind invitation. Before we were set down I communicated to Johnson my having engaged to return to London directly, for the reason I have mentioned, but that I would hasten back to him again. He was pleased that I had made this journey merely to keep him company. He was easy and placid, with Dr. Adams, Mrs. and Miss Adams, and Mrs. Kennicott, widow of the learned Hebræan, who was here on a visit. He soon despatched the inquiries which were made about his illness and recovery, by a short and distinct narrative; and then assuming a gay air, repeated from Swift,

'Nor think on our approaching ills,  
And talk of spectacles and pills.'

Dr. Newton, the Bishop of Bristol, having been

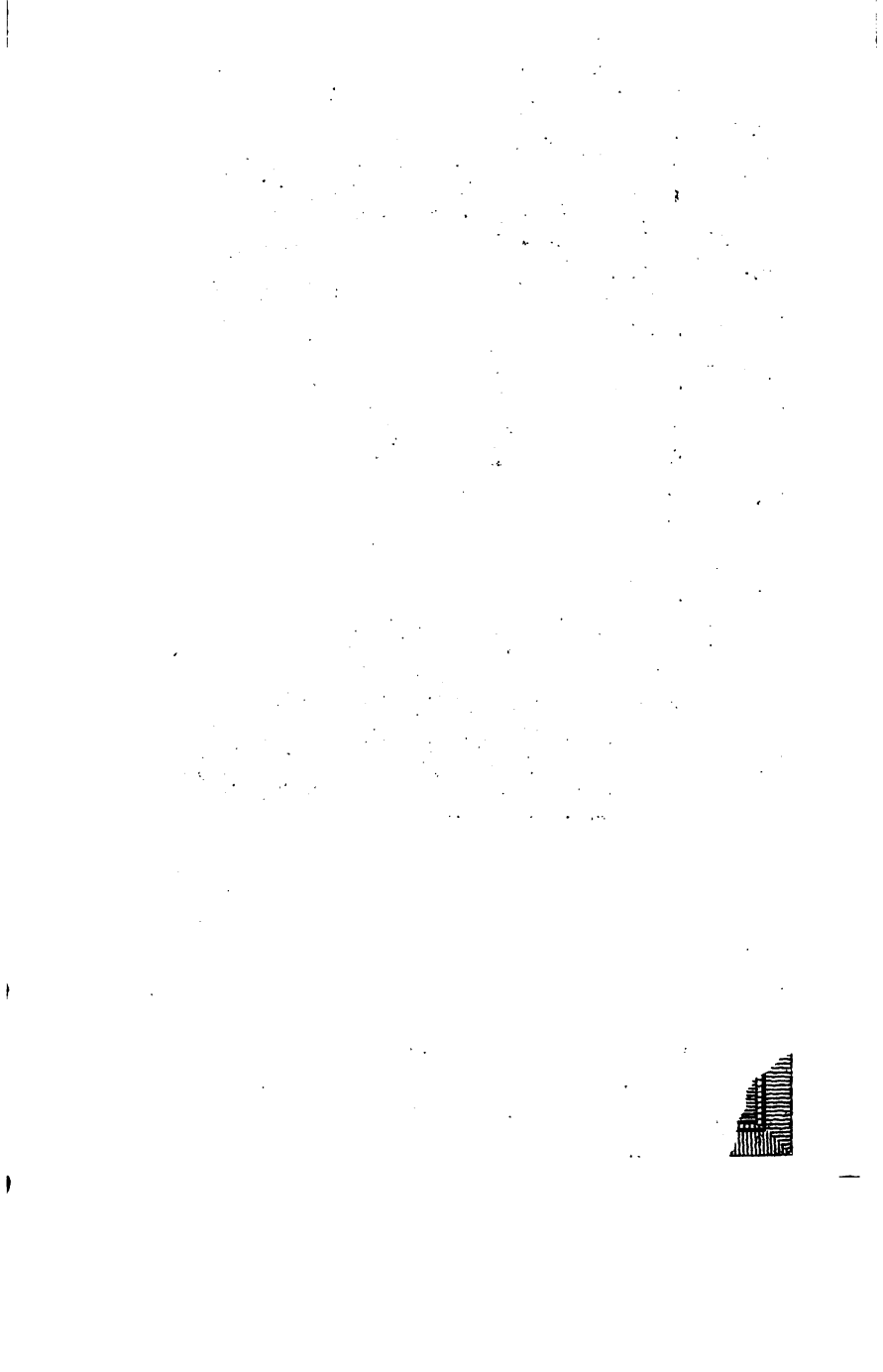
mentioned, Johnson, recollecting the manner in which he had been censured by that Prelate,<sup>1</sup> thus retaliated: 'Tom knew he should be dead before what he has said of me would appear. He durst not have printed it while he was alive.' DR. ADAMS: 'I believe his *Dissertations on the Prophecies* is his great work.' JOHNSON: 'Why, sir, it is Tom's great work; but how far it is great, or how much of it is Tom's, are other questions. I fancy a considerable part of it was borrowed.' DR. ADAMS: 'He was a very successful man.' JOHNSON: 'I don't think so, sir. He did not get very high. He was late in getting what he did get; and he did not get it by the best means. I believe he was a gross flatterer.'

I fulfilled my intention by going to London, and returned to Oxford on Wednesday the 9th of June, when I was happy to find myself again in the same

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Newton, in his account of his own Life, after animadverting upon Mr. Gibbon's *History*, says, 'Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* afforded more amusement; but candour was much hurt and offended at the malevolence that predominates in every part. Some passages, it must be allowed, are judicious and well written, but make not sufficient compensation for so much spleen and ill-humour. Never was any biographer more sparing of his praise or more abundant in his censures. He seemingly delights more in exposing blemishes than in recommending beauties; slightly passes over excellencies, enlarges upon imperfections, and not content with his own severe reflections, revives old scandal, and produces large quotations from the forgotten works of former critics. His reputation was so high in the republic of letters that it wanted not to be raised upon the ruin of others. But these essays, instead of raising a higher idea than was before entertained of his understanding, have certainly given the world a worse opinion of his temper.' The Bishop was therefore the more surprised and concerned for his townsman, for 'he respected him not only for his genius and learning, but valued him much for the more amiable part of his character, his humanity and charity, his morality and religion.' The last sentence we may consider as the general and permanent opinion of Bishop Newton; the remarks which precede it must, by all who have read Johnson's admirable work, be imputed to the disgust and peevishness of old age. I wish they had not appeared, and that Dr. Johnson had not been provoked by them to express himself not in respectful terms, of a Prelate whose labours were certainly of considerable advantage both to literature and religion.









*Dr. Thomas Newton*



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agreeable circle at Pembroke College, with the comfortable prospect of making some stay. Johnson welcomed my return with more than ordinary glee.

He talked with great regard of the Honourable Archibald Campbell, whose character he had given at the Duke of Argyll's table when we were at Inveraray;<sup>1</sup> and at this time wrote out for me, in his own hand, a fuller account of that learned and venerable writer, which I have published in its proper place. Johnson made a remark this evening which struck me a good deal. 'I never (said he) knew a nonjuror who could reason.'<sup>2</sup> Surely he did not mean to deny that faculty to many of their writers—to Hickee, Brett, and other eminent divines of that persuasion; and did not recollect that the seven bishops, so justly celebrated for their magnanimous resistance of arbitrary power, were yet nonjurors to the new Government.<sup>3</sup> The non-juring clergy of Scotland, indeed, who, excepting a few, have lately, by a sudden stroke, cut off all ties of allegiance to the house of Stuart, and resolved to pray for our present lawful Sovereign by name, may be thought to have confirmed this remark; as it may be said that the divine indefeasible hereditary right which they professed to believe, if ever true, must be equally

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, third edit. p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Mr. Agutter has favoured me with a note of a dialogue between Mr. John Henderson and Dr. Johnson on this topic, as related by Mr. Henderson, and it is evidently so authentic that I shall here insert it:—HENDERSON: 'What do you think, sir, of William Law?' JOHNSON: 'William Law, sir, wrote the best piece of Parenetic Divinity; but William Law was no reasoner.' HENDERSON: 'Jeremy Collier, sir?' JOHNSON: 'Jeremy Collier fought without a rival, and therefore could not claim the victory.' Mr. Henderson mentioned Kenn and Kettlewell; but some objections were made; at last he said, 'But, sir, what do you think of Lesley?' JOHNSON: 'Charles Lesley I had forgotten. Lesley was a reasoner, and a reasoner who was not to be reasoned against.'

<sup>3</sup> [Only five of them.—A. B.]

true still. Many of my readers will be surprised when I mention that Johnson assured me he had never in his life been in a nonjuring meeting-house.

Next morning at breakfast he pointed out a passage in Savage's *Wanderer*, saying, 'These are fine verses.' 'If (said he) I had written with hostility of Warburton in my *Shakespeare*, I should have quoted this couplet:

"Here Learning, blinded first, and then beguiled,  
Looks dark as Ignorance, as Frenzy wild."

You see they'd have fitted him to a *T'* (smiling). DR. ADAMS: 'But you did not write against Warburton.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir, I treated him with great respect both in my preface and in my notes.'

Mrs. Kennicott spoke of her brother, the Reverend Mr. Chamberlayne, who had given up great prospects in the Church of England on his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. Johnson, who warmly admired every man who acted from a conscientious regard to principle, erroneous or not, exclaimed fervently, 'God bless him.'

Mrs. Kennicott, in confirmation of Dr. Johnson's opinion that the present was not worse than former ages, mentioned that her brother assured her there was now less infidelity on the Continent than there had been; Voltaire and Rousseau were less read. I asserted, from good authority, that Hume's infidelity was certainly less read. JOHNSON: 'All infidel writers drop into oblivion when personal connections and the floridness of novelty are gone; though now and then a foolish fellow, who thinks he can be witty upon them, may bring them again into notice. There will sometimes start up a college joker who does not conside-

that what is a joke in a college will not do in the world. To such defenders of religion I would apply a stanza of a poem which I remember to have seen in some old collection :

“Henceforth be quiet and agree,  
Each kiss his empty brother;  
Religion scorns a foe like thee,  
But dreads a friend like t’other.”

The point is well though the expression is not correct; *one*, and not *thee*, should be opposed to *t’other*.<sup>1</sup>

On the Roman Catholic religion he said, ‘If you join the Papists externally, they will not interrogate you strictly as to your belief in their tenets. No reasoning Papist believes every article of their faith. There is one side on which a good man might be persuaded to embrace it. A good man of a timorous disposition, in great doubt of his acceptance with God, and pretty credulous, may be glad to be of a church where there are so many helps to get to Heaven. I would be a Papist if I could. I have fear enough; but an obstinate rationality prevents me. I shall never be a Papist, unless on the near approach of death, of which I have a very great terror. I wonder

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<sup>1</sup> I have inserted the stanza as Johnson repeated it from memory; but I have since found the poem itself in *The Foundling Hospital for Wit*, printed at London, 1749. It is as follows :

*Epigram, occasioned by a religious dispute at Bath*

‘On Reason, Faith, and Mystery high  
Two wits harangue the table;  
B—y believes he knows not why,  
N— swears ’tis all a fable.  
Peace, coxcombs, peace, and both agree  
N—, kiss thy empty brother;  
Religion laughs at foes like thee,  
And dreads a friend like t’other.’

that women are not all Papists.' BOSWELL: 'They are not more afraid of death than men are.' JOHNSON: 'Because they are less wicked.' DR. ADAMS: 'They are more pious.' JOHNSON: 'No, hang 'em, they are not more pious. A wicked fellow is the most pious when he takes to it. He'll beat you all at piety.'

He argued in defence of some of the peculiar tenets of the Church of Rome. As to the giving the bread only to the laity, he said, 'They may think, that in what is merely ritual, deviations from the primitive mode may be admitted on the ground of convenience; and I think they are as well warranted to make this alteration as we are to substitute sprinkling in the room of the ancient baptism.' As to the invocation of saints, he said, 'Though I do not think it authorised, it appears to me that the "communion of saints" in the Creed means the communion with the saints in Heaven, as connected with "The holy Catholic Church."' <sup>1</sup> He admitted the influence of evil spirits upon our minds, and said, 'Nobody who believes the New Testament can deny it.'

I brought a volume of Dr. Hurd the Bishop of Worcester's Sermons, and read to the company some passages from one of them, upon this text, '*Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.*'—James iv. 7. I was happy to produce so judicious and elegant a supporter<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Waller, in his *Divine Poesie*, Canto first, has the same thought finely expressed:

'The Church triumphant, and the Church below,  
In songs of praise their present union show;  
Their joys are full; our expectation long,  
In life we differ, but we join in song;  
Angels and we assisted by this art,  
May sing together, though we dwell apart.'

<sup>2</sup> The sermon thus opens: 'That there are angels and spirits good and bad; that at the head of these last there is one more considerable



of a doctrine which, I know not why, should, in this world of imperfect knowledge, and therefore of wonder and mystery in a thousand instances, be contested by some with an unthinking assurance and flippancy.

After dinner, when one of us talked of there being a great enmity between Whig and Tory;—JOHNSON: 'Why, not so much, I think, unless when they come into competition with each other. There is none when they are only common acquaintance, none when they are of different sexes. A Tory will marry into a Whig family, and a Whig into a Tory family, without any reluctance. But indeed, in a matter of much more concern than political tenets, and that is religion, men and women do not concern themselves much about

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and malignant than the rest, who, in the form, or under the name of a *serpent*, was deeply concerned in the fall of man, and whose head, as the prophetic language is, the Son of Man was one day to *bruise*; that this evil spirit, though that prophecy be in part completed, has not yet received his death's wound, but is still permitted, for ends unsearchable to us, and in ways which we cannot particularly explain, to have a certain degree of power in this world hostile to its virtue and happiness, and sometimes exerted with too much success; all this is so clear from Scripture, that no believer, unless he be first of all *spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit*, can possibly entertain a doubt of it.'

Having treated of *possessions*, his Lordship says, 'As I have no authority to affirm that there *are* now any such, so neither may I presume to say with confidence, that there are *not* any.'

'But then with regard to the influence of evil spirits at this day upon the souls of men, I shall take leave to be a great deal more peremptory. [Then, having stated the various proofs, he adds] 'All this, I say, is so manifest to every one who reads the Scriptures, that, if we respect their authority, the question concerning the reality of the demoniac influence upon the minds of men is clearly determined.'

Let it be remembered that these are not the words of an antiquated or obscure enthusiast, but of a learned and polite Prelate now alive; and were spoken, not to a vulgar congregation, but to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn. His Lordship in this sermon explains the words, 'deliver us from evil,' in the Lord's Prayer, as signifying a request to be protected from 'the evil one,' that is, the Devil. This is well illustrated in a short but excellent Commentary by my late worthy friend, the Rev. Dr. Lort, of whom it may truly be said, *Multis illis bonis stabilis occidit*. It is remarkable that Waller in his 'Reflections on the several Petitions, in that sacred form of devotion,' has understood this in the same sense:

'Guard us from all temptations of the Foe.

difference of opinion ; and ladies set no value on the moral character of men who pay their addresses to them ; the greatest profligate will be as well received as the man of the greatest virtue, and this by a very good woman, by a woman who says her prayers three times a day.' Our ladies endeavoured to defend their sex from this charge ; but he roared them down ! 'No, no, a lady will take Jonathan Wild as readily as St. Austin if he has threepence more ; and, what is worse, her parents will give her to him. Women have a perpetual envy of our vices ; they are less vicious than we, not from choice, but because we restrict them ; they are the slaves of order and fashion ; their virtue is of more consequence to us than our own, so far as concerns this world.'

Miss Adams mentioned a gentleman of licentious character, and said, 'Suppose I had a mind to marry that gentleman, would my parents consent?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, they'd consent, and you'd go. You'd go, though they did not consent.' MISS ADAMS: 'Perhaps their opposing might make me go.' JOHNSON: 'O, very well ; you'd take one whom you think a bad man to have the pleasure of vexing your parents. You put me in mind of Dr. Barrowby, the physician, who was very fond of swine's flesh. One day, when he was eating it, he said, "I wish I was a Jew." "Why so? (said somebody) ; the Jews are not allowed to eat your favourite meat." "Because (said he), I should then have the gust of eating it with the pleasure of sinning."' Johnson then proceeded in his declamation.

Miss Adams soon afterwards made an observation that I do not recollect, which pleased him much ; he

said with a good-humoured smile, 'That there should be so much excellence united with so much *depravity* is strange.'

Indeed this lady's good qualities, merit, and accomplishments, and her constant attention to Dr. Johnson, were not lost upon him. She happened to tell him that a little coffee-pot, in which she had made him coffee, was the only thing she could call her own. He turned to her with a complacent gallantry, 'Don't say so, my dear; I hope you don't reckon my heart as nothing.'

I asked him if it was true as reported, that he had said lately, 'I am for the King against Fox; but I am for Fox against Pitt.' JOHNSON: 'Yes, sir; the King is my master; but I do not know Pitt; and Fox is my friend.'

'Fox (added he) is a most extraordinary man; here is a man (describing him in strong terms of objection in some respects according as he apprehended, but which exalted his abilities the more), who has divided the kingdom with Cæsar; so that it was a doubt whether the nation should be ruled by the sceptre of George the Third, or the tongue of Fox.'

Dr. Wall, physician at Oxford, drank tea with us. Johnson had in general a peculiar pleasure in the company of physicians, which was certainly not abated by the conversation of this learned, ingenious, and pleasing gentleman. Johnson said, 'It is wonderful how little good Radcliffe's travelling fellowships have done. I know nothing that has been imported by them; yet many additions to our medical knowledge might be got in foreign countries. Inoculation, for instance, has saved more lives than war destroys: and

the cures performed by the Peruvian bark are innumerable. But it is in vain to send our travelling physicians to France, and Italy, and Germany, for all that is known there is known here: I'd send them out of Christendom; I'd send them among barbarous nations.'

On Friday, June 11, we talked at breakfast of forms of prayer. JOHNSON: 'I know of no good prayers but those in the *Book of Common Prayer*.' DR. ADAMS (in a very earnest manner): 'I wish, sir, you would compose some family prayers.' JOHNSON: 'I will not compose prayers for you, sir, because you can do it for yourself. But I have thought of getting together all the books of prayer which I could, selecting those which should appear to me the best, putting out some, inserting others, adding some prayers of my own, and prefixing a discourse on prayer.' We all now gathered about him, and two or three of us at a time joined in pressing him to execute this plan. He seemed to be a little displeased at the manner of our importunity, and in great agitation called out, 'Do not talk thus of what is so awful. I know not what time God will allow me in this world. There are many things which I wish to do.' Some of us persisted, and Dr. Adams said, 'I never was more serious about anything in my life.' JOHNSON: 'Let me alone, let me alone; I am overpowered.' And then he put his hands before his face, and reclined for some time upon the table.

I mentioned Jeremy Taylor's using, in his forms of prayer, 'I am the chief of sinners,' and other such self-condemning expressions. 'Now (said I), this cannot be said with truth by every man, and therefore

is improper for a general printed form. I myself cannot say that I am the worst of men; I *will* not say so.' JOHNSON: 'A man may know, that physically, that is, in the real state of things, he is not the worst man; but that morally he may be so. Law observes, that 'every man knows something worse of himself, than he is sure of in others.' You may not have committed such crimes as some men have done; but you do not know against what degree of light they have sinned. Besides, sir, 'the chief of sinners' is a mode of expression for 'I am a great sinner.' So St. Paul, speaking of our Saviour's having died to save sinners, says, 'of whom I am the chief': yet he certainly did not think himself so bad as Judas Iscariot.' BOSWELL: 'But, sir, Taylor means it literally, for he founds a conceit upon it. When praying for the conversion of sinners, and of himself in particular, he says, "Lord, thou wilt not leave thy *chief* work undone.'" JOHNSON: 'I do not approve of figurative expressions in addressing the Supreme Being; and I never use them. Taylor gives a very good advice: "Never lie in your prayers; never confess more than you really believe; never promise more than you mean to perform.'" I recollected this precept in his *Golden Grove*; but his *example* for prayer contradicts his *precept*.

Dr. Johnson and I went in Dr. Adams's coach to dine with Mr. Nowell, Principal of St. Mary Hall, at his beautiful villa at Ifley, on the banks of the Isis, about two miles from Oxford. While we were upon the road, I had the resolution to ask Johnson whether he thought that the roughness of his manner had been an advantage or not, and if he would not have done more good if he had been more gentle. I proceeded

to answer myself thus: 'Perhaps it has been of advantage, as it has given weight to what you said: you could not, perhaps, have talked with such authority without it.' JOHNSON: 'No, sir; I have done more good as I am. Obscenity and impiety have always been repressed in my company.' BOSWELL: 'True, sir; and that is more than can be said of every bishop. Greater liberties have been taken in the presence of a bishop, though a very good man, from his being milder, and therefore not commanding such awe. Yet, sir, many people who might have been benefited by your conversation, have been frightened away. A worthy friend of ours has told me that he has often been afraid to talk to you.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, he need not have been afraid, if he had anything rational to say.<sup>1</sup> If he had not, it was better he did not talk.'

Dr. Nowell is celebrated for having preached a sermon before the House of Commons, on the 30th of January 1772, full of high Tory sentiments, for which he was thanked as usual, and printed it at their request; but, in the midst of that turbulence and faction which disgraced a part of the present reign, the thanks were afterwards ordered to be expunged. This strange conduct sufficiently exposes itself; and Dr. Nowell will ever have the honour which is due to a lofty friend of our monarchical constitution. Dr. Johnson said to me, 'Sir, the Court will be very much to blame if he is not promoted.' I told this to Dr.

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<sup>1</sup> [The words of Erasmus (as my learned friend Dr. Kearney observes to me) may be applied to Johnson: Qui ingenium, sensum, dictionem hominis noverant, multis non offenduntur, quibus graviter erant offendendi, qui hæc ignorarunt.—M.]

Nowell ; and asserting my humbler, though not less zealous exertions in the same cause, I suggested that whatever return we might receive, we should still have the consolation of being like Butler's steady and generous Royalist,

'True as the dial to the sun,  
Although it be not shone upon.'

We were well entertained and very happy at Dr. Nowell's, where was a very agreeable company ; and we drank 'Church and King' after dinner, with true Tory cordiality.

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

I censured the coarse invectives which were become fashionable in the House of Commons, and said that if members of Parliament must attack each other personally in the heat of debate, it should be done more genteelly. JOHNSON : 'No, sir ; that would be much worse. Abuse is not so dangerous when there is no

vehicle of wit or delicacy, no subtle conveyance. The difference between coarse and refined abuse is as the difference between being bruised by a club, and wounded by a poisoned arrow.' I have since observed his position elegantly expressed by Dr. Young :

' As the soft plume gives swiftness to the dart,  
Good breeding sends the satire to the heart.'

On Saturday, June 12, there drank tea with us at Dr. Adams's, Mr. John Henderson, student of Pembroke College, celebrated for his wonderful acquirements in alchemy, judicial astrology, and other abstruse and curious learning,<sup>1</sup> and the Reverend Herbert Croft, who, I am afraid, was somewhat mortified by Dr. Johnson's not being highly pleased with some *Family Discourses*, which he had printed; they were in too familiar a style to be approved of by so many a mind. I have no note of this evening's conversation, except a single fragment. When I mentioned Thomas, Lord Lyttelton's vision, the prediction of the time of his death and its exact fulfilment;—JOHNSON: 'It is the most extraordinary thing that has happened in my day. I heard it with my own ears, from his uncle, Lord Westcote.'<sup>2</sup> I am so glad to have every evidence of the spiritual world, that I am willing to believe it.' DR. ADAMS: 'You have evidence enough; good evidence, which needs not such support.' JOHNSON: 'I like to have more.'

Mr. Henderson, with whom I had sauntered in the

<sup>1</sup> See an account of him in a sermon by the Rev. Mr. Agutter, published in 1788.

<sup>2</sup> [A correct account of Lord Lyttelton's supposed vision may be found in Nashe's *History of Worcestershire—Additions and Corrections*—p. 36.—M.]



venerable walks of Merton College, and found him a very learned and pious man, supped with us. Dr. Johnson surprised him not a little, by acknowledging with a look of horror, that he was much oppressed by the fear of death. The amiable Dr. Adams suggested that God was infinitely good. JOHNSON: 'That he is infinitely good, as far as the perfection of his nature will allow, I certainly believe; but it is necessary for good upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As to an *individual*, therefore, he is not infinitely good; and as I cannot be *sure* that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned.' (Looking dismally.) DR. ADAMS: 'What do you mean by damned?' JOHNSON (passionately and loudly): 'Sent to hell, sir, and punished everlastingly.' DR. ADAMS: 'I don't believe that doctrine.' JOHNSON: 'Hold, sir, do you believe that some will be punished at all?' DR. ADAMS: 'Being excluded from heaven will be a punishment; yet there may be no great positive suffering.' JOHNSON: Well, sir; but, if you admit any degree of punishment, there is an end of your argument for infinite goodness simply considered; for infinite goodness would inflict no punishment whatever. There is not infinite goodness, physically considered; morally, there is.' BOSWELL: 'But may not a man attain to such a degree of hope, as not to be uneasy from the fear of death?' JOHNSON: 'A man may have such a degree of hope as to keep him quiet. You see I am not quiet, from the vehemence with which I talk; but I do not despair.' MRS. ADAMS: 'You seem, sir, to forget the merits of our Redeemer.' JOHNSON: 'Madam, I do not forget

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

From the subject of death we passed to discourse of life, whether it was upon the whole more happy or miserable. Johnson was decidedly for the balance of misery :<sup>1</sup> in confirmation of which I maintained, that

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<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Mr. Ralph Churton, Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, has favoured me with the following remarks on my work, which he is pleased to say, 'I have hitherto extolled, and cordially approve.'

The chief part of what I have to observe is contained in the following transcript from a letter to a friend, which, with his concurrence, I copied for this purpose ; and, whatever may be the merit or justness of the remarks, you may be sure that being written to a most intimate friend, without any intention that they ever should go further, they are the genuine and undisguised sentiments of the writer :

" Jan. 6, 1792.

" Last week, I was reading the second volume of Boswell's *Johnson*, with increasing esteem for the worthy author, and increasing veneration of the wonderful and excellent man who is the subject of it. The writer throws in, now and then, very properly some serious religious reflections ; but there is one remark, in my mind an obvious and just one, which I think he has not made, that Johnson's 'morbid melancholy,' and constitutional infirmities, were intended by Providence, like St. Paul's thorn in the flesh, to check intellectual conceit and arrogance ; which the consciousness of his extraordinary talents, awake as he was to the voice of praise, might otherwise have generated in a very culpable degree. Another observation strikes me, that in consequence of the same natural indisposition, and habitual sickness (for he says he scarcely passed one day without pain after his twentieth year), he considered and represented human life, as a scene of much greater misery than is generally experienced. There may be persons bowed

no man would choose to lead over again the life which he had experienced. Johnson acceded to that opinion in the strongest terms. This is an inquiry often made ;

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down with affliction all their days ; and there are those, no doubt, whose iniquities rob them of rest ; but neither calamities nor crimes, I hope and believe, do so much and so generally abound, as to justify the dark picture of life which Johnson's imagination designed, and his strong pencil delineated. This I am sure, the colouring is far too gloomy for what I have experienced, though as far as I can remember, I have had more sickness (I do not say more severe, but only more in quantity) than falls to the lot of most people. But then daily debility and occasional sickness were far overbalanced by intervenient days, and perhaps weeks, void of pain, and overflowing with comfort. So that in short, to return to the subject, human life, as far as I can perceive from experience or observation, is not that state of constant wretchedness which Johnson always insisted it was : which misrepresentation (for such it surely is) his biographer has not corrected, I suppose, because, unhappily, he has himself a large portion of melancholy in his constitution, and fancied the portrait a faithful copy of life."

The learned writer then proceeds thus in his letter to me :

'I have conversed with some sensible men on this subject, who all seem to entertain the same sentiments respecting life with those which are expressed or implied in the foregoing paragraph. It might be added, that as the representation here spoken of appears not consistent with fact and experience, so neither does it seem to be countenanced by Scripture. There is, perhaps, no part of the sacred volume which at first sight promises so much to lend its sanction to these dark and desponding notions as the book of Ecclesiastes, which so often, and so emphatically, proclaims the vanity of things sublunary. But "the design of this whole book (as it has been justly observed) is not to put us out of conceit with life, but to cure our vain expectations of a complete and perfect happiness in this world ; to convince us, that there is no such thing to be found in mere external enjoyments : and to teach us—to seek for happiness in the practice of virtue, in the knowledge and love of God, and in the hopes of a better life. For this is the application of all : *Let us hear*, etc., xii. 13. Not only his duty, but his happiness too : *For God*, etc., ver. 14."—See *Sherlock on Providence*, p. 299.

'The New Testament tells us, indeed, and most truly, that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" ; and therefore wisely forbids us to increase our burden by forebodings of sorrows ; but I think it nowhere says that even our ordinary afflictions are not consistent with a very considerable degree of positive comfort and satisfaction. And, accordingly, one whose sufferings as well as merits were conspicuous, assures us, that in proportion "as the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, so their consolation also abounded by Christ" (2 Cor. i. 5). It is needless to cite, as indeed it would be endless even to refer to, the multitude of passages in both Testaments holding out, in the strongest language, promises of blessings, even in this world, to the faithful servants of God. I will only refer to St. Luke xviii. 29, 30, and 1 Tim. iv. 8.

'Upon the whole, setting aside instances of great and lasting bodily pain, of minds peculiarly oppressed by melancholy, and of

and its being a subject of disquisition is a proof that much misery presses upon human feelings; for those who are conscious of a felicity of existence, would

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severe temporal calamities, from which extraordinary cases we surely should not form our estimate of the general tenor and complexion of life; excluding these from the account, I am convinced that as well the gracious constitution of things which Providence has ordained, as the declarations of Scripture and the actual experience of individuals, authorise the sincere Christian to hope that his humble and constant endeavours to perform his duty, chequered as the best life is with many failings, will be crowned with a greater degree of present peace, serenity, and comfort, than he could reasonably permit himself to expect, if he measured his views and judged of life from the opinion of Dr. Johnson, often and energetically expressed in the Memoirs of him, without any animadversion or censure by his ingenious biographer. If he himself, upon reviewing the subject, shall see the matter in this light, he will, in an octavo edition, which is eagerly expected, make such additional remarks or corrections as he shall judge fit; lest the impressions which these discouraging passages may leave on the reader's mind should in any degree hinder what otherwise the whole spirit and energy of the work tends, and, I hope, successfully, to promote,—pure morality and true religion.

Though I have, in some degree, obviated any reflections against my illustrious friend's dark views of life, when considering, in the course of this work, his *Rambler* and his *Rasselas*, I am obliged to Mr. Churton for complying with my request of his permission to insert his remarks, being conscious of the weight of what he judiciously suggests as to the melancholy in my own constitution. His more pleasing views of life, I hope, are just, *Valeant, quantum valere possunt*.

Mr. Churton concludes his letter to me in these words: 'Once, and only once, I had the satisfaction of seeing your illustrious friend; and as I feel a particular regard for all whom he distinguished with his esteem and friendship, so I derive much pleasure from reflecting that I once beheld, though but transiently, near our College gate, one whose works will for ever delight and improve the world, who was a sincere and zealous son of the Church of England, an honour to his country, and an ornament to human nature.'

His letter was accompanied with a present from himself of his *Sermons at the Bampton Lecture*, and from his friend, Dr. Townson, the venerable Rector of Malpas in Cheshire, of his *Discourses on the Gospels*, together with the following extract of a letter from that excellent person, who is now gone to receive the reward of his labours: 'Mr. Boswell is not only very entertaining in his works, but they are so replete with moral and religious sentiments, without an instance, as far as I know, of a contrary tendency, that I cannot help having a great esteem for him; and if you think such a trifle as a copy of the *'Discourses,' ex dono authoris*, would be acceptable to him, I should be happy to give him this small testimony of my regard.'

Such spontaneous testimonies of approbation from such men, without any personal acquaintance with me, are truly valuable and encouraging.

never hesitate to accept of a repetition of it. I have met with very few who would. I have heard Mr. Burke make use of a very ingenious and plausible argument on this subject: 'Every man (said he) would lead his life over again; for every man is willing to go on and take an addition to his life, which, as he grows older, he has no reason to think will be better, or even so good, as what has preceded. I imagine, however, the truth is that there is a deceitful hope that the next part of life will be free from the pains, and anxieties, and sorrows, which we have already felt. We are for wise purposes 'Condemn'd in Hope's delusive mine,' as Johnson finely says; and I may also quote the celebrated lines of Dryden, equally philosophical and poetical:

'When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat,  
 Yet fool'd with hope, men favour the deceit;  
 Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay;  
 To-morrow's falser than the former day;  
 Lies worse; and while it says we shall be blest  
 With some new joys, cuts off what we possess.  
 Strange cozenage! none would live past years again;  
 Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain;  
 And from the dregs of life think to receive,  
 What the first sprightly running could not give.'<sup>1</sup>

It was observed to Dr. Johnson that it seemed strange that he, who has so often delighted his company by his lively and brilliant conversation, should say he was miserable. JOHNSON: 'Alas! it is all outside; I may be cracking my joke, and cursing the sun. *Sun, how I hate thy beams!*' I knew not well what to think of this declaration; whether to hold it

<sup>1</sup> *Aurengzebe*, Act IV. scene 1.

as a genuine picture of his mind,<sup>1</sup> or as the effect of his persuading himself, contrary to fact, that the position which he had assumed as to human unhappiness, was true. We may apply to him a sentence in Mr. Greville's *Maxims, Characters, and Reflections*:<sup>2</sup> a book which is entitled to much more praise than it has received: 'Aristarchus is charming: how full of knowledge, of sense, of sentiment. You get him with difficulty to your supper; and after having delighted everybody and himself for a few hours, he is obliged to return home;—he is finishing his treatise to prove that unhappiness is the portion of man.'

On Sunday, June 13, our philosopher was calm at breakfast. There was something exceedingly pleasing in our leading a college life, without restraint, and with superior elegance, in consequence of our living in the Master's house and having the company of ladies. Mrs. Kennicott related, in his presence, a lively saying of Dr. Johnson to Miss Hannah More, who had expressed a wonder that the poet who had written *Paradise Lost*, should write such poor sonnets:—'Milton, madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones.'

We talked of the casuistical question, whether it was allowable at any time to depart from Truth? JOHNSON: 'The general rule is that Truth should never be violated, because it is of the utmost importance to the comfort of life, that we should have a

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<sup>1</sup> Yet there is no doubt that a man may appear very gay in company who is sad at heart. His merriment is like the sound of drums and trumpets in a battle, to drown the groans of the wounded and dying.

<sup>2</sup> Page 139.

full security by mutual faith ; and occasional inconveniencies should be willingly suffered, that we may preserve it. There must, however, be some exceptions. If, for instance, a murderer should ask you which way a man is gone, you may tell him what is not true, because you are under a previous obligation not to betray a man to a murderer.' BOSWELL: 'Supposing the person who wrote *Junius* were asked whether he was the author, might he deny it?' JOHNSON: 'I don't know what to say to this. If you were *sure* that he wrote *Junius*, would you, if he denied it, think as well of him afterwards? Yet it may be urged that what a man has no right to ask, you may refuse to communicate ; and there is no other effectual mode of preserving a secret and an important secret, the discovery of which may be very hurtful to you, but a flat denial ; for if you are silent, or hesitate, or evade, it will be held equivalent to a confession. But stay, sir, here is another case. Supposing the author had told me confidentially that he had written *Junius*, and I were asked if he had, I should hold myself at liberty to deny it, as being under a previous promise, express or implied, to conceal it. Now what I ought to do for the author, may I not do for myself? But I deny the lawfulness of telling a lie to a sick man, for fear of alarming him. You have no business with consequences ; you are to tell the truth. Besides, you are not sure what effect your telling him that he is in danger may have. It may bring his distemper to a crisis, and that may cure him. Of all lying, I have the greatest abhorrence of this, because I believe it has been frequently practised on myself.'

I cannot help thinking that there is much weight

in the opinion of those who have held that truth, as an eternal and immutable principle, ought, upon no account whatever, to be violated, from supposed previous or superior obligations, of which every man being to judge for himself, there is great danger that we too often, from partial motives, persuade ourselves that they exist; and probably whatever extraordinary instances may sometimes occur, where some evil may be prevented by violating this noble principle, it would be found that human happiness would, upon the whole, be more perfect, were truth universally preserved.

In the notes to the *Dunciad* we find the following verses, addressed to Pope: <sup>1</sup>—

'While malice, Pope, denies thy page  
Its own celestial fire;  
While critics, and while bards in rage,  
Admiring, won't admire:

While wayward pens thy worth assail,  
And envious tongues decry;  
These times, though many a friend bewail,  
These times bewail not I.

But when the world's loud praise is thine,  
And spleen no more shall blame:  
When with thy Homer thou shalt shine  
In one establish'd fame!

When none shall rail, and every lay  
Devote a wreath to thee;  
That day (for come it will) that day  
Shall I lament to see.'

It is surely not a little remarkable that they should appear without a name. Miss Seward, knowing Dr.

<sup>1</sup> The annotator calls them 'amiable verses.'



Johnson's almost universal and minute literary information, signified a desire that I should ask him who was the author. He was prompt with his answer: 'Why, sir, they were written by one Lewis, who was either under-master or an usher of Westminster School, and published a *Miscellany*, in which "Grongar Hill" first came out.'<sup>1</sup> Johnson praised them highly, and repeated them with a noble animation. In the twelfth line, instead of 'one establish'd fame,' he repeated 'one unclouded flame,' which he thought

<sup>1</sup> [Lewis's verses addressed to Pope (as Mr. Bindley suggests to me), were first published in a collection of pieces in verse and prose on occasion of the *Dunciad*, 8vo, 1732. They are there called an Epigram. 'Grongar Hill,' the same gentleman observes, was first printed in Savage's *Miscellanies* as an *Ode* (it is singular that Johnson should not have recollected this), and was reprinted in the same year (1736) in Lewis's *Miscellany* in the form it now bears.

In that *Miscellany* (as the Reverend Mr. Blakeway observes to me), 'the beautiful poem, "Away, let nought to love displeasing," etc. (reprinted in Percy's *Reliques*, vol. i. b. iii. No. 14) first appeared.'

Lewis was author of *Philip of Macedon*, a tragedy, published in 1727, and dedicated to Pope; and in 1730 he published a second volume of miscellaneous poems.

As Dr. Johnson settled in London not long after the verses addressed to Pope first appeared, he probably then obtained some information concerning their author, David Lewis, whom he has described as an usher of Westminster School; yet the Dean of Westminster, who has been pleased, at my request, to make some inquiry on this subject, has not found any vestige of his having ever been employed in this situation. A late writer (*Environs of London*, iv. 171) supposed that the following inscription in the churchyard of the church of *Low Leyton*, in Essex, was intended to commemorate this poet:

'Sacred to the memory of David Lewis, Esq., who died the 8th day of April 1760, aged seventy-seven years; a great favourite of the Muses, as his many excellent pieces in poetry sufficiently testify.

"Inspired verse may on this marble live,  
But can no honour to thy ashes give."

. . . Also Mary, the wife of the above-named David Lewis, fourth daughter of Newdigate Owsley, Esq., who departed this life the 10th of October 1774, aged ninety years.'

But it appears to me improbable that this monument was erected for the author of the Verses to Pope, and of the Tragedy already mentioned; the language both of the dedication prefixed to that piece, and of the dedication addressed to the Earl of Shaftesbury, and prefixed to the *Miscellanies*, 1730, denoting a person who moved in a lower sphere than this Essex Squire seems to have done.—M.]

was the reading in former editions: but I believe was a flash of his own genius. It is much more poetical than the other.

On Monday, June 14, and Tuesday, 15, Dr. Johnson and I dined, on one of them, I forget which, with Mr. Mickle, translator of the *Lusiad*, at Wheatley, a very pretty country place a few miles from Oxford; and on the other with Dr. Wetherell, Master of University College. From Dr. Wetherell's he went to visit Mr. Sackville Parker, the bookseller; and when he returned to us, gave the following account of his visit, saying, 'I have been to see my old friend, Sack. Parker; I find he has married his maid; he has done right. She had lived with him many years in great confidence, and they had mingled minds; I do not think he could have found any wife that would have made him so happy. The woman was very attentive and civil to me; she pressed me to fix a day for dining with them, and to say what I liked, and she would be sure to get it for me. Poor Sack. ! He is very ill indeed.<sup>1</sup> We parted as never to meet again. It has quite broken me down.' This pathetic narrative was strangely diversified with the grave and earnest defence of a man's having married his maid. I could not but feel it as in some degree ludicrous.

In the morning of Tuesday, June 15, while we sat at Dr. Adams's, we talked of a printed letter from the Reverend Herbert Croft, to a young gentleman who had been his pupil, in which he advised him to read to the end of whatever books he should begin to read. JOHNSON: 'This is surely a strange advice; you may

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<sup>1</sup> [He died at Oxford in his eighty-ninth year, Dec. 10, 1796.—M.]

as well resolve that whatever men you happen to get acquainted with, you are to keep to them for life. A book may be good for nothing; or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing: are we to read it all through? These Voyages (pointing to the three large volumes of *Voyages to the South Sea*, which were just come out), *who* will read them through? A man had better work his way before the mast than read them through; they will be eaten by rats and mice before they are read through. There can be little entertainment in such books; one set of savages is like another.' BOSWELL: 'I do not think the people of Otaheite can be reckoned savages.' JOHNSON: 'Don't cant in defence of savages.' BOSWELL: 'They have the art of navigation.' JOHNSON: 'A dog or a cat can swim.' BOSWELL: 'They carve very ingeniously.' JOHNSON: 'A cat can scratch, and a child with a nail can scratch.' I perceived this was none of the *mollia tempora fandi*; so desisted.

Upon his mentioning that when he came to college he wrote his first exercises twice over, but never did so afterwards;—MISS ADAMS: 'I suppose, sir, you could not make them better?' JOHNSON: 'Yes, madam, to be sure, I could make them better. Thought is better than no thought.' MISS ADAMS: 'Do you think, sir, you could make your *Ramblers* better?' JOHNSON: 'Certainly I could.' BOSWELL: 'I'll lay a bet, sir, you cannot.' JOHNSON: 'But I will, sir, if I choose. I shall make the best of them you shall pick out, better.' BOSWELL: 'But you may add to them. I will not allow of that.' JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir, there are three ways of making them better;—putting out,—adding,—or correcting.'

During our visit at Oxford, the following conversation passed between him and me on the subject of my trying my fortune at the English bar. Having asked whether a very extensive acquaintance in London, which was very valuable, and of great advantage to a man at large, might not be prejudicial to a lawyer, by preventing him from giving sufficient attention to his business?—JOHNSON: ‘Sir, you will attend to business, as business lays hold of you. When not actually employed, you may see your friends as much as you do now. You may dine at a club every day, and sup with one of the members every night; and you may be as much at public places as one who has seen them all would wish to be. But you must take care to attend constantly in Westminster Hall; both to mind your business, as it is almost all learned there (for nobody reads now), and to show that you want to have business. And you must not be too often seen at public places, that competitors may not have it to say, “He is always at the playhouse or at Ranelagh, and never to be found at his chambers.” And, sir, there must be a kind of solemnity in the manner of a professional man. I have nothing particular to say to you on the subject. All this I should say to any one; I should have said it to Lord Thurlow twenty years ago.’

The profession may probably think this representation of what is required in a barrister who would hope for success, to be much too indulgent; but certain it is, that as

‘The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,’

some of the lawyers of this age who have risen high, have by no means thought it absolutely necessary to

submit to that long and painful course of study which a Plowden, a Coke, and a Hale, considered as requisite. My respected friend, Mr. Langton, has shown me in the handwriting of his grandfather, a curious account of a conversation which he had with Lord Chief Justice Hale, in which that great man tells him, 'That for two years after he came to the inn of court, he studied sixteen hours a day; however (his Lordship added), that by this intense application he almost brought himself to his grave, though he were of a very strong constitution, and after reduced himself to eight hours; but that he would not advise anybody to so much; that he thought six hours a day, with attention and constancy, was sufficient; that man must use his body as he would his horse, and his stomach; not tire him at once but rise with an appetite.'

On Wednesday, June 19, Dr. Johnson and I returned to London; he was not well to-day, and said very little, employing himself chiefly in reading Euripides. He expressed some displeasure at me, for not observing sufficiently the various objects upon the road. 'If I had your eyes, sir (said he), I should count the passengers.' It was wonderful how accurate his observations of visual objects was, notwithstanding his imperfect eyesight, owing to a habit of attention.—That he was much satisfied with the respect paid to him at Dr. Adams's is thus attested by himself: 'I returned last night from Oxford, after a fortnight's abode with Dr. Adams, who treated me as well as I could expect or wish; and he that contents a sick man, a man whom it is impossible to please, has surely done his part well.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Mrs. Thrale*, vol. ii. p. 372.

After his return to London from this excursion, I saw him frequently, but have few memorandums; I shall therefore here insert some particulars which I collected at various times.

The Reverend Mr. Astle of Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, brother to the learned and ingenious Thomas Astle, Esq., was from his early years known to Dr. Johnson, who obligingly advised him as to his studies, and recommended to him the following books, of which a list which he has been pleased to communicate, lies before me in Johnson's own handwriting:

*Universal History* (ancient); Rollin's *Ancient History*; Puffendorf's *Introduction to History*; Vertot's *History of Knights of Malta*; Vertot's *Revolution of Portugal*; Vertot's *Revolution of Sweden*; Carte's *History of England*; *Present State of England*; *Geographical Grammar*; Prideaux's *Connexion*; Nelson's *Feasts and Fasts*; *Duty of Man*; *Gentleman's Religion*; Clarendon's *History*; Watt's *Improvement of the Mind*; Watt's *Logic*; *Nature Displayed*; Lowth's *English Grammar*; Blackwell *on the Classics*; Sherlock's *Sermons*; Burnet's *Life of Hale*; Dupin's *History of the Church*; Shuckford's *Connexions*; Law's *Serious Call*; Walton's *Complete Angler*; Sandys' *Travels*; Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*; England's *Gazetteer*; Goldsmith's *Roman History*; *Some Commentaries on the Bible*.

It having been mentioned to Dr. Johnson that a gentleman who had a son whom he imagined to have an extreme degree of timidity, resolved to send him to a public school, that he might acquire confidence;—'Sir (said Johnson), this is a preposterous expedient for removing his infirmity; such a disposition should be cultivated in the shade. Placing him at a public school is forcing an owl upon day.'

Speaking of a gentleman whose house was much frequented by low company: 'Rags, sir (said he), will

always make their appearance, where they have a right to do it.'

Of the same gentleman's mode of living, he said, 'Sir, the servants, instead of doing what they are bid, stand round the table in idle clusters, gaping upon the guests; and seem as unfit to attend a company, as to steer a man-of-war.'

A dull country magistrate gave Johnson a long tedious account of his exercising his criminal jurisdiction, the result of which was having sentenced four convicts to transportation. Johnson, in an agony of impatience to get rid of such a companion, exclaimed, 'I heartily wish, sir, that I were a fifth.'

Johnson was present when a tragedy was read, in which there occurred this line :

'Who rules o'er freemen should himself be free.'

The company having admired it much, 'I cannot agree with you (said Johnson); it might as well be said,

"Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat."

He was pleased with the kindness of Mr. Cator, who was joined with him in Mr. Thrale's important trust, and thus describes him :<sup>1</sup> 'There is much good in his character, and much usefulness in his knowledge.' He found a cordial solace at that gentleman's seat at Beckenham, in Kent, which is indeed one of the finest places at which I ever was a guest; and where I find more and more a hospitable welcome.

Johnson seldom encouraged general censure of any profession; but he was willing to allow a due share of

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Mrs. Thrale*, vol. ii. p. 284.

merit to the various departments necessary in civilised life. In a splenetic, sarcastical, or jocular frame of mind, however, he would sometimes utter a pointed saying of that nature. One instance has been mentioned,<sup>1</sup> where he gave a sudden satirical stroke to the character of an *attorney*. The too indiscriminate admission to that employment, which requires both abilities and integrity, has given rise to injurious reflections, which are totally inapplicable to many very respectable men who exercise it with reputation and honour.


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

Talking to me of Harry Walpole (as Horace, late Earl of Orford, was often called), Johnson allowed that he got together a great many curious little things, and told them in an elegant manner. Mr. Walpole thought Johnson a more amiable character after reading his *Letters to Mrs. Thrale*, but never was one of the true admirers of that great man.<sup>2</sup> We may suppose a prejudice conceived, if he ever heard Johnson's account to Sir George Staunton, that when he made the speeches in Parliament for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 'he always took care to put Sir Robert Walpole in the wrong, and to say everything he could against the electorate of Hanover.' The celebrated

<sup>1</sup> See vol. ii. p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> [In his posthumous works he has spoken of Johnson in the most contemptuous manner!—M.]





*Horace Walpole*

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*Heroic Epistle*, in which Johnson is satirically introduced, has been ascribed both to Mr. Walpole and Mr. Mason. One day at Mr. Courtenay's, when a gentleman expressed his opinion that there was more energy in that poem than could be expected from Mr. Walpole, Mr. Warton, the late laureate, observed, 'It may have been written by Walpole and buckram'd by Mason.'<sup>1</sup>

He disapproved of Lord Hailes for having modernised the language of the ever-memorable John Hales, of Eton, in an edition which his Lordship published of that writer's works. 'An author's language, sir (said he), is a characteristic part of his composition, and is also characteristic of the age in which he writes. Besides, sir, when the language is changed, we are not sure that the sense is the same. No, sir; I am sorry Lord Hailes has done this.'

Here it may be observed that his frequent use of the expression, *No, sir*, was not always to intimate contradiction; for he would say so when he was about to enforce an affirmative proposition which had not been denied, as in the instance last mentioned. I used to consider it as a kind of flag of defiance, as if he had said, 'Any argument you may offer against this is not just. No, sir, it is not.' It was like Falstaff's 'I deny your Major.'

Sir Joshua Reynolds having said that he took the altitude of a man's taste by his stories and his wit, and of his understanding by the remarks which he repeated, being always sure that he must be a weak man who quotes common things with an emphasis as if they

<sup>1</sup> [It is now (1804) known that the *Heroic Epistle* was written by Mason.—M.]

were oracles. Johnson agreed with him; and Sir Joshua having also observed that the real character of a man was found out by his amusements, Johnson added, 'Yes, sir; no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures.'

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

Had Johnson treated at large *De Claris Oratoribus*, he might have given us an admirable work. When the Duke of Bedford attacked the ministry as vehemently as he could for having taken upon them to extend the time for the importation of corn, Lord Chatham, in his first speech in the House of Lords, boldly avowed himself to be an adviser of that measure. 'My colleagues (said he), as I was confined by indisposition, did me the signal honour of coming to the bedside of a sick man to ask his opinion. But, had they not thus condescended, I should have *taken up my bed and walked*, in order to have delivered that opinion at the Council board.' Mr. Langton, who was present, mentioned this to

Johnson, who observed, 'Now, sir, we see that he took these words as he found them, without considering that, though the expression in Scripture, *take up thy bed and walk*, strictly suited the instance of the sick man restored to health and strength, who would of course be supposed to carry his bed with him, it could not be proper in the case of a man who was lying in a state of feebleness, and who certainly would not add to the difficulty of moving at all that of carrying his bed.'

When I pointed out to him in the newspaper one of Mr. Grattan's animated and glowing speeches in favour of the freedom of Ireland, in which this expression occurred (I know not if accurately taken): 'We will persevere till there is not one link of the English chain left to clank upon the rags of the meanest beggar in Ireland';—'Nay, sir (said Johnson), don't you perceive that *one* link cannot clank?'

Mrs. Thrale has published,<sup>1</sup> as Johnson's, a kind of parody or counterpart of a fine poetical passage in one of Mr. Burke's speeches on American taxation. It is vigorously but somewhat coarsely executed, and, I am inclined to suppose, is not quite correctly exhibited. I hope he did not use the words '*vile agents*' for the Americans in the House of Parliament; and if he did so in an extempore effusion, I wish the lady had not committed it to writing.

Mr. Burke uniformly showed Johnson the greatest respect; and when Mr. Townshend, now Lord Sydney, at a period when he was conspicuous in opposition, threw out some reflection in Parliament upon the grant

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<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes.*

of a pension to a man of such political principles as Johnson, Mr. Burke, though then of the same party with Mr. Townshend, stood warmly forth in defence of his friend, to whom, he justly observed, the pension was granted solely on account of his eminent literary merit. I am well assured that Mr. Townshend's attack upon Johnson was the occasion of his 'hitching in a rhyme'; for that in the original copy of Goldsmith's character of Mr. Burke, in his *Retaliation*, another person's name stood in the couplet where Mr. Townshend is now introduced :

'Though fraught with all learning kept straining his throat,  
To persuade *Tommy Townshend* to lend him a vote.'

It may be worth remarking, among the minutiae of my collection, that Johnson was once drawn to serve in the militia, the trained bands of the city of London, and that Mr. Rackstrow, of the Museum in Fleet Street, was his colonel. It may be believed he did not serve in person ; but the idea, with all its circumstances, is certainly laughable. He upon that occasion provided himself with a musket, and with a sword and belt, which I have seen hanging in his closet.

He was very constant to those whom he once employed, if they gave him no reason to be displeased. When somebody talked of being imposed on in the purchase of tea and sugar, and such articles ; 'That will not be the case (said he), if you go to a *stately shop*, as I always do. In such a shop it is not worth their while to take a petty advantage.'

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

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

The difference, he observed, between a well-bred and an ill-bred man is this: 'One immediately attracts your liking, the other your aversion. You love the one till you find reason to hate him; you hate the other till you find reason to love him.'

The wife of one of his acquaintance had fraudulently made a purse for herself out of her husband's fortune. Feeling a proper compunction in her last moments, she confessed how much she had secreted; but before she could tell where it was placed, she was seized with a convulsive fit and expired. Her husband said, he was more hurt by her want of confidence in him, than by the loss of his money. 'I told him (said Johnson), that he should console himself; for *perhaps* the money might be *found*, and he was *sure* that his wife was *gone*.'

A foppish physician once reminded Johnson of his having been in company with him on a former occasion, 'I do not remember it, sir.' The physician still insisted; adding that he that day wore so fine a coat that it must have attracted his notice. 'Sir (said Johnson), had you been dipped in Pactolus, I should not have noticed you.'

He seemed to take a pleasure in speaking in his own style; for when he had carelessly missed it, he would repeat the thought translated into it. Talking of the Comedy of the *Rehearsal*, he said, 'It has not wit enough to keep it sweet.' This was easy;—he therefore caught himself, and pronounced a more round sentence: 'It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction.'

He censured a writer of entertaining travels for

assuming a feigned character, saying (in his sense of the word), 'He carries out one lie; we know not how many he brings back.' At another time, talking of the same person, he observed, 'Sir, your assent to a man whom you have never known to falsify, is a debt; but after you have known a man to falsify, your assent to him then is a favour.'

Though he had no taste for painting, he admired much the manner in which Sir Joshua Reynolds treated of his art, in his *Discourses to the Royal Academy*. He observed one day of a passage in them, 'I think I might as well have said this myself'; and once when Mr. Langton was sitting by him, he read one of them very eagerly, and expressed himself thus: 'Very well, Master Reynolds; very well, indeed. But it will not be understood.'

When I observed to him that painting was so far inferior to poetry, that the story or even emblem which it communicates must be previously known, and mentioned as a natural and laughable instance of this, that a little Miss on seeing a picture of Justice with the scales, had exclaimed to me, 'See, there's a woman selling sweetmeats'; he said, 'Painting, sir, can illustrate, but cannot inform.'

No man was more ready to make an apology when he had censured unjustly than Johnson. When a proof-sheet of one of his works was brought to him, he found fault with the mode in which a part of it was arranged, refused to read it, and in a passion desired that the compositor<sup>1</sup> might be sent to him. The com-

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<sup>1</sup> Compositor in the printing-house means the person who adjusts the types in the order in which they are to stand for printing; and arranges what is called the *form*, from which an impression is taken.



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*Caleb Whitefoord*



*Caleb*

positor was Mr. Manning, a decent, sensible man, who had composed about one-half of his *Dictionary*, when in Mr. Strahan's printing-house; and a great part of his *Lives of the Poets*, when in that of Mr. Nichols; and who (in his seventy-seventh year), when in Mr. Baldwin's printing-house, composed a part of the first edition of this work concerning him. By producing the manuscript, he at once satisfied Dr. Johnson that he was not to blame. Upon which Johnson candidly and earnestly said to him, 'Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon; Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon, again and again.'

His generous humanity to the miserable was almost beyond example. The following instance is well attested:—Coming home late one night, he found a poor woman lying in the street, so much exhausted that she could not walk; he took her upon his back, and carried her to his house, where he discovered that she was one of those wretched females who had fallen into the lowest state of vice, poverty, and disease. Instead of harshly upbraiding her, he had her taken care of with all tenderness for a long time, at a considerable expense, till she was restored to health, and endeavoured to put her into a virtuous way of living.<sup>1</sup>

He thought Mr. Caleb Whitefoord singularly happy in hitting on the signature of *Papyrius Cursor*, to his ingenious and diverting cross-readings of the newspapers; it being a real name of an ancient Roman, and clearly expressive of the thing done in this lively conceit.

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<sup>1</sup> The circumstance therefore alluded to in Mr. Courtenay's *Poetical Character* of him is strictly true. My informer was Mrs. Desmoulins, who lived many years in Dr. Johnson's house.

He once in his life was known to have uttered what is called a *bull*: Sir Joshua Reynolds, when they were riding together in Devonshire, complained that he had a very bad horse, for that even when going downhill he moved slowly step by step. 'Ay (said Johnson), and when he goes uphill, he stands still.'

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

An author of considerable eminence having engrossed a good share of the conversation in the company of Johnson, and having said nothing but what was trifling and insignificant; Johnson, when he was gone, observed to us, 'It is wonderful what a difference there sometimes is between a man's powers of writing and of talking. —<sup>1</sup> writes with great spirit, but is a poor talker; had he held his tongue, we might have supposed him to have been restrained by modesty; but he has spoken a great deal to-day; and have you heard what stuff it was?'

A gentleman having said that a *congé d'elire* has not, perhaps, the force of a command, but may be considered only as a strong recommendation;—'Sir (replied Johnson, who overheard him), it is such a recommendation, as if I should throw you out of a two pair of stairs window, and recommend to you to fall soft.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Hill suggests Dr. Beattie.—A. B.]

<sup>2</sup> This has been printed in other publications, 'fall to the ground.'

Mr. Steevens, who passed many a social hour with him during their long acquaintance, which commenced when they both lived in the Temple, has preserved a good number of particulars concerning him, most of which are to be found in the department of Apophthegms, etc., in the Collection of Johnson's *Works*.<sup>1</sup> But he has been pleased to favour me with the following, which are original :

'One evening, previous to the trial of Baretti, a consultation of his friends was held at the house of Mr. Cox, the solicitor, in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. Among others present were, Mr. Burke and Dr. Johnson, who differed in sentiments concerning the tendency of some part of the defence the prisoner was to make. When the meeting was over, Mr. Steevens observed, that the question between him and his friend had been agitated with rather too much warmth. "It may be so, sir (replied the Doctor), for Burke and I should have been of one opinion, if we had had no audience."

'Dr. Johnson once assumed a character in which perhaps even Mr. Boswell never saw him. His curiosity having been excited by the praises bestowed on the celebrated Torr 's fireworks at Marylebone Gardens, he desired Mr. Steevens to accompany him thither. The evening had proved showery ; and soon after the few people present were assembled, public notice was given, that the conductors to the wheels, suns, stars, etc., were so thoroughly water-soaked, that it was impossible any part of the exhibition should be made.

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<sup>1</sup> But Johnson himself gave me the true expression which he had used as above ; meaning that the recommendation left as little choice in the one case as the other.

“This is a mere excuse (says the Doctor) to save their crackers for a more profitable company. Let us both hold up our sticks, and threaten to break those coloured lamps that surround the orchestra, and we shall soon have our wishes gratified. The core of the fireworks cannot be injured ; let the different pieces be touched in their respective centres, and they will do their offices as well as ever.” Some young men who overheard him, immediately began the violence he had recommended, and an attempt was speedily made to fire some of the wheels which appeared to have received the smallest damage ; but to little purpose were they lighted, for most of them completely failed. The author of the *Rambler*, however, may be considered on this occasion, as the ringleader of a successful riot, though not as a skilful pyrotechnist.’

‘It has been supposed that Dr. Johnson, so far as fashion was concerned, was careless of his appearance in public. But this is not altogether true, as the following slight instance may show :—Goldsmith’s last comedy was to be represented during some court-mourning ; and Mr. Steevens appointed to call on Dr. Johnson, and carry him to the tavern where he was to dine with others of the poet’s friends. The Doctor was ready dressed, but in coloured clothes ; yet being told that he would find every one else in black, received the intelligence with a profusion of thanks, hastened to change his attire, all the while repeating his gratitude for the information that had saved him from an appearance so improper in the front row of a front box. “I would not (added he), for ten pounds, have seemed so retrograde to any general observance.”’

‘He would sometimes found his dislikes on very



slender circumstances. Happening one day to mention Mr. Flexman, a dissenting minister, with some compliment to his exact memory in chronological matters; the Doctor replied, "Let me hear no more of him, sir. That is the fellow who made the index to my *Ramblers*, and set down the name of Milton thus: Milton, *Mr. John.*"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Steevens adds this testimony. 'It is unfortunate, however, for Johnson, that his particularities and frailties can be more distinctly traced than his good and amiable exertions. Could the many bounties he studiously concealed, the many acts of humanity he performed in private, be displayed with equal circumstantiality, his defects would be so far lost in the blaze of his virtues, that the latter only would be regarded.'

Though from my very high admiration of Johnson, I have wondered that he was not courted by all the great and all the eminent persons of his time, it ought fairly to be considered, that no man of humble birth, who lived entirely by literature, in short no author by profession, ever rose in this country into that personal notice which he did. In the course of this work a numerous variety of names has been mentioned, to which many might be added. I cannot omit Lord and Lady Lucan, at whose house he often enjoyed all that an elegant table and the best company can contribute to happiness; he found hospitality united with extraordinary accomplishments, and embellished with charms of which no man could be insensible.

On Tuesday, June 22, I dined with him at the Literary Club, the last time of his being in that

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<sup>1</sup> [After how long a time may the 'Mr.' be politely dropped?—A. B.]

respectable society. The other members present were the Bishop of St. Asaph, Lord Eliot, Lord Palmerston, Dr. Fordyce, and Mr. Malone. He looked ill; but had such a manly fortitude, that he did not trouble the company with melancholy complaints. They all showed evident marks of kind concern about him, with which he was much pleased, and he exerted himself to be as entertaining as his indisposition allowed him.

The anxiety of his friends to preserve so estimable a life, as long as human means might be supposed to have influence, made them plan for him a retreat from the severity of a British winter, to the mild climate of Italy. This scheme was at last brought to a serious resolution at General Paoli's, where I had often talked of it. One essential matter, however, I understood was necessary to be previously settled, which was obtaining such an addition to his income, as would be sufficient to enable him to defray the expense in a manner becoming the first literary character of a great nation, and, independent of his other merits, the author of the Dictionary of the English Language. The person to whom I above all others thought I should apply to negotiate this business, was the Lord Chancellor,<sup>1</sup> because I knew that he highly valued Johnson, and that Johnson highly valued his Lordship; so that it was no degradation of my illustrious friend to solicit for him the favour of such a man. I have mentioned what Johnson said of him to me when he was at the bar; and after his Lordship was advanced to the seals, he said of him, 'I would prepare myself

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<sup>1</sup> [Edward Lord Thurlow (who died September 11, 1806.—M.)]

for no man in England but Lord Thurlow. When I am to meet with him, I should wish to know a day before.' How he would have prepared himself, I cannot conjecture. Would he have selected certain topics, and considered them in every view, so as to be in readiness to argue them at all points? and what may we suppose these topics to have been? I once started the curious inquiry to the great man who was the subject of this compliment: he smiled, but did not pursue it.

I first consulted with Sir Joshua Reynolds, who perfectly coincided in opinion with me; and I therefore, though personally very little known to his Lordship, wrote to him,<sup>1</sup> stating the case, and requesting his good offices for Dr. Johnson. I mentioned that I was obliged to set out for Scotland early in the following week, so that if his Lordship should have any commands for me as to this pious negotiation, he would be pleased to send them before that time; otherwise Sir Joshua Reynolds would give all attention to it.

This application was made not only without any suggestion on the part of Johnson himself, but was utterly unknown to him, nor had he the smallest suspicion of it. Any insinuations, therefore, which since his death have been thrown out, as if he had stooped to ask what was superfluous, are without any foundation. But, had he asked it, it would not have been superfluous; for though the money he had saved proved to be more than his friends imagined, or than

<sup>1</sup> It is strange that Sir John Hawkins should have related that the application was made by Sir Joshua Reynolds, when he could so easily have been informed of the truth by inquiring of Sir Joshua. Sir John's carelessness to ascertain facts is very remarkable.

I believe he himself, in his carelessness concerning worldly matters, knew it to be, had he travelled upon the Continent, an augmentation of his income would by no means have been unnecessary.

On Wednesday, June 23, I visited him in the morning, after having been present at the shocking sight of fifteen men executed before Newgate. I said to him I was sure that human life was not machinery, that is to say, a chain of fatality planned and directed by the Supreme Being, as it had in it so much wickedness and misery, so many instances of both, as that by which my mind was now clouded.

Were it machinery, it would be better than it is in these respects, though less noble, as not being a system of moral government. He agreed with me now, as he always did, upon the great question of the liberty of the human will, which has been in all ages perplexed with so much sophistry. 'But, sir, as to the doctrine of necessity, no man believes it. If a man should give me arguments that I do not see, though I could not answer them, should I believe that I do not see?' It will be observed that Johnson at all times made the just distinction between doctrines *contrary* to reason and doctrines *above* reason.

Talking of the religious discipline proper for unhappy convicts, he said, 'Sir, one of our regular clergy will probably not impress their minds sufficiently: they should be attended by a Methodist preacher,<sup>1</sup> or a Popish priest.' Let me however observe, in justice to the Reverend Mr. Vilette,

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<sup>1</sup> A friend of mine happened to be passing by a *field congregation* in the environs of London, when a Methodist preacher quoted this passage with triumph.

who has been ordinary of Newgate for no less than eighteen years, in the course of which he has attended many hundreds of wretched criminals, that his earnest and humane exhortations have been very effectual. His extraordinary diligence is highly praiseworthy, and merits a distinguished reward.<sup>1</sup>

On Thursday, June 24, I dined with him at Mr. Dilly's, where were the Reverend Mr. (now Dr.) Knox, master of Tunbridge School, Mr. Smith, Vicar of Southill, Dr. Beattie, Mr. Pinkerton, author of various literary performances, and the Reverend Dr. Mayo. At my desire old Mr. Sheridan was invited, as I was earnest to have Johnson and him brought together again by chance, that a reconciliation might be effected. Mr. Sheridan happened to come early, and having learned that Dr. Johnson was to be there, went away; so I found, with sincere regret, that my friendly intentions were hopeless. I recollect nothing that passed this day except Johnson's quickness, who, when Dr. Beattie observed, as something remarkable which had happened to him, that he had chanced to see both No. 1 and No. 1000 of the hackney-coaches, the first and the last. 'Why, sir (said Johnson), there is an equal chance for one's seeing those two numbers as any other two.' He was clearly right; yet the seeing of the two extremes, each of which is in some degree more conspicuous than the rest, could not but strike one in a stronger manner

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<sup>1</sup> I trust that the city of London, now happily in unison with the Court, will have the justice and generosity to obtain preferment for this reverend gentleman, now a worthy old servant of that magnificent corporation.

[Wesley speaks highly of the spirit and behaviour of this gentleman. Most men's notions of an ordinary of Newgate during the last century are derived from the one who figures in *Jonathan Wild*.—A. B.]

than the sight of any other two numbers. Though I have neglected to preserve his conversation, it was perhaps at this interview that Dr. Knox formed the notion of it which he has exhibited in his *Winter Evenings*.

On Friday, June 25, I dined with him at General Paoli's, 'where,' he says in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale, 'I love to dine.' There was a variety of dishes much to his taste, of all which he seemed to me to eat so much that I was afraid he might be hurt by it; and I whispered to the General my fear, and begged he might not press him. 'Alas! (said the General) see how very ill he looks; he can live but a very short time. Would you refuse any slight gratifications to a man under sentence of death? There is a humane custom in Italy by which persons in that melancholy situation are indulged with having whatever they like best to eat and drink, even with expensive delicacies.'

I showed him some verses on Lichfield by Miss Seward, which I had that day received from her, and had the pleasure to hear him approve of them. He confirmed to me the truth of a high compliment which I had been told he had paid to that lady, when she mentioned to him *The Columbiade*, an epic poem, by Madame du Beccage: 'Madame, there is not anything equal to your description of the sea round the North Pole in your Ode on the death of Captain Cook.'

On Sunday, June 27, I found him rather better. I mentioned to him a young man who was going to Jamaica with his wife and children, in expectation of being provided for by two of her brothers settled in that island, one a clergyman and the other a physician. JOHNSON: 'It is a wild scheme, sir, unless he has a

positive and deliberate invitation. There was a poor girl, who used to come about me, who had a cousin in Barbadoes that, in a letter to her, expressed a wish she should come out to that island, and expatiated on the comforts and happiness of her situation. The poor girl went out; her cousin was much surprised, and asked her how she could think of coming. 'Because (said she) you invited me.' 'Not I,' answered the cousin. The letter was then produced. 'I see it is true (said she) that I did invite you; but I did not think you would come.' They lodged her in an outhouse, where she passed her time miserably; and as soon as she had an opportunity she returned to England. Always tell this when you hear of people going abroad to relations upon a notion of being well received. In the case which you mention, it is probable that the clergyman spends all he gets, and the physician does not know how much he is to get.'

We this day dined at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with General Paoli, Lord Eliot (formerly Mr. Eliot, of Port Eliot), Dr. Beattie, and some other company. Talking of Lord Chesterfield;—JOHNSON: 'His manner was exquisitely elegant, and he had more knowledge than I expected.' BOSWELL: 'Did you find, sir, his conversation to be of a superior style?' JOHNSON: 'Sir, in the conversation which I had with him I had the best right to superiority, for it was upon philology and literature.' Lord Eliot, who had travelled at the same time with Mr. Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield's natural son, justly observed, that it was strange that a man who showed he had so much affection for his son as Lord Chesterfield did, by writing so many long and

anxious letters to him, almost all of them when he was Secretary of State, which certainly was a proof of great goodness of disposition, should endeavour to make his son a rascal. His Lordship told us that Foote had intended to bring on the stage a father who had thus tutored his son, and to show the son an honest man to every one else, but practising his father's maxims upon him, and cheating him. JOHNSON: 'I am much pleased with this design; but I think there was no occasion to make the son honest at all. No; he should be a consummate rogue: the contrast between honesty and knavery would be the stronger. It should be contrived so that the father should be the only sufferer by the son's villany, and thus there would be poetical justice.'

He put Lord Eliot in mind of Dr. Walter Harte. 'I know (said he) Harte was your Lordship's tutor, and he was also tutor to the Peterborough family. Pray, my Lord, do you recollect any particulars that he told you of Lord Peterborough? He is a favourite of mine, and is not enough known; his character has been only ventilated in party pamphlets.' Lord Eliot said, if Dr. Johnson would be so good as to ask him any questions, he would tell what he could recollect. Accordingly some things were mentioned. 'But (said his Lordship) the best account of Lord Peterborough that I have happened to meet with is in Captain Carleton's *Memoirs*. Carleton was descended of an ancestor who had distinguished himself at the siege of Derry. He was an officer; and, what was rare at that time, had some knowledge of engineering.' Johnson said he had never heard of the book. Lord Eliot had it at Port Eliot; but, after a good deal of inquiry, procured a copy in London, and sent it to



Johnson, who told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he was going to bed when it came, but was so much pleased with it, that he sat up till he had read it through, and found in it such an air of truth, that he could not doubt of its authenticity; adding, with a smile (in allusion to Lord Eliot's having recently been raised to the peerage), 'I did not think a *young Lord* could have mentioned to me a book in the English history that was not known to me.'<sup>1</sup>

An addition to our company came after we went up to the drawing-room: Dr. Johnson seemed to rise in spirits as his audience increased. He said, 'He wished Lord Orford's pictures, and Sir Ashton Lever's museum, might be purchased by the public, because both the money, and the pictures, and the curiosities would remain in the country; whereas, if they were sold into another kingdom, the nation would indeed get some money, but would lose the pictures and curiosities, which it would be desirable we should have, for improvement in taste and natural history. The only question was, as the nation was much in want of money, whether it would not be better to take a large price from a foreign State?'

He entered upon a curious discussion of the difference between intuition and sagacity; one being immediate in its effect, the other requiring a circuitous process; one, he observed, was the *eye* of the mind, the other the *nose* of the mind.

A young gentleman present took up the argument against him, and maintained that no man ever thinks of the *nose of the mind*, not adverting that though that

<sup>1</sup> [It is still a moot point whether these *Memoirs* are genuine or a fabrication of Defoe's.—A. B.]

figurative sense seems strange to us, as very unusual, it is truly not more forced than Hamlet's 'In my *mind's eye*, Horatio.' He persisted much too long, and appeared to Johnson as putting himself forward as his antagonist with too much presumption; upon which he called to him in a loud tone, 'What is it you are contending for, if you *be* contending?'—And afterwards imagining that the gentleman retorted upon him with a kind of smart drollery, he said, 'Mr. —, it does not become you to talk so to me. Besides, ridicule is not your talent; you have *there* neither intuition nor sagacity.' The gentleman protested that he had intended no improper freedom, but had the greatest respect for Dr. Johnson. After a short pause, during which we were somewhat uneasy; —JOHNSON: 'Give me your hand, sir. You are too tedious, and I was too short.' MR. —: 'Sir, I am honoured by your attention in any way.' JOHNSON: 'Come, sir, let's have no more of it. We offended one another by our contention; let us not offend the company by our compliments.'<sup>1</sup>

He now said, 'He wished much to go to Italy, and that he dreaded passing the winter in England.' I said nothing; but enjoyed a secret satisfaction in thinking that I had taken the most effectual measures to make such a scheme practicable.

On Monday, June 28, I had the honour to receive from the Lord Chancellor the following letter:—

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'SIR,—I should have answered your letter immediately; if (being much engaged when I received it) I had not put it in my pocket, and forgot to open it till this morning.

<sup>1</sup> [This young gentleman is supposed to have been Burke's son.—A. B.]

'I am much obliged to you for the suggestion; and I will adopt and press it as far as I can. The best argument, I am sure, and I hope it is not likely to fail, is Dr. Johnson's merit. But it will be necessary, if I should be so unfortunate as to miss seeing you, to converse with Sir Joshua on the sum it will be proper to ask,—in short, upon the means of setting him out. It would be a reflection on us all, if such a man should perish for want of the means to take care of his health.—Yours, etc. THURLOW.'

This letter gave me a very high satisfaction; I next day went and showed it to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was exceedingly pleased with it. He thought that I should now communicate the negotiation to Dr. Johnson, who might afterwards complain if the attention with which he had been honoured should be too long concealed from him. I intended to set out for Scotland next morning; but Sir Joshua cordially insisted that I should stay another day, that Johnson and I might dine with him, that we three might talk of his Italian tour, and, as Sir Joshua expressed himself, 'have it all out.' I hastened to Johnson, and was told by him that he was rather better to-day. BOSWELL: 'I am very anxious about you, sir, and particularly that you should go to Italy for the winter, which I believe is your own wish.' JOHNSON: 'It is, sir.' BOSWELL: 'You have no objection, I presume, but the money it would require.' JOHNSON: 'Why no, sir.' Upon which I gave him a particular account of what had been done, and read to him the Lord Chancellor's letter. He listened with much attention; then warmly said, 'This is taking prodigious pains about a man.' 'O, sir (said I with most sincere affection), your friends would do everything for you.' He paused,—grew more and more agitated,—till tears

started into his eyes, and he exclaimed with a fervent emotion, 'God bless you all.' I was so affected that I also shed tears. After a short silence, he renewed, and extended his grateful benediction, 'God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake.' We both remained for some time unable to speak. He rose suddenly and quitted the room, quite melted in tenderness. He stayed but a short time, till he had recovered his firmness; soon after he returned I left him, having first engaged him to dine at Sir Joshua Reynolds's next day. I never was again under that roof which I had so long revered.

On Wednesday, June 30, the friendly confidential dinner with Sir Joshua Reynolds took place, no other company being present. Had I known that this was the last time that I should enjoy in this world, the conversation of a friend whom I so much respected, and from whom I derived so much instruction and entertainment, I should have been deeply affected. When I now look back to it, I am vexed that a single word should have been forgotten.

Both Sir Joshua and I were so sanguine in our expectations, that we expatiated with confidence on the liberal provision which we were sure would be made for him, conjecturing whether munificence would be displayed in one large donation, or in an ample increase of his pension. He himself caught so much of our enthusiasm, as to allow himself to suppose it not impossible that our hopes might in one way or other be realised. He said that he would rather have his pension doubled than a grant of a thousand pounds; 'For (said he), though probably I may not live to receive as much as a thousand pounds, a man would

have the consciousness that he should pass the remainder of his life in splendour, how long soever it might be.' Considering what a moderate proportion an income of six hundred pounds a year bears to innumerable fortunes in this country, it is worthy of remark, that a man so truly great should think it splendour.

As an instance of extraordinary liberality of friendship, he told us, that Dr. Brocklesby had upon this occasion offered him a hundred a year for his life. A grateful tear started into his eye, as he spoke this in a faltering tone.

Sir Joshua and I endeavoured to flatter his imagination with agreeable prospects of happiness in Italy. 'Nay (said he), I must not expect much of that; when a man goes to Italy merely to feel how he breathes the air, he can enjoy very little.'

Our conversation turned upon living in the country, which Johnson, whose melancholy mind required the dissipation of quick successive variety, had habituated himself to consider as a kind of mental imprisonment. 'Yet, sir (said I), there are many people who are content to live in the country.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, it is in the intellectual world as in the physical world; we are told by natural philosophers that a body is at rest in the place that is fit for it; they who are content to live in the country, are *fit* for the country.'

Talking of various enjoyments, I argued that a refinement of taste was a disadvantage, as they who have attained to it must be seldomer pleased than those who have no nice discrimination, and are therefore satisfied with everything that comes in their way. JOHNSON: 'Nay, sir; that is a paltry notion.

Endeavour to be as perfect as you can in every respect.'

I accompanied him in Sir Joshua Reynolds's coach, to the entry of Bolt Court. He asked me whether I would not go with him to his house; I declined it, from an apprehension that my spirits would sink. We bade adieu to each other affectionately in the carriage. When he had got down upon the foot-pavement, he called out, 'Fare you well'; and without looking back, sprung away with a kind of pathetic briskness, if I may use that expression, which seemed to indicate a struggle to conceal uneasiness, and impressed me with a foreboding of our long, long separation.

I remained one day more in town, to have the chance of talking over my negotiation with the Lord Chancellor; but the multiplicity of his Lordship's important engagements did not allow of it; so I left the management of the business in the hands of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Soon after this time Dr. Johnson had the mortification of being informed by Mrs. Thrale, that, 'what she supposed he never believed,' was true; namely, that she was actually going to marry Signor Piozzi, an Italian music-master. He endeavoured to prevent it; but in vain. If she would publish the whole of the correspondence that passed between Dr. Johnson and her on the subject, we should have a full view of his real sentiments. As it is, our judgment must be biassed by that characteristic specimen, which Sir John Hawkins has given us: 'Poor Thrale, I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage. She is now become a sub-

ject for her enemies to exult over; and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget, or pity.'<sup>1</sup>

It must be admitted that Johnson derived a considerable portion of happiness from the comforts and elegancies which he enjoyed in Mr. Thrale's family; but Mrs. Thrale assures us he was indebted for these to her husband alone, who certainly respected him sincerely. Her words are, '*Veneration for his virtue, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my husband first put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr. Johnson; but the perpetual confinement I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last; nor could I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more.*' Alas! how different is this from the declarations which I have heard Mrs. Thrale make in his lifetime, without a single murmur against any peculiarities, or against any one circumstance which attended their intimacy.

As a sincere friend of the great man whose life I am writing, I think it necessary to guard my readers against the mistaken notion of Dr. Johnson's character, which this lady's *Anecdotes* of him suggest; for from the very nature and form of her book, 'it lends deception lighter wings to fly.'

'Let it be remembered (says an eminent critic),<sup>2</sup> that she has comprised in a small volume all that she could recollect of Dr. Johnson in *twenty years*, during which period, doubtless, some serious things were

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson's letter to Sir John Hawkins, *Life*, p. 570.

<sup>2</sup> Who has been pleased to furnish me with his remarks.

said by him; and they who read the book in *two hours*, naturally enough suppose that his whole conversation was of this complexion. But the fact is, I have been often in his company, and never *once* heard him say a severe thing to any one; and many others can attest the same. When he did say a severe thing, it was generally extorted by ignorance pretending to knowledge, or by extreme vanity or affectation.

‘Two instances of inaccuracy (adds he) are peculiarly worthy of notice :

‘It is said, “*That natural roughness of his manner so often mentioned, would, notwithstanding the regularity of his notions, burst through them all from time to time; and he once bade a very celebrated lady, who praised him with too much zeal perhaps, or perhaps too strong an emphasis (which always offended him), consider what her flattery was worth, before she choked him with it.*”

‘Now let the genuine anecdote be contrasted with this. The person thus represented as being harshly treated, though a very celebrated lady,<sup>1</sup> was *then* just come to London from an obscure situation in the country. At Sir Joshua Reynolds’s one evening, she met Dr. Johnson. She very soon began to pay her court to him in the most fulsome strain. “Spare me, I beseech you, dear madam,” was his reply. She still *laid it on*. “Pray, madam, let us have no more of this”; he rejoined. Not paying any attention to these warnings, she continued still her eulogy. At length, provoked by this indelicate and *vain* obtrusion of com-

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<sup>1</sup> [Miss Hannah More.—A. B.]



*Gabriel Piore*

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*Mrs. Piozzi*

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pliment, he exclaimed, "Dearest lady, consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely."

'How different does this story appear, when accompanied with all these circumstances which really belong to it, but which Mrs. Thrale either did not know, or has suppressed.

'She says in another place, "*One gentleman, however, who dined at a nobleman's house in his company, and that of Mr. Thrale, to whom I was obliged for the anecdote, was willing to enter the lists in defence of King William's character; and having opposed and contradicted Johnson two or three times, petulantly enough, the master of the house began to feel uneasy, and expect disagreeable consequences; to avoid which he said, loud enough for the Doctor to hear,—Our friend here has no meaning now in all this, except just to relate at club to-morrow how he teased Johnson at dinner to-day; this is all to do himself honour.—No, upon my word (replied the other), I see no honour in it, whatever you may do.—Well, sir (returned Dr. Johnson sternly), if you do not see the honour, I am sure I feel the disgrace.*"

'This is all sophisticated. Mr. Thrale was *not* in the company, though he might have related the story to Mrs. Thrale. A friend, from whom I had the story, was present; and it was *not* at the house of a nobleman. On the observation being made by the master of the house on a gentleman's contradicting Johnson, that he had talked for the honour, etc., the gentleman muttered in a low voice, "I see no honour in it"; and Dr. Johnson said nothing: so all the rest (though *bien trouvée*) is mere garnish.'

I have had occasion several times, in the course of

this work, to point out the incorrectness of Mrs. Thrale, as to particulars which consisted with my own knowledge. But indeed she has, in flippant terms enough, expressed her disapprobation of that anxious desire of authenticity which prompts a person who is to record conversations, to write them down *at the moment*. Unquestionably, if they are to be recorded at all, the sooner it is done the better. This lady herself says, '*To recollect, however, and to repeat the sayings of Dr. Johnson, is almost all that can be done by the writers of his Life; as his life, at least since my acquaintance with him, consisted in little else than talking, when he was not employed in some serious piece of work.*' She boasts of her having kept a commonplace book; and we find she noted, at one time or other, in a very lively manner, specimens of the conversation of Dr. Johnson, and of those who talked with him; but had she done it recently, they probably would have been less erroneous; and we should have been relieved from those disagreeable doubts of their authenticity, with which we must now peruse them.

She says of him, '*He was the most charitable of mortals, without being what we call an active friend. Admirable at giving counsel; no man saw his way so clearly; but he would not stir a finger for the assistance of those to whom he was willing enough to give advice.*' And again on the same page, '*If you wanted a slight favour, you must apply to people of other dispositions; for not a step would Johnson move to obtain a man a vote in a society, to repay a compliment which might be useful or pleasing, to write a letter of request, etc., or to obtain a hundred pounds a year more for a friend who perhaps had already two or three. No force could urge*

*him to diligence, no importunity could conquer his resolution to stand still.*'

It is amazing that one who had such opportunities of knowing Dr. Johnson should appear so little acquainted with his real character. I am sorry this lady does not advert, that she herself contradicts the assertion of his being obstinately defective in the *petites morales*, in the little endearing charities of social life, in conferring smaller favours; for she says, 'Dr. Johnson *was liberal enough in granting literary assistance to others, I think; and innumerable are the Prefaces, Sermons, Lectures, and Dedications which he used to make for people who begged of him.*' I am certain that *a more active friend* has rarely been found in any age. This work, which I fondly hope will rescue his memory from obloquy, contains a thousand instances of his benevolent exertions in almost every way that can be conceived; and particularly in employing his pen with a generous readiness for those to whom its aid could be useful. Indeed his obliging activity in doing little offices of kindness, both by letters and personal application, was one of the most remarkable features in his character; and for the truth of this I can appeal to a number of his respectable friends: Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Langton, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Burke, Mr. Windham, Mr. Malone, the Bishop of Dromore, Sir William Scott, Sir Robert Chambers. And can Mrs. Thrale forget the advertisements which he wrote for her husband at the time of his election contest; the epitaphs on him and her mother; the playful and even trifling verses, for the amusement of her and her daughters; his corresponding with her children, and entering into their minute

concerns, which shows him in the most amiable light?

She relates that Mr. Ch—lm—ley unexpectedly rode up to Mr. Thrale's carriage, in which Mr. Thrale and she, and Dr. Johnson were travelling; that he paid them all his proper compliments, but observing that Dr. Johnson, who was reading, did not see him, *'tapped him gently on the shoulder. "'Tis Mr. Ch—lm—ley," says my husband. "Well, sir—and what if it is Mr. Ch—lm—ley?" says the other sternly, just lifting his eyes a moment from his book, and returning to it again with renewed avidity.'* This surely conveys a notion of Johnson, as if he had been grossly rude to Mr. Cholmondeley,<sup>1</sup> a gentleman whom he always loved and esteemed. If, therefore, there was an absolute necessity for mentioning the story at all, it might have been thought that her tenderness for Dr. Johnson's character would have disposed her to state anything that could soften it. Why then is there a total silence as to what Mr. Cholmondeley told her?—that Johnson, who had known him from his earliest years, having been made sensible of what had doubtless a strange appearance, took occasion, when he afterwards met him, to make a very courteous and kind apology. There is another little circumstance which I cannot but remark. Her book was published in 1785. She had then in her possession a letter from Dr. Johnson, dated in 1777, which begins thus: 'Cholmondeley's story shocks me, if it be true, which I can hardly think, for I am utterly unconscious of it; I am

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<sup>1</sup> George James Cholmondeley, Esq., grandson of George, third Earl of Cholmondeley, and one of the Commissioners of Excise: a gentleman respected for his abilities and elegance of manners.



George James Clapham

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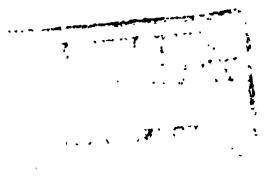
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*George James Cholmondeley*



very sorry, and very much ashamed.' Why then publish the anecdote? Or if she did, why not add the circumstances, with which she was well acquainted?

In his social intercourse she thus describes him: '*Ever musing till he was called out to converse, and conversing till the fatigue of his friends, or the promptitude of his own temper to take offence, consigned him back again to silent meditation.*' Yet, in the same book, she tells us, '*He was, however, seldom inclined to be silent, when any moral or literary question was started; and it was on such occasions that, like the sage in "Rasselas," he spoke, and attention watched his lips, he reasoned, and conviction closed his periods.*' His conversation, indeed, was so far from ever fatiguing his friends, that they regretted when it was interrupted or ceased, and could exclaim in Milton's language,

'With thee conversing, I forgot all time.'

I certainly, then, do not claim too much in behalf of my illustrious friend in saying that however smart and entertaining Mrs. Thrale's *Anecdotes* are, they must not be held as good evidence against him; for wherever an instance of harshness and severity is told, I beg leave to doubt its perfect authenticity; for though there may have been *some* foundation for it, yet, like that of his reproof to the 'very celebrated lady,' it may be so exhibited in the narration as to be very unlike the real fact.

The evident tendency of the following anecdote is to represent Dr. Johnson as extremely deficient in affection, tenderness, or even common civility. '*When I one day lamented the loss of a first cousin killed in America,—"Præthee, my dear (said he), have done with*

*canting; how would the world be the worse for it, I may ask, if all your relations were at once spitted like larks, and roasted for Presto's supper!*"—(Presto was the dog that lay under the table while we talked.) I suspect this too of exaggeration and distortion. I allow that he made her an angry speech; but let the circumstances fairly appear, as told by Mr. Baretti, who was present:

'Mrs. Thrale, while supping very heartily upon larks, laid down her knife and fork, and abruptly exclaimed, "O, my dear Johnson, do you know what has happened? The last letters from abroad have brought us an account that our poor cousin's head was taken off by a cannon-ball." Johnson, who was shocked both at the fact, and her light unfeeling manner of mentioning it, replied, "Madam, it would give you very little concern if all your relations were spitted like those larks, and dressed for Presto's supper."<sup>1</sup>

It is with concern that I find myself obliged to animadvert on the inaccuracies of Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes*, and perhaps I may be thought to have dwelt too long upon her little collection. But as from Johnson's long residence under Mr. Thrale's

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<sup>1</sup> Upon mentioning this to my friend Mr. Wilkes, he, with his usual readiness, pleasantly matched it with the following *sentimental anecdote*:—He was invited by a young man of fashion at Paris, to sup with him and a lady, who had been for some time his mistress, but with whom he was going to part. He said to Mr. Wilkes that he really felt very much for her, she was in such distress; and that he meant to make her a present of two hundred louis-d'ors. Mr. Wilkes observed the behaviour of Mademoiselle, who sighed indeed very piteously, and assumed every pathetic air of grief; but ate no less than three French pigeons, which are as large as English partridges, besides other things. Mr. Wilkes whispered the gentleman, 'We often say in England, *Excessive sorrow is exceeding dry*, but I never heard *Excessive sorrow is exceeding hungry*. Perhaps one hundred will do.' The gentleman took the hint.

roof, and his intimacy with her, the account she has given of him may have made an unfavourable and unjust impression, my duty, as a faithful biographer, has obliged me reluctantly to perform this unpleasant task.

Having left the *pious negotiation*, as I called it, in the best hands, I shall here insert what relates to it. Johnson wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds on July 6, as follows :

‘I am going, I hope, in a few days, to try the air of Derbyshire, but hope to see you before I go. Let me, however, mention to you what I have much at heart. If the Chancellor should continue his attention to Mr. Boswell’s request, and confer with you on the means of relieving my languid state, I am very desirous to avoid the appearance of asking money upon false pretences. I desire you to represent to his Lordship, what, as soon as it is suggested, he will perceive to be reasonable,—That, if I grow much worse, I shall be afraid to leave my physicians, to suffer the inconveniences of travel, and pine in the solitude of a foreign country;—That, if I grow much better, of which indeed there is now little appearance, I shall not wish to leave my friends and my domestic comforts; for I do not travel for pleasure or curiosity; yet if I should recover, curiosity would revive. In my present state I am desirous to make a struggle for a little longer life, and hope to obtain some help from a softer climate. Do for me what you can.’

He wrote to me July 26 :

‘I wish your affairs could have permitted a longer and continued exertion of your zeal and kindness. They that have your kindness may want your ardour. In the meantime I am very feeble, and very dejected.’

By a letter from Sir Joshua Reynolds, I was informed that the Lord Chancellor had called on him,

and acquainted him that the application had not been successful; but that his Lordship, after speaking highly in praise of Johnson, as a man who was an honour to his country, desired Sir Joshua to let him know that, on granting a mortgage of his pension, he should draw on his Lordship to the amount of five or six hundred pounds; and that his Lordship explained the meaning of the mortgage to be, that he wished the business to be conducted in such a manner, that Dr. Johnson should appear to be under the least possible obligation. Sir Joshua mentioned that he had by the same post communicated all this to Dr. Johnson.

How Johnson was affected upon the occasion will appear from what he wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds:

*Ashbourne, Sept. 9.*

'Many words, I hope, are not necessary between you and me to convince you what gratitude is excited in my heart by the Chancellor's liberality, and your kind offices. . . .

'I have enclosed a letter to the Chancellor, which, when you have read it, you will be pleased to seal with a head, or any other general seal, and convey it to him: had I sent it directly to him, I should have seemed to overlook the favour of your intervention.'

TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR <sup>1</sup>

'MY LORD,—After a long and not inattentive observation of mankind, the generosity of your Lordship's offer raises in me not less wonder than gratitude. Bounty, so liberally bestowed,

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds, on account of the excellence both of the sentiment and expression of this letter, took a copy of it, which he showed to some of his friends: one of whom, who admired it, being allowed to peruse it leisurely at home, a copy was made, and found its way into the newspapers and magazines. It was transcribed with some inaccuracies. I print it from the original draft in Johnson's own handwriting.



I should gladly receive, if my condition made it necessary; for to such a mind who would not be proud to own his obligations? But it has pleased God to restore me to so great a measure of health, that if I should now appropriate so much of a fortune destined to do good, I could not escape from myself the charge of advancing a false claim. My journey to the continent, though I once thought it necessary, was never much encouraged by my physicians; and I was very desirous that your Lordship should be told of it by Sir Joshua Reynolds as an event very uncertain; for if I grew much better I should not be willing, if much worse not able, to migrate. Your Lordship was first solicited without my knowledge; but when I was told that you were pleased to honour me with your patronage, I did not expect to hear of a refusal; yet, as I have had no long time to brood hope, and have not rioted in imaginary opulence, this cold reception has been scarce a disappointment; and, from your Lordship's kindness, I have received a benefit which only men like you are able to bestow. I shall now live *michi carior*, with a higher opinion of my own merit.—I am, my Lord, your Lordship's most obliged, most grateful, and most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'September 1784.'

Upon this unexpected failure I abstain from presuming to make any remarks, or to offer any conjectures.

Having, after repeated reasonings, brought Dr. Johnson to agree to my removing to London, and even to furnish me with arguments in favour of what he had opposed, I wrote to him requesting he would write them for me; he was so good as to comply, and I shall extract that part of his letter to me of June 11, as a proof how well he could exhibit a cautious yet encouraging view of it:

'I remember, and entreat you to remember, that *virtus est vitium fugere*; the first approach to riches is security from

poverty. The condition upon which you have my consent to settle in London is, that your expense never exceeds your annual income. Fixing this basis of security you cannot be hurt, and you may be very much advanced. The loss of your Scottish business, which is all that you can lose, is not to be reckoned as any equivalent to the hopes and possibilities that open here upon you. If you succeed, the question of prudence is at an end; everybody will think that done right which ends happily; and though your expectations, of which I would not advise you to talk too much, should not be totally answered, you can hardly fail to get friends who will do for you all that your present situation allows you to hope; and if, after a few years, you should return to Scotland, you will return with a mind supplied by various conversation, and many opportunities of inquiry, with much knowledge and materials for reflection and instruction.'

Let us now contemplate Johnson thirty years after the death of his wife still retaining for her all the tenderness of affection.

TO THE REV. MR. BAGSHAW, AT BROMLEY

'SIR,—Perhaps you may remember that in the year 1753 you committed to the ground my dear wife. I now entreat your permission to lay a stone upon her; and have sent the inscription, that, if you find it proper, you may signify your allowance.

'You will do me a great favour by showing the place where she lies, that the stone may protect her remains.

'Mr. Ryland will wait on you for the inscription,<sup>1</sup> and procure it to be engraved. You will easily believe that I shrink from this mournful office. When it is done, if I have strength remaining, I will visit Bromley once again, and pay you part of the respect to which you have a right from, reverend sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

'July 12, 1784.'

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<sup>1</sup> Printed in his *Works*.

On the same day he wrote to Mr. Langton :

'I cannot but think that in my languid and anxious state I have some reason to complain that I received from you neither inquiry nor consolation. You know how much I value your friendship, and with what confidence I expect your kindness, if I wanted any act of tenderness that you could perform; at least, if you do not know it, I think your ignorance is your own fault. Yet how long is it that I have lived almost in your neighbourhood without the least notice. —I do not, however, consider this neglect as particularly shown to me; I hear two of your most valuable friends make the same complaint. But why are all thus overlooked? You are not oppressed by sickness, you are not distracted by business; if you are sick, you are sick of leisure:—And allow yourself to be told that no disease is more to be dreaded or avoided. Rather to do nothing than to do good is the lowest state of a degraded mind. Boileau says to his pupil,

“Que les vers ne soient pas votre éternel emploi,  
Cultivez vos amis.”

That voluntary debility, which modern language is content to term indolence, will, if it is not counteracted by resolution, render in time the strongest faculties lifeless, and turn the flame to the smoke of virtue.—I do not expect nor desire to see you, because I am much pleased to find that your mother stays so long with you, and I should think you neither elegant nor grateful if you did not study her gratification. You will pay my respects to both the ladies, and to all the young people.—I am going northward for a while, to try what help the country can give me; but, if you will write, the letter will come after me.'

Next day he set out on a jaunt to Staffordshire and Derbyshire, flattering himself that he might be in some degree relieved.

During his absence from London he kept up a correspondence with several of his friends, from which I shall select what appears to me proper for

publication, without attending nicely to chronological order.

To Dr. Brocklesby he writes :

*'Ashbourne, July 20.*

'The kind attention which you have so long shown to my health and happiness makes it as much a debt of gratitude as a call of interest, to give you an account of what befalls me, when accident recovers<sup>1</sup> me from your immediate care.—The journey of the first day was performed with very little sense of fatigue; the second day brought me to Lichfield, without much lassitude; but I am afraid that I could not have borne such violent agitation for many days together. Tell Dr. Heberden that in the coach I read *Cicero's* civil or moral, which I concluded as I entered Lichfield. My affection and understanding went along with *Erasmus*, except that once or twice he somewhat unskillfully entangles *Cicero's* civil or moral, with his rhetorical character.—I stayed five days at Lichfield, but, being unable to walk, had no great pleasure, and yesterday (19th) I came hither, where I am to try what air and attention can perform.—Of any improvement in my health I cannot yet please myself with the perception. . . .—The asthma has no abatement. Opiates stop the fit, so as that I can sit and sometimes lie easy, but they do not now procure me the power of motion; and I am afraid that my general strength of body does not increase. The weather indeed is not benign; but how low is he sunk whose strength depends upon the weather!—I am now looking into *Floyer*, who lived with his asthma to almost his ninetieth year. His book by want of order is obscure; and his asthma, I think, not of the same kind with mine. Something however I may perhaps learn.—My appetite still continues keen enough; and what I consider as a symptom of radical health, I have a voracious delight in raw summer fruit, of which I was less eager a few years ago.—You will be pleased to communicate this account to Dr. Heberden, and if anything is to be done let me have your joint opinion.—Now—*abite curæ*; let me inquire after the Club.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [This is probably an error either of the transcript or the press. *Removes* seems to be the word intended.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> At the Essex Head, Essex Street.

'July 31.—Not recollecting that Dr. Heberden might be at Windsor, I thought your letter long in coming. But, you know, *nocturna petuntur*, the letter which I so much desired tells me that I have lost one of my best and tenderest friends.<sup>1</sup> My comfort is, that he appeared to live like a man that had always before his eyes the fragility of our present existence, and was therefore, I hope, not unprepared to meet his Judge. —Your attention, dear sir, and that of Dr. Heberden, to my health is extremely kind. I am loth to think that I grow worse; and cannot fairly prove even to my own partiality that I grow much better.'

'August 5.—I return you thanks, dear sir, for your unwearied attention, both medicinal and friendly, and hope to prove the effect of your care by living to acknowledge it.'

'August 12.—Pray be so kind as to have me in your thoughts, and mention my case to others as you have opportunity. I seem to myself neither to gain nor lose strength. I have lately tried milk, but have yet found no advantage, and I am afraid of it merely as a liquid. My appetite is still good, which I know is dear Dr. Heberden's criterion of the *vis vitæ*.—As we cannot now see each other, do not omit to write, for you cannot think with what warmth of expectation I reckon the hours of a post-day.'

'August 14.—I have hitherto sent you only melancholy letters; you will be glad to hear some better account. Yesterday the asthma remitted, perceptibly remitted; and I moved with more ease than I have enjoyed for many weeks. May God continue his mercy.—This account I would not delay, because I am not a lover of complaints or complainers, and yet I have, since we parted, uttered nothing till now but terror and sorrow. Write to me, dear sir.'

'August 16.—Better I hope, and better. My respiration gets more and more ease and liberty. I went to church yesterday, after a very liberal dinner, without any inconvenience; it is indeed no long walk, but I never walked it without difficulty, since I came, before. . . . The intention was only to overpower the seeming *vis inertię* of the pectoral and pulmonary muscles.—I am favoured with a degree of ease

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Allen, the printer.

that very much delights me, and do not despair of another race upon the stairs of the Academy.—If I were, however, of a humour to see or to show the state of my body on the dark side, I might say,

“*Quid te exempta juvat spinis de pluribus una?*”<sup>1</sup>

The nights are still sleepless, and the water rises, though it does not rise very fast. Let us, however, rejoice in all the good that we have. The remission of one disease will enable nature to combat the rest.—The squills I have not neglected; for I have taken more than a hundred drops a day, and one day took two hundred and fifty, which, according to the popular equivalent of a drop to a grain, is more than half an ounce.—I thank you, dear sir, for your attention in ordering the medicines; your attention to me has never failed. If the virtue of medicines could be enforced by the benevolence of the prescriber, how soon should I be well!

*August 19.*—The relaxation of the asthma still continues, yet I do not trust it wholly to itself, but soothe it now and then with an opiate. I not only perform the perpetual act of respiration with less labour, but I can walk with fewer intervals of rest, and with greater freedom of motion. I never thought well of Dr. James's compounded medicines; his ingredients appear to me sometimes inefficacious and trifling, and sometimes heterogeneous and destructive of each other. This prescription exhibits a composition of about three hundred and thirty grains, in which there are four grains of emetic tartar, and six drops [of] thebaic tincture. He that writes thus surely writes for show. The basis of his medicine is the gum ammoniacum, which dear Dr. Lawrence used to give, but of which I never saw any effect. We will, if you please, let this medicine alone. The squills have every suffrage, and in the squills we will rest for the present.'

*August 21.*—The kindness which you show by having me in your thoughts upon all occasions, will, I hope, always fill my heart with gratitude. Be pleased to return my thanks to Sir George Baker, for the consideration which he has bestowed

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Epist. ii. 212.*

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TILDEN

*Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone*



upon me.—Is this the balloon that has been so long expected, this balloon to which I subscribed, but without payment? It is pity that philosophers have been disappointed, and shame that they have been cheated; but I know not well how to prevent either. Of this experiment I have read nothing. Where was it exhibited? and who was the man that ran away with so much money? Continue, dear sir, to write often and more at a time, for none of your prescriptions operate to their proper uses more certainly than your letters operate as cordials.’

‘August 26.—I suffered you to escape last post without a letter, but you are not to expect such indulgence very often; for I write not so much because I have anything to say, as because I hope for an answer; and the vacancy of my life here makes a letter of great value.—I have here little company and little amusement, and thus abandoned to the contemplation of my own miseries, I am something gloomy and depressed; this too I resist as I can, and find opium, I think, useful, but I seldom take more than one grain.—Is not this strange weather? Winter absorbed the spring, and now autumn is come before we have had summer. But let not our kindness for each other imitate the inconstancy of the seasons.’

‘Sept. 2.—Mr. Windham has been here to see me; he came, I think, forty miles out of his way, and stayed about a day and a half; perhaps I make the time shorter than it was. Such conversation I shall not have again till I come back to the regions of literature; and there Windham is *inter stellas*<sup>1</sup> *Luna minores*.’ He then mentions the effects of certain medicines as taken: that ‘Nature is recovering its original powers, and the functions returning to their proper state. God continue his mercies, and grant me to use them rightly.’

‘Sept. 9.—Do you know the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire? And have you ever seen Chatsworth? I was at Chatsworth on Monday: I had seen it before, but never when its owners were at home: I was very kindly received, and

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<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that so good a Latin scholar as Johnson should have been so inattentive to the metre, as by mistake to have written *stellas* instead of *ignas*.

honestly pressed to stay: but I told them that a sick man is not a fit inmate of a great house. But I hope to go again some time.'

'Sept. 11.—I think nothing grows worse, but all rather better, except sleep, and that of late has been at its old pranks. Last evening I felt what I had not known for a long time, an inclination to walk for amusement; I took a short walk and came back again neither breathless nor fatigued.—This has been a gloomy, frigid, ungenial summer, but of late it seems to mend; I hear the heat sometimes mentioned, but I do not feel it;

"Præterea minimus gelido jam in corpore sanguis  
Febre calet sola."<sup>1</sup>

I hope, however, with good help, to find means of supporting a winter at home, and to hear and tell at the Club what is doing, and what ought to be doing in the world. I have no company here, and shall naturally come home hungry for conversation.—To wish you, dear sir, more leisure, would not be kind; but what leisure you have you must bestow upon me.'

'Sept. 16.—I have now let you alone for a long time, having indeed little to say. You charge me somewhat unjustly with luxury. At Chatsworth, you should remember, that I have eaten but once; and the doctor with whom I live follows a milk diet. I grow no fatter, though my stomach, if it be not disturbed by physic, never fails me.—I now grow weary of solitude, and think of removing next week to Lichfield, a place of more society, but otherwise of less convenience. When I am settled I shall write again.—Of the hot weather that you mentioned, we have [not] had in Derbyshire very much, and for myself I seldom feel heat, and suppose that my frigidity is the effect of my distemper; a supposition which naturally leads me to hope that a hotter climate may be useful. But I hope to stand another English winter.'

'Lichfield, Sept. 29.—On one day I had three letters about the air balloon: yours was far the best, and has enabled me to impart to my friends in the country an idea of this species of amusement. In amusement, mere amusement, I am afraid

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* x. 217.

it must end, for I do not find that its course can be directed so as that it should serve any purposes of communication: and it can give no new intelligence of the state of the air at different heights till they have ascended above the height of mountains, which they seem never likely to do.—I came hither on the 27th. How long I shall stay I have not determined. My dropsy is gone, and my asthma much remitted, but I have felt myself a little declining these two days, or at least to-day; but such vicissitudes must be expected. One day may be worse than another; but this last month is far better than the former; if the next should be as much better than this I shall run about the town on my own legs.'

'October 6.—The fate of the balloon I do not much lament. to make new balloons is to repeat the jest again. We know now a method of mounting into the air, and, I think, are not likely to know more. The vehicles can serve no use till we can guide them; and they can gratify no curiosity till we mount with them to greater heights than we can reach without; till we rise above the tops of the highest mountains, which we have yet not done. We know the state of the air in all its regions, to the top of Teneriffe, and therefore learn nothing from those who navigate a balloon below the clouds. The first experiment, however, was bold and deserved applause and reward. But since it has been performed, and its event is known, I had rather now find a medicine that can ease an asthma.'

'October 25.—You write to me with a zeal that animates, and a tenderness that melts me. I am not afraid either of a journey to London, or a residence in it. I came down with little fatigue, and am now not weaker. In the smoky atmosphere I was delivered from the dropsy, which I consider as the original and radical disease. The town is my element;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His love of London continually appears. In a letter from him to Mrs. Smart, wife of his friend the poet, which is published in a well-written life of him, prefixed to an edition of his Poems in 1791, there is the following sentence: 'To one that has passed so many years in the pleasures and opulence of London, there are few places that can give much delight.'

Once, upon reading that line in the curious epitaph quoted in the *Spectator*, 'Born in New England, did in London die';

he laughed and said, 'I do not wonder at this. It would have been strange, if, born in London, he had died in New England.'

there are my friends, there are my books, to which I have not yet bid farewell, and there are my amusements. Sir Joshua told me long ago that my vocation was to public life, and I hope still to keep my station till God shall bid me *Go in peace.*'

TO MR. HOOLE

*'Ashbourne, Aug. 7.*

'Since I was here I have two little letters from you, and have not had the gratitude to write. But every man is most free with his best friends, because he does not suppose that they can suspect him of intentional incivility.—One reason for my omission is, that being in a place to which you are wholly a stranger I have no topics of correspondence. If you had any knowledge of Ashbourne I could tell you of two Ashbourne men, who being last week condemned at Derby to be hanged for a robbery, went and hanged themselves in their cell. But this, however it may supply us with talk, is nothing to you.—Your kindness, I know, would make you glad to hear some good of me, but I have not much good to tell; if I grow not worse, it is all that I can say.—I hope Mrs. Hoole receives more help from her migration. Make her my compliments, and write again to, dear sir, your affectionate servant.'

'*Aug. 13.*—I thank you for your affectionate letter. I hope we shall both be the better for each other's friendship, and I hope we shall not very quickly be parted.—Tell Mr. Nichols that I shall be glad of his correspondence, when his business allows him a little remission: though to wish him less business that I may have more pleasure, would be too selfish.—To pay for seats at the balloon is not very necessary, because in less than a minute, they who gaze at a mile's distance will see all that can be seen. About the wings I am of your mind; they cannot at all assist it, nor I think regulate its motion.—I am now grown somewhat easier in my body, but my mind is sometimes depressed.—About the Club I am in no great pain. The forfeitures go on, and the house, I hear, is improved for our future meetings. I hope we shall meet often and sit long.'

'*Sept. 4.*—Your letter was, indeed, long in coming, but it was very welcome. Our acquaintance has now subsisted long,

and our recollection of each other involves a great space and many little occurrences, which melt the thoughts to tenderness.—Write to me, therefore, as frequently as you can.—I hear from Dr. Brocklesby and Mr. Ryland that the Club is not crowded. I hope we shall enliven it when winter brings us together.’

TO DR. BURNEY

‘August 2.

‘The weather, you know, has not been balmy; I am now reduced to think, and am at last content to talk of the weather. Pride must have a fall.<sup>1</sup>—I have lost dear Mr. Allen; and wherever I turn, the dead or the dying meet my notice, and force my attention upon misery and mortality. Mrs. Burney’s escape from so much danger, and her ease after so much pain, throws, however, some radiance of hope upon the gloomy prospect. May her recovery be perfect, and her continuance long.—I struggle hard for life. I take physic and take air; my friend’s chariot is always ready. We have run this morning twenty-four miles, and could run forty-eight more. *But who can run the race with death?*’

‘Sept. 4.—[Concerning a private transaction, in which his opinion was asked, and after giving it, he makes the following reflections, which are applicable on other occasions.] ‘Nothing deserves more compassion than wrong conduct with good meaning; than loss or obloquy suffered by one, who, as he is conscious only of good intentions, wonders why he loses that kindness which he wishes to preserve; and not knowing his own fault, if, as may sometimes happen, nobody will tell him, goes on to offend by his endeavours to please.—I am delighted by finding that our opinions are the same.—You will do me a real kindness by continuing to write. A post day has now been long a day of recreation.’

<sup>1</sup> There was no information for which Dr. Johnson was less grateful than for that which concerned the weather. It was in allusion to his impatience with those who were reduced to keep conversation alive by observations on the weather, that he applied the old proverb to himself. If any one of his intimate acquaintance told him it was hot or cold, wet or dry, windy or calm, he would stop them by saying, ‘Poh! poh! you are telling us that of which none but men in a mine or a dungeon can be ignorant. Let us bear with patience, or enjoy in quiet, elementary changes, whether for the better or the worse, as they are never secrets.—B.

'Nov. 1.—Our correspondence paused for want of topics. I had said what I had to say on the matter proposed to my consideration, and nothing remained but to tell you that I waked or slept; that I was more or less sick. I drew my thoughts in upon myself, and supposed yours employed upon your book.—That your book has been delayed I am glad, since you have gained an opportunity of being more exact.—Of the caution necessary in adjusting narratives there is no end. Some tell what they do not know, that they may not seem ignorant, and others from mere indifference about truth. All truth is not, indeed, of equal importance; but, if little violations are allowed, every violation will in time be thought little; and a writer should keep himself vigilantly on his guard against the first temptations to negligence or supineness.—I had ceased to write, because respecting you I had no more to say, and respecting myself could say little good. I cannot boast of advancement, and in case of convalescence, it may be said, with few exceptions, *non progredi est regredi*. I hope I may be excepted.

'My great difficulty was with my sweet Fanny,<sup>1</sup> who, by her artifice of inserting her letter in yours, had given me a precept of frugality which I was not at liberty to neglect; and I know not who were in town under whose cover I could send my letter. I rejoice to hear that you are so well, and have a delight particularly sympathetic in the recovery of Mrs. Burney.'

TO MR. LANGTON

'Aug. 25.

'The kindness of your last letter, and my omission to answer it, begins to give you, even in my opinion, a right to reprimand, and to charge me with forgetfulness for the absent. I will, therefore, delay no longer to give an account of myself, and wish I could relate what would please either myself or my friend.—On July 13 I left London, partly in hope of help from new air and change of place, and partly excited by the sick man's impatience of the present. I got to Lichfield, in a stage vehicle, with very little fatigue, in two

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<sup>1</sup> The celebrated Miss Fanny Burney.

days, and had the consolation<sup>1</sup> to find that since my last visit my three old acquaintances are all dead.—July 20, I went to Aahbourne, where I have been till now; the house in which we live is repairing. I live in too much solitude, and am often deeply dejected: I wish we were nearer, and rejoice in your removal to London. A friend, at once cheerful and serious, is a great acquisition. Let us not neglect one another for the little time which Providence allows us to hope.—Of my health I cannot tell you, what my wishes persuaded me to expect, that it is much improved by the season or by remedies. I am sleepless; my legs grow weary with a very few steps, and the water breaks its boundaries in some degree. The asthma, however, has remitted; my breath is still much obstructed, but is more free than it was. Nights of watchfulness produce torpid days; I read very little, though I am alone; for I am tempted to supply in the day what I lost in bed. This is my history; like all other histories a narrative of misery. Yet am I so much better than in the beginning of the year, that I ought to be ashamed of complaining. I now sit and write with very little sensibility of pain or weakness; but when I rise I shall find my legs betraying me. Of the money which you mentioned, I have no immediate need, keep it, however, for me, unless some exigence requires it. Your papers I will show you certainly, when you would see them; but I am a little angry at you for not keeping minutes of your own *acceptum et expensum*, and think a little time might be spared from Aristophanes, for the *res familiares*. Forgive me, for I mean well. I hope, dear sir, that you and Lady Rothes, and all the young people, too many to enumerate, are well and happy. God bless you all.'

TO MR. WINDHAM

'August.

'The tenderness with which you have been pleased to treat me, through my long illness, neither health nor sickness can, I hope, make me forget; and you are not to suppose, that

<sup>1</sup> [Probably some word has been here omitted before *consolation*; perhaps *sad* or *miserable*; or the word *consolation* has been printed by mistake instead of *mortification*:—but the original letter not being now (1798) in Mr. Langton's hands, the error (if it be one) cannot be corrected.—M.]

after we parted you were no longer in my mind. But what can a sick man say, but that he is sick? His thoughts are necessarily concentrated in himself: he neither receives nor can give delight; his inquiries are after alleviations of pain, and his efforts are to catch some momentary comfort.—Though I am now in the neighbourhood of the Peak, you must expect no account of its wonders, of its hills, its waters, its caverns, or its mines; but I will tell you, dear sir, what I hope you will not hear with less satisfaction, that, for about a week past, my asthma has been less afflictive.'

*Lichfield, October 2.*—'I believe you had been long enough acquainted with the *phenomena* of sickness, not to be surprised that a sick man wishes to be where he is not, and where it appears to everybody but himself that he might easily be, without having the resolution to remove. I thought Ashbourne a solitary place, but did not come hither till last Monday. I have here more company, but my health has for this last week not advanced; and in the languor of disease how little can be done! Whither or when I shall make my next remove, I cannot tell; but I entreat you, dear sir, to let me know from time to time, where you may be found, for your residence is a very powerful attractive to, sir, your most humble servant.'

## TO MR. PERKINS

'DEAR SIR,—I cannot but flatter myself that your kindness for me will make you glad to know where I am, and in what state.

'I have been struggling very hard with my diseases. My breath has been very much obstructed, and the water has attempted to encroach upon me again. I passed the first part of the summer at Oxford, afterwards I went to Lichfield, thence to Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, and a week ago I returned to Lichfield.

'My breath is now much easier, and the water is in a great measure run away, so that I hope to see you again before winter.

'Please make my compliments to Mrs. Perkins and to Mr. and Mrs. Barclay.—I am, dear sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

*Lichfield, Oct. 4, 1784.*



TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM GERARD HAMILTON

'DEAR SIR,—Considering what reason you gave me in the spring to conclude that you took part in whatever good or evil might befall me, I ought not to have omitted so long the account which I am about to give you. My diseases are an asthma and a dropsy, and, what is less curable, seventy-five. Of the dropsy, in the beginning of the summer, or in the spring, I recovered to a degree which struck with wonder both me and my physicians: the asthma now is likewise, for a time, very much relieved. I went to Oxford, where the asthma was very tyrannical, and the dropsy began again to threaten me; but seasonable physic stopped the inundation: I then returned to London, and in July took a resolution to visit Staffordshire and Derbyshire, where I am yet struggling with my disease. The dropsy made another attack, and was not easily ejected, but at last gave way. The asthma suddenly remitted in bed, on the 13th of August, and, though now very oppressive, is, I think, still something gentler than it was before the remission. My limbs are miserably debilitated, and my nights are sleepless and tedious. When you read this, dear sir, you are not sorry that I wrote no sooner. I will not prolong my complaints. I hope still to see you in a *happier hour*, to talk over what we have often talked, and perhaps to find new topics of merriment, or new incitements to curiosity.—I am, dear sir, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Lichfield, Oct. 20, 1784.*'

TO JOHN PARADISE, ESQ.<sup>1</sup>

'DEAR SIR,—Though in all my summer's excursion I have given you no account of myself, I hope you think better of me than to imagine it possible for me to forget you, whose kindness to me has been too great and too constant not to have

<sup>1</sup> Son of the late Peter Paradise, Esq., his Britannic Majesty's consul at Salonica, in Macedonia, by his lady, a native of that country. He studied at Oxford, and has been honoured by that University with the degree of LL.D. He is distinguished not only by his learning and talents, but by an amiable disposition, gentleness of manners, and a very general acquaintance with well-informed and accomplished persons of almost all nations.

[Mr. Paradise died December 12, 1795.—M.]

made its impression on a harder breast than mine. Silence is not very culpable, when nothing pleasing is suppressed. It would have alleviated none of your complaints to have read my vicissitudes of evil. I have struggled hard with very formidable and obstinate maladies; and though I cannot talk of health, think all praise due to my Creator and Preserver for the continuance of my life. The dropsy has made two attacks, and has given way to medicine; the asthma is very oppressive, but that has likewise once remitted. I am very weak, and very sleepless; but it is time to conclude the tale of misery. I hope, dear sir, that you grow better, for you have likewise your share of human evil, and that your lady and the young charmers are well.—I am, dear sir, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Lichfield, Oct. 27, 1784.*'

TO MR. GEORGE NICOL<sup>1</sup>

'DEAR SIR,—Since we parted, I have been much oppressed by my asthma, but it has lately been less laborious. When I sit I am almost at ease, and I can walk, though yet very little, with less difficulty for this week past, than before. I hope I shall again enjoy my friends, and that you and I shall have a little more literary conversation. Where I now am, everything is very liberally provided for me but conversation. My friend is sick himself, and the reciprocation of complaints and groans afford not much of either pleasure or instruction. What we have not at home this town does not supply, and I shall be glad of a little imported intelligence, and hope that you will bestow, now and then, a little time on the relief and entertainment of, sir, yours, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Ashbourne, Aug. 19, 1784.*'

TO MR. CRUIKSHANK

'DEAR SIR,—Do not suppose that I forget you; I hope I shall never be accused of forgetting my benefactors. I had, till lately, nothing to write but complaints upon complaints, of miseries upon miseries; but within this fortnight I have received great relief. Have your lecturers any vacation? If

<sup>1</sup> Bookseller to his Majesty.

you are released from the necessity of daily study, you may find time for a letter to me. [In this letter he states the particulars of his case.] In return for this account of my health let me have a good account of yours, and of your prosperity in all your undertakings.—I am, dear sir, yours, etc.,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Ashbourne, Sept. 4, 1784.*'

TO MR. THOMAS DAVIES

'*August 14.*

'The tenderness with which you always treat me, makes me culpable in my own eyes for having omitted to write in so long a separation; I had, indeed, nothing to say that you could wish to hear. All has been hitherto misery accumulated upon misery, disease corroborating disease, till yesterday my asthma was perceptibly and unexpectedly mitigated. I am much comforted with this short relief, and am willing to flatter myself that it may continue and improve. I have at present such a degree of ease, as not only may admit the comforts, but the duties of life. Make my compliments to Mrs. Davies. Poor dear Allen, he was a good man.'

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

'*Ashbourne, July 21.*

'The tenderness with which I am treated by my friends makes it reasonable to suppose that they are desirous to know the state of my health, and a desire so benevolent ought to be gratified. I came to Lichfield in two days without any painful fatigue, and on Monday came hither, where I purpose to stay and try what air and regularity will effect. I cannot yet persuade myself that I have made much progress in recovery. My sleep is little, my breath is very much encumbered, and my legs are very weak. The water has increased a little, but has again run off. The most distressing symptom is want of sleep.'

*August 19.*—'Having had since our separation little to say that could please you or myself by saying, I have not been lavish of useless letters: but I flatter myself that you will partake of the pleasure with which I can now tell you, that about a week ago I felt suddenly a sensible remission of

my asthma, and consequently a greater lightness of action and motion. Of this grateful alleviation I know not the cause, nor dare depend upon its continuance, but while it lasts I endeavour to enjoy it, and am desirous of communicating, while it lasts, my pleasure to my friends. Hitherto, dear sir, I had written, before the post, which stays in this town but a little while, brought me your letter. Mr. Davies seems to have represented my little tendency to recover in terms too splendid. I am still restless, still weak, still watery, but the asthma is less oppressive. Poor Ramsay!<sup>1</sup> On which side soever I turn, mortality presents its formidable frown. I left three old friends at Lichfield, when I was last there, and now found them all dead. I no sooner lost sight of dear Allan, than I am told that I shall see him no more. That we must all die, we always knew; I wish I had sooner remembered it. Do not think me intrusive or importunate, if I now call, dear sir, upon you to remember it.'

*Sept. 2.*—'I am glad that a little favour from the court has intercepted your furious purposes. I could not in any case have approved such public violence of resentment, and should have considered any who encouraged it, as rather seeking sport for themselves, than honour for you. Resentment gratifies him who intended an injury, and pains him unjustly who did not intend it. But all this is now superfluous. I still continue, by God's mercy, to mend. My breath is easier, my nights are quieter, and my legs are less in bulk, and stronger in use. I have, however, yet a great deal to overcome, before I can yet attain even an old man's health. Write, do write to me now and then; we are now old acquaintance, and perhaps few people have lived so much and so long together, with less cause of complaint on either side. The retrospection of this is very pleasant, and, I hope, we shall never think on each other with less kindness.'

*Sept. 9.*—'I could not answer your letter before this day, because I went on the sixth to Chatsworth, and did not come back till the post was gone. Many words, I hope, are not necessary between you and me, to convince you what gratitude

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Ramsay, Esq., painter to his Majesty, who died August 10, 1784, in the seventy-first year of his age, much regretted by his friends.

is excited in my heart by the Chancellor's liberality, and your kind offices. I did not, indeed, expect that what was asked by the Chancellor would have been refused, but since it has, we will not tell that anything has been asked. I have enclosed a letter to the Chancellor, which, when you have read it, you will be pleased to seal with a head, or other general seal, and convey it to him: had I sent it directly to him, I should have seemed to overlook the favour of your intervention. My last letter told you of my advance in health, which, I think, in the whole, still continues. Of the hydropic tumour, there is now very little appearance; the asthma is much less troublesome, and seems to remit something day after day. I do not despair of supporting an English winter. At Chatsworth, I met young Mr. Burke, who led me very commodiously into conversation with the Duke and Duchess. We had a very good morning. The dinner was public.

*Sept. 18.*—'I flattered myself that this week would have given me a letter from you, but none has come. Write to me now and then, but direct your next to Lichfield. I think and I hope am sure, that I still grow better; I have sometimes good nights; but am still in my legs weak, but so much mended, that I go to Lichfield in hope of being able to pay my visits on foot, for there are no coaches. I have three letters this day, all about the balloon; I could have been content with one. Do not write about the balloon, whatever else you may think proper to say.'

*October 2.*—'I am always proud of your approbation, and therefore was much pleased that you liked my letter. When you copied it, you invaded the Chancellor's right rather than mine. The refusal I did not expect, but I had never thought much about it, for I doubted whether the Chancellor had so much tenderness for me as to ask. He, being keeper of the King's conscience, ought not to be supposed capable of an improper petition. All is not gold that glitters, as we have often been told; and the adage is verified in your place and my favour; but if what happens does not make us richer, we must bid it welcome, if it makes us wiser. I do not at present grow better, nor much worse; my hopes, however, are somewhat abated, and a very great loss is the loss of hope, but I struggle on as I can.'

TO MR. JOHN NICHOLS

*Lichfield, Oct. 20.*

'When you were here, you were pleased, as I am told, to think my absence an inconvenience. I should certainly have been very glad to give so skilful a lover of antiquities any information about my native place, of which, however, I know not much, and have reason to believe that not much is known. Though I have not given you any amusement, I have received amusement from you. At Ashbourne, where I had very little company, I had the luck to borrow Mr. Bowyer's *Life*; a book so full of contemporary history, that a literary man must find some of his old friends. I thought that I could now and then have told you some hints worth your notice; and perhaps we may talk a life over. I hope we shall be much together; you must now be to me what you were before, and what dear Mr. Allen was, besides. He was taken unexpectedly away, but I think he was a very good man. I have made little progress in recovery. I am very weak, and very sleepless: but I live on, and hope.'

This various mass of correspondence, which I have thus brought together, is valuable, both as an addition to the store which the public already has of Johnson's writings, and as exhibiting a genuine and noble specimen of vigour and vivacity of mind, which neither age nor sickness could impair or diminish.

It may be observed that his writings in every way, whether for the public, or privately to his friends, was by fits and starts; for we see frequently that many letters are written on the same day. When he had once overcome his aversion to begin, he was, I suppose, desirous to go on, in order to relieve his mind from the uneasy reflection of delaying what he ought to do.

While in the country, notwithstanding the accumulation of illness which he endured, his mind did not lose its powers. He translated an Ode of Horace,

which is printed in his works, and composed several prayers. I shall insert one of them, which is so wise and energetic, so philosophical and so pious, that I doubt not of its affording consolation to many a sincere Christian, when in a state of mind to which I believe the best are sometimes liable.<sup>1</sup>

And here I am enabled fully to refute a very unjust reflection, by Sir John Hawkins, both against Dr. Johnson and his faithful servant, Mr. Francis Barber; as if both of them had been guilty of culpable neglect towards a person of the name of Heely, whom Sir John chooses to call a *relation* of Dr. Johnson's. The fact is, that Mr. Heely was not his relation; he had indeed been married to one of his cousins, but she had died without having children, and he had married another woman; so that even the slight connection which there once had been by *alliance* was dissolved. Dr. Johnson, who had shown very great liberality to this man while his first wife was alive, as has appeared in a former part of this work, was humane and charitable enough to continue his bounty to him occasionally; but surely there was no strong call of duty upon him, or upon his legatee, to do more. The following

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<sup>1</sup> *Against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts.* 'O Lord, my Maker and Protector, who hast graciously sent me into this world to work out my salvation, enable me to drive from me all such unquiet and perplexing thoughts as may mislead or hinder me in the practice of those duties which Thou hast required. When I behold the works of thy hands, and consider the course of thy providence, give me grace always to remember that thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor thy ways my ways. And while it shall please Thee to continue me in this world, where much is to be done, and little to be known, teach me by thy Holy Spirit to withdraw my mind from unprofitable and dangerous inquiries, from difficulties vainly curious, and doubts impossible to be solved. Let me rejoice in the light which Thou hast imparted, let me serve Thee with active zeal and humble confidence, and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which Thou receivest shall be satisfied with knowledge. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

letter, obligingly communicated to me by Mr. Andrew Strahan, will confirm what I have stated :—

TO MR. HEELY, NO. 5, IN PYE STREET, WESTMINSTER

'SIR,—As necessity obliges you to call so soon again upon me, you should at least have told the smallest sum that will supply your present want: you cannot suppose that I have much to spare. Two guineas is as much as you ought to be behind with your creditor. If you wait on Mr. Strahan, in New Street, Fetter Lane, or in his absence, on Mr. Andrew Strahan, show this, by which they are entreated to advance you two guineas, and to keep this as a voucher.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Ashbourne, Aug. 12, 1784.*'

Indeed, it is very necessary to keep in mind that Sir John Hawkins has unaccountably viewed Johnson's character and conduct, in almost every particular, with an unhappy prejudice.<sup>1</sup>

We now behold Johnson for the last time in his

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<sup>1</sup> I shall add one instance only to those which I have thought it incumbent on me to point out. Talking of Mr. Garrick's having signified his willingness to let Johnson have the loan of any of his books to assist him in his edition of Shakespeare; Sir John says (page 444), 'Mr. Garrick knew not what risk he ran by this offer. Johnson had so strange a forgetfulness of obligations of this sort, that few who lent him books ever saw them again.' This surely conveys a most unfavourable insinuation, and has been so understood. Sir John mentions the single case of a curious edition of Politian, which, he tells us, appeared to belong to Pembroke College, which probably had been considered by Johnson as his own for upwards of fifty years. Would it not be fairer to consider this as an inadvertence, and draw no general inference? The truth is, that Johnson was so attentive, that in one of his manuscripts in my possession he has marked, in two columns, books borrowed and books lent.

In Sir John Hawkins's compilation there are, however, some passages concerning Johnson which have unquestionably merit. One of them I shall transcribe, in justice to a writer whom I have had too much occasion to censure, and to show my fairness as the biographer of my illustrious friend: 'There was wanting in his conduct and behaviour that dignity which results from a regular and orderly course of action, and by an irresistible power commands esteem. He could not be said to be a staid man, nor so to have adjusted in his mind the balance of reason and passion, as to give occasion to say what may be



native city, for which he ever retained a warm affection, and which, by a sudden apostrophe, under the word *Lich*, he introduces with reverence into his immortal work, *The English Dictionary*, '*Salve, magna parens!*'<sup>1</sup> While here, he felt a revival of all the tenderness of filial affection, an instance of which appeared in his ordering the gravestone and inscription over Elizabeth Blaney<sup>2</sup> to be substantially and carefully renewed.

To Mr. Henry White, a young clergyman, with whom he now formed an intimacy, so as to talk to him with great freedom, he mentioned that he could not in general accuse himself of having been an undutiful son. 'Once, indeed (said he), I was disobedient; I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago I desired to atone for this fault; I went to Uttoxeter

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observed of some men, that all they do is just, fit, and right.' Yet a judicious friend well suggests, 'It might, however, have been added that such men are often merely just, and rigidly correct, while their hearts are cold and unfeeling; and that Johnson's virtues were of a much higher tone than those of the *staid, orderly man* here described.'

<sup>1</sup> The following circumstance, mutually to the honour of Johnson and the Corporation of his native city, has been communicated to me by the Reverend Dr. Vyse, from the Town-Clerk: 'Mr. Simpson has now before him a record of the respect and veneration which the Corporation of Lichfield, in the year 1767, had for the merits and learning of Dr. Johnson. His father built the corner house in the Market-place, the two fronts of which, towards Market and Broad Market Street, stood upon waste land of the Corporation, under a forty-years' lease, which was then expired. On the 15th of August 1767, at a common-hall of the bailiffs and citizens, it was ordered (and that without any solicitation), that a lease should be granted to Samuel Johnson, Doctor of Laws, of the encroachments at his house, for the term of ninety-nine years, at the old rent, which was five shillings. Of which, as Town-Clerk, Mr. Simpson had the honour and pleasure of informing him, and that he was desired to accept it, without paying any fine on the occasion, which lease was afterwards granted, and the Doctor died possessed of this property.'

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. p. 13.

in very bad weather, and stood for a considerable time bareheaded in the rain, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory.'

'I told him (says Miss Seward), in one of my latest visits to him, of a wonderful learned pig, which I had seen at Nottingham, and which did all that we have observed exhibited by dogs and horses. The subject amused him. "Then (said he) the pigs are a race unjustly calumniated. *Pig* has, it seems, not been wanting to *man*, but *man* to *pig*. We do not allow *time* for his education; we kill him at a year old." Mr. Henry White, who was present, observed that if this instance had happened in or before Pope's time, he would not have been justified in instancing the swine as the lowest degree of grovelling instinct. Dr. Johnson seemed pleased with the observation, while the person who made it proceeded to remark that great torture must have been employed ere the indocility of the animal could have been subdued. "Certainly (said the Doctor); but (turning to me), how old is your pig?" I told him three years old. "Then (said he) the pig has no cause to complain; he would have been killed the first year if he had not been *educated*, and protracted existence is a good recompense for very considerable degrees of torture."

As Johnson had now very faint hopes of recovery, and as Mrs. Thrale was no longer devoted to him, it might have been supposed that he would naturally have chosen to remain in the comfortable house of his beloved wife's daughter, and end his life where he began it. But there was in him an animated and

lofty spirit,<sup>1</sup> and however complicated diseases might depress ordinary mortals, all who saw him beheld and acknowledged the *inriatum animum Catonis*.<sup>2</sup> Such was his intellectual ardour even at this time, that he said to one friend, 'Sir, I look upon every day to be lost in which I do not make a new acquaintance'; and to another, when talking of his illness, 'I will be conquered; I will not capitulate.' And such was his love of London, so high a relish had he of its magnificent extent, and variety of intellectual entertainment, that he languished when absent from it, his mind having become quite luxurious from the long habit of enjoying the metropolis; and therefore, although at Lichfield, surrounded with friends who loved and revered him, and for whom he had a very sincere affection, he still found that such conversation as London affords could be found nowhere else. These feelings, joined probably to some flattering hopes of aid from the eminent physicians and surgeons in London, who kindly and generously attended him without accepting fees, made him resolve to return to the capital.

From Lichfield he came to Birmingham, where he passed a few days with his worthy old schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, who thus writes to me: 'He was very

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Burke suggested to me as applicable to Johnson what Cicero, in his *Cato Major*, says of Appius: '*Inlentum enim animum, tanquam arcum, habebat, nec languescens succumbebat senectuti*,' repeating at the same time the following noble words in the same passage: '*Ita enim senectus honesta est, si se ipsa defendit, si jus suum retinet, si nemini emancipata est, si usque ad extremum vita spiritum vindicat jus suum.*'

<sup>2</sup> [*Atroce* animum Catonis, are Horace's words, and it may be doubted whether *atrox* is used by any other original writer in the same sense. *Stubborn* is perhaps the most correct translation of this epithet.—M.]

solicitous with me to recollect some of our most early transactions, and transmit them to him, for I perceived nothing gave him greater pleasure than calling to mind those days of our innocence. I complied with his request, and he only received them a few days before his death. I have transcribed for your inspection exactly the minutes I wrote to him.' This paper having been found in his repositories after his death, Sir John Hawkins has inserted it entire, and I have made occasional use of it and other communications from Mr. Hector<sup>1</sup> in the course of this work. I have both visited and corresponded with him since Dr. Johnson's death, and by my inquiries concerning a great variety of particulars have obtained additional information. I followed the same mode with the Reverend Dr. Taylor, in whose presence I wrote down a good deal of what he could tell; and he, at my request, signed his name, to give it authenticity. It is very rare to find any person who is able to give a distinct account of the life even of one whom he has known intimately, without questions being put to them. My friend Dr. Kippis has told me that on this account it is a practice with him to draw out a biographical catechism.

Johnson then proceeded to Oxford, where he was

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<sup>1</sup> It is a most agreeable circumstance attending the publication of this work, that Mr. Hector has survived his illustrious schoolfellow so many years; that he still retains his health and spirits; and has gratified me with the following acknowledgment: 'I thank you, most sincerely thank you, for the great and long-continued entertainment your *Life of Dr. Johnson* has afforded me and others of my particular friends.' Mr. Hector, besides setting me right as to the verse on a sprig of Myrtle (see vol. i. p. 62, note), has favoured me with two English odes, written by Dr. Johnson at an early period of his life, which will appear in my edition of his Poems.

[This early and worthy friend of Johnson died at Birmingham, September 2, 1794.—M.]

again kindly received by Dr. Adams,<sup>1</sup> who was pleased to give me the following account in one of his letters (Feb. 17th, 1785):—

‘His last visit was, I believe, to my house, which he left, after a stay of four or five days. We had much serious talk together, for which I ought to be the better as long as I live. You will remember some discourse which we had in the summer upon the subject of prayer, and the difficulty of this sort of composition. He reminded me of this, and of my having wished him to try his hand, and to give us a specimen of the style and manner that he approved. He added that he was now in a right frame of mind, and as he could not possibly employ his time better, he would in earnest set about it. But I find, upon inquiry, that no papers of this sort were left behind him, except a few short ejaculatory forms suitable to his present situation.’

<sup>1</sup> [This amiable and excellent man survived Dr. Johnson about four years, having died in January 1789 at Gloucester, where a monument is erected to his memory, with the following inscription :

Sacred to the memory of  
WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.  
Master of Pembroke College, Oxford,  
Prebendary of this Cathedral, and  
Archdeacon of Llandaff.

Ingenious, Learned, Eloquent,  
He ably defended the truth of Christianity :  
Pious, Benevolent, and Charitable,  
He successfully inculcated its sacred Precepts.  
Pure, and undeviating in his own Conduct,  
He was tender and compassionate to the Failings of others.  
Ever anxious for the welfare and happiness of Mankind,  
He was on all occasions forward to encourage  
Works of public Utility, and extensive Beneficence  
In the Government of the College over which he presided,  
His vigilant Attention was uniformly exerted  
To promote the important Objects of the institution ;  
Whilst the mild Dignity of his Deportment,  
His gentleness of Disposition, and Urbanity of Manners,  
Inspired Esteem, Gratitude, and Affection.  
Full of Days, and matured in Virtue,  
He died Jan. 13th, 1789, aged 82.

A very just character of Dr. Adams may also be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1789, vol. lix. p. 214. His only daughter (see p. 284), was married, in July 1788, to B. Hyatt, Esq. of Painswick, in Gloucestershire.—M.]

Dr. Adams had not then received accurate information on this subject; for it has since appeared that various prayers had been composed by him at different periods, which, intermingled with pious resolutions and some short notes of his life, were entitled by him *Prayers and Meditations*, and have, in pursuance of his earnest requisition, in the hopes of doing good, been published, with a judicious well-written Preface, by the Reverend Mr. Strahan, to whom he delivered them. This admirable collection, to which I have frequently referred in the course of this work, evinces, beyond all his compositions for the public, and all the eulogies of his friends and admirers, the sincere virtue and piety of Johnson. It proves with unquestionable authenticity that, amidst all his constitutional infirmities, his earnestness to conform his practice to the precepts of Christianity was unceasing, and that he habitually endeavoured to refer every transaction of his life to the will of the Supreme Being.

He arrived in London on the 16th of November, and next day sent to Dr. Burney the following note, which I insert as the last token of his remembrance of that ingenious and amiable man, and as another of the many proofs of the tenderness and benignity of his heart:

'Mr. Johnson, who came home last night, sends his respects to dear Dr. Burney, and all the dear Burneys, little and great.'

TO MR. HECTOR, IN BIRMINGHAM

'DEAR SIR,—I did not reach Oxford until Friday morning, and then I sent Francis to see the balloon fly, but could not go myself. I stayed at Oxford till Tuesday, and then came in the common vehicle easily to London. I am as I was, and

having seen Dr. Brocklesby am to ply the squills; but, whatever be their efficacy, this world must soon pass away. Let us think seriously on our duty. I send my kindest respects to dear Mrs. Careless: let me have the prayers of both. We have all lived long and must soon part. God have mercy on us, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'London, Nov. 17, 1784.'

His correspondence with me, after his letter on the subject of my settling in London, shall now, so far as is proper, be produced in one series.

July 26, he wrote to me from Ashbourne:

'On the 14th I came to Lichfield, and found everybody glad enough to see me. On the 20th I came hither and found a house half-built, of very uncomfortable appearance; but my own room has not been altered. That a man worn with diseases, in his seventy-second or third year, should condemn part of his remaining life to pass among ruins and rubbish, and that no inconsiderable part, appears to me very strange.—I know that your kindness makes you impatient to know the state of my health, in which I cannot boast of much improvement. I came through the journey without much inconvenience, but when I attempt self-motion I find my legs weak and my breath very short; this day I have been much disordered. I have no company; the Doctor<sup>1</sup> is busy in his fields, and goes to bed at nine, and his whole system is so different from mine that we seem formed for different elements; I have, therefore, all my amusement to seek within myself.'

Having written to him in bad spirits a letter filled with dejection and fretfulness, and at the same time expressing anxious apprehensions concerning him, on account of a dream which had disturbed me; his answer was chiefly in terms of reproach, for a supposed

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. Taylor.

charge of 'affecting discontent, and indulging the vanity of complaint.' It, however, proceeded :

'Write to me often, and write like a man. I consider your fidelity and tenderness as a great part of the comforts which are yet left me, and sincerely wish we could be nearer to each other. . . . My dear friend, life is very short and very uncertain; let us spend it as well as we can. My worthy neighbour, Allen, is dead. Love me as well as you can. Pay my respects to dear Mrs. Boswell. Nothing ailed me at that time; let your superstition at last have an end.'

Feeling very soon that the manner in which he had written might hurt me, he two days afterwards, July 28, wrote to me again, giving me an account of his sufferings; after which he thus proceeds :

'Before this letter you will have had one which I hope you will not take amiss; for it contains only truth, and that truth kindly intended. . . . *Spartam quam nactus es orna*; make the most and best of your lot, and compare yourself not with the few that are above you, but with the multitudes which are below you. . . . Go steadily forwards with lawful business or honest diversions. "*Be* (as Temple says of the Dutchmen) *well when you are not ill, and pleased when you are not angry.*" . . . This may seem but an ill return for your tenderness; but I mean it well, for I love you with great ardour and sincerity. Pay my respects to dear Mrs. Boswell, and teach the young ones to love me.'

I unfortunately was so much indisposed during a considerable part of the year that it was not, or at least I thought it was not, in my power to write to my illustrious friend as formerly, or without expressing such complaints as offended him. Having conjured him not to do me the injustice of charging me with affectation, I was with much regret long silent. His last letter to me then came, and affected me very tenderly.



TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR,—I have this summer sometimes amended, and sometimes relapsed, but, upon the whole, have lost ground very much. My legs are extremely weak and my breath very short, and the water is now increasing upon me. In this uncomfortable state your letters used to relieve; what is the reason that I have them no longer? Are you sick, or are you sullen? Whatever be the reason, if it be less than necessity drive it away; and of the short life that we have make the best use for yourself and for your friends. . . . I am sometimes afraid that your omission to write has some real cause, and shall be glad to know that you are not sick, and that nothing ill has befallen dear Mrs. Boswell or any of your family.—I am, sir, your, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*Lichfield, Nov. 5, 1784.*'

Yet it was not a little painful to me to find that in a paragraph of this letter, which I have omitted, he still persevered in arraigning me as before, which was strange in him who had so much experience of what I suffered. I, however, wrote to him two as kind letters as I could; the last of which came too late to be read by him, for his illness increased more rapidly upon him than I had apprehended; but I had the consolation of being informed that he spoke of me on his death-bed with affection, and I look forward with humble hope of renewing our friendship in a better world.

I now relieve the readers of this work from any further personal notice of its author; who, if he should be thought to have obtruded himself too much upon their attention, requests them to consider the peculiar plan of his biographical undertaking.

Soon after Johnson's return to the metropolis, both the asthma and dropsy became more violent and dis-

treasful. He had for some time kept a journal in Latin of the state of his illness, and the remedies which he used, under the title of *Ægri Ephemeris*, which he began on the 6th of July, but continued it no longer than the 8th of November; finding, I suppose, that it was a mournful and unavailing register. It is in my possession; and is written with great care and accuracy.

Still his love of literature<sup>1</sup> did not fail. A very

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<sup>1</sup> It is truly wonderful to consider the extent and constancy of Johnson's literary ardour, notwithstanding the melancholy which clouded and embittered his existence. Besides the numerous and various works which he executed, he had, at different times, formed schemes of a great many more, of which the following catalogue was given by him to Mr. Langton, and by that gentleman presented to his Majesty:

DIVINITY

'A small book of precepts and directions for piety: the hint taken from the directions in Morton's exercise.

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND LITERATURE IN GENERAL

'History of Criticism, as it relates to judging of authors, from Aristotle to the present age. An account of the rise and improvements of that art: of the different opinions of authors, ancient and modern.

'Translation of the History of Herodian.

'New edition of Fairfax's Translation of Tasso, with notes, glossary, etc.

'Chaucer, a new edition of him, from manuscripts and old editions, with various readings, conjectures, remarks on his language and the changes it had undergone from the earliest times to his age, and from his to the present; with notes explanatory of customs, etc., and references to Boccace, and other authors from whom he has borrowed, with an account of the liberties he has taken in telling the stories; his life, and an exact etymological glossary.

'Aristotle's Rhetoric, a translation of it into English.

'A collection of Letters, translated from the modern writers, with some account of the several authors.

'Oldham's Poems, with notes, historical and critical.

'Roscommon's Poems, with notes.

'Lives of the Philosophers, written with a polite air, in such a manner as may divert as well as instruct.

'History of the Heathen Mythology, with an explication of the fables, both allegorical and historical; with references to the poets.

'History of the State of Venice, in a compendious manner.

'Aristotle's Ethics, an English translation of them, with notes.

'Geographical Dictionary, from the French.

'Hierocles upon Pythagoras, translated into English, perhaps with notes. This is done by Norria.

few days before his death he transmitted to his friend, Mr. John Nichols, a list of the authors of the *Universal*

- ' A book of Letters, upon all kinds of subjects.
- ' Claudian, a new edition of his works, *cum notis variorum*, in the manner of Burman.
- ' Tully's Tusculan Questions, a translation of them.
- ' Tully's *De Naturâ Deorum*, a translation of those books.
- ' Benzo's New History of the New World, to be translated.
- ' Machiavel's History of Florence, to be translated.
- ' History of the Revival of Learning in Europe, containing an account of whatever contributed to the restoration of literature; such as controversies, printing, the destruction of the Greek empire, the encouragement of great men, with the lives of the most eminent patrons and most eminent early professors of all kinds of learning in different countries.
- ' A Body of Chronology, in verse, with historical notes.
- ' A Table of the Spectators, Tatlers, and Guardians, distinguished by figures into six degrees of value, with notes, giving the reasons of preference or degradation.
- ' A Collection of Letters from English Authors, with a preface giving some account of the writers; with reasons for selection and criticism upon styles; remarks on each letter if needful.
- ' A Collection of Proverbs from various languages. Jan. 6, —53.
- ' A Dictionary of the Common Prayer, in imitation of Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible. March, —52.
- ' A Collection of Stories and Examples, like those of Valerius Maximus. Jan. 10, —53.
- ' From *Ælian*, a volume of Select Stories, perhaps from others. Jan. 28, —53.
- ' Collection of Travels, Voyages, Adventures, and Descriptions of Countries.
- ' Dictionary of Ancient History and Mythology.
- ' Treatise on the Study of Polite Literature, containing the history of learning, directions for editions, commentaries, etc.
- ' Maxims, Characters, and Sentiments, after the manner of Bruyère, collected out of ancient authors, particularly the Greek, with Apophthegms.
- ' Classical Miscellanies, Select Translations from ancient Greek and Latin authors.
- ' Lives of Illustrious Persons, as well of the active as the learned, in imitation of Plutarch.
- ' Judgment of the learned upon English authors.
- ' Poetical Dictionary of the English Tongue.
- ' Considerations upon the Present State of London.
- ' Collection of Epigrams, with notes and observations.
- ' Observations on the English Language, relating to words, phrases, and modes of speech.
- ' *Minutiæ Literariæ*, miscellaneous reflections, criticisms, emendations, notes.
- ' History of the Constitution.
- ' Comparison of Philosophical and Christian morality, by sentences collected from the moralists and fathers.
- ' Plutarch's Lives, in English, with notes.

*History*, mentioning their several shares in that work. It has, according to his direction, been deposited in

## POETRY AND WORKS OF IMAGINATION

- 'Hymn to Ignorance.
- 'The Palace of Sloth,—a vision.
- 'Coluthus, to be translated.
- 'Prejudice,—a poetical essay.
- 'The Palace of Nonsense,—a vision.'

Johnson's extraordinary facility of composition, when he shook off his constitutional indolence, and resolutely sat down to write, is admirably described by Mr. Courtenay, in his *Poetical Review*, which I have several times quoted :

- ' While through life's maze he sent a piercing view,  
His mind expansive to the object grew.  
With various stores of erudition fraught,  
The lively image, the deep-searching thought,  
Slept in repose :—but when the moment press'd,  
The bright ideas stood at once confess'd ;  
Instant his genius sped its vigorous rays,  
And o'er the letter'd world diffused a blaze :  
As womb'd with fire the cloud electric flies,  
And calmly o'er th' horizon seems to rise :  
Touch'd by the pointed steel, the lightning flows,  
And all th' expanse with rich effulgence glows.'

We shall in vain endeavour to know with exact precision every production of Johnson's pen. He owned to me that he had written about forty sermons ; but as I understood that he had given or sold them to different persons, who were to preach them as their own, he did not consider himself at liberty to acknowledge them. Would those who were thus aided by him, who are still alive, and the friends of those who are dead, fairly inform the world, it would be obligingly gratifying a reasonable curiosity, to which there should, I think, now be no objection. Two volumes of them, published since his death, are sufficiently ascertained : see vol. iv. p. 183. I have before me, in his handwriting, a fragment of twenty quarto leaves, of a translation into English of Sallust, *De Bello Catilinario*. When it was done I have no notion, but it seems to have no very superior merit to mark it as his. Besides the publications heretofore mentioned, I am satisfied, from internal evidence, to admit also as genuine the following, which, notwithstanding all my chronological care, escaped me in the course of this work :

*Considerations on the Case of Dr. Trapp's Sermons*, published in 1739 in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. It is a very ingenious defence of the right of abridging an author's work without being held as infringing his property. This is one of the nicest questions in the *Law of Literature* ; and I cannot help thinking that the indulgence of abridging is often exceedingly injurious to authors and booksellers, and should in very few cases be permitted. At any rate, to prevent difficult and uncertain discussion, and give an absolute security to authors in the property of their labours, no abridgment whatever should be permitted till after the expiration of such a number of years as the Legislature may be pleased to fix.

But, though it has been confidently ascribed to him, I cannot allow

the British Museum, and is printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December 1784.<sup>1</sup>

During his sleepless nights he amused himself by translating into Latin verse, from the Greek, many of the epigrams in the *Anthologia*. These translations, with some other poems by him in Latin, he gave to his friend Mr. Langton, who, having added a few notes, sold them to the booksellers for a small sum to be given to some of Johnson's relations, which was

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that he wrote a Dedication to both Houses of Parliament of a book entitled *The Evangelical History Harmonised*. He was no *croaker*, no declaimer against *the times*. He would not have written, 'That we are fallen upon an age in which corruption is not barely universal, is universally confessed.' Nor, 'Rapine preys on the public without opposition, and perjury betrays it without inquiry.' Nor would he, to excite a speedy reformation, have conjured up such phantoms of terror as these: 'A few years longer, and perhaps all endeavours will be in vain. We may be swallowed by an earthquake: we may be delivered to our enemies.' This is not Johnsonian.

There are, indeed, in this Dedication several sentences constructed upon the model of those of Johnson. But the imitation of the form, without the spirit of his style, has been so general, that this of itself is not sufficient evidence. Even our newspaper writers aspire to it. In an account of the funeral of Edwin, the comedian, in the *Diary* of Nov. 9, 1793, that son of drollery is thus described: 'A man who had so often cheered the sullenness of vacancy and suspended the approaches of sorrow.' And in the *Dublin Evening Post*, August 16, 1791, there is the following paragraph: 'It is a singular circumstance that in a city like this, containing 200,000 people, there are three months in the year during which no place of public amusement is open. Long vacation is here a vacation from pleasure as well as business: nor is there any mode of passing the listless evenings of declining summer but in the riots of a tavern or the stupidity of a coffee-house.'

I have not thought it necessary to specify every copy of verses written by Johnson, it being my intention to publish an authentic edition of all his poetry, with notes.

<sup>1</sup> [As the letter accompanying the list (which fully supports the observation in the text) was written but a week before Dr. Johnson's death, the reader may not be displeased to find it here preserved:]

TO MR. NICHOLS

'The late learned Mr. Swinton, having one day remarked that one man, meaning, I suppose, no man but himself, could assign all the parts of the Ancient Universal History to their proper authors, at the request of Sir Robert Chambers, or of myself, gave the account which I now transmit to you in his own hand; being willing that of so great a work the history should be known, and that each writer should receive his due proportion of praise from posterity.

'I recommend to you to preserve this scrap of literary intelligence in

accordingly done; and they are printed in the collection of his works.

A very erroneous notion has circulated as to Johnson's deficiency in the knowledge of the Greek language, partly owing to the modesty with which, from knowing how much there was to be learned, he used to mention his own comparative acquisitions. When Mr. Cumberland<sup>1</sup> talked to him of the Greek fragments which are so well illustrated in the *Observer*, and of the Greek dramatists in general, he candidly acknowledged his insufficiency in that particular branch of Greek literature. Yet it may be said that

Mr. Swinton's own hand, or to deposit it in the Museum, that the veracity of this account may never be doubted.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,  
SAM. JOHNSON.

'Dec. 6, 1784.'

Mr. S——n

The History of the Carthaginians.

” ” Numidians.

” ” Mauritanians.

” ” Gætulians.

” ” Garamanthes.

” ” Melano Gætulians.

” ” Nigritæ.

” ” Cyrenaica.

” ” Marmarica.

” ” the Regio Syrtica.

” ” Turks, Tartars, and Moguls.

” ” Indians.

” ” Chinese.

Dissertation on the peopling of America.

” ” independency of the Arabs.

The Cosmogony, and a small part of the History immediately following, by Mr. Sale.

To the birth of Abraham, chiefly by Mr. Shelvoek.

History of the Jews, Gauls, and Spaniards, by Mr. Psalmanazar.

Xenophon's Retreat, by the same.

History of the Persians and the Constantinopolitan Empire, by Dr. Campbell.

History of the Romans, by Mr. Bower.]

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Cumberland assures me that he was always treated with great courtesy by Dr. Johnson, who, in his *Letters to Mrs. Thrale*, vol. ii. p. 68, thus speaks of that learned, ingenious, and accomplished gentleman: 'The want of company is an inconvenience, but Mr. Cumberland is a million.'

though not a great, he was a good Greek scholar. Dr. Charles Burney, the younger, who is universally acknowledged by the best judges to be one of the few men of this age who are very eminent for their skill in that noble language, has assured me that Johnson could give a Greek word for almost every English one; and that, although not sufficiently conversant in the niceties of the language, he upon some occasions discovered, even in these, a considerable degree of critical acumen. Mr. Dalzel, Professor of Greek at Edinburgh, whose skill in it is unquestionable, mentioned to me, in very liberal terms, the impression which was made upon him by Johnson in a conversation which they had in London concerning that language. As Johnson, therefore, was undoubtedly one of the first Latin scholars in modern times, let us not deny to his fame some additional splendour from Greek.

I shall now fulfil my promise of exhibiting specimens of various sorts of imitation of Johnson's style.

In the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, 1787, there is an 'Essay on the Style of Dr. Samuel Johnson,' by the Reverend Robert Burrowes, whose respect for the great object of his criticism<sup>1</sup> is thus evinced in the concluding paragraph: 'I have singled him out from the great body of the English writers because his universally acknowledged beauties would be most apt to induce imitation; and I have treated rather on

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<sup>1</sup> We must smile at a little inaccuracy of metaphor in the Preface to the *Transactions*, which is written by Mr. Burrowes. The *critic of the style of Johnson* having, with a just zeal for literature, observed that the whole nation are called on to exert themselves, afterwards says: 'They are called on by every *tie* which can have a laudable influence on the heart of man.'

his faults than his perfections, because an essay might comprise all the observations I could make upon his faults, while volumes would not be sufficient for a treatise on his perfections.'

Mr. Burrowes has analysed the composition of Johnson, and pointed out its peculiarities with much acuteness; and I would recommend a careful perusal of his essay to those who, being captivated by the union of perspicuity and splendour which the writings of Johnson contain, without having a sufficient portion of his vigour of mind, may be in danger of becoming bad copyists of his manner. I, however, cannot but observe, and I observe it to his credit, that this learned gentleman has himself caught no mean degree of the expansion and harmony, which, independent of all other circumstances, characterise the sentences of Johnson. Thus, in the Preface to the volume in which the essay appears we find, 'If it be said that in societies of this sort too much attention is frequently bestowed on subjects barren and speculative, it may be answered that no one science is so little connected with the rest as not to afford many principles whose use may extend considerably beyond the science to which they primarily belong; and that no proposition is so purely theoretical as to be totally incapable of being applied to practical purposes. There is no apparent connection between duration and the cycloidal arch, the properties of which, duly attended to, have furnished us with our best regulated methods of measuring time: and he who has made himself master of the nature and affections of the logarithmic curve, is not aware that he has advanced considerably towards ascertaining the proportionable density of the



air at its various distances from the surface of the earth.'

The ludicrous imitators of Johnson's style are innumerable. Their general method is to accumulate hard words without considering that, although he was fond of introducing them occasionally, there is not a single sentence in all his writings where they are crowded together, as in the first verse of the following imaginary Ode by him to Mrs. Thrale,<sup>1</sup> which appeared in the newspapers :

' *Cervisial octor's viduate* dame,  
Opin'st thou his gigantic fame,  
Procumb'g at that shrine ;  
Shall, *catenated* by thy charms,  
A captive in thy *ambient* arms,  
Perennially be thine ?'

This, and a thousand other such attempts, are totally unlike the original, which the writers imagined they were turning into ridicule. There is not similarity enough for burlesque, or even for caricature.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson's wishing to unite himself with this rich widow was much talked of, but I believe without foundation. The report, however, gave occasion to a poem, not without characteristic merit, entitled, 'Ode to Mrs. Thrale, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D., on their supposed approaching Nuptials': printed for Mr. Faulder, in Bond Street. I shall quote as a specimen the first three stanzas :

' If e'er my fingers touch'd the lyre,  
In satire fierce, in pleasure gay ;  
Shall not my Thralia's smiles inspire ?  
Shall Sam refuse the sportive lay ?  
My dearest lady ! view your slave,  
Behold him as your very *Scrub* ;  
Eager to write as author grave,  
Or govern well the brewing-tub.  
To rich felicity thus raised,  
My bosom glows with amorous fire,  
Porter no longer shall be praised,  
'Tis I myself am *Thrale's Entire*.'

Mr. Colman, in his *Prose on several Occasions*, has 'A Letter from Lexiphanes; containing Proposals for a *Glossary or Vocabulary of the Vulgar Tongue*: intended as a supplement to a larger Dictionary.' It is evidently meant as a sportive sally of ridicule on Johnson, whose style is thus imitated, without being grossly overcharged:—'It is easy to foresee, that the idle and illiterate will complain that I have increased their labours by endeavouring to diminish them; and that I have explained what is more easy by what is more difficult—*ignotum per ignotius*. I expect, on the other hand, the liberal acknowledgments of the learned. He who is buried in scholastic retirement, secluded from the assemblies of the gay and remote from the circles of the polite, will at once comprehend the definitions, and be grateful for such a seasonable and necessary elucidation of his mother-tongue.' Annexed to this letter is a short specimen of the work, thrown together in a vague and desultory manner, not even adhering to alphabetical concatenation.<sup>1</sup>

The serious imitators of Johnson's style, whether intentionally or by the imperceptible effect of its strength and animation, are, as I have had already occasion to observe, so many, that I might introduce quotations from a numerous body of writers in our

<sup>1</sup> *Higgledy-piggledy*.—Conglomeration and confusion.

*Hodge-podge*.—A culinary mixture of heterogeneous ingredients: applied metaphorically to all discordant combinations.

*Tit for Tat*.—Adequate retaliation.

*Shilly Shally*.—Hesitation and irresolution.

*Fes! fa! fum!*.—Gigantic intonations.

*Rigmarole*.—Discourse, incoherent and rhapsodical.

*Cyrcum-cyrcum*.—Lines of irregularity and involution.

*Ding dong*.—Tintinabulary chimes, used metaphorically to signify despatch and vehemence.

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*Fanny Helen (born T. Alden)*

language, since he appeared in the literary world. I shall point out the following :

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D.

'In other parts of the globe, man, in his rudest state, appears as Lord of the creation, giving law to various tribes of animals which he has tamed and reduced to subjection. The Tartar follows his prey on the horse which he has reared, or tends his numerous herds which furnish him both with food and clothing ; the Arab has rendered the camel docile, and avails himself of its persevering strength ; the Laplander has formed the reindeer to be subservient to his will ; and even the people of Kamschatka have trained their dogs to labour. This command over the inferior creatures is one of the noblest prerogatives of man, and among the greatest efforts of his wisdom and power. Without this his dominion is incomplete. He is a monarch who has no subjects ; a master without servants ; and must perform every operation by the strength of his own arm.'<sup>1</sup>

EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ.

'Of all our passions and appetites the love of power is of the most imperious and unsociable nature, since the pride of one man requires the submission of the multitude. In the tumult of civil discord the laws of Society lose their force, and their place is seldom supplied by those of humanity. The ardour of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to inflame the mind and to silence the voice of pity.'<sup>2</sup>

MISS BURNEY

'My family, mistaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a splendid connection for me, to which, though my invariable repugnance has stopped any advances, their wishes and their views immovably adhere.

<sup>1</sup> *History of America*, vol. i. quarto, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. i. chap. iv.

I am but too certain they will now listen to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I despair of success; I know not how to risk a prayer with those who may silence me by a command.<sup>1</sup>

REV. MR. NARES<sup>2</sup>

'In an enlightened and improving age, much perhaps is not to be apprehended from the inroads of mere caprice; at such a period it will generally be perceived that needless irregularity is the worst of all deformities, and that nothing is so truly elegant in language as the simplicity of unviolated analogy. Rules will, therefore, be observed, so far as they are known and acknowledged: but, at the same time, the desire of improvement having been once excited will not remain inactive; and its efforts, unless assisted by knowledge, as much as they are prompted by zeal, will not unfrequently be found pernicious; so that the very persons whose intention it is to perfect the instrument of reason will deprave and disorder it unknowingly. At such a time, then, it becomes peculiarly necessary that the analogy of language should be fully examined and understood; that its rules should be carefully laid down; and that it should be clearly known how much it contains, which being already right should be defended from change and violation; how much it has that demands amendment; and how much that, for fear of greater inconveniences, must, perhaps, be left unaltered, though irregular.'

A distinguished author in the *Mirror*,<sup>3</sup> a periodical paper, published at Edinburgh, has imitated Johnson very closely. Thus, in No. 16:

<sup>1</sup> *Cecilia*, book vii. chap. i.

<sup>2</sup> The passage which I quote is taken from that gentleman's *Elements of Orthoepy*; containing a distinct View of the whole Analogy of the English Language, so far as relates to *Pronunciation, Accent, and Quantity*, London, 1784. I beg leave to offer my particular acknowledgments to the author of a work of uncommon merit and great utility. I know no book which contains, in the same compass, more learning, polite literature, sound sense, accuracy of arrangement, and perspicuity of expression.

<sup>3</sup> That collection was presented to Dr. Johnson, I believe by its authors; and I heard him speak very well of it.

'The effects of the return of spring have been frequently remarked as well in relation to the human mind as to the animal and vegetable world. The reviving power of this season has been traced from the fields to the herds that inhabit them, and from the lower classes of beings up to man. Gladness and joy are described as prevailing through universal Nature, animating the low of the cattle, the carol of the birds, and the pipe of the shepherd.'

The Reverend Dr. Knox, master of Tunbridge School, appears to have the *imitari aveo* of Johnson's style perpetually in his mind; and to his assiduous, though not servile, study of it, we may partly ascribe the extensive popularity of his writings.<sup>1</sup>

In his *Essays, Moral and Literary*, No. 3, we find the following passage :

'The polish of external grace may indeed be deferred till the approach of manhood. When solidity is obtained by pursuing the modes prescribed by our forefathers, then may the file be used. The firm substance will bear attrition, and the lustre then acquired will be durable.'

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<sup>1</sup> It were to be wished, that he had imitated that great man in every respect, and had not followed the example of Dr. Adam Smith, in ungraciously attacking his venerable *Alma Mater*, Oxford. It must, however, be observed, that he is much less to blame than Smith: he only objects to certain particulars; Smith to the whole institution, though indebted for much of his learning to an exhibition which he enjoyed, for many years, at Balliol College. Neither of them, however, will do any hurt to the noblest university in the world. While I animadvert on what appears to me exceptionable in some of the works of Dr. Knox, I cannot refuse due praise to others of his productions; particularly his sermons, and to the spirit with which he maintains, against presumptuous heretics, the consolatory doctrines peculiar to the Christian Revelation. This he has done in a manner equally strenuous and conciliating. Neither ought I to omit mentioning a remarkable instance of his candour: Notwithstanding the wide difference of our opinions, upon the important subject of University education, in a letter to me concerning this work, he thus expresses himself: 'I thank you for the very great entertainment your *Life of Johnson* gives me. It is a most valuable work. Yours is a new species of biography. Happy for Johnson, that he had so able a recorder of his wit and wisdom.'

There is, however, one in No. 11, which is blown up into such tumidity, as to be truly ludicrous. The writer means to tell us, that members of Parliament, who have run in debt by extravagance, will sell their votes to avoid an arrest,<sup>1</sup> which he thus expresses :

'They who build houses and collect costly pictures and furnitures, with the money of an honest artisan or mechanic, will be very glad of emancipation from the hands of a bailiff, by a sale of their senatorial suffrage.'

But I think the most perfect imitation of Johnson is a professed one, entitled *A Criticism on Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, said to be written by Mr. Young, Professor of Greek, at Glasgow, and of which let him have the credit, unless a better title can be shown. It has not only the particularities of Johnson's style, but that very species of literary discussion and illustration for which he was eminent. Having already quoted so much from others, I shall refer the curious to this performance, with an assurance of much entertainment.

Yet whatever merit there may be in any imitations of Johnson's style, every good judge must see that they are obviously different from the original ; for all of them are either deficient in its force, or overloaded with its peculiarities ; and the powerful sentiment to which it is suited is not to be found.

Johnson's affection for his departed relations seemed to grow warmer as he approached nearer to the time when he might hope to see them again. It probably

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Knox, in his *Moral and Literary* abstraction, may be excused for not knowing the political regulations of his country. No senator can be in the hands of a bailiff.



appeared to him that he should upbraid himself with unkind inattention, were he to leave the world without having paid a tribute of respect to their memory.

TO MR. GREEN, APOTHECARY, AT LICHFIELD

'DEAR SIR,—I have enclosed the epitaph for my father, mother, and brother, to be all engraved on the large size, and laid in the middle aisle in St. Michael's Church, which I request the clergyman and churchwardens to permit.

'The first care must be to find the exact place of interment, that the stone may protect the bodies. Then let the stone be deep, massy, and hard; and do not let the difference of ten pounds, or more, defeat our purpose.

'I have enclosed ten pounds, and Mrs. Porter will pay you ten more, which I gave her for the same purpose. What more is wanted shall be sent; and I beg that all possible haste may be made, for I wish to have it done while I am yet alive. Let me know, dear sir, that you receive this.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'Dec. 2, 1784.'

TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD<sup>1</sup>

'DEAR MADAM,—I am very ill, and desire your prayers. I have sent Mr. Green the epitaph, and a power to call on you for ten pounds.

'I laid this summer a stone over Tetty, in the chapel of Bromley, in Kent. The inscription is in Latin, of which this is the English. [Here a translation.]

'That this is done, I thought it fit that you should know. What care will be taken of us, who can tell? May God pardon and bless us, for Jesus Christ's sake.—I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'Dec. 2, 1784.'

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<sup>1</sup> [This lady, whose name so frequently occurs in the course of this work, survived Dr. Johnson just thirteen months. She died at Lichfield, in her seventy-first year, January 13, 1786, and bequeathed the principal part of her fortune to the Rev. Mr. Pearson, of Lichfield.—M.]

My readers are now, at last, to behold Samuel Johnson preparing himself for that doom, from which the most exalted powers afford no exemption to man. Death had always been to him an object of terror; so that though by no means happy, he still clung to life with an eagerness at which many have wondered. At any time when he was ill, he was very much pleased to be told that he looked better. An ingenious member of the *Eumelian Club*<sup>1</sup> informs me, that upon one occasion, when he said to him that he saw health returning to his cheek, Johnson seized him by the hand and exclaimed, 'Sir, you are one of the kindest friends I ever had.'

His own state of his views of futurity will appear truly rational; and may, perhaps, impress the unthinking with seriousness.

'You know (says he),<sup>2</sup> I never thought confidence, with respect to futurity, any part of the character of a brave, a wise, or a good man. Bravery has no place where it can avail nothing; wisdom impresses strongly the consciousness of those faults, of which it is, perhaps, itself an aggravation; and goodness, always wishing to be better, and imputing every deficiency to criminal negligence, and every fault to voluntary corruption, never dares to suppose the condition of forgiveness fulfilled, nor what is wanting in the crime supplied by penitence.

'This is the state of the best; but what must be the condition of him whose heart will not suffer him to

<sup>1</sup> A club in London, founded by the learned and ingenious physician, Dr. Ash, in honour of whose name it was called *Eumelian*, from the Greek *Εὐμελίας*: though it was warmly contended, and even put to a vote, that it should have the more obvious appellation of *Fraxinean*, from the Latin.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Thrale's Collection, March 10, 1784. Vol. ii. p. 3.

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

His great fear of death, and the strange dark manner in which Sir John Hawkins imparts the uneasiness which he expressed on account of offences with which he charged himself, may give occasion to injurious suspicions, as if there had been something of more than ordinary criminality weighing upon his conscience. On that account, therefore, as well as from the regard to truth which he inculcated, I am to mention (with all possible respect and delicacy, however), that his conduct, after he came to London, and had associated with Savage and others, was not so strictly virtuous, in one respect, as when he was a younger man. It was well known that his amorous inclinations were uncommonly strong and impetuous. He owned to many of his friends, that he used to take women of the town to taverns, and hear them relate their history. In short, it must not be concealed, that, like many other good and pious men, among whom we may place the apostle Paul upon his own authority, Johnson was not free from propensities which were ever ‘warring against the law of his mind,’—and that in his combats with them, he was sometimes overcome.

Here let the profane and licentious pause; let them not thoughtlessly say that Johnson was an *hypocrite*, or that his *principles* were not firm, because his *practice* was not uniformly conformable to what he professed.

Let the question be considered independent of moral and religious associations; and no man will deny that thousands, in many instances, act against conviction. Is a prodigal, for example, an *hypocrite*, when he owns he is satisfied that his extravagance will bring him to ruin and misery? We are *sure* he *believes* it; but immediate inclination, strengthened by indulgence, prevails over that belief in influencing his conduct. Why then shall credit be refused to the *sincerity* of those who acknowledge their persuasions of moral and religious duty, yet sometimes fail of living as it requires? I heard Dr. Johnson once observe, 'There is something noble in publishing truth, though it condemns oneself.'<sup>1</sup> And one who said in his presence, 'he had no notion of people being in earnest in their good professions, whose practice was not suitable to them,' was thus reprimanded by him:—'Sir, are you so grossly ignorant of human nature as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles, without having good practice?'

But let no man encourage or soothe himself in 'presumptuous sin,' from knowing that Johnson was sometimes hurried into indulgences which he thought criminal. I have exhibited this circumstance as a shade in so great a character, both from my sacred love of truth, and to show that he was not so weakly scrupulous as he had been represented by those who

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*. On the same subject, in his letter to Mrs. Thrale, dated Nov. 29, 1783, he makes the following just observation: 'Life, to be worthy of a rational being, must be always in progression; we must always purpose to do more or better than in time past. The mind is enlarged and elevated by mere purposes, though they end as they began, by airy contemplation. We compare and judge, though we do not practise.'

imagine that the sins, of which a deep sense was upon his mind, were merely such little venial trifles as pouring milk into his tea on Good Friday. His understanding will be defended by my statement, if his consistency of conduct be in some degree impaired. But what wise man would, for momentary gratifications, deliberately subject himself to suffer such uneasiness as we find was experienced by Johnson in reviewing his conduct as compared with his notion of the ethics of the gospel? Let the following passages be kept in remembrance: 'O God, giver and preserver of all life, by whose power I was created, and by whose providence I am sustained, look down upon me with tenderness and mercy; grant that I may not have been created to be finally destroyed; that I may not be preserved to add wickedness to wickedness.'—'O Lord, let me not sink into total depravity; look down upon me, and rescue me at last from the captivity of sin.'—'Almighty and most merciful Father, who hast continued my life from year to year, grant that by longer life I may become less desirous of sinful pleasures, and more careful of eternal happiness.'—'Let not my years be multiplied to increase my guilt; but as my age advances, let me become more pure in my thoughts, more regular in my desires, and more obedient to thy laws.'—'Forgive, O merciful Lord, whatever I have done contrary to thy laws. Give me such a sense of my wickedness as may produce true contrition and effectual repentance; so that when I shall be called into another state, I may be received among the sinners to whom sorrow and reformation have obtained pardon, for Jesus Christ's sake.—Amen.'

Such was the distress of mind, such the penitence of Johnson, in his hours of privacy, and in his devout approaches to his Maker. His *sincerity*, therefore, must appear to every candid mind unquestionable.

It is of essential consequence to keep in view, that there was in this excellent man's conduct, no false principle of *commutation*, no *deliberate* indulgence in sin, in consideration of a counterbalance of duty. His offending and his repenting, were distinct and separate:<sup>1</sup> and when we consider his almost unexampled attention to truth, his inflexible integrity, his constant piety, who will dare to 'cast a stone at him'? Besides, let it never be forgotten, that he cannot be charged with any offence indicating badness of *heart*, anything dishonest, base, or malignant; but that on the contrary, he was charitable in an extraordinary degree: so that even in one of his own rigid judgments of himself (Easter Eve, 1781), while he says, 'I have corrected no external habits'; he is obliged to own, 'I hope that since my last communion I have advanced by pious reflections, in my submission to God, and my benevolence to man.'

I am conscious that this is the most difficult and dangerous part of my biographical work, and I cannot but be very anxious concerning it. I trust that I have got through it, preserving at once my regard to truth,—to my friend,—and to the interests of virtue and religion. Nor can I apprehend that more harm can ensue from the knowledge of the irregularities of

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson related with very earnest approbation, a story of a gentleman, who, in an impulse of passion, overcame the virtue of a young woman. When she said to him, 'I am afraid we have done wrong!' he answered, 'Yes, we have done wrong;—for I would not *debauch her mind*.'

Johnson, guarded as I have stated it, than from knowing that Addison and Parnell were intemperate in the use of wine; which he himself, in his Lives of those celebrated writers and pious men, has not forbore to record.

It is not my intention to give a very minute detail of the particulars of Johnson's remaining days, of whom it was now evident, that the crisis was fast approaching, when he must '*die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*' Yet it will be instructive, as well as gratifying to the curiosity of my readers, to record a few circumstances, on the authenticity of which they may perfectly rely, as I have been at the utmost pains to obtain an accurate account of his last illness, from the best authority.

Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Warren, and Dr. Butter, physicians, generously attended him, without accepting any fees, as did Mr. Cruikshank, surgeon; and all that could be done from professional skill and ability was tried, to prolong a life so truly valuable. He himself indeed, having, on account of his very bad constitution, been perpetually applying himself to medical inquiries, united his own efforts with those of the gentlemen who attended him; and imagining that the dropsical collection of water which oppressed him might be drawn off by making incisions in his body, he, with his usual resolute defiance of pain, cut deep, when he thought that his surgeon had done it too tenderly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This bold experiment, Sir John Hawkins has related in such a manner as to suggest a charge against Johnson of intentionally hastening his end; a charge so very inconsistent with his character in every respect, that it is injurious even to refute it, as Sir John has thought it necessary to do. It is evident, that what Johnson did in hopes of relief, indicated an extraordinary eagerness to retard his dissolution.

About eight or ten days before his death, when Dr. Brocklesby paid him his morning visit, he seemed very low and desponding, and said, 'I have been as a dying man all night.' He then emphatically broke out in the words of Shakespeare :

'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd ;  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow ;  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain ;  
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff,  
Which weighs upon the heart ?'

To which Dr. Brocklesby readily answered, from the same great poet :

' . . . therein the patient  
Must minister to himself.'

Johnson expressed himself much satisfied with the application.

On another day, after this, when talking on the subject of prayer, Dr. Brocklesby repeated from Juvenal,

'Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano,'

and so on to the end of the tenth satire ; but in running it quickly over, he happened in the line,

'Qui spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponat,'

to pronounce *supremum* for *extremum* ; at which Johnson's critical ear instantly took offence, and discoursing vehemently on the unmetrical effect of such a lapse, he showed himself as full as ever of the spirit of the grammarian.



Having no other relations,<sup>1</sup> it had been for some time Johnson's intention to make a liberal provision for his faithful servant, Mr. Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated truly as an humble friend. Having asked Dr. Brocklesby what would be a proper annuity to a favourite servant, and being answered that it must depend on the circumstances of the master; and that, in the case of a nobleman, fifty pounds a year was considered as an adequate reward for many years' faithful service;—'Then (said Johnson), shall I be *nobilissimus*, for I mean to leave Frank seventy pounds a year, and I desire you to tell him so.' It is strange, however, to think, that Johnson was not free from that general weakness of being averse to execute a will, so that he delayed it from time to time; and had it not been for Sir John Hawkins repeatedly urging it, I think it is probable

<sup>1</sup> [The author in a former page has shown the injustice of Sir John Hawkins's charge against Johnson, with respect to a person of the name of Heely, whom he has inaccurately represented as a relation of Johnson's. (See p. 203.) That Johnson was anxious to discover whether any of his relations were living, is evinced by the following letter, written not long before he made his will :

TO THE REV. DR. VYSE, IN LAMBETH

'SIR,—I am desirous to know whether Charles Scrimshaw of Woodcase (I think), in your father's neighbourhood, be now living; what is his condition, and where he may be found. If you can conveniently make an inquiry about him, and can do it without delay, it will be an act of great kindness to me, he being very nearly related to me. I beg [you] to pardon this trouble.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.

' Bolt Court, Fleet Street,  
' Nov. 29, 1784.'

In conformity to the wish expressed in the preceding letter, an inquiry was made, but no descendants of Charles Scrimshaw, or of his sisters, were discovered to be living. Dr. Vyse informs me, that Dr. Johnson told him, 'he was disappointed in the inquiries he had made after his relations.' There is therefore no ground whatsoever for supposing that he was unmindful of them, or neglected them.—M.]

that his kind resolution would not have been fulfilled. After making one, which, as Sir John Hawkins informs us, extended no further than the promised annuity, Johnson's final disposition of his property was established by a will and codicil, of which copies are subjoined.<sup>1</sup>

The consideration of numerous papers of which he

<sup>1</sup> 'In the name of God. Amen. I, Samuel Johnson, being in full possession of my faculties, but fearing this night may put an end to my life, do ordain this my last will and testament. I bequeath to God, a soul polluted by many sins, but I hope purified by Jesus Christ. I leave seven hundred and fifty pounds in the hands of Bennet Langton, Esq.; three hundred pounds in the hands of Mr. Barclay and Mr. Perkins, brewers: one hundred and fifty pounds in the hands of Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore; one thousand pounds, three per cent. annuities in the public funds; and one hundred pounds now lying by me in ready money: all these before-mentioned sums and property I leave, I say, to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. William Scott, of Doctors Commons, in trust, for the following uses:— That is to say, to pay to the representatives of the late William Innys, bookseller, in St. Paul's Churchyard, the sum of two hundred pounds; to Mrs. White, my female servant, one hundred pounds stock in the three per cent. annuities aforesaid. The rest of the aforesaid sums of money and property, together with my books, plate, and household furniture, I leave to the before-mentioned Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. William Scott, also in trust, to be applied, after paying my debts, to the use of Francis Barber, my man-servant, a negro, in such manner, as they shall judge most fit and available to his benefit. And I appoint the aforesaid Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. William Scott, sole executors of this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills and testaments whatever. In witness whereof, I herunto subscribe my name, and affix my seal, this eighth day of December 1784. SAM. JOHNSON (L.S.).

'Signed, sealed, published, declared, and delivered, by the said testator, as his last will and testament, in the presence of us, the word *two* being first inserted in the opposite page.

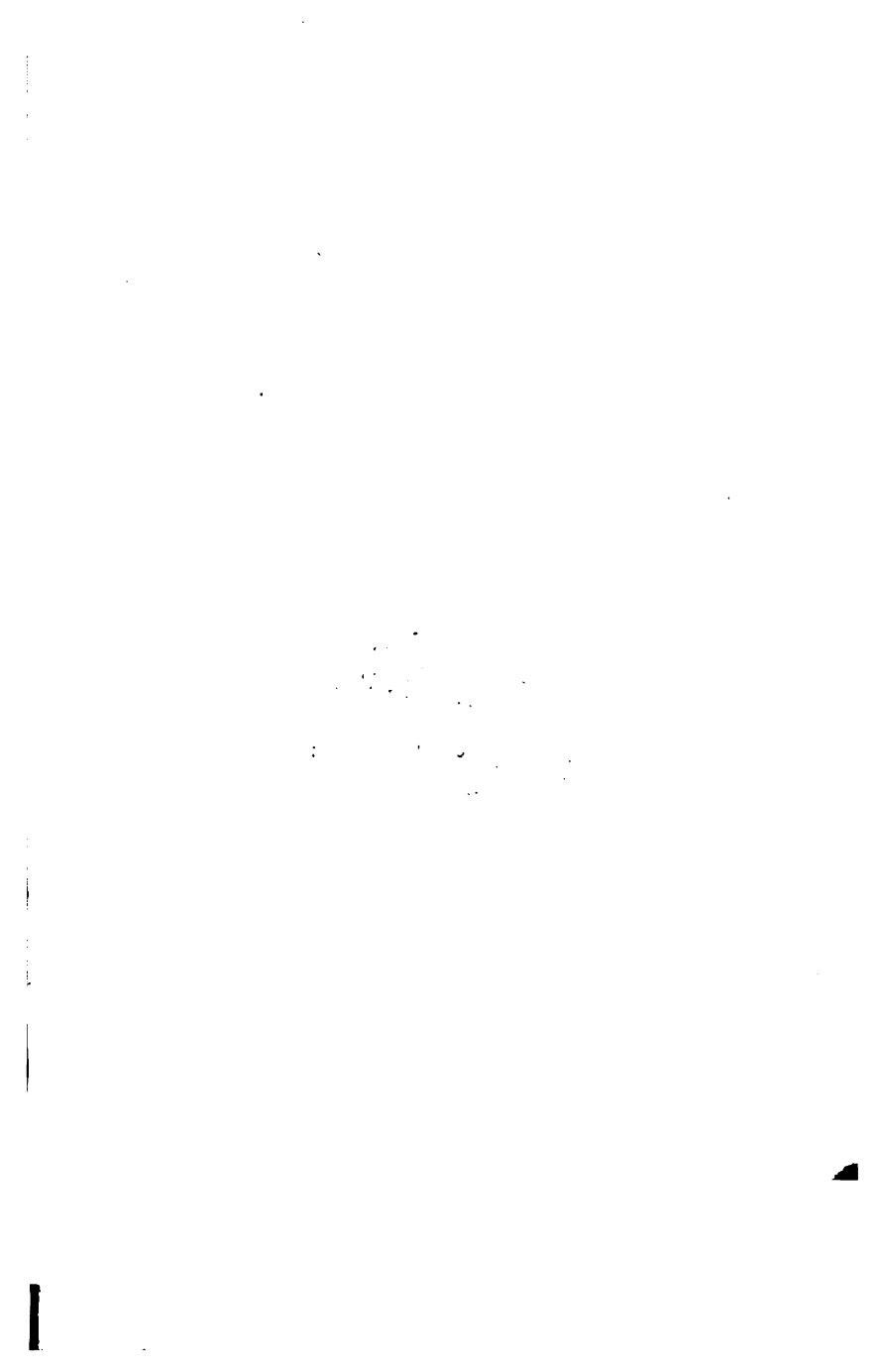
'GEORGE STRAHAN.  
'JOHN DESMOULINS.'

'By way of Codicil to my last will and testament, I, Samuel Johnson, give, devise, and bequeath, my messuage or tenement situate at Lichfield, in the county of Stafford, with the appurtenances in the tenure and occupation of Mrs. Bond, of Lichfield aforesaid, or of Mr. Hinchman, her under-tenant, to my executors in trust, to sell and dispose of the same; and the money arising from such sale I give and bequeath as follows, viz., to Thomas and Benjamin, the sons of Fisher Johnson, late of Leicester, and — Whiting, daughter of Thomas Johnson, late of Coventry, and the grand-daughter of the said Thomas Johnson, one full and equal fourth-part each; but in case there shall be more grand-daughters than one of the said Thomas Johnson, living at the time of

THE NEW  
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TILDEN FOUNDATION



*Dr. Brocklesby*



*Dr. E. ...*

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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS



*Frances Reynolds*





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was possessed, seems to have struck Johnson's mind with a sudden anxiety, and as they were in great confusion, it is much to be lamented that he had not intrusted some faithful and discreet person with the care and selection of them; instead of which, he, in a precipitate manner, burned large masses of them, with little regard, as I apprehend, to discrimination. Not

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my decease, I gave and bequeath the part or share of that one to and equally between such grand-daughters. I give and bequeath to the Rev. Mr. Rogers, of Berkeley, near Frome, in the county of Somerset, the sum of one hundred pounds, requesting him to apply the same towards the maintenance of Elizabeth Herne, a lunatic. I also give and bequeath to my god-children, the son and daughter of Mauritius Lowe, painter, each of them one hundred pounds of my stock in the three per cent. consolidated annuities, to be applied and disposed of by and at the direction of my executors, in the education or settlement in the world of them my said legatees. Also I give and bequeath to Sir John Hawkins, one of my executors, the *Annales Ecclesiastici* of Baronius, and Holinshed's and Stowe's *Chronicles*, and also an octavo Common Prayer-Book. To Bennet Langton, Esq., I give and bequeath my Polygot Bible. To Sir Joshua Reynolds, my great French Dictionary, by Martiniere, and my own copy of my folio English Dictionary of the last revision. To Dr. William Scott, one of my executors, the *Dictionnaire de Commerce*, and Lectius's edition of the Greek Poets. To Mr. Windham, *Poeta Græci Heroici* per Henricum Stephanum. To the Rev. Mr. Strahan, vicar of Islington, in Middlesex, Mill's Greek Testament, Beza's Greek Testament, by Stephens, all my Latin Bibles, and my Greek Bible, by Wechelius. To Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Butter, and Mr. Cruikshank, the surgeon who attended me, Mr. Holder, my apothecary, Gerard Hamilton, Esq., Mrs. Gardiner, of Snow Hill, Mrs. Frances Reynolds, Mr. Hoole, and the Reverend Mr. Hoole, his son, each a book at their election, to keep as a token of remembrance. I also give and bequeath to Mr. John Desmoullins, two hundred pounds consolidated three per cent. annuities; and to Mr. Sastres, the Italian master, the sum of five pounds, to be laid out in books of piety for his own use. And whereas the said Bennet Langton hath agreed in consideration of the sum of seven hundred and fifty pounds, mentioned in my will to be in his hands, to grant and secure an annuity of seventy pounds, payable during the life of me and my servant, Francis Barber, and the life of the survivor of us, to Mr. George Stubbs, in trust for us; my mind and will is, that in case of my decease before the said agreement shall be perfected, the said sum of seven hundred and fifty pounds, and the bond for securing the said sum, shall go to the said Francis Barber; and I hereby give and bequeath to him the same, in lieu of the bequest in his favour, contained in my said will. And I hereby empower my executors to deduct and retain all expenses that shall or may be incurred in the execution of my said will, or of this codicil thereto, out of such estate and effects as I shall die possessed of. All the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate and effects I give and bequeath to my said executors, in trust for the said Francis Barber, his

that I suppose we have thus been deprived of any compositions which he had ever intended for the public eye ; but from what escaped the flames, I judge that many curious circumstances relating both to himself and other literary characters, have perished.

Two very valuable articles, I am sure, we have lost, which were two quarto volumes, containing a full, fair, and most particular account of his own life, from his earliest recollection. I owed to him, that having accidentally seen them, I had read a great deal in

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executors, and administrators. Witness my hand and seal, this ninth day of December 1784. SAM. JOHNSON (L.S.).

'Signed, sealed, published, declared, and delivered, by the said Samuel Johnson, as and for a codicil to his last will and testament, in the presence of us, who, in his presence, and at his request, and also in the presence of each other, have hereto subscribed our names as witnesses.

' JOHN COPELY.  
' WILLIAM GIBSON.  
' HENRY COLE.'

Upon these testamentary deeds it is proper to make a few observations.

His express declaration with his dying breath as a Christian, as it had been often practised in such solemn writings, was of real consequence from this great man, for the conviction of a mind equally acute and strong, might well overbalance the doubts of others, who were his contemporaries. The expression *polluted*, may, to some, convey an impression of more than ordinary contamination ; but that is not warranted by its genuine meaning, as appears from the *Rambler*, No. 42. The same word is used in the will of Dr. Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln, who was piety itself.

His legacy of two hundred pounds to the representatives of Mr. Innys, bookseller, in St. Paul's Churchyard, proceeded from a very worthy motive. He told Sir John Hawkins, that his father having become a bankrupt, Mr. Innys had assisted him with money or credit to continue his business. 'This (said he) I consider as an obligation on me to be grateful to his descendants.'

The amount of his property proved to be considerably more than he had supposed it to be. Sir John Hawkins estimates the bequest to Francis Barber at a sum little short of fifteen hundred pounds, including an annuity of seventy pounds to be paid to him by Mr. Langton, in consideration of seven hundred and fifty pounds, which Johnson had lent to that gentleman. Sir John seems not a little angry at this bequest, and mutters 'a caveat against ostentatious bounty and favour to negroes.' But surely when a man has money entirely of his own acquisition, especially when he has no near relations, he may, without blame, dispose of it as he pleases, and with great propriety to a faithful

them; and, apologising for the liberty I had taken, asked him if I could help it.' He placidly answered, 'Why, sir, I do not think you could have helped it.' I said that I had, for once in my life, felt half an inclination to commit theft. It had come into my mind to carry off those two volumes, and never see him more. Upon my inquiring how this would have affected him, 'Sir (said he), I believe I should have gone mad.'<sup>1</sup>

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servant. Mr. Barber, by the recommendation of his master, retired to Lichfield, where he might pass the rest of his days in comfort.

It has been objected that Johnson has omitted many of his best friends, when leaving books to several as tokens of his last remembrance. The names of Dr. Adams, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Burney, Mr. Hector, Mr. Murphy, the author of this work, and others who were intimate with him, are not to be found in his will. This may be accounted for by considering, that as he was very near his dissolution at the time, he probably mentioned such as happened to occur to him; and that he may have recollected, that he had formerly shown others such proofs of his regard, that it was not necessary to crowd his will with their names. Mrs. Lucy Porter was much displeas'd that nothing was left to her: but besides what I have now stated, she should have considered, that she had left nothing to Johnson by her will, which was made during his lifetime, as appeared at her decease.

His enumerating several persons in one group, and leaving them 'each a book at their election,' might possibly have given occasion to a curious question as to the order of choice, had they not luckily fixed on different books. His library, though by no means handsome in its appearance, was sold by Mr. Christie, for two hundred and forty-seven pounds, nine shillings; many people being desirous to have a book which had belonged to Johnson. In many of them he had written little notes; sometimes tender memorials of his departed wife: as, 'This was dear Tetty's book'; sometimes occasional remarks of different sorts. Mrs. Lyons, of Clifford's Inn, has favoured me with the two following:

In *Holy Rules and Helps to Devotions*, by Brian Duppa, Lord Bishop of Winton, '*Preces quidam videtur diligenter tractasse: spero non inauditus.*'

In the *Rosicrucian infallible Axiomata*, by John Heydon, Gent., prefixed to which are some verses addressed to the author, signed Ambr. Waters, A.M., Coll. Ex. Oxon. '*These Latin verses were written to Hobbs by Bathurst, upon his Treatise on Human Nature, and have no relation to the book.—An odd fraud.*'

[Francis Barber, Dr. Johnson's principal legatee, died in the infirmary at Stafford, after undergoing a painful operation, Feb. 13, 1801.—M.]

<sup>1</sup> One of these volumes, Sir John Hawkins informs us, he put into his pocket; for which the excuse he states is, that he meant to preserve it from falling into the hands of a person whom he describes so as to

During his last illness, Johnson experienced the steady and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Mr. Hoole has drawn up a narrative of what passed in the visits which he paid him during that time, from the 10th of November to the 13th of December, the day of his death, inclusive, and has favoured me with a perusal of it, with permission to make extracts, which I have done. Nobody was more attentive to him than Mr. Langton,<sup>1</sup> to whom he tenderly said, *Te teneam moriens deficiente manu*. And I think it highly to the honour of Mr. Windham, that his important occupations as an active statesman did not prevent him from paying assiduous respect to the dying sage whom he revered. Mr. Langton informs me that 'one day he found Mr. Burke and four or five more friends sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, "I am afraid, sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you." "No, sir (said Johnson), it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state, indeed, when your company would not be a delight to me." Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly

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make it sufficiently clear who is meant; 'having strong reasons (said he) to suspect that this man might find and make an ill use of the book.' Why Sir John should suppose that the gentleman alluded to would act in this manner, he has not thought fit to explain. But what he did was not approved of by Johnson; who, upon being acquainted of it without delay by a friend, expressed great indignation, and warmly insisted on the book being delivered up; and, afterwards, in the supposition of his missing it, without knowing by whom it had been taken, he said, 'Sir, I should have gone out of the world distrusting half mankind.' Sir John next day wrote a letter to Johnson, assigning reasons for his conduct; upon which Johnson observed to Mr. Langton, 'Bishop Sanderson could not have dictated a better letter. I could almost say, *Melius est sic permittere quam non errasse*.' The agitation into which Johnson was thrown by this incident probably made him hastily burn those precious records, which must ever be regretted.

<sup>1</sup> [Mr. Langton, whose name so often occurs in these volumes, survived Johnson several years. He died at Southampton, Dec. 18, 1801.—M.]

affected, replied, 'My dear sir, you have always been too good to me.' Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men.

The following particulars of his conversation within a few days of his death, I give on the authority of Mr. John Nichols :<sup>1</sup>

'He said that the Parliamentary Debates were the only part of his writings which then gave him any compunction : but that at the time he wrote them, he had no conception he was imposing upon the world,

<sup>1</sup> On the same undoubted authority, I give a few articles which should have been inserted in chronological order ; but which, now that they are before me, I should be sorry to omit :

'In 1736, Dr. Johnson had a particular inclination to have been engaged as an assistant to the Reverend Mr. Budworth, then headmaster of the grammar-school, at Brewood, in Staffordshire, "an excellent person, who possessed every talent of a perfect instructor of youth, in a degree which (to use the words of one of the brightest ornaments of literature, the Reverend Dr. Hurd, Bishop of Worcester), has been rarely found in any of that profession since the days of Quintilian." Mr. Budworth, "who was less known in his lifetime, from that obscure situation to which the caprice of fortune oft condemns the most accomplished characters, than his highest merit deserved," had been bred under Mr. Blackwell, at Market Bosworth, where Johnson was sometime an usher, which might naturally lead to the application. Mr. Budworth was certainly no stranger to the learning or abilities of Johnson, as he more than once lamented his having been under the necessity of declining the engagement, from an apprehension that the paralytic affection, under which our great philologist laboured through life, might become the object of imitation or of ridicule, among his pupils.' Captain Budworth, his grandson, has confirmed to me this anecdote.

'Among the early associates of Johnson, at St. John's Gate, was Samuel Boyse, well known by his ingenious productions ; and not less noted for his imprudence. It was not unusual for Boyse to be a customer to the pawnbroker. On one of these occasions, Dr. Johnson collected a sum of money to redeem his friend's clothes, which, in two days after, were pawned again. "The sum (said Johnson) was collected by sixpences, at a time when, to me, sixpence was a serious consideration."

'Speaking one day of a person for whom he had a real friendship, but in whom vanity was somewhat too predominant, he observed that "Kelly was so fond of displaying on his sideboard the plate which he possessed, that he added to it his spurs. For my part (said he), I never was master of a pair of spurs but once ; and they are now at the

though they were frequently written from very slender materials, and often from none at all,—the mere coinage of his own imagination. He never wrote any part of his works with equal velocity. Three columns of the Magazine in an hour was no uncommon effort, which was faster than most persons could have transcribed that quantity.

‘Of his friend Cave he always spoke with great affection. “Yet (said he), Cave (who never looked out of his window, but with a view to the *Gentleman’s Magazine*) was a penurious paymaster; he would contract for lines by the hundred, and expect the long hundred; but he was a good man, and always delighted to have his friends at his table.”

‘When talking of a regular edition of his own works, he said, that he had power [from the booksellers] to print such an edition, if his health admitted it; but had no power to assign over any edition, unless he could add notes, and so alter them as to make them new works; which his state of health forbade him to think of. “I may possibly live (said he), or rather

bottom of the ocean. By the carelessness of Boswell’s servant, they were dropped from the end of the boat, on our return from the Isle of Skye.”

The late Reverend Mr. Samuel Badcock, having been introduced to Dr. Johnson, by Mr. Nichols, some years before his death, thus expressed himself in a letter to that gentleman:

‘How much I am obliged to you for the favour you did me in introducing me to Dr. Johnson! *Tantum vidi Virgilium*. But to have seen him, and to have received a testimony of respect from him, was enough. I recollect all the conversation, and shall never forget one of his expressions. Speaking of Dr. P — (whose writings, I saw, he estimated at a low rate), he said, “You have proved him as deficient in *probity* as he is in *learning*.” I called him an “*Index-scholar*”; but he was not willing to allow him a claim even to that merit. He said “that he borrowed from those who had been borrowers themselves, and did not know that the mistakes he adopted had been answered by others.” I often think of our short, but precious, visit to this great man. I shall consider it as a kind of an *ere* in my life.’



breathe, three days, or perhaps three weeks ; but find myself daily and gradually weaker."

'He said at another time, three or four days only before his death, speaking of the little fear he had of undergoing a chirurgical operation, "I would give one of these legs for a year more of life, I mean of comfortable life, not such as that which I now suffer";—and lamented much his inability to read during his hours of restlessness. "I used formerly (he added), when sleepless in bed, *to read like a Turk.*"

'Whilst confined by his last illness, it was his regular practice to have the church service read to him, by some attentive and friendly divine. The Rev. Mr. Hoole performed this kind office in my presence for the last time, when, by his own desire, no more than the litany was read ; in which his responses were in the deep and sonorous voice which Mr. Boswell has occasionally noticed, and with the most profound devotion that can be imagined. His hearing not being quite perfect, he more than once interrupted Mr. Hoole with, "Louder, my dear sir, louder, I entreat you, or you pray in vain!"—and, when the service was ended, he, with great earnestness, turned round to an excellent lady who was present, saying, "I thank you, madam, very heartily, for your kindness in joining me in this solemn exercise. Live well, I conjure you ; and you will not feel the compunction at the last, which I now feel." So truly humble were the thoughts which this great and good man entertained of his own approaches to religious perfection.

'He was earnestly invited to publish a volume of *Devotional Exercises* ; but this (though he listened to

the proposal with much complacency, and a large sum of money was offered for it) he declined, from motives of the sincerest modesty.

‘He seriously entertained the thought of translating *Thuanus*. He often talked to me on the subject; and once, in particular, when I was rather wishing that he would favour the world, and gratify his Sovereign, by a Life of Spenser (which he said that he would readily have done, had he been able to obtain any new materials for the purpose), he added, “I have been thinking again, sir, of *Thuanus*: it would not be the laborious task which you have supposed it. I should have no trouble but that of dictation, which would be performed as speedily as an amanuensis could write.”’<sup>1</sup>

It is to the mutual credit of Johnson and divines of different communions, that although he was a steady Church of England man, there was, nevertheless, much agreeable intercourse between him and them. Let me particularly name the late Mr. La Trobe, and Mr. Hutton, of the Moravian profession. His intimacy with the English Benedictines, at Paris, has been mentioned; and as an additional proof of the charity in which he lived with good men of the Romish Church, I am happy in this opportunity of recording his friendship with the Reverend Thomas Hussey, D.D., his Catholic Majesty’s Chaplain of Embassy at the Court of London, that very respectable man, eminent not only for his powerful eloquence as a preacher, but for his various abilities and acquisitions. Nay, though Johnson loved a Presbyterian the least

<sup>1</sup> [It is much to be regretted that the great project was not carried out. *Thuanus* is a delightful author.—A. B.]

of all, this did not prevent his having a long and uninterrupted social connection with the Reverend Dr. James Fordyce, who, since his death, hath gratefully celebrated him in a warm strain of devotional composition.

Amidst the melancholy clouds which hung over the dying Johnson, his characteristical manner showed itself on different occasions.

When Dr. Warren, in the usual style, hoped that he was better; his answer was, 'No, sir; you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance towards death.'

A man whom he had never seen before was employed one night to sit up with him. Being asked next morning how he liked his attendant, his answer was, 'Not at all, sir; the fellow's an idiot; he is as awkward as a turnspit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse.'

Mr. Windham having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, 'That will do,—all that a pillow can do.'

He repeated with great spirit a poem, consisting of several stanzas, in four lines, in alternate rhyme, which he said he had composed some years before,<sup>1</sup> on occasion of a rich, extravagant young gentleman's coming of age; saying he had never repeated it but once since he composed it, and had given but one copy of it. That copy was given to Mrs. Thrale, now

<sup>1</sup> [In 1780. See his letter to Mrs. Thrale, dated August 8th, 1780: 'You have heard in the papers how —— is come to age; I have enclosed a short song of congratulation, which you must not show to anybody. It is odd that it should come into anybody's head. I hope you will read it with candour; it is, I believe, one of the author's first essays in that way of writing, and a beginner is always to be treated with tenderness.'—M.]

Piozzi, who has published it in a book which she entitles *British Synonymy*, but which is truly a collection of entertaining remarks and stories, no matter whether accurate or not. Being a piece of exquisite satire, conveyed in a strain of pointed vivacity and humour, and in a manner of which no other instance is to be found in Johnson's writings, I shall here insert it :

\*Long expected one-and-twenty,  
Ling'ring year, at length is flown ;  
Pride and pleasure, pomp and plenty,  
Great ———, are now your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,  
Free to mortgage or to sell,  
Wild as wind, and light as feather,  
Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

Call the Betseys, Kates, and Jennies,<sup>1</sup>  
All the names that banish care ;  
Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,  
Show the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly  
Joy to see their quarry fly ;  
There the gamester, light and jolly,  
There the lender, grave and aly.

Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,  
Let it wander as it will ;  
Call the jockey, call the pander,  
Bid them come and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,  
Pockets full, and spirits high—  
What are acres ? what are houses ?  
Only dirt, or wet or dry.

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<sup>1</sup> [Johnson here forestalls a famous rhyme of D. G. Rossetti's.—A. B.]

Should the guardian, friend, or mother  
 Tell the woes of wilful waste ;  
 Scorn their counsel, scorn their pother,—  
 You can hang or drown at last.’

As he opened a note which his servant brought to him, he said, ‘ An odd thought strikes me :—we shall receive no letters in the grave.’

He requested three things of Sir Joshua Reynolds :—To forgive him thirty pounds which he had borrowed of him ; to read the Bible ; and never to use his pencil on a Sunday. Sir Joshua readily acquiesced.

Indeed he showed the greatest anxiety for the religious improvement of his friends, to whom he discoursed of its infinite consequence. He begged of Mr. Hoole to think of what he had said, and to commit it to writing ; and, upon being afterwards assured that this was done, pressed his hands, and in an earnest tone thanked him. Dr. Brocklesby having attended him with the utmost assiduity and kindness as his physician and friend, he was peculiarly desirous that this gentleman should not entertain any loose speculative notions, but be confirmed in the truths of Christianity, and insisted on his writing down in his presence, as nearly as he could collect it, the import of what passed on the subject ; and Dr. Brocklesby having complied with the request, he made him sign the paper, and urged him to keep it in his own custody as long as he lived.

Johnson, with that native fortitude, which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. ‘ Give me (said he) a direct answer.’ The

Doctor having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. 'Then (said Johnson), I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded.' In this resolution he persevered, and, at the same time, used only the weakest kinds of sustenance. Being pressed by Mr. Windham to take somewhat more generous nourishment, lest too low a diet should have the very effect which he dreaded, by debilitating his mind, he said, 'I will take anything but inebriating sustenance.'

The Reverend Mr. Strahan, who was the son of his friend, and had been always one of his great favourites, had, during his last illness, the satisfaction of contributing to soothe and comfort him. That gentleman's house at Islington, of which he is vicar, afforded Johnson, occasionally and easily, an agreeable change of place and fresh air; and he attended also upon him in town in the discharge of the sacred offices of his profession.

Mr. Strahan has given me the agreeable assurance, that, after being in much agitation, Johnson became quite composed, and continued so till his death.

Dr. Brocklesby, who will not be suspected of fanaticism, obliged me with the following accounts:

'For some time before his death, all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and *propitiation* of Jesus Christ.

'He talked often to me about the necessity of faith

in the *sacrifice* of Jesus, as necessary beyond all good works whatever, for the salvation of mankind.

‘He pressed me to study Dr. Clarke, and to read his *Sermons*. I asked him why he pressed Dr. Clarke, an Arian.<sup>1</sup> “Because (said he) he is fullest on the *propitiatory sacrifice*.”’

Johnson having thus in his mind the true Christian scheme, at once rational and consolatory, uniting justice and mercy in the Divinity, with the improvement of human nature, previous to his receiving the Holy Sacrament in his apartment, composed and fervently uttered this prayer :<sup>2</sup>

‘Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes, it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time, the death of thy Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits, and thy mercy ; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance ; make this commemoration available to the confirmation of my faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity ; and make the death of thy Son Jesus Christ effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my offences. Bless my friends ; have mercy upon all men. Support me, by thy Holy Spirit, in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death ; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.’

<sup>1</sup> The change of his sentiments with regard to Dr. Clarke is thus mentioned to me in a letter from the late Dr. Adams, Master of Pembroke College, Oxford :—‘The Doctor’s prejudices were the strongest, and certainly in another sense the weakest, that ever possessed a sensible man. You know his extreme zeal for orthodoxy. But did you ever hear what he told me himself? That he had made it a rule not to admit Dr. Clarke’s name in his *Dictionary*. This, however, wore off. At some distance of time he advised with me what books he should read in defence of the Christian religion. I recommended Clarke’s *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion* as the best of the kind ; and I find in what is called his *Prayers and Meditations*, that he was frequently employed in the latter part of his time in reading Clarke’s *Sermons*.’

<sup>2</sup> The Reverend Mr. Strahan took care to have it preserved, and has inserted it in *Prayers and Meditations*.

Having, as has been already mentioned, made his will on the 8th and 9th of December, and settled all his worldly affairs, he languished till Monday, the 13th of that month, when he expired, about seven o'clock in the evening, with so little apparent pain that his attendants hardly perceived when his dissolution took place.

Of his last moments, my brother, Thomas David, has furnished me with the following particulars :

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

'On Monday, the 13th of December, the day on which he died, a Miss Morris, daughter to a particular friend of his, called, and said to Francis, that she begged to be permitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing. Francis went into his room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned himself in the bed, and said, "God bless you, my dear!" These were the last words he spoke. His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when Mr. Barber and Mrs. Desmoulins, who were sitting in the room, observing that the noise he made in breathing had ceased, went to the bed, and found he was dead.'

About two days after his death the following very



agreeable account was communicated to Mr. Malone, in a letter by the Honourable John Byng, to whom I am much obliged for granting me permission to introduce it in my work :

'DEAR SIR,—Since I saw you I have had a long conversation with Cawston,<sup>1</sup> who sat up with Dr. Johnson, from nine o'clock on Sunday evening, till ten o'clock on Monday morning. And, from what I can gather from him, it should seem that Dr. Johnson was perfectly composed, steady in hope, and resigned to death. At the interval of each hour, they assisted him to sit up in his bed, and move his legs, which were in much pain; when he regularly addressed himself to fervent prayer; and though, sometimes, his voice failed him, his sense never did, during that time. The only sustenance he received was cider and water. He said his mind was prepared, and the time to his dissolution seemed long. At six in the morning, he inquired the hour, and, on being informed, said that all went on regularly, and he felt he had but a few hours to live.

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

'This account, which is so much more agreeable than, and somewhat different from, yours, has given us the satisfaction of thinking that that great man died as he lived, full of resignation, strengthened in faith, and joyful in hope.'

A few days before his death, he had asked Sir John Hawkins, as one of his executors, where he should be buried; and on being answered, 'Doubtless in Westminster Abbey,' seemed to feel a satisfaction very natural to a poet; and indeed in my opinion very

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<sup>1</sup> Servant to the Right Honourable William Windham.

natural to every man of any imagination, who has no family sepulchre in which he can be laid with his fathers. Accordingly, upon Monday, December 20, his remains were deposited in that noble and renowned edifice: and over his grave was placed a large blue flagstone with this inscription:

'SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.  
Obiit XIII die Decembris  
Anno Domini  
M. DCCLXXXIV.  
*Ætatis sue LXXV.'*

His funeral was attended by a respectable number of his friends, particularly such of the members of the Literary Club as were then in town; and was also honoured with the presence of several of the Reverend Chapter of Westminster. Mr. Burke, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr. Windham, Mr. Langton, Sir Charles Bunbury, and Mr. Coleman, bore his pall. His schoolfellow, Dr. Taylor, performed the mournful office of reading the burial service.

I trust I shall not be accused of affectation, when I declare that I find myself unable to express all that I felt upon the loss of such a 'Guide, Philosopher, and Friend.'<sup>1</sup> I shall, therefore, not say one

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of Johnson I may adopt the words of Sir John Harrington, concerning his venerable tutor and diocesan, Dr. John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells; 'who hath given me some helps, more hopes, all encouragements in my best studies: to whom I never came but I grew more religious: from whom I never went, but I parted better instructed. Of him therefore, my acquaintance, my friend, my instructor, if I speak much, it were not to be marvelled; if I speak frankly, it is not to be blamed; and though I speak partially, it were to be pardoned.'—*Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 136. There is one circumstance in Sir John's character of Bishop Still, which is peculiarly applicable to Johnson; 'He became so famous a disputer, that the learnedest were even afraid to dispute with him: and he finding his own strength, could not stick to warn them in their arguments to take

word of my own, but adopt those of an eminent friend,<sup>1</sup> which he uttered with an abrupt felicity, superior to all studied compositions:—‘He has made a chasm, which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up.—Johnson is dead.—Let us go to the next best:—there is nobody; no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson.’

As Johnson had abundant homage paid to him during his life,<sup>2</sup> so no writer in this nation ever had

heed to their answers, like a perfect fencer that will tell beforehand in which button he will give the venue, or like a cunning chess-player that will appoint beforehand with which pawn and in what place he will give the mate.—*Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> [The late Right Hon. William Gerard Hamilton, who had been intimately acquainted with Dr. Johnson near thirty years. He died in London, July 16, 1796, in his sixty-ninth or seventieth year.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> Beside the Dedications to him by Dr. Goldsmith, the Reverend Dr. Franklin, and the Reverend Mr. Wilson, which I have mentioned according to their dates, there was one by a lady, of a versification of *Ainogait and Ajut*, and one by the ingenious Mr. Walker, of his *Rhetorical Grammar*. I have introduced into this work several compliments paid to him in the writings of his contemporaries; but the number of them is so great, that we may fairly say that there was almost a general tribute.

Let me not be forgetful of the honour done to him by Colonel Myddleton, of Gwainynog, near Denbigh: who, on the banks of a rivulet in his park, where Johnson delighted to stand and repeat verses, erected an urn with the following inscription:

‘This spot was often dignified by the presence of  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

Whose moral writings, exactly conformable to the precepts of  
Christianity,

Gave ardour to Virtue and confidence to Truth.’

As no inconsiderable circumstance of his fame, we must reckon the extraordinary zeal of the artists to extend and perpetuate his image. I can enumerate a bust by Mr. Nollekens, and the many casts which are made from it; several pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, from one of which, in the possession of the Duke of Dorset, Mr. Humphry executed a beautiful miniature in enamel; one by Mrs. Frances Reynolds, Sir Joshua’s sister: one by Mr. Zoffanij: and one by Mr. Opie; and the following engravings of his portrait: 1. One by Cooke, from Sir Joshua, for the Proprietors’ edition of his folio Dictionary.—2. One from ditto, by ditto, for their quarto edition.—3. One from Opie, by Heath, for Harrison’s edition of his Dictionary.—4. One from

such an accumulation of literary honours after his death. A sermon upon that event was preached in St. Mary's Church, Oxford, before the University, by the Reverend Mr. Agutter, of Magdalen College. The Lives, the Memoirs, the Essays, both in prose and verse, which have been published concerning him, would make many volumes. The numerous attacks, too, upon him, I consider as part of his consequence, upon the principle which he himself so well knew and asserted. Many who trembled at his presence, were forward in assault, when they no longer apprehended danger. When one of his little pragmatistical foes was

Nollekens' bust of him, by Bartolozzi, for Fielding's quarto edition of his Dictionary.—5. One small, from Harding, by Trotter, for his *Beauties*.—6. One small, from Sir Joshua, by Trotter, for his *Lives of the Poets*.—7. One small, from Sir Joshua, by Hall, for the *Rambler*.—8. One small, from an original drawing, in the possession of Mr. John Simco, etched by Trotter, for another edition of his *Lives of the Poets*.—9. One small, no painter's name, etched by Taylor, for his *Johnsoniana*.—10. One folio whole-length, with his oak-stick, as described in Boswell's *Tour*, drawn and etched by Trotter.—11. One large mezzotinto, from Sir Joshua, by Doughty.—12. One large Roman head, from Sir Joshua, by Marchi.—13. One octavo, holding a book to his eye, from Sir Joshua, by Hall, for his works.—14. One small, from a drawing from the life, and engraved by Trotter, for his Life published by Kearsley.—15. One large, from Opie, by Mr. Townley (brother of Mr. Townley, of the Commons), an ingenious artist, who resided some time in Berlin, and has the honour of being engraver to his Majesty the King of Prussia. This is one of the finest mezzotintos that ever was executed; and what renders it of extraordinary value, the plate was destroyed after four or five impressions only were taken off. One of them is in the possession of Sir William Scott. Mr. Townley has lately been prevailed with to execute and publish another of the same, that it may be more generally circulated among the admirers of Dr. Johnson.—16. One large, from Sir Joshua's first picture of him, by Heath, for this work, in quarto.—17. One octavo, by Baker, for the octavo edition.—18. And one for Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, in which Johnson's countenance is analysed upon the principles of that fanciful writer. There are also several seals with his head cut on them, particularly a very fine one by that eminent artist, Edward Burch, Esq., R.A., in the possession of the younger Dr. Charles Burney.

Let me add, as a proof of the popularity of his character, that there are copper pieces struck at Birmingham, with his head impressed on them, which pass current as half-pence there, and in the neighbouring parts of the country.

invidiously snarling at his fame, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's table, Dr. Parr exclaimed with his usual animation, 'Ay, now that the old lion is dead, every ass thinks he may kick at him.'

A monument for him, in Westminster Abbey, was resolved upon soon after his death, and was supported by a most respectable contribution; but the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's having come to a resolution of admitting monuments there, upon a liberal and magnificent plan, that cathedral was afterwards fixed on as the place in which a cenotaph should be erected to his memory: and in the cathedral of his native city of Lichfield a smaller one is to be erected.<sup>1</sup> To compose his epitaph could not but excite the warmest competition of genius.<sup>2</sup> If *laudari a laudato viro* be praise, which is highly estimable, I should not forgive myself were I to omit the following sepulchral verses on the

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<sup>1</sup> [This monument has been since erected. It consists of a medallion, with a tablet beneath, on which is this inscription:

'The friends of SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.  
A native of Lichfield,  
Erected this Monument,  
As a tribute of respect  
To the Memory of a man of extensive learning,  
A distinguished moral writer, and a sincere Christian.  
He died Dec. 13, 1784, aged 75.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> The Reverend Dr. Parr, on being requested to undertake it, thus expressed himself in a letter to William Seward, Esq.:

I leave this mighty task to some hardier and some abler writer. The variety and splendour of Johnson's attainments, the peculiarities of his character, his private virtues, and his literary publications, fill me with confusion and dismay, when I reflect upon the confined and difficult species of composition, in which alone they can be expressed, with propriety, upon his monument.'

But I understand that this great scholar, and warm admirer of Johnson has yielded to repeated solicitations, and executed the very difficult undertaking.

[Dr. Johnson's monument, consisting of a colossal figure leaning against a column (but not very strongly resembling him), has, since the death of our author, been placed in St. Paul's Cathedral, having been

author of the *English Dictionary*, written by the Right Honourable Henry Flood :<sup>1</sup>

'No need of Latin or of Greek to grace  
Our Johnson's memory, or inscribe his grave ;  
His native language claims this mournful space,  
To pay the immortality he gave.'

The character of Samuel Johnson has, I trust, been so developed in the course of this work, that they who have honoured it with a perusal may be considered

first opened to public view, Feb. 23, 1796. The Epitaph was written by the Rev. Dr. Parr, and is as follows :

A      **P**      Ω

SAMVELI · IOHNSON  
GRAMMATICO · ET · CRITICO  
SCRIPTORVM · ANGLICORVM · LITTERATE · PERITO  
POETAE · LVMINIBVS · SENTENTIARVM  
ET · PONDERIBVS · VERBORVM · ADMIRABILI  
MAGISTRO · VIRTVTIS · GRAVISSIMO  
HOMINI · OPTIMO · ET · SINGVLARIS · EXEMPLI  
QVI · VIXIT · ANN · LXXV · MENS · II · DIEB · XIII  
DECESSIT · IDIB · DECEMBR · ANN · CHRIST · CI<sup>o</sup> · D<sup>o</sup>CC · LXXXIII  
SEPVLT · IN · AED · SANCT · PETR · WESTMONASTERIENS.  
XIII · KAL · IANVAR · ANN · CHRIST · CI<sup>o</sup> · D<sup>o</sup>CC · LXXXV  
AMICI · ET · SODALES · LITTERARII  
PECVNIA · CONLATA  
H · M · FACIVND · CVRAVER.

On a scroll in his hand are the following words :

ENMAKAPEZZIIONQNANYEAIOSIEHAMOIBH

On one side of the monument :

FACIEBAT IOHANNES BACON, SCVLPTOR, ANN · CHRIST · M.DCC.LXXXV.

The subscription for this monument, which cost eleven hundred guineas, was begun by the Literary Club, and completed by the aid of Dr. Johnson's other friends and admirers.—[M.]

<sup>1</sup> To prevent any misconception on this subject, Mr. Malone, by whom these lines were obligingly communicated, requests me to add the following remark :

'In justice to the late Mr. Flood, now himself wanting, and highly meriting, an epitaph from his country, to which his transcendent talents did the highest honour, as well as the most important service, it should be observed that these lines were by no means intended as a regular monumental inscription for Dr. Johnson. Had he undertaken

as well acquainted with him. As, however, it may be expected that I should collect into one view the capital and distinguishing features of this extraordinary man, I shall endeavour to acquit myself of that part of my biographical undertaking,<sup>1</sup> however difficult it may be to do that which many of my readers will do better for themselves.

His figure was large and well formed, and his countenance of the cast of an ancient statue; yet his appearance was rendered strange and somewhat uncouth by convulsive cramps, by the scars of that distemper which it was once imagined the royal touch could cure, and by a slovenly mode of dress. He had the use only of one eye; yet so much does mind govern and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his visual perceptions, as far as they extended, were uncommonly quick and accurate. So morbid was his temperament that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he walked, it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters: when he rode, he had no command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon. That with his constitution and habits of life he should have lived

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to write an appropriate and discriminative epitaph for that excellent and extraordinary man, those who knew Mr. Flood's vigour of mind will have no doubt that he would have produced one worthy of his illustrious subject. But the fact was merely this: In Dec. 1789, after a large subscription had been made for Dr. Johnson's monument, to which Mr. Flood liberally contributed, Mr. Malone happened to call on him at his house in Berners Street, and the conversation turning on the proposed monument, Mr. Malone maintained that the epitaph, by whomsoever it should be written, ought to be in Latin. Mr. Flood thought differently. The next morning, in the postscript to a note on another subject, he mentioned that he continued of the same opinion as on the preceding day, and subjoined the lines above given.'

<sup>1</sup> As I do not see any reason to give a different character of my illustrious friend now, from what I formerly gave, the greatest part of the sketch of him in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* is here adopted.

seventy-five years, is a proof that an inherent *visida vis* is a powerful preservative of the human frame.

Man is, in general, made up of contradictory qualities; and these will ever show themselves in strange succession, where a consistency in appearance at least, if not reality, has not been attained by long habits of philosophical discipline. In proportion to the native vigour of the mind, the contradictory qualities will be the more prominent, and more difficult to be adjusted; and, therefore, we are not to wonder that Johnson exhibited an eminent example of this remark which I have made upon human nature. At different times he seemed a different man, in some respects; not, however, in any great or essential article, upon which he had fully employed his mind, and settled certain principles of duty, but only in his manners, and in the display of argument and fancy in his talk. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvellous and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He was a sincere and zealous Christian, of high Church of England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned; and had, perhaps, at an early period, narrowed his mind somewhat too much, both as to religion and politics. His being impressed with the danger of extreme latitude in either, though he was of a very independent spirit, occasioned his appearing somewhat unfavourable to the prevalence of that noble freedom of sentiment which is the best possession of man. Nor can it be denied that he had many prejudices; which, however, frequently suggested many of his pointed sayings, that



rather show a playfulness of fancy than any settled malignity. He was steady and inflexible in maintaining the obligations of religion and morality; both from a regard for the order of society, and from a veneration for the Great Source of all order; correct, nay stern in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of the most humane and benevolent heart,<sup>1</sup> which showed itself not only in a most liberal charity, as far as his circumstances would allow, but in a thousand instances of active benevolence. He was afflicted with a bodily disease, which made him often restless and fretful; and with a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking: we therefore ought not to wonder at his sallies of impatience and passion at any time; especially when provoked by obtrusive ignorance or presuming petulance; and allowance must be made for his uttering hasty and satirical sallies even against his best friends. And surely when it is considered that, 'amidst sickness and sorrow,' he exerted his faculties in so many works for the benefit of mankind, and particularly that he achieved the great and admirable Dictionary of our language, we must be astonished at his resolution. The solemn text, 'Of him to whom much is given, much will be required,' seems to have been ever present to his mind, in a rigorous sense, and to have made him

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<sup>1</sup> In the *Olla Podrida*, a collection of essays published at Oxford, there is an admirable paper upon the character of Johnson, written by the Reverend Dr. Horne, the last excellent Bishop of Norwich. The following passage is eminently happy: 'To reject wisdom, because the person of him who communicates it is uncouth, and his manners are inelegant;—what is it, but to throw away a pine-apple, and assign for a reason the roughness of its coat?'

dissatisfied with his labours and acts of goodness, however comparatively great; so that the unavoidable consciousness of his superiority was, in that respect, a cause of disquiet. He suffered so much from this, and from the gloom which perpetually haunted him, and made solitude frightful, that it may be said of him, 'If in this life only he had hope, he was of all men most miserable.' He loved praise when it was brought to him; but was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. As he was general and unconfined in his studies, he cannot be considered as master of any one particular science; but he had accumulated a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which was so arranged in his mind, as to be ever in readiness to be brought forth. But his superiority over other learned men consisted chiefly in what may be called the art of thinking, the art of using his mind; a certain continual power of seizing the useful substance of all that he knew, and exhibiting it in a clear and forcible manner; so that knowledge, which we often see to be no better than lumber in men of dull understanding, was, in him, true, evident, and actual wisdom. His moral precepts are practical; for they are drawn from an intimate acquaintance with human nature. His maxims carry conviction; for they are founded on the basis of common sense, and a very attentive and minute survey of real life. His mind was so full of imagery, that he might have been perpetually a poet: yet it is remarkable, that however rich his prose is in this respect, his poetical pieces, in general, have not much of that splendour, but are rather distinguished by strong sentiment, and acute observation, conveyed in harmonious and energetic

verse, particularly in heroic couplets. Though usually grave, and even awful in his deportment, he possessed uncommon and peculiar powers of wit and humour; he frequently indulged himself in colloquial pleasantry; and the heartiest merriment was often enjoyed in his company; with this great advantage, that it was entirely free from any poisonous tincture of vice or impiety—it was salutary to those who shared in it. He had accustomed himself to such accuracy in his common conversation,<sup>1</sup> that he at all times expressed his thoughts with great force, and an elegant choice of language, the effect of which was aided by his having a loud voice, and a slow deliberate utterance. In him were united a most logical head with a most

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<sup>1</sup> Though a perfect resemblance of Johnson is not to be found in any age, parts of his character are admirably expressed by Clarendon, in drawing that of Lord Falkland, whom the noble and masterly historian describes at his seat near Oxford: 'Such an immenseness of wit, such a solidity of judgment, so infinite a fancy bound in by a most logical ratiocination. His acquaintance was cultivated by the most polite and accurate men, so that his house was an university in less volume, whither they came, not so much for repose as study, and to examine and refine those grosser propositions which laziness and consent made current in conversation.'

Bayle's account of Menage may also be quoted as exceedingly applicable to the great subject of this work: 'His illustrious friends erected a very glorious monument to him in the collection entitled *Menagiana*. Those who judge of things aright, will confess that this collection is very proper to show the extent of genius and learning which was the character of Menage. And I may be bold to say, that *the excellent works he published will not distinguish him from other learned men so advantageously as this*. To publish books of great learning, to make Greek and Latin verses exceedingly well turned, is not a common talent, I own; neither is it extremely rare. It is incomparably more difficult to find men who can furnish discourse about an infinite number of things, and who can diversify them an hundred ways. How many authors are there, who are admired for their works, on account of the vast learning that is displayed in them, who are not able to sustain a conversation. Those who know Menage only by his books, might think he resembled those learned men; but if you show the *Menagiana*, you distinguish him from them, and make him known by a talent which is given to very few learned men. There it appears that he was a man who spoke off-hand a thousand good things. His memory extended to what was ancient and modern; to the court and to the city; to the dead and to the living languages; to things serious and things jocose; in a word,

fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing : for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. Exulting in his intellectual strength and dexterity, he could, when he pleased, be the greatest sophist that ever contended in the lists of declamation ; and from a spirit of contradiction and a delight in showing his powers, he would often maintain the wrong side with equal warmth and ingenuity ; so that, when there was an audience, his real opinions could seldom be gathered from his talk ; though when he was in company with a single friend, he would discuss a subject with genuine fairness ; but he was too conscientious to make error permanent and pernicious by deliberately writing it ; and, in all his numerous works, he earnestly inculcated what appeared to him to be the truth ; his piety being constant, and the ruling principle of all his conduct.

Such was Samuel Johnson, a man whose talents, acquirements, and virtues, were so extraordinary, that the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence.

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to a thousand sorts of subjects. That which appeared a trifle to some readers of the *Menagiana*, who did not consider circumstances, caused admiration in other readers, who minded the difference between what a man speaks without preparation, and that which he prepares for the press. And, therefore, we cannot sufficiently commend the care which his illustrious friends took to erect a monument so capable of giving him immortal glory. They were not obliged to rectify what they had heard him say ; for, in so doing, they had not been faithful historians of his conversation.

THE END

## INDEX

- ADDRESS**, Johnson's sternness to an, iii. 277.
- Abbreviations**, Johnson's, of his friends' names, iii. 113.
- Abercrombie**, Mr. James, sends Boswell copies of Johnson's letters to Americans, iii. 62-4.
- Abernethy**, Life of Dr., in *Biog. Brit.*, quoted on special providence, vi. 106 and n., 107 n.
- Abington**, Lord, his joke with Miss Hervey on Johnson's devotion, v. 132 n.
- Mrs., asks Johnson to come to her benefit, iii. 171, 174; Johnson dines at, iii. 196.
- Abolition of the Slave Trade, Doubts on*, by John Ranby, recommended by Johnson, iv. 207.
- Absenteeism** discussed by Johnson, iv. 246.
- Abstinence**, Johnson's practice of, but not temperance, ii. 131; iii. 277; v. 210.
- Abyssinia, Voyage to*, by Lobo, Johnson's translation of, i. 55-9; shown to him as a curiosity, iv. 18.
- Abyssinia, Rasselas, Prince of*, Johnson writes this book to defray his mother's funeral expenses, ii. 15.
- Accademia della Crusca** send Johnson their *Vocabulario*, i. 244; could hardly believe the Dictionary to be the work of one man, ii. 106.
- Académie Française** send Johnson their *Dictionnaire*, i. 244.
- Academy of Arts, Royal**, instituted, ii. 219.
- Accounts**, Johnson's idea of its being unnecessary to keep, vi. 15.
- Accuracy and Veracity**, Johnson's insistence on, iv. 229-30; v. 103.
- Acquaintance**, Johnson's numerous and varied, iv. 31; the more a man extends and varies his, the better, vi. 14.
- Action**, a ludicrous, in the Court of Sessions, in which Boswell was counsel, v. 263; Johnson's arguments for, v. 263.
- Action**, Johnson ridicules rhetorical, ii. 7; iii. 66.
- Adams**, Rev. Dr., Master of Pembroke College, i. 32, 33, 45, 46, 49, 96, 97, 99; accuses Johnson of great pride, i. 216; his conversation with Johnson about the Dictionary, i. 146-47; his account of the first performance of *Irene*, i. 155, 156; gives Boswell many particulars of Johnson's academical life, iii. 283; answers Hume's *Essay on Miracles*, iii. 283; entertains Johnson at Oxford, vi. 119, 209; account to Boswell of Johnson's last visit to him, vi. 209; death at Gloucester, vi. 209 n.
- Miss, her fine character, and attention to Johnson, vi. 126-27.
- George, his dedication to the King of his *Treatise on the Globes*, written by Johnson, ii. 198.
- Addison**, his style compared with Johnson's, i. 180; Johnson on his style, i. 180; his morality, humour, and elegance of writing,

- ii. 90; his Notanda for the *Spectator* compared with Johnson's sketches for the *Rambler*, ii. 162; 'whoever wishes to attain a good style, must give days and nights to the study of,' ii. 181-82; Goldsmith not like, iii. 112; his travels and his learning, iii. 193; wrote, or improved, Budget's papers in the *Spectator*, iv. 50; his *Cato* quoted, iv. 284; his illustration of the difference between his powers in conversation and in writing, v. 42; Johnson's Life of, v. 189; Malone's note on his harsh conduct to Steele, v. 189-90; *Various Readings in the Life of*, v. 191; said to have written some of his best papers in the *Spectator* 'warm with wine,' v. 228.
- Address of the Painters to George III.*, written by Johnson, ii. 26.
- Admiration, judgment better than, iii. 206.
- Adultery, Johnson on the heinousness of, ii. 208-9.
- Adventurer, The*, commenced, i. 188, 203, 204-8.
- Advertisement of Johnson's school, i. 66; about the *Idler* in the *Universal Chronicle*, ii. 20 n.; in the Edinburgh papers, correcting a mistake in the *Journey*, iii. 154.
- Advice, Johnson's to Boswell as to studies, ii. 136-37.
- Ady, Miss Mary, her accounts of Johnson's early days, i. 14; Johnson's visits at Lichfield, iv. 1.
- Ægri Ephemeris*, a journal of his illness, kept by Johnson from July 6th to Nov. 8th, vi. 214.
- Æneid*, the, Story of the *Odyssey* better than, vi. 56.
- Affection of silence, iv. 262.
- Affection, the effect of habit, or instinct? ii. 246.
- Agar, Wellbore Ellis, his collection of pictures, iv. 121 n.
- Age, old age, iv. 194; Bacon on, vi. 3.
- Agriculture, Marshall's absurd book on, v. 15.
- Agutter, Rev. Mr. gives Boswell notes of Johnson's conversation, vi. 121 n.; his sermon on Johnson's death, vi. 256.
- Aikin, Anna Letitia, her essay on 'Imitation,' iv. 175.
- Air-bath, Lord Monboddo's, iv. 169.
- Akenside, his *Pleasures of Imagination*, iii. 22; Johnson prefers, to Gray and Mason, iv. 40; *Various Readings in Johnson's Life of*, v. 194.
- Akerman, Mr., the keeper of Newgate, iv. 147; his house burned in the Gordon riots, v. 128-30.
- Alarm, The False*, Johnson's first and favourite political pamphlet, ii. 258; iii. 4.
- Alberti Leandro, Addison borrowed much from, iii. 194.
- Alcibiades, his dog, Mr. Jenning's marble statue of, iv. 232.
- Aldrich, Rev. Mr., and the Cock Lane ghost story, ii. 73 n.
- Aleppo, The Siege of*, a play by Hawkins, iv. 261 n.
- Alias* in Johnson's Dictionary, (1756) exemplified by Mallet or Malloch, vi. 54.
- Allen, Mr., the printer, his famous dinner, 'worthy of a Synod of Cooks,' ii. 132; imitates Johnson, iv. 271; brings Marshall's 'Agriculture' to Johnson, v. 15; Johnson sends for, when seized with a paralytic stroke, vi. 63; one of Johnson's 'best and tenderest friends,' vi. 187.
- Almack's, a new gaming club, iv. 32.
- Alnwick Castle, the cause of high words between Johnson and Dr. Percy, iv. 273.
- Amanuenses, six employed on the Dictionary, i. 147.
- 'Ambassador, The, says well, ludicrous anecdote of Johnson repeating, v. 110-11.
- Amelia*, Fielding's, Johnson read through without stopping, iv. 50-51.
- Amendments, 'seldom made without some token of a rent,' says Johnson of poetry, v. 176; in Johnson's prose, v. 176.
- America, Johnson's strong feeling

- against, iii. 163; Johnson's inquiry into the affairs of, iii. 144-46; warm discussion on, between Johnson and Boswell, iv. 207-8; Johnson on the war with, v. 219.
- Americans, Johnson's horror of, iv. 293; his outburst against, v. 17.
- Amusements, discovery of a man's character by, vi. 150.
- Amoret, Waller's verses to, iii. 270 n.
- Amyat, Dr., his story of Johnson saying that if he wished to become a botanist, he must first turn himself into a reptile, ii. 46 n.
- Anacreon*, Baxter's, the rare copy at Auchinleck, vi. 76.
- Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton's, ii. 266; published, iii. 282; praised, iii. 282.
- Anderson, Professor, of Glasgow, iv. 122.
- Angel, Mr., the stenographer, iii. 79.
- Animals, Johnson's fondness for those under his protection, vi. 33.
- Anne, Queen, 'touches' Johnson, i. 18.
- Annotator, Johnson's opinion of Warburton as an, ii. 4.
- Ant, the, a paraphrase from the Proverbs, ii. 182.
- Anthologia*, epigrams in the, translated by Johnson in his sleepless nights, vi. 217.
- Antient Literature, Johnson appointed Professor in, ii. 219.
- Antiquarian researches, conversation on, v. 36.
- Apparitions, Johnson on the probability of, v. 230.
- Appearance, Johnson careful of his, in public, vi. 158.
- Apprentice, Johnson, and the printer's, iii. 174.
- Arbuthnot, Dr., his great genius, ii. 90.
- Architecture, Johnson disapproves of ornamental, iii. 280-81.
- Argenson, M. Dr., Johnson's visit to, iii. 234.
- Argument, Goldsmith's application from Cibber to Johnson in, vi. 108; and testimony, vi. 115; 'Sir, I have found you an argument, but I am not obliged to find you an understanding, vi. 148.
- Argyle, Duchess of, i. 198.
- Aristotle, discussion on his doctrine of purging the passions, iv. 46-7.
- Armorial bearings, as old as the siege of Thebes, iii. 36.
- Armstrong, Dr., a friend of Thomson's, iv. 120.
- Arnold, Thomas, M.D., his *Observations on Insanity*, iv. 178.
- 'Articles,' discussed, ii. 250; subscription to, iii. 9.
- Arts, Royal Academy of, founded, ii. 219.
- Ascham, Johnson's Life of, ii. 128.
- Ash, Dr., founder of the Eumelian Club, vi. 228 n.
- Ashbourne, Dr. Taylor's residence in, i. 52; Johnson's visits, and meeting of Boswell there, iv. 9, 133.
- Astle, Mr. Thomas, Johnson's letter to, v. 269; his notes on Alfred, v. 269; Rev. Mr., brother of above, communicates a list of books given him by Johnson when young, vi. 146.
- Aston, Sir Thomas, account of, i. 52.
- Molly, a beauty, a wit, and a whig, i. 52; v. 44 and n.; said to be the lady for whose favour Johnson was the rival of Lord Lyttelton, v. 194.
- Mrs., sister of Molly, and of Mrs. Walmsley, iii. 307; iv. 5; struck with palsy, iv. 135.
- Atterbury, his funeral sermon on Lady Cutts quoted, iv. 229; Johnson's admiration for his sermons, iv. 248.
- 'Attitudinise,' Johnson's advice on, to a gentleman gesticulating in company, vi. 156.
- Auchinleck, Lord, death of, v. 288; Johnson's letter to Boswell on the death of, v. 288-90.
- Boswell's description of, ii. 124; the entail of, iii. 233-

- 55; Johnson dissuades Boswell from leaving, iv. 179; burning of papers at, v. 66 n.; Mrs. Boswell invites Johnson to repeat his visit, v. 200.
- Augustus, Memoirs of the Court of*, reviewed by Johnson, i. 253.
- BACON, Lord, a favourite author with Johnson, iv. 196; Mallet's *Life of*, iv. 196-97; his *Hints for Civil Conversation* quoted, vi. 71; Johnson quotes his saying about old age, vi. 3.
- Badcock, Rev. Samuel, boasts of his visit to Johnson, vi. 242 n.
- Bagshaw, Rev. Thomas, account of, iii. 114 n.; letter from Johnson to, iii. 114; letter to, requesting him to put a stone over Mrs. Sir George's grave, vi. 184.
- Baker, Sir George, prescribes for Johnson, vi. 188.
- Ballads, Johnson's contempt for the modern imitations of old, iii. 68.
- Balloon, unsuccessful experiment with a, vi. 189; Johnson receives letters about, vi. 190.
- Ballou, Mr. Thomas, from whom Johnson learned what he knew of law, iv. 31 and n.
- Baltic, a voyage to, projected by Johnson and Boswell, iii. 136, 137 n.
- Banks, Sir Joseph, letter from Johnson to, iii. 1-2; his expedition, iii. 5.
- Baptism, register of Johnson's, i. 9 n.; discussion on infant, iii. 298; iv. 213.
- Bar, Boswell proposes to enter the English, vi. 144; Johnson's advice on the matter, vi. 144.
- Barber, Francis, Johnson's black servant, i. 189; offers Mrs. Johnson's wedding-ring to Mrs. Lucy Porter, i. 191; born at Jamaica, i. 193 n.; pressed into the navy, ii. 22; letter from Mr. Wilkes to Smollet, relating to, ii. 22, 23, 24; returns to Johnson, ii. 24; placed at school, ii. 214; Johnson's letters to, at school, ii. 261-62; returns from school, iii. 4. Johnson makes provision for, vi. 235, 237 n.; residuary legatee, vi. 239 n.
- Barclay, the young student who wrote an answer to Kenrick's attack on Johnson's *Shakespeare*, ii. 157.
- Mr., partner in Thrale's brewery, v. 252 n.
- Alexander, his *Ship of Fools*, i. 226.
- Robert, his *Apology for the Quakers*, iii. 297; discussion of, by Johnson and Loyd, iii. 297.
- Baretti, Signor Joseph, translates a pamphlet of Johnson's, i. 247; Johnson writes the Dedication to the Italian Dictionary, ii. 26; Johnson's three letters to, ii. 33-7, 40-2, 48-50; Johnson's high opinion of, ii. 210; his trial for murder, ii. 242; Johnson a witness at the trial, ii. 242; Mr. Burke a witness at the trial, ii. 242; his acquittal, ii. 242; quarrels with Davies, iii. 62; his *Lessons in Italian and English*, iii. 142; Johnson's race with, iii. 288; his fantastic dialogues, iii. 289; Beauclerk on, iv. 28; translates Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* into Italian, iv. 100; his review, *Frustra Letteraria*, iv. 175; the first to receive copy-money in Italy, iv. 164.
- Bark and steel for the mind, the *Rambler* full of, i. 172.
- Barnard, Dr., Bishop of Killaloe, tells Johnson that he fears he will treat Ireland worse than Scotland, iii. 158-59; his altercation with Johnson, v. 249 n.; Johnson's charade on, vi. 31.
- Mr., King's Librarian, ii. 190 n.
- Barnewall, Nicholas, Lord Trimlestown, iv. 288 n.
- Barnstone, Miss Letitia, v. 113.
- Barrettier, Philip, Johnson writes the life of, i. 125.
- Barrington, the Hon. Daines, his *Essay on the Migration of Birds*, iii. 103; v. 16.
- Barrowby, Dr., anecdote of, vi. 126.
- Barry, Sir Edward, his *System of Physic*, iv. 42.



- Barry, James, R. A., letter from Johnson to, referring to Mauritius Lowe, vi. 38; his pictures exhibited, vi. 59.
- Barter, Mr., his controversy with Elwal, the heretic, iii. 22.
- Bastard, The*, Savage's poem, i. 129.
- Bateman, Mr., of Christ's Church, his lectures, i. 47.
- Bath, Johnson's visits to, iv. 51; Boswell joins him there, iv. 52.
- Easton, Lady Miller's vase at, iii. 186-87.
- Baths, Johnson thinks medicated, useless, ii. 244.
- Bathurst, Dr. Richard, i. 144, 150; writes in the *Adventurer*, i. 204; dies at Havannah, ii. 50.
- Lord, on Pope's *Essay on Man*, v. 102-3.
- Bayes, the name under which Dryden was characterised in the *Rehearsal*, iii. 26.
- Bayle's Dictionary, i. 232; very useful, ii. 90; the account of Menage in it quoted and applied to Johnson, vi. 261 n.
- Baxter, his rule in preaching, vi. 23; *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, the best collection of evidences, vi. 72; his works all good, vi. 61.
- Bear, Goldsmith's remark about Johnson and the skin of the, ii. 218.
- Beattie, Dr., ii. 284; Mrs. Thrale's love for, iii. 6; Johnson's regard for, iii. 6; letter to Boswell, iii. 6 n.; his popularity, iii. 120; his wife, v. 131; his *Hermit* moves Johnson to tears, vi. 24.
- Beauclerk, Lady Di, iii. 94.
- Topham, i. 65, 200-1; wakes up Johnson for a frisk, i. 202; his advice to Johnson when he got his pension, i. 202; acts as a witness at Baret's trial, ii. 242; his story of Johnson and Mme. de Boufflers, iii. 247; one of the original members of the Club, iii. 140; visits Cambridge with Johnson, iii. 147-48; his illness, iii. 145; shares Boswell's veneration for Johnson's Court, iii. 84; his equable spirits, iv. 28; on Baret's trial, iv. 28; on George Steevens, iv. 283; altercation between him and Johnson, v. 84-6; Johnson, Reynolds, Boswell, etc., dine with, v. 87; is 'very entertaining,' v. 90; Johnson's affection for, v. 149; his death, v. 119 n.; Johnson on, v. 119; his library sold, v. 120, 241; Mr. Langton on the death of, v. 123; anecdote showing Johnson's regard for, vi. 18.
- Beauties of Johnson, i. 171.
- Beckenham, Mr. Cator's seat, vi. 147.
- Bedlam, Boswell's visit to, iii. 220.
- Beggars more readily ask alms of a man than a woman, v. 171.
- Beggar's Opera*, opinions on, iii. 212-13; v. 22-3.
- Belief in the appearance of departed spirits, ii. 17-18.
- Bell, Mrs., wife of Dr. Bell, Prebendary of Westminster, epitaph on, iii. 60 n.
- Bell, John, of Antermony, the traveller, ii. 208.
- Bellamy, Mrs., the actress begs for Johnson's patronage at her benefit, vi. 79 n.
- Belsham, Mr., quotation from his essay, ii. 56 n.
- Benedictines, Note on the, in Paris, iii. 233; Johnson parts tenderly from the, iii. 244.
- Benevolence, Johnson's disbelief in action from pure, iv. 54.
- Benson, Mr. Auditor, his monument to Milton, i. 184.
- Bentham, Canon, visited by Johnson and Boswell, iii. 286.
- Bentley, Dr., verses by, v. 162 n., 163 n.
- Berenger, Richard, author of the *Art of Horsemanship*, v. 227 and n.
- Beresford, Mrs., accompanies Johnson to Oxford, vi. 117.
- Berkeley, Bishop, discussion of his doctrines, ii. 133; 'a profound scholar,' ii. 275.
- Berwick, Duke of, account of his *Memoirs*, iv. 288-89.
- Betterton, the actor, comparison with Foote, iv. 187.
- Bevil, Rev. Mr., his defence of

- James Hammond, the poet, v. 202 *π*.
- Bewley, Mr., the philosopher of Maningham, and the hearth-brush, v. 269-70.
- Bible, the, should be read with a commentary, iv. 63-4; proposal to translate into the Gaelic language, ii. 183; opposed by a religious society, and encouraged by Johnson, ii. 183-85; an old Bible seen by Johnson in Paris, iii. 240.
- 'Bibliotheca Harleiana,' Johnson's proposals for printing, showing the importance of a *catalogue raisonné*, i. 117.
- Bibliothèque*, Johnson's scheme for one, i. 231-32.
- Bibliothèque des Savans*, its review of Johnson's Dictionary, i. 265.
- Bickerstaff, Isaac, author of *Love in a Village*, ii. 231.
- Bicknell, Mr., his ridicule of Johnson, i. 258.
- Biography, conversation, between Johnson, Boswell, and Warton, iii. 287.
- Biographia Britannica*, Johnson declines to undertake a new edition of the, iv. 176.
- Biography, every man his own best biographer, i. 1; Boswell's advantages in undertaking his work, i. 2; George III. desires Johnson to undertake literary biography, ii. 195; Johnson's ideas on, iv. 156.
- Birch, Dr. T., Dr. Warburton's letter to, i. 4; E. Cave's letter to, i. 114, 116; Johnson's description of, i. 123; letter to, i. 124; letters to and from about the Dictionary, i. 146, 233; Johnson's letters to about some papers of Raleigh's, 183.
- Birds, migration of, discussed, iii. 103.
- Birmingham, Johnson arrives at, iii. 295.
- Bishop, a beverage liked by Johnson, i. 202.
- 'Black Dog,' Johnson calls Maty, i. 242.
- Blackfriars Bridge, rebuilt, ii. 23-4; Johnson engages in the controversy on, ii. 24-5.
- Blacklock, Dr. Thomas, his poems, ii. 129; Spence's Life of, ii. 129.
- Blackmore, Richard, his poem on the Creation, ii. 254; the absurd lines attributed to him, ii. 255 and *π*.; Johnson's Life of, v. 192; *Various Readings in the Life of*, v. 192-93.
- Blackstone, Composition of the Commentaries, v. 228.
- Blackwall, Anthony, i. 53 and *π*.
- Blagden, S., 'a delightful fellow,' iii. 243 *π*.; v. 169.
- Blair, Dr. Hugh, finds 'the Giant in his den,' ii. 61; sups with Johnson and Boswell, ii. 214; his poem, *The Grave*, iv. 54; Johnson on his sermons, iv. 101; v. 42; great success of his sermons, iv. 161; Johnson's praise of his sermons, iv. 169; his letter to Boswell concerning Pope, v. 102-3; Johnson loves his sermons, 'though the dog is a Scotchman,' v. 224.
- Blake, Admiral, Johnson writes the Life of, i. 3.
- Blaney, Elizabeth, her romantic attachment to Johnson's father, i. 12-13.
- Blank verse, Johnson's opinions on, ii. 269; v. 180.
- Bleeding, Johnson disapproves of, iv. 154.
- Blenheim Park, Johnson and Boswell drive through, iii. 290.
- Blockhead, an Athenian, the worst of all, i. 45; Johnson calls Churchill a, ii. 83; Johnson calls Fielding a, iii. 31; Johnson calls Mr. Hector's maid a, iii. 295; Johnson says, 'no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money,' iv. 29.
- Bocage, M. du, Johnson dines with, iii. 233; Mme. du, her poem, *The Columbiade*, vi. 164.
- Boerhave, Johnson writes Life of, in *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 105.
- Boethius, *magis philosophus quam Christianus*, ii. 271.
- Boileau, his imitation of the third satire of Juvenal applied to Paris, i. 86.

- Bolingbroke, Lord, his works published, i. 218; controversy on Pope and, ii. 4-5; describes the House of Commons, iv. 236 n.; wrote the scheme of the *Essay on Man*, in prose, v. 102.
- Bolt Court, Johnson moves to, iii. 268.
- Bolton, Mr., his works at Birmingham visited by Boswell, iii. 299.
- Bond, Mrs., Johnson's tenant at Lichfield, vi. 236 n.
- Bones, poor people in London collect, vi. 40.
- Bon-mots, conversation on, v. 24-5.
- Books, Johnson pores over the backs of, iii. 211; Mr. Cambridge's, iii. 211; Dr. Burney's, iii. 211 n.; carelessly used by Johnson, iii. 49; Johnson dusts his, iv. 18; few printed in Scotland before the Union, iii. 71; collection of those printed in Scotland before the Union, iii. 71.
- Booksellers, contract with Johnson for the Dictionary, i. 144; their rights, risks, and profits, iii. 266-68.
- Boothby, Miss Hill, v. 194 n.; v. 195 n.
- Boscawen, Mrs., Boswell's praise of, v. 33.
- Boscovich, Père, visits England, ii. 270; Johnson's Latin conversation with, iii. 241.
- Bosville, Mr., Boswell writes from his house at Thorpe, v. 62; his wife, iii. 27.
- Boswell, appreciation of his Life of Johnson, i. x. xi. xiii. xxiv.; his fitness for writing the 'Life,' i. 2; his method in writing the 'Life,' i. 4-5; on Chesterfield's Letters, i. 217 n.; desires to see Johnson, ii. 52; his introduction in Davies's shop, ii. 57-8; Reynolds's first portrait of Johnson given to Boswell, ii. 58; calls on Johnson at his chambers in the Temple, ii. 61; meets Johnson at an eating-house, ii. 66-7; sups with Johnson and Goldsmith at the Mitre, ii. 81; lives in Mr. Temple's chambers, ii. 100; spends the day with Johnson at Greenwich, ii. 119-24; drinks tea with Miss Williams and Johnson for the first time, ii. 125; Johnson's advice to, on going abroad, ii. 127; sets out on his travels, ii. 128; accompanied by Johnson as far as Harwich, ii. 128, 130-31, 133; parts with Johnson, ii. 135; finds Utrecht very dull, ii. 135; letters to and from Johnson, ii. 135-38; returns to London, ii. 162; publishes his Thesis on Civil Law, ii. 176; returns to Scotland, ii. 175-76; letters from Johnson, ii. 176-78, 211, 221-22, 256, 283; iii. 2, 3; Johnson corrects his Latin Dedication, ii. 176-77; the Dedication, ii. 176-77 n.; defends his Latin to Johnson, ii. 178-80, 211-12, 284; iii. 2; publishes *Corsica*, ii. 200; goes to London again, ii. 200; follows Johnson to Oxford, ii. 200; meets Mrs. Thrale at Johnson's, ii. 226; invited to Thrale's house, ii. 227; presents Johnson to General Paoli, ii. 229; their conversation, ii. 229-30; annoys Johnson by conversing on death, ii. 254; at the Shakespeare Jubilee, ii. 220; at the dinner where Goldsmith wore the bloom-coloured coat, ii. 232; marries, ii. 257; verses on matrimony, ii. 257; goes to Scotland, ii. 258; cessation of correspondence between Johnson and, ii. 262; loved by Johnson's friends, iii. 3; his fourth visit to London, iii. 4; his defence of the schoolmaster, iii. 3, 4, 41-3; letter from Dr. Beattie to, iii. 6 n.; advised by Johnson to buy St. Kilda, iii. 7; dines with Johnson at General Paoli's, iii. 23; dines with Johnson at General Oglethorpe's, iii. 36; calls on Johnson with General Paoli, iii. 47; consults with Johnson on a question of Scots law, iii. 52; breakfasted with Johnson on Good Friday, iii. 68-9; attends with Johnson, St. Clement Danes Church, iii. 69; dined with Rousseau, iii. 70; invited to dine with John-

son on Easter Day, 1773, iii. 70; elected a member of the Club, iii. 94; Johnson calls him an *unscotched* Scotchman, iii. 96; accompanies Johnson on a tour to the Hebrides, iii. 122; announces the birth of a son, iii. 229; the estate of Auchinleck and the question of entail, iii. 252-62; visits London for the sixth time, iii. 268; goes with Johnson to Oxford, iii. 279; drive through Stratford, iii. 292; and Henley, iii. 295; to Birmingham, iii. 295; learns from Mr. Hector many particulars of Johnson's early life, iii. 299; arrives at Lichfield, iii. 301; advised by Johnson to keep a journal, iii. 72; dines with Johnson at Mr. Thrall's, iii. 81; Johnson's love for, iii. 121; 'no kindness' for Americans, iii. 146; complains of melancholy, iii. 264; introduced to Mrs. Lucy Porter, by Johnson, iii. 302; at Ashbourne, iv. 9; Johnson says that Boswell lives with savages in Scotland, and rakes in London, iv. 84; returns to Scotland, iv. 86; goes to meet Johnson at Dr. Taylor's at Ashbourne, iv. 138; his seventh visit to London, iv. 223; Johnson describes him as 'the best travelling companion in the world,' iv. 296; 'a man whom everybody likes,' v. 65; his bad behaviour and apology, v. 244; Johnson's last letter to, vi. 213; Mr. Courtenay's verses on, i. 179; iii. 123; Johnson says, 'If I were to lose Boswell it would be a limb amputated,' v. 220 &; his description of Johnson, v. 257; his epitome of Johnson, v. 257-62; and Johnson dine with Peter Garrick, iv. 1; and Johnson leave for London, iv. 12; defends Rev. Mr. James Thomson in the Court of Session, iv. 64; assisted by Johnson in the defence, iv. 65-9; brings Johnson and Wilkes together, iv. 75; Burke says 'that there was nothing equal to it in the whole

history of the *Corps Diplomatique*, iv. 86; suggests a tour to the Isle of Man, iv. 86; congratulated by Johnson on the birth of a son, iv. 99; death of his son David, iv. 109; letter from Mr. Edward Dilly, iv. 113-14; letter from Rev. Dr. Vyse, iv. 127-28; finds it difficult to get out of bed, iv. 170; wishes to make London his chief residence, iv. 179; Johnson's regard for, iv. 201; returns to Scotland, iv. 209; consults Johnson as to the mode of addressing the House of Commons, iv. 225; regrets his easiness with Johnson, iv. 226; letter to Dr. Percy, iv. 280-81; Johnson quarrels with, v. 40; 'a Scotchman without the faults of a Scotchman,' v. 51; announces the birth of another son, v. 68; introduced to John Wesley by Johnson, v. 95; Johnson said, 'Boswell is a man who I believe never left a house without leaving a wish for his return,' v. 112; visits Peter Garrick, v. 112; letter from Warren Hastings, v. 203-5; defends an action against the *Caledonian Mercury* by the Society of Procurators, v. 264; his petition for this case furnished by Johnson, v. 264, 265-66; wishes to be in Parliament, vi. 57; 'a very clubbable man,' vi. 89 &; letter to his physicians concerning Johnson's illness, vi. 97; letter from Johnson, vi. 211, 212.

Boswell, Letters from Johnson, iii. 58-9, 61-2, 119-21, 123-24, 126-34, 137-38, 140, 141, 143-45, 147-49, 161-62, 223-27, 229-30, 251-53, 256-65; iv. 51-2, 92-4, 97-100, 107-9, 123-25, 129-31, 132-35, 112-13, 216-17; relating to Dr. Percy, vi. 280; v. 65-6, 70-1, 74, 92, 96-8, 113-14, 116-17, 119-20, 131-33, 139-40, 208, 272-73, 283-84, 286-87, 292; vi. 1, 2, 66-7, 76, 84-5, 94-100; extract from, on moving to London, vi. 183-84.

— Letters to Johnson, iii. 59-60, 124-25, 132-33, 135-36, 143-44, 146-48, 160-61, 224-25, 229, 248,

- 251, 263; iv. 92, 94, 96-7, 103-5, 107-11, 119-22, 124 n.; written at the tomb of Melancthon, iv. 124 n., 128-29, 131-33, 135-37, 211, 213, 216, 220-23; relating to Dr. Percy, iv. 279; v. 63-4, 73-4, 91-2, 96-7, 111-13, 115-16; introducing his brother, David, v. 130; extracts from, v. 135-36.
- Boswell, Mrs., did not take to Johnson, iii. 124 n.; her saying that Boswell is led by a bear, iii. 124 n.; letter from Johnson, iv. 131; very ill, iv. 132, 216; Johnson presents her with a copy of his *Lives of the Poets*, v. 74; invites Johnson to Auchinleck, v. 290; letter to Johnson, v. 292; letter from Johnson, v. 290-91; writes a kind letter to Johnson, vi. 98.
- Veronica, author's daughter, Johnson's message to, iv. 132; death, iv. 132 n.
- Dr., uncle of author, describes Johnson as a 'robust genius born to grapple with whole libraries,' iv. 18.
- David, author's brother, introduced to Johnson, v. 130; furnishes particulars of Johnson's last illness, vi. 250.
- Thomas, founder of the family, iii. 253.
- David, iii. 253.
- family, History of, promised by Johnson if Boswell would collect the materials, vi. 34.
- Boufflers, Mme. de, her visit to Johnson, iii. 247-48.
- Bouhours, Dominique, writes to prove that all beauty depends on truth, ii. 237.
- Boulters's Monument*, Dr. Madden's poem, corrected by Johnson, i. 261-62.
- Boulton, the iron chieftain of Birmingham, iii. 299.
- Bow, Johnson's, to an Archbishop, description of, vi. 34.
- Bow-wow way, Lord Pembroke's remark about Johnson's sayings, iii. 176 n.
- Bowles, William, entertains Johnson at Heale, vi. 68.
- Bower, Mr., writes the History of the Romans for *Ancient Universal History*, vi. 218 n.
- Boydell, Mr. Alderman, iii. 145 n.
- Boyle, John, Earl of Orrery, i. 146.
- Mr., his *Martyrdom of Theodora* characterised by Johnson, i. 256.
- Boyse, Samuel, Johnson's early associate, vi. 241 n.
- Brahmins, Lord Macartney's remark on, vi. 151 n.; Johnson calls them the mastiffs of mankind, v. 225.
- Braithwaite, Mr., vi. 112-13.
- Bread, better than the bread fruit, iii. 103-4.
- Bridewell churchyard, Mr. Levett buried in, v. 273.
- Brighthelmstone, Johnson's stay at, ii. 220; iv. 97.
- Bristol, visited, iv. 56-7.
- British Synonymy*, Mrs. Piozzi's, vi. 246.
- Brocklesby, Dr., vi. 14; letters from Johnson to, vi. 68-9, 186-92; his generous offer to Johnson, vi. 171; Johnson gives him a book as a remembrancer, vi. 237 n.
- Bromley, Johnson's wife buried at, i. 195.
- Brook, Henry, i. 105.
- Brothers, Johnson's expression 'Good brothers make good sisters,' ii. 2.
- Brown, Capability, v. 100.
- Tom, Johnson's first master, i. 19; dedicates a spelling-book to the Universe, i. 19.
- Rev. Robert, his sayings, ii. 165, 274.
- Browne, Sir Thomas, Johnson's Life of, i. 252; imitated by Johnson, i. 178; his sayings about devils, iv. 296.
- Isaac Hawkins, iii. 187.
- Brownism, Boswell calls by this word Johnson's pompous style, i. 252.
- Bruce, the traveller, iii. 183 n.
- Robert, Johnson requested to draw a character of him for Lord Hailes, iii. 229.
- Brundisium, Horace's journey to, discussed, iv. 251-52.
- Brunet, Johnson meets, in Paris, iii. 237.

- Brydone, Patr., his *Tour through Sicily and Malta*, iv. 2-3; would be a great traveller if more attentive to the Bible, v. 60.
- Buchan, Earl of, iii. 34.
- Buchanan, his poems discussed, ii. 122; has fewer centos than any modern Latin poet, ii. 241; praised by Johnson, vi. 23.
- Budgel, Eustace, his suicide, iii. 84.
- Budworth, Rev. Mr., anecdotes of Johnson and, vi. 241 π.
- Bulldog, conversation on the, iv. 192.
- Bunbury, Sir Charles, elected a member of the Club, iii. 129.
- Burgoyne, General, the disaster of his army, v. 59.
- Burke, Edmund, one of the original members of the Club, ii. 140; attacked at the Club by Sir J. Hawkins, ii. 141; his duties oblige him to leave the Club, ii. 172; criticism of his *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, ii. 237; appears as a witness at Baret's trial, ii. 242; Johnson's opinion of his Parliamentary speeches, ii. 275; Boswell introduced to, iii. 94; winds into a subject like a serpent, iii. 116; Johnson acknowledges him to be 'an extraordinary man,' iii. 289; and calls forth all Johnson's powers, iii. 290; his commendation of Johnson's argument in defence of liberty of censure in the pulpit, iv. 69; commends Boswell for bringing Johnson and Wilkes together, iv. 86; commends Johnson's *Journey*, iv. 140; his 'Letter to the inhabitants of Bristol on the affairs of America,' iv. 189; his pun on Wilkes, v. 24; his house and lands, v. 12; Johnson's speech about, v. 12 and π; the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame, v. 158; his high appreciation of Johnson, v. 165; the ebullition of his mind, vi. 5; his constant stream of conversation, vi. 109; his pleasantry, vi. 110; in all places 'an extraordinary man,' vi. 110; Johnson's last interview with, vi. 240.
- Burman, Peter, Account of the Life of, by Johnson, i. 117.
- Burnet, his *History of his own Times*, iii. 68; his *Life of Rochester*, iv. 194.
- Burney, Dr. C., on the reception of the *Rambler*, i. 166 π; compares the *Rambler* with the *Spectator*, i. 181 π; his delight with the *Rambler*, i. 234; and with the plan of the Dictionary, i. 234; Johnson's letter to, i. 234, 265-66; his account of his visit to Johnson, ii. 4; his conversation with Johnson on Smart's madness, ii. 63; his praise of Johnson's preface to Shakespeare, and Johnson's letter in reply, ii. 158-59; obtains an introduction from Johnson to Oxford, v. 69; Johnson pores over his books, iii. 211 π; his youngest son accompanied to College by Johnson, v. 70; his story of an admiring friend and the hearth-brush, v. 270; his entertaining travels, vi. 24; Johnson's last note to, vi. 210.
- Fanny, her imitation of Johnson's style, vi. 223-24; at tea with Johnson and Boswell, vi. 59.
- Burrowes, Dr., Rector of St. Clement Danes, v. 80.
- Dr., Dean of Cork, his *Essay on the Style of Johnson*, vi. 219.
- Burton, Robert, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, i. 34; iii. 282; the only book that ever took Johnson out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise, ii. 266; Johnson inquires for his books, vi. 92 and π.
- Business, Johnson loves, iii. 282.
- Bute, Earl of, announces to Johnson the pension granted by George III., ii. 42; Johnson's letters to, ii. 45, 48; his advice to the King criticised, iii. 200-1; his undue partiality to Scotchmen, iii. 201; his seat, Luton Hoe, visited, v. 262; it would have been better for the nation

- ff Bute had never been minister, or had never resigned, iv. 6.
- Butler, S., quoted, iii. 82 n., 93.
- Butter, Dr., one of Johnson's physicians, iv. 12; Johnson and Boswell dine with, iv. 156; at one time lived at Derby, iv. 164; Johnson leaves him a book, vi. 237 n.
- Byng, Admiral, his cause pleaded by Johnson, i. 257; Voltaire's efforts on his behalf, i. 257 n.; epitaph on, i. 258.
- the Hon. John, his letter on death of Johnson, vi. 251.
- CADELL, Mr., iii. 267.
- Caledonian Mercury*, *The*, its paragraph on the Society of Procurators, v. 264; Boswell defends action against, v. 264.
- Caliban, Johnson called the, of literature, ii. 273.
- Callimachus, v. 142.
- Cambridge, Johnson's visit to, ii. 147-48.
- Cambridge, Richard Owen, entertains Johnson, Reynolds, etc., at Twickenham, iii. 208; his happy circumstances, vi. 32; discusses with Johnson the Spanish translation of Sallust, vi. 31.
- Camden, Lord, and Goldsmith, v. 13; and Garrick, v. 13.
- Cameron, Dr. Archibald, executed, i. 110 and n.
- Campbell, Bishop, Johnson's account of, vi. 121.
- Mr. Archibald, author of *Laxiphanes*, ii. 199.
- Rev. Dr., of St. Andrews, his ms. Essay, published by Mr. Innes as his own, ii. 32.
- Dr. John, ii. 82 and n.; ii. 204; iii. 70; iv. 244 and n., 248.
- Mungo, his shooting Lord Eglintoun, iv. 191.
- Colonel Mure, marries Miss Macleod, of Rasay, iv. 121.
- Dr. Thomas, account of, iii. 187; his works, iii. 187; visits London mainly to see Johnson, iii. 190; his *Life of Goldsmith*, iii. 193; his *Diary*, iii. 193.
- Candide*, its resemblance to *Rasselas*, ii. 16-17; v. 59.
- Cant, 'a man who has been canting all his life may cant to the last,' said of Dr. Dodd, iv. 272.
- Capel's *Shakespeare*, Johnson on the Preface to, v. 145.
- Cardan composed his mind by exciting voluntary pain, iv. 178 n.
- Careless, Mrs., Hector's sister, and Johnson's first love, iii. 299.
- Carelessness, Johnson's, v. 160.
- Carlisle, Earl of, his poems praised by Johnson, v. 248; his tragedy submitted to Johnson, vi. 82; Johnson's opinion of it in a letter to Mrs. Chapone, vi. 82-3.
- Carlyle, Thomas, on Coker's 'Boswell,' i. vii., xi.; his narrative of Charles II.'s escape, i. xi., xii., xiii.; on 'Boswell,' i. 5 n.
- Carter, Mrs. Elizabeth, i. 190; iv. 170; translator of Crousaz's *Examen of Pope's Essay on Man*, i. 103; Johnson's verses and epigrams to, i. 104; contributes to the *Rambler*, i. 161.
- Carthusians, Johnson on the, iii. 276-77.
- Catalogue. Proposals by Johnson for printing that of the Earl of Oxford, i. 117; of the artistic exhibition, Johnson writes Preface to, ii. 37.
- Catcot, George, the pewterer of Bristol, iv. 56-7.
- Cator, Mr., his place at Beckenham, vi. 147.
- Cato, Addison's, quoted, iv. 284; Johnson on Sheridan's performance of, ii. 30.
- Cave, Edward, editor of *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 60; Johnson's first publisher, i. 76-7, 81; Johnson's Latin verses to, i. 82 and n.; in account with Johnson, i. 101; letter to Dr. Birch, i. 114; refers to Johnson's *Irene*, i. 116; letters from Johnson, i. 118-20; Johnson's *Life of*, i. 208; on the *Rambler*, i. 208; v. 23-4; Johnson's regard for, vi. 242.
- Caxton, William, printed only two books not translations, iv. 255.

- Cham, Smollett's expression of Johnson as 'that great Cham of literature,' ii. 23 and *n.*
- Chamberlayne, Mr. George, vi. 122.
- Chambers, Catherine, her care of Johnson's mother, ii. 13; Johnson's farewell to her, ii. 13 *n.*, 197-98.
- Sir Robert, Johnson intimate with, i. 222; letter from Johnson to, i. 223; goes to Bengal as judge, iii. 120; marries Miss Wilton, iii. 128-29.
- Sir William, Horace Walpole praises his *Civil Architecture*, vi. 25 *n.*; Johnson revises his *Chinese Architecture*, vi. 25.
- Chamier, Mr., an original member of the Club, ii. 140; conversation with Goldsmith about the *Traveller*, iv. 254.
- Chantilly visited, iii. 242.
- Chapone, Mrs., letter from Johnson on Earl of Carlyle's tragedy, vi. 82-3.
- Chappe d'Aueroche, Lord Kames uses his *Journey into Siberia* in the *History of Man*, v. 43.
- Character, Johnson's power of drawing, iv. 30; v. 34; a man's, found by his amusements, vi. 159.
- Characters, of deceased, legal redress for calumination of, iv. 25, 26 *n.*; in the *Rambler*, said to be taken from real life, i. 173.
- Charade, by Johnson on Dr. Barnard, vi. 31.
- Charing Cross, 'the full tide of human existence is at,' iii. 186.
- Charitable texts, Mrs. Langton gave Johnson, vi. 115 *n.*
- Charlemont, Lord, his story of a serpent, v. 57.
- Charles I. could not be a lawyer, iii. 69.
- II., Johnson's partiality for, iii. 189; might have been as absolute as Louis XIV., iii. 216.
- v., on his celebrating his funeral obsequies in his lifetime, iv. 248.
- Chatham, Lord, a dictator, v. 60; the story of 'he would take up his bed and walk,' vi. 150.
- Chatlois, Hotel de, Paris, iii. 233.
- Chatterton, his poems, iv. 56-7; Johnson complains of a 'wide adherence to,' v. 276-77.
- Chesterfield, Earl of, Johnson inscribes the plan of his Dictionary to, i. 144-45; his neglect of Johnson, i. 208; anecdote of Johnson and, i. 208-9; his attempts to conciliate him, i. 209-11; gave money to Johnson, i. 213 *n.*; Johnson's Letter to, i. 212-16; Boswell on the letters, i. 217 *n.*; his witticisms, iii. 67; his pronunciation of the word *great*, iii. 19; Johnson on his letters, iv. 59; Dilly's edition of his works, v. 55; of his speeches written by Johnson, v. 55; Johnson describes him as dignified but insolent, vi. 12.
- Cheyne, his book on *Health and English Malady*, praised, iv. 36.
- Cheynel, Johnson writes Life of, i. 184.
- Child, new-born, Boswell's question as to what Johnson would do if he were left with a, ii. 245-46.
- China, Du Halde's, ii. 208; extracts from, for *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 120.
- manufactory at Derby of, iv. 164.
- Choisi, Abbé de, visited, iii. 235; sent to Siam as ambassador of Louis XIV., v. 38 *n.*, 39.
- Cholmondeley, Mr., Johnson's rudeness to, vi. 178; his regret and apology, vi. 178-79.
- Mrs., her compliments to Johnson, v. 20.
- Christ Church meadows, Johnson slides in, i. 221.
- Christian Morals*, by Sir Thomas Browne, Johnson edits, i. 252.
- Mr., of Dorking, accounts for the St. Kilda story, ii. 205.
- religion, evidences of, ii. 70-1.
- Christianity, strength of the evidence for, ii. 92.
- Chronicle, The London*, Johnson writes Introduction to, i. 260.
- *The Universal*, a weekly newspaper in which appeared the *Idler* essays, ii. 5.



- Church, the, its power of public censure, iv. 66.
- Churchill, Johnson calls him a blockhead, ii. 83; depreciation of his poetry, ii. 83; his prophecy of famine, ii. 84.
- Churton, Rev. Ralph, on the burial service, vi. 49 n., 50 n.
- Cibber, Colley, account of, ii. 68; Johnson calls his *Apology* 'very entertaining,' ii. 238; iv. 79-80; Cibber himself is described as 'a poor creature,' ii. 238; Johnson's contempt for, iii. 188; his *Lives of the Poets*, compiled by Shiels, iv. 38-9 and n., 40 n.; Johnson criticises his acts, iv. 186.
- Theophilus, his share in the *Lives of the Poets*, iv. 39.
- Cicero, Burke's quotation from, applied to Johnson, vi. 207 n.
- Clans, Johnson desires to know the order of, iii. 124.
- Clarendon, Lord, the continuation of his 'History' presented to Oxford University, iii. 265; his description of Lord Falkland quoted and applied to Johnson, vi. 261 n.
- Press, origin of, iii. 265; complaint of mismanagement, iii. 265; Johnson discusses its management with Dr. Wetherell, iii. 266-68, 282.
- Claret, 'the liquor for boys,' v. 82.
- Clark, Mr., alderman, proposed by Johnson as a member of the Essex Head Club, vi. 93.
- Clarke, Dr., unorthodox, iv. 249; Johnson's sentiments respecting, vi. 249 and n.
- Cleons, Dodsley's, ii. 2.
- Clergymen, Johnson's opinions with respect to, iii. 29-30.
- Clifton's eating-house in Butcher Row, ii. 66.
- Clive, Lord, a strong-minded man, v. 37.
- Mrs., the actress, Johnson's high opinion of, v. 146-47.
- Club, the Literary, founded by Johnson and Reynolds, ii. 139-40; list of original members, ii. 140 its *locale*, ii. 140; present members, ii. 140-41; Johnson's treatment of Garrick with respect to membership, ii. 141-42; Boswell elected a member, iii. 94.
- Club, Essex Head, vi. 89; members of, vi. 89; rules of, vi. 90 n.
- Eumelian, founded by Dr. Ash, vi. 228.
- Clubable man, Johnson calls Boswell so, vi. 89 n.
- Coat, Goldsmith's bloom-coloured, ii. 232.
- Cobb, Mrs., one of the Lichfield ladies, iv. 1.
- Cock Lane ghost, detected by Johnson, ii. 72-3 and n.; account of, iv. 269.
- Codex Divinorum Officiorum* (1459) seen at Paris, iii. 241.
- Colchester, Johnson and Boswell at, ii. 130-31.
- Collations*, Dr. Kennicott's, Johnson on, iii. 272.
- Collectanea*, Dr. Maxwell's, ii. 262-77.
- Collins, the poet, his depression of spirits, i. 224 n., 225 n.; ii. 50; Johnson's essay on for the *Political Calendar*, ii. 50.
- Colman, Mr., his praise of the *Rambler*, i. 166-67; his *Odes*, in ridicule of 'cool Mason and warm Gray,' iii. 183-84; on the learning of Shakespeare, v. 157; his letter from Lexiphanes, vi. 222.
- Colson, Rev. John, Johnson recommended to, i. 71.
- Commentaries by Lowth and Patrick, recommended by Johnson, iv. 64.
- Compiègne, visited, iii. 243.
- Confidence, produces happiness, iii. 55.
- Congé d'élire*, the force of a, vi. 156 and n., 157 n.
- Congreve, Charles, Johnson's schoolfellow, i. 20; 'always muddy,' iii. 300.
- William, fine passages in his *Mourning Bride*, ii. 233-34; quoted, iii. 82; *Various Readings in Johnson's Life* of, v. 197.
- Conjugal infidelity, Johnson on, v. 105-6.

- Content, Johnson says nobody was, iv. 242.
- Contract between Gardner, Rolt, and Smart, iii. 192-93.
- Contractions, Johnson's use of, for his friends' names, iii. 113.
- Controversy, conversation on, iii. 284-85.
- Convents, Johnson on the propriety of allowing, ii. 166.
- Conversation, Johnson's, i. 6-9; Johnson's with George III., ii. 190-95; Boswell's account of this, ii. 191 &; Goldsmith's, on a certain occasion, 'overflowed and drowned' one of the party, ii. 268; Goldsmith's, iii. 52; Goldsmith's constant attempts to shine in, iii. 85-6; Johnson's great success in, iii. 86; Johnson on Colley Cibber's, iii. 188; Johnson on Oglethorpe's, iv. 62; Johnson on Lord Elibank's, iv. 62; on conversation, vi. 4; distinguished from talk, vi. 24.
- Cookery, Johnson thinks himself a judge of, ii. 131-32; discussion on, iv. 287; the best book on, iv. 287-88.
- Cook, Captain, his great accuracy, iv. 18.
- Cooper, John Gilbert, iv. 151 &; his anecdote of Garrick on Johnson's *Dictionary*, v. 144.
- Corelli, said to have come to England to see Purcell, iii. 190.
- Coriat, Tom, iii. 33; his travels, iii. 32-3.
- Cork, Earl of, ii. 273; Johnson describes, iv. 185.
- Corn Laws, 'What, sir, would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do it?' ii. 274.
- Cornwallis, Archbishop, assists De Groot, iv. 127.
- Corsica, Johnson urges Boswell to publish his *Tour*, ii. 167; its publication, ii. 200; Johnson advises Boswell 'to empty his head of,' ii. 211; Boswell quotes from preface to the *Tour*, ii. 220 &; Johnson's praise of the *Tour* in, ii. 221.
- Cotterell, the Misses, Reynolds meets Johnson at their house, i. 197.
- Country, Johnson on life in the, iii. 50.
- Countries, unhealthy, the most populous, iv. 234.
- Courage, instances of Johnson's, iii. 151-52; necessary for maintaining virtue, vi. 131.
- Courtenay, Mr., his verses on Johnson, i. 36; his character of Johnson, i. 179; his poetical character of Johnson, i. 258; ii. 19; on *Rasselas*, ii. 19.
- Coverley, Sir Roger de, Johnson's delight in, iii. 216.
- Cowdray, visited by Johnson, v. 293.
- Cowley, Johnson thinks of publishing an edition of the works of, iv. 38; Johnson disapproves of Hurd's edition of, iv. 38; Johnson's Life of, v. 176; *Various Readings in the Life of*, v. 176-77.
- Cowper, Gilbert, calls Johnson 'the Caliban of Literature,' ii. 273; called the 'Punchinello' by Johnson, ii. 273.
- Coxcomb, once a coxcomb always one, ii. 278.
- Coxeter, Thomas, his proposed collection of English poets, iv. 160 and &.
- Crabbe, Rev. George, Johnson receives *The Village* for revision, vi. 13; Johnson's corrections, vi. 13 &.
- Cradock, Mr., author of *Zobeide*, iv. 46; his admiration of Johnson's conversation, iv. 47.
- Craven, Lady, iv. 31 and &.
- Creation, *The*, by Sir R. Blackmore, ii. 255 and &.
- Critical Review, *The*, ii. 27, 74 and &; Johnson writes in, ii. 76, 143.
- Criticism, a pretty essay on the elements of, ii. 60; Johnson on, ii. 236.
- Croft, Rev. Herbert, Burke's description of his style, v. 196; his *Family Discourses*, vi. 132; his advice to a pupil always to read a book through, vi. 142.

- Cromwell, Oliver, Johnson thinks of writing the life of, vi. 70.
- Crosbie, Mr. Andrew, iii. 221; talks of alchemy with Johnson, iii. 222.
- Crossbow, argument like an arrow from a, vi. 116.
- 'Crown and Anchor,' ii. 214; iii. 44; supper at, with Reynolds, Johnson, etc., iv. 48.
- Cruikshank, Mr., Johnson writes to, vi. 198-99; Johnson leaves him a book, vi. 237 n.
- Cullen, Dr., on sleep, iv. 170; consulted by Boswell for Johnson, vi. 96.
- Culloden, the Macdonalds placed on the right at, iii. 124.
- Cumberland, Richard, publication of his *Odes*, iv. 51; 'a million,' says Johnson, when speaking of the want of company, vi. 218 n.
- Cumming, Tom, a Quaker friend of Boswell's, vi. 49.
- Curat Lex*, Johnson's motto for Dr. Dodd's picture, vi. 44.
- Curates, on the salaries of, iv. 140.
- Cust, Francis Cockayne, his story about Savage, i. 132, 133 n.
- DACIER, Madame, her prose translation of Homer, v. 36 n.
- Dæmonology*, King James's, v. 83.
- Dalrymple, Sir John, his *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*, iii. 66; an honest man, but his writings mere bounce, iii. 66.
- Dalzell, Professor, on Johnson's knowledge of Greek, vi. 219.
- Dance, Johnson's learning to, v. 217-18.
- Darteneuf, Charles, an epicure, iii. 287.
- Davies, Mr. Thomas, the bookseller, his shop at No. 8 Russell Street, ii. 56 and n.; introduces Boswell to Johnson, ii. 57-8; encourages Boswell to follow up the introduction, ii. 61; his pretty wife, ii. 144; his sympathies with Barette, ii. 240; publishes writings of Johnson without permission, iii. 125; quarrels with Barette, iii. 62; retires from the stage, iv. 224-25; his benefit, iv. 250; his *Memoirs of Garrick*, v. 131 n.; dressed as the Thane of Ross, v. 147; Johnson on his learning, v. 152; letter to, from Johnson referring to his paralytic stroke, vi. 65; Johnson's affectionate letter to, vi. 199.
- Dawkins, Henry, referred to as an example of the enjoyment of wealth, v. 261.
- Dean, Richard, his work on the future existence of animals, ii. 206-7.
- Death, conversation on, ii. 239, 253-54; Johnson is annoyed at the discussion of the subject, ii. 253-54; explanation of his fear of, iii. 150-51; the gate of life, iv. 297; discussion of the fear of, and Johnson's horror of, iv. 155, 297; vi. 104, 229; who can run the race with it? vi. 193; Johnson's, vi. 250; his wife's, i. 189.
- De Claris Oratoribus*, Johnson would have made an admirable work on, vi. 150.
- Dedication, to the Earl of Orrery for Mrs. Lenox, i. 207; to the Marquis of Abreu for Barette's *Dictionary*, ii. 26; to the Queen for Hoole's translation of Tasso, ii. 51 n.; to the King for Dr. Kennedy's *Astronomical Chronology*, ii. 37; to the Earl of Middlesex for Mrs. Lenox's *Female Quixote*, ii. 37; to the Earl of Shaftesbury for Mr. Bennet's edition of Ascham's English works, ii. 128; to the Duke of York, for some music for the German flute, ii. 160; to the King for Mr. Adam's *Treatise on the Globes*, ii. 198; for Angel's 'shorthand,' iii. 79; to the King for Dr. Zachary Pearce's posthumous works, iv. 116.
- Dedications, Johnson's skill in, ii. 159.
- Deeds, note on the registration of, v. 211-12.
- Definitions, some in Johnson's *Dictionary* erroneous, i. 242; some humorous, i. 242; some obnoxious, i. 242-43; Johnson's power in, iii. 12-13.

- Defoe, Daniel, his invention of a ghost story, iii. 21 n.; his *Robinson Crusoe*, iv. 268; Johnson gives Mrs. Montagu a catalogue of his works of imagination, iv. 268.
- Deformities, Johnson's, v. 283.
- Degree, Johnson's difficulty in obtaining his, i. 96-98; made M.A. Oxon., i. 224, 229-30 LL.D. Dublin, ii. 149; D.C.L. Oxon., iii. 180-82.
- Delany, Dr., Johnson praises his *Observations on Swift*, iv. 251.
- Demosthenes, on rhetorical action, iii. 67.
- Dempster, Mr. George, ii. 74; his appreciation of Johnson's society, ii. 98; his commendation of Johnson's *Journeys*, iii. 154.
- Dennis, John, his critical works, iv. 48.
- Derby, Rev. John, iv. 116.
- Derby, china manufactory at, iv. 164.
- Derrick, Samuel, Boswell's 'first tutor in the ways of London,' i. 91; ii. 117; Johnson's story of his presence of mind, ii. 118-19; has a character he need not run away from, ii. 61; or Smart the better poet, vi. 29.
- Deserted Village*, Johnson's share in Goldsmith's, ii. 164.
- Desmoulins, Mrs., finds an asylum in Johnson's house, i. 38, 49, 191; on Mrs. Johnson, i. 192; Johnson's generosity to, iv. 224.
- Mr. John, Johnson's legacy of £200 to, vi. 237 n.
- Devaynes, Mr., the apothecary, vi. 107.
- Devonshire, Duke of, Johnson's description of, iv. 188-89; his kind reception of Johnson, vi. 189.
- Devotion, Johnson on, vi. 62.
- Dialogues, Lord Lyttelton's a 'nugatory performance,' ii. 270.
- Dial-plate of Johnson's watch, ii. 210.
- Diamond, Mr., an early friend of Johnson's, i. 196.
- Diary, extract from Johnson's, v. 98 n.
- Dibdin, Mr. Charles, sets Boswell's verse to music, ii. 257.
- Dick, Sir Alexander, his letter on tree-planting, iv. 105-6; Johnson asks his opinion on his own illness, vi. 96.
- Dictionary, announcement of Johnson's, i. 143; price for, stipulated, i. 144; plan for the, addressed to Lord Chesterfield, i. 144-45; discussion on, with Dr. Adams, i. 146-47; employment of six amanuenses on the, i. 147; prayer on beginning second volume of the, i. 207; conclusion of the, i. 235; publication of the, i. 239; preface of the, i. 239-42; payment for the, i. 249; epitome of the, i. 250; review of the, in the *Bibliothèque des Savans*, i. 265; the scheme of the, first mentioned by Doddsley to Johnson, i. 143; Wilkes's *jeu d'esprit* on the, i. 246; epigram by Garrick on the, i. 246; Johnson thinks he was longer over it than necessary, ii. 106; 'Dictionary Johnson,' ii. 52; receives the Oxford M.A. degree in recognition of the, ii. 224, 229-30; recognition by the Academia della Crusca, and the French Academy, i. 244; receives the Dublin LL.D. in recognition of the, ii. 149; and the Oxford D.C.L., iii. 180-82; publication of the revised edition of the, iii. 60; Johnson on the revised edition, iii. 61; of *Ancient Geography*, by Macbean, iii. 60.
- Dilly, Messrs., the booksellers, Johnson dines with, iii. 103-14; meeting of Johnson and Wilkes at a dinner given by, iv. 75-85.
- Mr. Edward, Johnson's letter to about Boswell, v. 95; his death, v. 97; letter to Boswell, iv. 113-14; Johnson's letter to, iv. 128; another letter to, from Johnson, vi. 92.
- Squire, Johnson's visit to, v. 256.
- Dinners, the Easter Day dinner at Johnson's lodgings, iii. 70; at General Oglethorpe's, when

- Goldsmith sang Tony Lumpkin's song, iii. 72; at General Paoli's, iii. 75; at Mr. Beauclerk's, iii. 94; at Mr. Dilly's, when Goldsmith was 'impertinent,' iii. 102-12; the 'testator' dinner at General Paoli's, iii. 116-17; at Mr. Dilly's, when Johnson met Wilkes, iv. 75-85; at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, iv. 251.
- Diploma, of Johnson's M.A. Oxon., i. 229-31; of Johnson's Dublin LL.D., ii. 149; of Johnson's Oxford D.C.L., iii. 181-82.
- Discoveries, Reynolds's, Johnson's admiration for, vi. 154.
- Dissertation on the Greek Comedy*, ii. 20.
- Divorce, discussion on, v. 51-2.
- Doctrine of the Church of Rome, Johnson on the, ii. 251; iii. 8-9.
- Dodd, Dr., Johnson assists, iv. 122-23, 141, 142-44; put to death for forgery, iv. 123 and *n.*; Johnson writes his 'Speech to the Recorder of London,' iv. 143; his sermon at Newgate, 'The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren,' written by Johnson, iv. 143; Johnson writes his Petition to the King, iv. 144; also his Petition from the City of London in favour of, iv. 144; also his last solemn 'Declaration,' iv. 145; letter to Johnson, iv. 149-50; Johnson's reflections on, iv. 150; Johnson's motto for his picture, vi. 44; his *Thoughts in Prison*, iv. 168, 271.
- Dodds, Mrs., Johnson writes her Petition to the Queen, iv. 144.
- Dodsley, Mr. Robert, i. 91, 143-44; his Preceptor, 150; his tragedy of *Cleone*, ii. 2; his life should be written, iii. 287; his *Muse in Livery*, iii. 287; his dispute with Goldsmith on poetry, iv. 45; mentions to Johnson the scheme for the Dictionary, v. 104-5; his blank verse poem, *Public Virtue*, v. 158-59; his *Cleone* complimented, v. 159.
- 'Dogged veracity,' a Duke of Devonshire so characterised, v. 78.
- Dominicetti, an Italian quack, ii. 244-45.
- Donaldson, Mr. Alexander, his cheap book-shop, ii. 101; defies the common-law rights of literary property, ii. 101; Johnson's indignation with, ii. 101.
- Donne, Dr., Walton's Life of, iii. 210.
- Dosa, George and Luke, ii. 163 *n.*
- Dossie, Mr., author of a treatise on agriculture, v. 150.
- Douglas, Dr., Bishop of Salisbury, his description to Boswell of Johnson's *London*, i. 93; sups with Johnson and Boswell, ii. 214; on Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*, ii. 216 and *n.*; visits Johnson, vi. 111.
- Dr. James, his collection of editions of Horace, vi. 113.
- Sir John, iv. 165. *See also* Douglas.
- Douglas Cause, The, Boswell defends, ii. 203; Boswell's annoyance at Johnson's want of interest in, iii. 85 *n.*; Andrew Stuart's letter to Lord Mansfield on, iii. 84-5.
- Doxy, Miss, Garrick's niece, v. 116.
- Drake, Sir Francis, Johnson writes the life of, i. 111.
- Drelincourt on Death, iii. 20.
- Dress, description of Johnson's, at the performance of *Irene*, i. 158; when Boswell first saw him, ii. 62.
- 'Drift, what is your, sir?' asked of Langton when he presented Johnson with the list of texts on charity, vi. 115.
- Drinking, 'drives away care,' iii. 40; discussion on its influence, iv. 48-50; habits of, iv. 171; effects of, iv. 172; the man who was 'habitually and equably drunk,' v. 90.
- Drumgould, Colonel, head of *L'École Militaire*, iii. 244.
- Drummond of Hawthornden, his *Polemio-middinia*, iv. 286.
- Drummond, Mr. William, bookseller, and Johnson's friend, ii. 182; Johnson's letters to, 183-87.

- Drummond, Dr., v. 83; his death at Naples, iv. 93 *n*.
- Dryden, characterised by Gray, ii. 168 *n*.; as Bayes in the *Rehearsal*, iii. 26; Johnson's Life of, referred to, v. 177; *Various Readings in*, v. 183; his *Aurengzeb* quoted, vi. 137.
- Duelling, is it consistent with moral duty? iii. 37-8; defence of, by Johnson, iii. 81; discussion on, vi. 48 and *n*.
- Duglas, James de, said to have taken Bruce's heart to the Holy Land, iv. 180.
- Du Halde's *China*, i. 120; ii. 208; Johnson's account of Green and Guthrie's translation of, v. 168.
- Dunbar, Dr., his *Essay on the History of Mankind*, v. 132.
- Dunciad*, *The*, written for fame, iii. 183; Johnson quotes the last lines, li. 233; verses from, quoted, vi. 140.
- Duncomoe, Mr., a very pleasing man, v. 15.
- Dundas, Henry, Lord Melville, his speech in favour of the negro, iv. 215.
- Dunning, Mr., a member of the Club, iv. 131; his tribute to Johnson's conversational powers, iv. 242.
- Durandi Sanctuarium* (1458) seen in Paris, iii. 240.
- Davy, Major-General Alexander, his death, ii. 11; account of, ii. 11 *n*.
- Dyer, Samuel, a learned member of the Club, ii. 172 and *n*.; v. 150.
- John, his poem *The Fleets*, iii. 292.
- EARTHQUAKE**, a shock of, in Staffordshire, iv. 138.
- Easton Maudit, Johnson's visit to Dr. Percy at, ii. 146-47.
- Eating, Johnson defends the enjoyment of good, ii. 130; Johnson on, ii. 180.
- Eccles, Isaac Ambrose, one of the guests at Boswell's supper-party, ii. 88.
- Ecole Militaire*, in Paris, iii. 232.
- Economy, conversation on, iv. 266.
- Edial, Johnson's school at, i. 66.
- Edinburgh, Johnson's visit to, iii. 121, 123.
- Education, Johnson on, ii. 164; 'I hate byroads in,' iii. 249; Milton and Locke on, v. 62.
- Edwards, Edward, Johnson writes to, introducing Dr. Burney, v. 69.
- Mr., meeting of Johnson with, v. 3, 4, 5; an old fellow-collegian of Johnson's, v. 227.
- Eglintoune, Alexander, Earl of, his admiration for Johnson, ii. 218.
- the Countess of, her regard for Johnson, v. 68.
- Egmont, John, Earl of, his *History of the House of Yvery*, vi. 34.
- Egotists, on, iv. 173-74.
- Eld, Mr., a Staffordshire Whig, v. 27.
- Elibank, Patrick, Lord, Johnson's high opinion of, iv. 33; conversation on, iv. 62.
- Eliot, Lord, iv. 59; travels with Mr. Stanhope, vi. 165; sends Johnson Carleton's *Memoirs*, vi. 166-67.
- Elizabeth, Madame, Johnson sees, iii. 237.
- Queen, Johnson on her learning, v. 152.
- Elliot, Sir Gilbert, his good pronunciation, iii. 18.
- Ellis, John, the literary money-scrivener, iv. 30 and *n*.
- Elphinstone, Mr. James, publishes the *Rambler* in Edinburgh, i. 167; Johnson's letters to, i. 168, 169, 170; supplies Johnson with translations for the *Rambler*, i. 182; entertains Johnson and Boswell at dinner, iii. 81; his *Martial* 'the most extraordinary translation,' iv. 260.
- Elwal, Mr., the trial of, iii. 22, 107.
- Emigration, conversation on, iv. 233.
- English language and pronunciation, Johnson on, iii. 17.
- Englishmen, the cold reserve in, vi. 28.

- Entail, encroachments on the dominion of Providence, iii. 261; Scottish law of, iii. 260; conversation on, iii. 270-71; reasons why entails are good, iii. 270.
- Epigram, to Eliza, i. 90, 104-5; *ad Lauram*, i. 121; on the Duke of Marlborough's grand bridge over a small river, i. 290; *ad Ricardum Savage*, i. 126.
- Epilogue, by Johnson, to be spoken by a lady who was to personate the ghost of Hermione, i. 30; to the *Distressed Mother*, by Addison, iv. 53; by Sir W. Yonge, to *Irene*, iv. 156.
- Episcopal Church of Scotland, Laud's Liturgy of the, iii. 27.
- Epitaph, on Philips, by Johnson, i. 111-12; ii. 182; Johnson's dissertation on Pope's, ii. 8-9; on Mrs. Bell, by Johnson, iii. 60 n; on Goldsmith, iv. 88-91; some exaggerated praise allowable in, iii. 249.
- Epitome of Dictionary, i. 250.
- Equality of men and women, conversation on, iv. 289, 290.
- Erasmus, a quotation from, applied to Johnson, vi. 130 n.
- Erse books, given to Johnson, iii. 133; Irish and Gaelic languages the same, iii. 160; Johnson writes the proposals for Shaw's Grammar on, iv. 109.
- Erskine, Hon. Andrew, ii. 74; iv. 152.
- the Hon. Thomas, his eloquence and vivacity, iii. 31.
- Essay, Johnson's, on Epitaphs, ii. 8; Johnson's, on the Bravery of English Common Soldiers, ii. 8; Johnson on Burke's *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, ii. 237; Pope's *Essay on Man*, v. 102.
- Essex, Lord, his advice to his kinsman, 'Rather to go one hundred miles to speak with one wise man, than five miles to see a fair town,' ii. 96.
- Essex Head Club, formed, vi. 89; list of members, vi. 89; rules of, vi. 90 n.
- Eton, Boswell sends his eldest son to, iv. 23.
- Eugenio*, misquoted by Johnson, iii. 95 and n; author of, iii. 95 n.
- Eumelian Club, founded by Dr. Ash, vi. 228.
- Euripides, quoted on armorial bearings, iii. 36 n.
- Evans, Mr., the bookseller, beaten by Goldsmith, iii. 65.
- Exaggerated praise, folly of, v. 220-21.
- Excise, Johnson offends by definition of, i. 243 n.
- Executions, the old method most satisfactory, vi. 26.
- Expedition, Banks' and Islanders', iii. 5, 6; Johnson on, iii. 6.
- Expulsion of six Oxford students, iii. 44; Johnson's illustration of the propriety of this, iii. 44.
- FABLE, Johnson's sketch of a, iii. 87.
- Falconer, Rev. Mr., a non-juring bishop, v. 73.
- Falkland Islands, thoughts on, ii. 277.
- False Alarm, The*, a political pamphlet, ii. 258; iii. 4.
- Fame, literary, difficulty of attaining, iii. 205; men of rank aspiring to, v. 248 and n.
- Families, old, Johnson's respect for, iii. 10.
- Farmer, Dr., ii. 39; letter from Johnson to, ii. 260-61; Johnson requests particulars of Ambrose Philips, Broome, and Gray, v. 124.
- Farquhar, Johnson's opinion of, v. 147.
- Faulkner, George, as a mimic, iii. 12.
- Feeling, conversation on, ii. 239; 'Very feeling people pay you by feeling,' ii. 240.
- Female Quixote*, by Mrs. Lennox, dedication by Johnson, ii. 37.
- Fenton, Johnson's Life of, quoted, iii. 172 n.
- Ferguson, Sir Adam, M.P., iii. 27-8.
- James, the self-taught natural philosopher, ii. 244.
- Feudal system, Boswell's arguments in favour of, iii. 35.

- Fielding, Henry, compared with Richardson, ii. 202-3; Johnson on, iii. 31, 32 and  $\pi$ ; his *Amelia*, iv. 50.
- Filby, John, Goldsmith's tailor, ii. 232.
- Fingal, the poem of, a mere unconnected rhapsody, ii. 271.
- Fireworks, Johnson at a display of, vi. 157.
- Fitzherbert, Mr. William, iv. 151; v. 87.
- Flageolet, Johnson once bought one, but never made a tune out of it, iv. 243.
- Flatman, Thomas, discussion on his poems, iv. 38; Rochester's verses on, iv. 38.
- Flattery, by royalty, a mere formula, iii. 89; pleases very generally, iii. 210.
- Fleas, Johnson on a man who told a long story about, iii. 50-1.
- Fleeco, *The*, Dyer's poem, iii. 292.
- Fleet Street, Johnson's preference for, ii. 123; cheerfulness of, iii. 186; v. 3.
- Fleming, Sir Michael le, ii. 123  $\pi$ .
- Flexman, Mr., a dissenting minister, vi. 159.
- Flint, Bet, Johnson's account of, v. 239; a verse of her Life quoted, v. 239  $\pi$ .
- Flood, Mr., on Johnson as a public orator, ii. 282; verses on Johnson by, vi. 256.
- Floyd, the poor author, ii. 119.
- Floyer, Sir John, i. 18; his asthma and long life, vi. 101.
- Fludyer, a fellow-student of Johnson's, iii. 285.
- Fontainebleau, visit to, iii. 236.
- Fontenelle's *Panegyric on Dr. Morin*, Johnson's translation of, i. 113.
- Foote, Samuel; Foote and Murphy, ii. 27-8; Johnson on, as a mimic, iii. 12; his story 'Sherry is dull,' ii. 115; calls Lord Monboddo an Elzevir edition of Johnson, iii. 46  $\pi$ ; on a dinner Johnson invited Boswell to, iii. 70; threatens to caricature Johnson on the stage, iii. 151; Johnson on, ii. 240-43 and 240  $\pi$ ; not a good mimic, iii. 151; iv. 76; his description of Johnson while at Paris, iii. 245-46; Johnson's description of him, iv. 76, 77; his humour 'irresistible,' iv. 77; quite impartial, for he tells lies of everybody, iii. 276; compared with Garrick, iv. 186; compared with Betterton, iv. 187; story of, and Garrick's bust, vi. 60; a comical fellow, vi. 110.
- Foppery, incurable, ii. 273.
- Forbes, Sir William, iv. 48, 88; his account of the Round Robin, iv. 89-90; his simile of the bottle of beer, iv. 50; on Boswell's Johnsonian journal, iv. 210.
- Ford, Cornelius, i. 24.
- Ford, Sarah, Johnson's mother, i. 70; 'Parson,' ii. 24; v. 53, 54; account of the family of, i. 9, 10.
- Fordyce, Dr. James, a warm friend of Johnson's, vi. 245.
- Dr. George, elected a member of the club, iii. 129.
- Foreigners, Johnson's contempt for, v. 154.
- Forrester, Colonel, author of the *Politics Philosopher*, iv. 31.
- Forster, his *Voyage to the South Seas*, iv. 182.
- 'Fountains, The,' a fairy tale, by Johnson, ii. 183.
- Fothergill, Dr. Thomas, iii. 180.
- John, the Quaker physician, iii. 306  $\pi$ .
- Fox, Charles, joins the Literary Club, iii. 129; Johnson's praise of his abilities, iv. 268 and  $\pi$ ; did not talk freely before Johnson, vi. 5; the cry of 'old Fox' raised, vi. 113; 'has divided the kingdom with Caesar,' vi. 127.
- France, Johnson goes to, with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, iii. 227; Johnson's private journal of his tour in, iii. 232-44; 'worse than Scotland in everything but climate,' iii. 245; Johnson's dress in, iii. 245 and  $\pi$ .
- Francis, Rev. Dr., commendation of his translation of Horace, v. 60.
- Franklin, Dr., his definition of man, iv. 246; his translation of Lucian, v. 172.



- French Queen, impressed by Mrs. Thrale, iii. 228.
- French, Johnson's account of the, ii. 270; iii. 233-44; does not talk French well, iii. 231; Johnson's observations on, iii. 245; 'a gross, ill-bred, untaught people,' v. 56; Johnson's praise of the literature, vi. 72.
- Fréron, Voltaire's antagonist, Johnson visits, iii. 235.
- Friend, Sir John, executed for high treason, iii. 40.
- Friendship, 'the wine of life,' i. 245; 'should be kept in constant repair,' i. 246; Johnson on, iii. 20; is absolute agreement necessary for? iii. 38-39; ode on, by Johnson, i. 122; ii. 182; 'the cordial drop to make the nauseous draught of life go down,' v. 87; 'friendships formed by caprice or chance,' vi. 114.
- Frisick, Johnson's inquiry for books in that language, ii. 138.
- Fullarton, Mr., v. 60.
- Fundamentally sensible, the woman who was, v. 236.
- Funeral, Garrick's, too ostentatious, vi. 44; Johnson's, vi. 252.
- Future state, Johnson on, iii. 19-21; Dr. Henry More on, iii. 19; Bishop Hall on, iii. 20 *π.*; music part of a, iii. 21; conversation on, iv. 203.
- GABBLE, 'Nay, if you are to bring in gabble, I'll talk no more,' v. 55.
- Gaelic and Irish languages the same, iii. 14, 160.
- Gaelic Dictionary, by Mr. Shaw, iv. 109.
- Gagnier, M., Johnson visits his very luxurious house, iii. 233-34.
- Gaming, Johnson on, iii. 33; iv. 29, 32.
- Ganganelli, pretended letters of, iv. 289.
- Gardner, Mr., the bookseller, his contract with Rolt and Smart, iii. 192-93.
- Gardiner, Mrs., Johnson's kind attention to, vi. 81; Johnson leaves her a book as a remembrance, vi. 237 *π.*
- Garrick, David, a pupil of Johnson's, i. 66; his account of Johnson and Mrs. Johnson, i. 68; accompanies Johnson to London, i. 71; goes to Mr. Colson's academy, i. 71; his dispute with Johnson on emphasis, i. 131; becomes manager of Drury Lane, i. 142; produces *Irene*, i. 154; 'our Garrick is a salad,' i. 159 *π.*; believed to be satirised in the *Rambler*, i. 174; his ode on the death of Mr. Pelham, i. 218; his epigram on the Dictionary, i. 246; refuses Johnson an order for the play for Miss Williams, ii. 59; his benefit night to Miss Williams, ii. 59 *π.*; his liberal charity praised by Johnson, ii. 59 *π.*; 'the first man in the world for sprightly conversation,' ii. 64; at dinner with Johnson at Boswell's lodgings, ii. 231; a witness at Barretti's trial, ii. 242; Johnson's treatment of, iii. 49; is not free in lending books, iii. 49; Hawkin's misstatement with respect to Johnson and, ii. 141; Boswell's true account of Garrick's admission to the Club, ii. 141-42; Mrs. Piozzi's misrepresentation of Johnson's conduct towards, ii. 142; his irritation at Johnson's ridicule, ii. 228; 'no wonder he is vain,' iii. 81; his description of Johnson's wit, iii. 86; his excellent prologue, iii. 174-75; 'tis a futile fellow,' iii. 175; finds out 'Latin by the meaning, instead of the meaning by the Latin,' iii. 232; begins to look old, iii. 250; about to leave the stage, iii. 279; Johnson on Garrick's conversation, iii. 304; conversation on, iv. 43; as Abel Druggier, iv. 43; Johnson says he 'does not play the part of Archer in the *Beaux Stratagem*' well, iv. 58; his great liberality, iv. 58; compared with Foote, iv. 78, 186; his discussion with Johnson on translation, and the plot of a play, iv. 260-61; his fame, iv. 264-65; Johnson says of him 'how little he assumes,'

- iv. 264-65; Foote on the liberality of, iv. 265; grumbled at Peg Woffington for making his tea too strong, iv. 265; Johnson allows no one to praise or blame him but himself, v. 13; his death, v. 73; his bust in Lichfield Cathedral, v. 173 *n.*; had 'friends but no friend,' v. 87; Johnson's description of, v. 88; his death 'eclipsed the gaiety of nations,' v. 88; Johnson applauds but teases him, v. 147; his portrait given to Langton by Lady Diana Beauclerk, v. 233; Beauclerk's inscription beneath it, v. 233; his funeral discussed, vi. 44.
- Garrick, Mrs., entertains Johnson, v. 232; Johnson dines with, to meet Hannah More and Dr. Burney, vi. 109.
- Peter, David's brother, i. 70; iii. 162; his great resemblance to his brother, iii. 162, 302; his social talents, iv. 1; Johnson and Boswell dine with, iv. 1-2; Boswell visits, v. 112.
- Gastrel, Rev. Mr., the barbarian who cut down Shakespeare's mulberry tree, iv. 5.
- Mrs., entertains Johnson and Boswell at Lichfield, iv. 5.
- Gaubius, Professor Jerome David, on madness, i. 39.
- Gay, the Orpheus of highwaymen, ii. 213.
- Gentilhomme, un, est toujours gentilhomme*, ii. 154.
- Gentility, conversation on, iii. 188-89.
- Gentle Shepherd*, Allan Ramsay's, the best pastoral ever written, iii. 75.
- Gentleman, Mr., gives Boswell a description of 'Dictionary Johnson,' ii. 52.
- Gentleman's Magazine*, Johnson's first connection with, i. 80-5; Johnson's contributions to the, i. 60, 80-5, 104-5, 111-12, 116-17, 119-20, 122, 123, 127-28, 139, 143, 150, 208, 263; ii. 26.
- George I. knew nothing and did nothing, iii. 190.
- George II., Johnson furious against, iii. 189.
- III., ii. 26; ii. 42; Johnson's conversation with, ii. 191-95; grants Johnson a pension, ii. 42-3.
- Gesticulating, Johnson's aversion to, in company, vi. 156.
- Gesture, Johnson on, ii. 7.
- Ghost, The*, Churchill's poem caricaturing Johnson, ii. 72.
- Ghosts, Johnson on, ii. 71-2; appearance of, iii. 21; discussed by Boswell and Johnson, iii. 36; Mr. E. Cave declares he has seen one, iii. 36; the question as to their existence, not yet decided, iv. 300; argument against the general belief in them, iv. 231; like a ghost, Johnson does not speak till he is spoken to, v. 9; Parson Ford's, supposed to have been seen, v. 53.
- Giannone, his saying, '*Tu, sei santo ma tu non sei filosofo*,' v. 143.
- Giant's Causeway, worth seeing, but 'not worth going to see,' v. 110.
- Giardini, Felix, Italian violinist, iii. 80.
- Gibbon, Edward, on the *Beggar's Opera*, iii. 213 *n.*; publication of his great work, iii. 288 *n.*; Johnson thinks him ugly, v. 211 *n.*; his imitation of Johnson's style, vi. 223.
- Gibbons, Dr., the dissenting minister, v. 261.
- Gillespie, Dr., gives a full opinion on Johnson's case, vi. 96.
- Glasse, Mrs., her cookery book written by Dr. Hill, iv. 288.
- Glasses, Looking-, Johnson sees them made, iii. 238-39.
- Glowworm, Johnson's fable of the ii. 208; iii. 87.
- Gobelins, Johnson examines the tapestry of, iii. 233.
- Goldsmith, Oliver, 'one of the first men we now have,' ii. 74; Boswell's account of, ii. 77-9; 'an inspired idiot,' ii. 78 *n.*; 'wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll,' ii. 78 *n.*; writes the *Vicar of Wakefield*, ii. 80; story

- of Johnson selling it for him, ii. 80, 81 n.; sups with Johnson and Boswell at the Mitre, ii. 81; argues with Johnson, ii. 88-9; one of the original members of the Club, ii. 140; Johnson reviews *The Traveller*, ii. 143; Johnson's share in *The Traveller*, ii. 163; Johnson's share in the *Deserted Village*, ii. 164; his envy of Johnson's interview with the King, ii. 197; his comedy, *The Good-natured Man*, ii. 199; says, Johnson 'has nothing of the bear but his skin,' ii. 218; his bloom-coloured coat, ii. 232; his *Life of Parnell*, iii. 24; writing a Natural History, iii. 39; afraid of being unnoticed, iii. 43; his character, iii. 50; his conversation, iii. 52; his religion, iii. 69; his *She Stoops to Conquer*, iii. 62, 71 and n., 89; dines with Boswell and Johnson at General Oglethorpe's, iii. 72; sings Tony Lumpkin's song, iii. 73; he beats a bookseller for an abusive letter, iii. 65; dines with Boswell and Johnson at General Paoli's, iii. 75; constantly attempts to shine in conversation, iii. 85-6; says Johnson would make 'little fishes talk like whales,' iii. 87; Johnson on, iii. 90-2; wishes to *shine*, iii. 109; Johnson says he is 'impertinent,' iii. 110; Johnson and Goldsmith reconciled, iii. 112; not like Addison, iii. 112; his envious disposition, iii. 115-16; death, 133 n., 134; his debts, 134; his story of MacLaurin published in his *Animated Nature*, iv. 25 n.; 'not a social man,' iv. 45; dispute with Robert Dodsley about poetry, iv. 45; a monument of, proposed for Westminster Abbey, iv. 87; Johnson's Latin epitaph for, iv. 89; in Greek, 91 n.; Johnson calls him 'a plant that flowereth late,' iv. 169; an agreeable companion, because he 'always talked for fame,' iv. 248; Johnson's conversation on, iv. 253-54; Goldsmith's reputation came late, iv. 253; whatever he wrote was done better than any other man could do, iv. 254; anecdote of Lord Camden and, v. 13; expunged passages from the *Vicar of Wakefield*, v. 77; wrote an epilogue to Mrs. Lennox's *The Sisters*, v. 149 n.; projects going to Aleppo, v. 161; sometimes took liberties with Johnson unpunished, v. 248; on the impossibility of arguing with Johnson, vi. 108.
- Goldsmith, Dr. Isaac, Dean of Cloyne, ii. 79 n.
- Good Friday, 1773, Boswell spends with Johnson, iii. 69; observance of, iii. 203.
- Good humour, a rare quality, iii. 209; Johnson thinks himself 'a good humour'd fellow,' iii. 209.
- Good-natured Man*, Johnson praises the, ii. 202.
- Gordon, Sir Alexander, ii. 131; iii. 124.
- Gordon Riots, Johnson describes the, v. 125-27.
- Gough Square, Fleet Street, Johnson's residence while composing the *Dictionary*, i. 148.
- Gout, Johnson suffers with, vi. 74.
- Government, Johnson on, ii. 264; maintains that all forms of, are safe, iii. 28; characterises as 'imbecility,' the present, iv. 53.
- Gower, Earl, efforts on behalf of Johnson for a Dublin degree, i. 97-8.
- Graces, every man of education would rather be called a rascal than be accused of any deficiency in the graces, iv. 60.
- Graham, Colonel, Boswell's cousin, iii. 14.
- Miss, the beautiful, v. 107.
- Rev. George, author of *Telemachus, a Mask*, ii. 76.
- Grainger, Dr., his poem, *The Sugar Cane*, iii. 292 and n.; Johnson's review on in the *London Chronicle*, ii. 142; his excellent qualities, iii. 293 and n.; his *Ode on Solitude*, iv. 200.
- Grandiloquence, Johnson makes fun of Sir John Dalrymple's, iii. 66.

- Grand Chartreuse, Johnson visits, iii. 241.
- Granger, Rev. James, his *Biographical History*, iv. 96.
- Grattan, Mr., vi. 151.
- Grave*, *The*, Blair's poem, iv. 54.
- Gravina, an Italian critic, vi. 35.
- Gray's Inn Journal*, *The*, ii. 27-8.
- Gray, Thomas, the poet, Johnson on, ii. 69; the 'Remains' of, published by Mason, iii. 22; Johnson said he was dull in a new way which made people think he was great, iii. 176; Boswell's surprise at Johnson's inability to appreciate his poetry, iii. 184; iv. 39; Johnson on *Gray's Odes*, v. 152.
- Great, on the pronunciation of the word, iii. 19.
- Greaves, Samuel, an old servant of Mr. Thrale's, vi. 89.
- Greek and Latin languages, essential to a good education, ii. 119; Johnson proposes to study Greek at the age of sixty-seven, iv. 95; 'every man gets as much of it as he can,' v. 161; Johnson's knowledge of, vi. 218-19.
- Green, Dr. John, Bishop of Lincoln, i. 20.
- Green, Mr. Richard, of Lichfield, his museum, iii. 305-6; v. 94, 111; Johnson's letter to, with epitaphs, vi. 227.
- 'Green Man' at Ashbourne, iv. 209.
- Green room, Johnson's amusement in, v. 146.
- Greenwich, Johnson and Boswell spend the day at, ii. 119; the Hospital criticised, ii. 122; Johnson does not like the Park as well as Fleet Street, ii. 123.
- Grenville, Mr. George, his character given contemptuously by Johnson, ii. 279.
- Gresham College, iv. 24.
- Greville, Fulke, his *Maxims* quoted, vi. 138.
- Grief, the passing nature of, iv. 138-39.
- Grierson, Mr., introduces Dr. Maxwell to Johnson, ii. 263; dies in Germany, ii. 263; Johnson's praise of, ii. 263.
- Grierson, Mrs., a very learned lady, ii. 263 n.
- Groot, Isaac de, nephew of Grotius, befriended by Johnson, iv. 126-27.
- Grotius, ii. 116; 'from whom every man of learning has learnt something,' iv. 127.
- Grove, Henry, his excellent papers in the *Spectator*, iv. 41.
- Guimené, Princess, Johnson sees, iii. 237.
- Guthrie, Mr. William, his parliamentary debates, i. 84-5.
- Guyon's *Amazons*, Johnson's translation of, i. 113.
- Gwyn, Mr., the architect, Johnson improves his *Thoughts on the Coronation of George III.*, ii. 33; Johnson writes the dedication to *London and Westminster Improved*, ii. 181; iii. 279-80.
- HABEAS CORPUS the peculiar advantage of our government over that of other countries, ii. 223.
- Habits, the force of early, iii. 212.
- Hackman, Mr., his jealousy, v. 84.
- Hague, Mr., one of the masters at Lichfield School, i. 20.
- Hailes, Lord, his fine character, ii. 97, 113; his letter about Johnson, quoted, ii. 97; compares Johnson and Swift, ii. 97; discovers Johnson's hand in the argument presented by Boswell, iii. 58; sends Johnson a copy of his *Annals of Scotland*, iii. 132; asks for Johnson's criticisms on it, iii. 132, 136; Johnson's affection for, iii. 145; Johnson commends his *Annals* for accuracy, iii. 262-63; compared with Henault, iii. 263; Johnson on the *Annals*, iv. 63; sends Johnson his *Lactantius*, iv. 135; and *Vanity of Human Wishes*, i. 154 n.; his censure of Prior, iv. 195.
- Hale, Lord Chief-Justice, iii. 192; his long and painful course of study, vi. 145.
- Hales, John, of Eton, the 'ever memorable,' vi. 149.

- Hall, Bishop, on a future state, iii. 20 *n.*
- Hall, General, v. 65.
- Hamilton, Gavin, his picture of Mary Queen of Scots, iii. 125.
- William Gerard, Johnson engages in a political discussion with, ii. 150; advises Johnson as to his pension, iii. 168; his anxiety to assist Johnson during his illness, vi. 80-1; letter from Johnson to, vi. 197; Johnson longs to see him 'in a happier hour,' vi. 197; Johnson remembers him in his will, vi. 237 *n.*; on the chasm made by the death of Johnson, vi. 253.
- Mr., of Bangor, his poem not appreciated by Johnson, iv. 152-53.
- Hammond, Dr., his Commentary on the New Testament recommended by Johnson, iv. 64.
- Hanmer, Sir Thomas, epitaph on, i. 139; ii. 182.
- Hanway, Mr. Jonas, his *Essay on Tea*, i. 256; acquired some reputation by travelling abroad, but lost it all by travelling at home, ii. 268.
- Happiness, Johnson on Hume's statement that all are equally happy, ii. 165; the product of confidence, iii. 55; Johnson did not believe in present, iv. 59.
- Hardykute, the ballad of, ii. 237.
- Harrington, Countess of, iv. 142.
- Dr. Henry, author of *Nuga Antiqua*, vi. 18.
- Harris, James, of Salisbury, is he, or is he not, an eminent Grecian? iii. 80; Johnson on his *Journey*, iii. 211; Boswell calls him 'the amiable philosopher of Salisbury'; Johnson, 'a prig and a bad prig,' iv. 245.
- Harte, Mr., commendation of his *History of Gustavus Adolphus*, ii. 266.
- Dr. Walter, vi. 166.
- Harwich, Johnson and Boswell go to, ii. 128, 133.
- Harwood, Dr., translated the New Testament with a 'Socinian twist,' iv. 46.
- Hastie, the schoolmaster whom Boswell defended, iii. 41; Johnson's argument for him, iii. 41-3.
- Hastings, Warren, Johnson's correspondence with, v. 205-8; his letter to Boswell, v. 203-5.
- Hawkesworth, Dr., the author of some pieces attributed to Johnson, i. 140 *n.*, 150; imitates Johnson's style, i. 188, 204; iii. 71; his *Voyage to the South Sea*, iii. 102-3.
- Hawkins, Sir John, i. viii.; his Memoirs of Johnson criticised by Boswell, i. 2-4; reference to Richard Savage, i. 126 *n.*; his list of English Dictionaries before Johnson's, i. 147; Boswell's contemptuous account of, i. 150; his blunders in deciphering Johnson's handwriting, i. 165; one of the original members of the Club, i. 150; ii. 140; calls himself a seceder, ii. 141; an unclubbable man, ii. 141 *n.*; Boswell corrects, ii. 24 *n.*, 25 *n.*; his inaccuracies and prejudice, vi. 161 *n.*, 203, 204 *n.*, 205 *n.*; Johnson bequeaths him some books, vi. 237 *n.*
- Mr., his play wrong in the concoction, iv. 261.
- one of Johnson's ushers at Lichfield, i. 19.
- Hay, Lord Charles, iv. 20; Johnson's conversation with, v. 162.
- Hayes, Rev. Mr., published Dr. Taylor's sermons, iv. 184.
- Heale, the seat of William Bowles, Johnson entertained at, vi. 68.
- Health, Rules for, v. 287.
- Heberden, Dr., Johnson sends for, vi. 63; Johnson's letter to, giving an account of his health, vi. 186; leaves him a book as a remembrance, vi. 237 *n.*
- Hebrides, Tour to the, decided on, iii. 119; carried out, iii. 122; Boswell's account described by Mr. Courtenay, iii. 123; Johnson says his journey was the most pleasant he ever made, iv. 98; Martin's account of the, iv. 244.
- Hector, Edmund, Johnson's schoolfellow and friend, i. 13, 18, 22, 23, 53, 54, 55, 56, 62, 63;

- furnishes particulars of Johnson's early life, i. 22-3; Johnson visits at Birmingham, iii. 295; v. 271; Johnson visits for the last time, vi. 207; thanks Boswell for the great pleasure his *Life of Johnson* gave him, vi. 208 n.; letters from Johnson to, v. 281-83; vi. 210-11.
- Heely, Mr. and Mrs., ii. 187; Johnson's kindness to, vi. 203-4.
- Hell is paved with good intentions, iii. 206.
- Hensault, Lord Hailes compared with, iii. 263.
- Henderson, Mr., the actor, visits Johnson, vi. 79 n.
- John, student of Pembroke College, vi. 132.
- Henry, Dr. R., his *History of Great Britain*, v. 36.
- Hereditary right, discussion on, iv. 158-59.
- Hermippus Redivivus*, by Cohansen, translated by Dr. John Campbell, ii. 82; Boswell feels himself intellectually, iii. 269.
- Hermit, The*, Dr. Beattie's, Johnson reads with tears, vi. 24.
- Hervey, Miss Elizabeth, story of her and Johnson, v. 132 n.
- Hon. Henry, Johnson's love for, i. 74-5.
- Hon. Thomas, Johnson's correspondence with, on his separation from his wife, ii. 188; Beauclerk's account of, ii. 189; Johnson receives £50 from him for writing a pamphlet, ii. 189; 'one of the gentlest men that ever lived,' iii. 189.
- Hickey, Thomas, the painter, iii. 188.
- Hierocles, Johnson's translation of the *Jests of*, i. 113.
- Highlands of Scotland, East Indies better mapped than the, iii. 202.
- High Life below Stairs*, a diverting farce, v. 146.
- Hill, Aaron, his account of *Irene*, i. 157 n.
- Dr. Birkbeck, i. vii., 49 n.
- Dr. John, a quack doctor, upon whom Garrick made an epigram, ii. 194.
- Hinchcliffe, Dr. John, Bishop of Peterborough, v. 121.
- Historia Studiorum*, an imperfect list of Johnson's works, v. 23.
- History, must be false, ii. 228; conversation on the judiciousness of writing a contemporary, iii. 76; it is no better than an old almanack, iii. 212; a narrative of misery, vi. 195.
- Hitch, Mr. Charles, bookseller, i. 144.
- Hoadly, Dr. Benjamin, author of *The Suspicious Husband*, ii. 203 n.
- Hodge, Johnson's cat, vi. 33.
- Hogarth, his account of first seeing Johnson, i. 110-12.
- Holborn, Johnson lived there, while completing his Dictionary, i. 148.
- Holcroft, Thomas, *Memoirs of*, i. xiv-xv.
- Holder, Mr., Johnson mentions him in his will, vi. 237 n.
- Hollis, Thomas, a 'strenuous Whig,' v. 234.
- Home, John, author of *Douglas*, ii. 118; *Douglas*, quoted, iv. 87; his *History of the Civil War*, iv. 164 n.
- Homer, venerated by Johnson, ii. 273; Johnson on Virgil and, iv. 196; on the antiquity of, v. 33; Johnson on Macpherson's prose translation of, v. 35-6; Boswell says Homer plays the bassoon, Pope the flageolet, iv. 288.
- Hooke, Dr., Johnson visits, in Paris, iii. 240.
- Hoole, John, Johnson writes the Dedication to the Queen for translation of his *Tasso*, ii. 51; his play unsuccessful, iii. 142; introduced to Warren Hastings, v. 208; Johnson asks, to collect a city club, not 'patriots,' v. 224; born in Moorfields, educated in Grub Street, vi. 24-5; Johnson's gratitude for his affection, vi. 192; his account of Johnson's last illness, vi. 240; Johnson leaves him and his son a book, vi. 237 n.
- Hope, Dr., consulted by Boswell for Johnson, vi. 97.

- Horace, Johnson and Wilkes discuss a passage in the *Art of Poetry*, iv. 80-1; Johnson repeats many lines from, iv. 106; discussion on his villa, and his journey to Brundisium, iv. 251-52; his character, iv. 252; quotation from, iv. 281; the lyrical part can never be perfectly translated, v. 60; Johnson translates one of his Odes during his illness, vi. 202.
- Horne, Dr., Bishop of Norwich, talks of editing Walton's *Lives*, iii. 133, 286; his *Letter to Mr. Dunning on the English Particle*, v. 58.
- Horneck, Miss, and her sister, friends of Goldsmith, ii. 79.
- Hospitality, how far should wealth be employed in, iii. 25; conversation on, v. 156-57.
- House of Commons, Lord Bolingbroke's description of the, iv. 236.
- Howard, Mr., an early friend of Johnson's, i. 50; of Lichfield, iv. 224.
- Huddesford, Dr., Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, i. 229.
- Hudibras, a great deal of bullion in, iii. 215.
- Huggins, the translator of Ariosto, Johnson says he has ball without powder, v. 146.
- Humanity, Johnson's generous, vi. 155.
- Hume, David, Johnson argues against, ii. 107; an echo of Voltaire, ii. 206; makes a collection of Scotticisms, ii. 222; his style, iii. 102; his *Essay on Miracles*, iii. 283; his life, iv. 122; on his infidelity, iv. 154-55; 'a Tory by chance, vi. 30.
- Humour, Madame D'Arblay on Johnson's, iii. 118.
- Humphry, Oria, the painter, Johnson's letters to, vi. 102-3 and *n.*
- Hunter, Mr., Johnson's schoolmaster at Lichfield, i. 19-20; iii. 4.
- Miss, tells Johnson of his strange gestures, vi. 21.
- Hurd, Bishop, Johnson disapproves of his edition of Cowley, iv. 38; his 'Commentary' on Horace quoted and discussed, iv. 81 *n.*, 82 *n.*, 83 *n.*; accounts for everything systematically, vi. 26-7; Boswell reads aloud one of his sermons, vi. 124 *n.*, 125 *n.*
- Husband's Miscellany*, containing Johnson's translation of the Messiah, i. 35-6.
- Hussey, Rev. John, v. 71.
- Thomas, Catholic chaplain, vi. 244.
- Hutcheson, John, his *Moral Philosophy*, iv. 58.
- Hutton, Mr., a Moravian friend of Johnson's, vi. 244.
- Hypochondria, Johnson suffers from, i. 37-8; ii. 144.
- Hypocrite, the character of the, in Cibber's play applicable more to Nonjurors than Methodists, iii. 171.
- ICELAND, Horrebow's history of, and the chapter about snakes, iv. 287.
- Idleness, a disease to be combated, ii. 93; iii. 186.
- Idler*, *The*, ii. 5-8; contributions to by Mr. Thomas Warton, Mr. Bennet Langton, Sir Joshua Reynolds, ii. 5; popularity of, ii. 19 *n.*, 20 *n.*; piracies from, ii. 20 *n.*
- Ilk, Johnson's definition of the word, v. 28 *n.*
- Il Palmerino d'Inghilterra*, a romance praised by Cervantes, iv. 12.
- Imitations, serious, vi. 223-26; ludicrous, vi. 221 and *n.*, 222.
- Imlac, a character in *Rasselas*, in which Johnson describes his own feelings, iv. 17.
- Immortality, the belief in, universal, iii. 205.
- Ince, Mr. Richard, a writer in *The Spectator*, iv. 42.
- Inch Kenneth, Johnson wrote verses on, iii. 145.
- Infidel, an, should not be treated with respect, iii. 283-84; capable of any crime, iv. 61.

- Infidelity, conjugal, Johnson on, v. 105-6.
- Infidels, Johnson thinks there are but few, iii. 205.
- Inn, the comfort attainable at a good, ii. 290-91; Shenstone's lines on, ii. 291 n.
- Innes, Mr., his literary fraud, ii. 32.
- Innovation, the age is running mad after, vi. 26.
- Innys, Mr., bookseller, Johnson leaves his representatives £200, in gratitude for assistance received by him, vi. 236 n.
- Inquisition, the, Johnson amuses himself by defending, ii. 128.
- Intentions, hell is paved with good, iii. 206.
- Intuition and sagacity, discussion on, vi. 167.
- Irene*, Johnson's tragedy of, i. 70-5; unfinished sketch of, given to Mr. Langton, i. 76-7; ready, but laid aside, i. 79-80; Johnson's effort to dispose of it, i. 116; Johnson's dispute with Garrick, as to alterations in, i. 154-55; produced by Garrick at Drury Lane, i. 154-55; ill success of, i. 155-56; price paid for, i. 156; receipts for three benefit nights, i. 156; Johnson's dress for this play, i. 158; Sir W. Yonge's epilogue to, i. 156; Aaron Hill's description of, i. 157 n.; Boswell on, i. 156-57; Dr. Burney on, i. 156 n.
- Irish, Clergy, Johnson on, ii. 275; and Gaelic, iii. 14, 160; Johnson says they never speak well of one another, iii. 159; conversation on the language, iv. 236-37; Johnson's love for the country of the, ii. 266.
- Irwin, Captain, meets Johnson in Paris, iii. 234.
- Islam, the old seat of the Congreves, Johnson and Boswell visit, iv. 189-90.
- Isle of Man, Boswell suggests making a tour to the, iv. 86.
- Italian, Johnson, at the age of sixty-nine, proposes to study, v. 271.
- Italy, abandonment of Johnson's tour with the Thrales to, iv. 26-7; Johnson wishes to visit, dreading the winter in England, vi. 160.
- Ivy Lane Club, instituted, i. 149; the surviving members meet, vi. 89; described by Hawkins, vi. 90.
- JACK, Sixteen-string, a noted highwayman, iv. 46 and n.
- Jackson, Harry, one of Johnson's schoolfellows, iii. 303; and early friends, iv. 133.
- Jackson, Mr. Richard, the all-knowing, consulted on the proposed tour in Italy, iv. 28; commends the remarks on trade in Johnson's *Journey*, iv. 139.
- James, Dr., Johnson's schoolfellow and friend, i. 123; letter to Dr. Mead, i. 123 n.; *Medicinal Dictionary*, i. 123; his death, iv. 14; Johnson does not think much of his medicines, vi. 188.
- Jenkinson, the Rt. Hon. Charles, Johnson's letter to, about Dodd, iv. 147-48.
- Jennings, Henry Constantine, his marble statue of a dog, iv. 232.
- Jenyns, Soame, iv. 54; Johnson reviews his *Inquiry into the Origin of Evil*, i. 258; his attack on Johnson, i. 259 n.; a passage in Horace applied to, iv. 282; his *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, iv. 291.
- Joddrel, Mr., a member of the Essex Street Club, vi. 107.
- Johnson, Samuel, as a biographer, i. 2; his birth, i. 10; his father, i. 10, 11; his mother, i. 10; his own account of his early years, i. 13 n., 18 n.; his early Toryism, i. 14; impetuosity of temper, i. 15; his near sightedness, i. 15; power of memory, i. 15, 23; infant precocity, i. 16; opinion of his father, i. 16; 'touched' for scrofula, i. 18; taught by Dame Oliver, i. 18; taught by Mr. Hunter at Lichfield, i. 19, 20; his aptness at study, i. 22; his indolence, i. 23; ii. 143; goes to Stourbridge Grammar School, i. 24; early poetical composi-



tions, i. 25-31; his early reading, i. 32, 33; goes to Pembroke College, i. 33; his Latin translations, i. 35, 36; his 'morbid melancholy', i. 37, 38, 39, 40; his religious progress, i. 41, 42, 43; his life at Oxford, i. 33-48; his early reading, i. 43; 44; leaves Pembroke College, i. 48, 49; his early poetry, i. 49, 50; usher at Market Bosworth, i. 53; proposed publication of a translation of Politian, i. 59; his marriage, i. 65, 66; sets up a private academy, i. 66 *n.*; scheme for a grammar school classes, i. 68, 69, 70; goes to London, i. 71, 72, 80; want of a complete list of his writings, i. 81, 82; Latin verses to Cave, i. 82; translation, i. 83 *n.*; contributes to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 82, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 125, 139, 150; does the debates in Parliament, i. 84, 85; publication and reception of *London*, i. 92, 97, 153; unsuccessful in obtaining his master's degree, i. 98, 99; his convulsions, i. 109; discontinues writing parliamentary debates for *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 115; *Irene*, Cave's letter to Dr. Birch referring to, i. 116; 'proposals for printing Bibliotheca Harleiana,' i. 117; letters to Cave, i. 118, 119, 120; ode on Friendship, i. 122; letters to Dr. Birch, i. 124, 123, 233; affection for his mother, i. 124; ii. 12, 13-25; letter to Mr. Levett, i. 124; iii. 135, 227-28; iv. 97; *Life of Richard Savage*, i. 125, 128-32; friendship with Savage, i. 125-27; *Harleian Miscellany*, i. 137; *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, published, i. 138; prospectus of Dictionary, published, i. 143; *Vanity of Human Wishes*, published, i. 150, 151; his power of rapid composition, i. 151, 161; iv. 50; style of writing, i. 175, 176; is compared with Addison's, i. 180; on Addison's style, i. 181; dictates

a letter to Lauder addressed to Dr. Douglas, i. 185; writes Preface and Postscript to Lauder's Milton forgery, i. 185, 186; temporary cessation of labours, i. 188; prayer on Mrs. Johnson, i. 189, 190; love for his wife, i. 190; *Prayers and Meditations*, i. 190; preserves his wife's wedding-ring, i. 191; his melancholy, i. 193, 245; ii. 144; neglect of duties to his wife, i. 194; his tenderness, i. 194; vi. 155; epitaph on his wife, i. 195 *n.*; meets Topham Beauclerk at Oxford, i. 200, 201; goes with Beauclerk and Langton at three o'clock in the morning, i. 202; contributes to the *Adventurer*, i. 203, 204; letter to Dr. Joseph Warton, i. 204, 205; ii. 261; disguises his style in the *Adventurer*, i. 207 *n.*; writes a dedication for Mrs. Lenox, i. 207; Lord Chesterfield's neglect of, i. 208; attempts to conciliate him, i. 209-11; his powerful memory, i. 213, 217 *n.*; received money from Lord Chesterfield, i. 213 *n.*; on Lord Chesterfield's letters, i. 216; on Lord Bolingbroke's works, i. 218; letter to Sir Robert Chambers, i. 223; M.A. degree conferred by Oxford on, i. 224, 229-30; text of the M.A. diploma of, i. 229-30; letters to Dr. C. Burney, i. 234-35, 265-66; ii. 3, 4, 158-59; letters to Bennet Langton, i. 236-37; ii. 1-3, 10, 11, 29, 30, 172-75, 199, 279, 284-85; iii. 3, 134-35, 207-8, 223; iv. 126; v. 67-8, 280-81; vi. 75-6, 100-2, 185, 194-95; Dictionary, published, i. 239; preface to the, i. 239-42; on definitions, i. 242; offends Excise Commissioners by definition of the word Excise, i. 243 *n.*; receives the *Dictionnaire* from the Académie Française, i. 244; receives the *Vocabulario* from the Academia della Crusca, i. 244; writes a pamphlet for Mr. L. Williams, i. 247; suffers with his eyes, i. 250; writes an epitome of his Dictionary, i. 250; con-

tributes to the *Universal Visitor*, i. 251; contributes to the *Literary Magazine*, i. 251, 252, 263; reviews for the *Literary Magazine*, i. 253-55; patriotism, i. 254-55; on tea-drinking, i. 256-57; review on Jenyn's *Inquiry into the Origin of Evil*, i. 258; writes Dedication and Preface to Payne's *Introduction to the Game of Draughts*, i. 260; writes Introduction to the *London Chronicle*, i. 260; letter to Charles O'Connor, i. 263-64; letters to Thomas Warton, i. 265; ii. 8, 9, 210, 261; goes to see Dodsley's *Cleone*, ii. 2; proposals for edition of Shakespeare, ii. 3; visit of Dr. Burney to, ii. 4; on Warburton and Theobald, ii. 4; starts the *Idler*, ii. 5, 6, 7, 8; popularity of, ii. 19 n., 20 n.; piracies from, ii. 20 n.; on gesture, ii. 7; Essay on Epitaphs, ii. 8; Dissertation on Pope's Epitaphs, ii. 8; Essay on the bravery of the English common soldiers, ii. 8; sorrow on the death of his mother, ii. 12-15; letters to his mother, ii. 12, 13, 14; letter to Miss Porter, ii. 13, 14; referring to the death of his mother, ii. 15; ill-health of his mother, ii. 12, 13, 14; sends money to his mother, ii. 12; wrote *Rasselas*, ii. 15; price received for, ii. 16; Boswell on, ii. 16, 17; Voltaire's *Candide* compared with, ii. 16, 17; similarity of, and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, ii. 17; on the belief of the appearance of departed spirits, ii. 17, 18; liberality of, ii. 20; translates for Mrs. Lenox's English version of Brumoy, ii. 20; *Dissertation on the Greek Comedy*, ii. 20; writes an Introduction to *The World Displayed*, ii. 20; letter from, to Joseph Simpson, ii. 21, 22; abhorrence of a sailor's life, ii. 22; engages in the controversy relating to Blackfriars Bridge, ii. 24, 25; writes *An Address of the Painters to George III. on his Accession to*

*the Throne of these Kingdoms*, ii. 26; writes the Dedication to Baretti's Italian Dictionary, ii. 26; reviews Tytler's *Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots*, ii. 26; complimented by Mr. Murphy, in *A Poetical Epistle to Samuel Johnson*, ii. 27, 28; becomes acquainted with Mr. Murphy, ii. 28, 29; talks of Sheridan in *Cato*, ii. 30; writes the Preface to Rolt's *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, ii. 31; assists Mr. Gwyn in his pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Coronation of George III.*, ii. 33; letters to Mr. Baretti, ii. 33-37, 40-42, 48-50; published in the *European Magazine*, ii. 33 n.; writes a Dedication to the King for Kennedy's *Astronomical Chronology*, ii. 37; writes the Dedication to Mrs. Lenox's *Female Quixote*, ii. 37; writes the Preface to the *Catalogue of the Artist's Exhibition*, ii. 37; letter to Dr. Staunton, ii. 38; receives a pension from George III., ii. 42, 43; consults Sir Joshua Reynolds as to whether he should accept the pension, ii. 43; reply to Sheridan when told a pension was to be granted him, ii. 44; letter to the Earl of Bute, ii. 45; accompanies Sir Joshua Reynolds to Devonshire, ii. 45; visits Plymouth and the Eddystone, ii. 46, 47; admires the navy at Plymouth, ii. 46; contributes to *The Poetical Calendar*, ii. 50; on Macpherson's *Ossian*, ii. 62; has 'no passion' for cleanliness, ii. 64; takes a liking to Boswell, ii. 70-71; writes for the *Critical Review*, ii. 76; argues with Goldsmith, ii. 88, 89; on reading, ii. 93; on miracles, ii. 108; goes with Boswell to Greenwich, ii. 119-24; takes Boswell to drink tea with Mrs. Williams, ii. 125; advice to Boswell when abroad, ii. 127; to Boswell as to studies, ii. 136-37; writes *The Life of Ascham*, ii. 128; goes with Boswell as far as Harwich,

ii. 128; arrival at, ii. 133; and Boswell at Colchester, ii. 130-31; parts with Boswell, ii. 135; letters to Boswell, ii. 135-38, 161-62, 176-78, 211, 221-22, 256; iii. 2, 3, 58-9, 61-2, 119-21, 123-24, 126-29, 134, 140, 141, 147-49, 161-62, 223-37, 229-30; visits Bennet Langton, at Langton, ii. 128-39; review on Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*, ii. 142; peculiarities of, ii. 145-46; letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds, ii. 147, 284; iii. 1; iv. 88, 95-6; visits Cambridge, ii. 147-48; his liberality, ii. 148-49; created Doctor of Laws by Trinity College, Dublin, ii. 149; text of Diploma, ii. 149; letter to Dr. Leland on receiving the LL.D. degree from Trinity College, Dublin, ii. 149-50 *n.*; his 'Prayer before the Study of Law,' ii. 150; introduction to Mr. Thrale, ii. 151-54; account of, ii. 154-55; account of Mr. Thrale's father, ii. 151-52; his edition of Shakespeare published, ii. 156-57; his share in Goldsmith's *Traveller*, ii. 162; and *Deserted Village*, ii. 164; contributions to Mrs. Williams' *Miscellanies*, ii. 182; letters to Mr. William Drummond, ii. 183-87; his conversation with the King, ii. 191-95; his own account, ii. 196; letters to Mrs. Thrale, price sold for, ii. 197 *n.*; farewell with Catherine Chambers, ii. 197-98; expatiates on the advantages of Oxford, ii. 205; letter to Mrs. Lucy Porter, ii. 212; appointed Professor in Ancient Literature, ii. 219; at Brightelmstone with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, ii. 220; presented to General Paoli by Boswell, ii. 229, 230; opinion of, ii. 231; appears as witness at Baret's trial, ii. 242; on Roman Catholic religion, ii. 249-52; *The False Alarm*, a political pamphlet by, ii. 258; iii. 4; letter to the Rev. Dr. Farmer, ii. 260-61; letters to Francis Barber, ii. 261-62; on Government, ii. 264; his charity, ii. 29-60, 265; his

mode of life, ii. 265; his levee, ii. 265; called the 'Caliban of literature,' ii. 273; publishes his *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland Islands*, ii. 277; iii. 4; letter to Joseph Banks, iii. 1, 2; tells Boswell to buy St. Kilda, iii. 7; on second sight, iii. 8; respect for old families, iii. 10; on mimicry, iii. 11, 12; Foote as a mimic, iii. 12; prepares a fourth edition of his Dictionary, iii. 12; definitions, iii. 12, 13; on words and derivations, iii. 13, 14; on translating the New Testament into Erse and Irish, iii. 14; introduced to Sir Alexander Macdonald, iii. 15; on lawyers, iii. 15, 16; on pronunciation, iii. 17-19; assists Boswell in his defence of Hastie, the schoolmaster, iii. 41-3; dictates to Boswell an argument on a question in Scots law, iii. 53-7; writes a preface to Macbean's *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, iii. 60; revised edition of Dictionary published, iii. 60; new edition of Shakespeare published by George Steevens, iii. 60-1; on the revised edition of Dictionary, iii. 61; letter to an American gentleman, Mr. B—d, iii. 63; letter to the Rev. Mr. White, iii. 63-4; invites Boswell to dine with him on Easter Day, 1773, iii. 70; dines at General Ogleshorpe's, iii. 72, 87; dines at General Paoli's, iii. 75; writes a Preface and Dedication to Angel's book on shorthand, iii. 79; on fiddle-playing, iii. 80; does not read books through, iii. 81; on savage life, iii. 83; on suicide, iii. 83-4; on *She Stoops to Conquer*, iii. 88-9; on Goldsmith, iii. 90-2; on Robertson, iii. 91-2; on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, iii. 93; on the claim of lay-patrons to present ministers to parishes in Scotland, iii. 97-101; says Goldsmith is 'impertinent,' iii. 110; and Goldsmith are reconciled, iii. 112;

letter to Rev. Thomas Bagshaw, iii. 114; taken unwell at General Paoli's, iii. 116; is troubled with his eye, iii. 119; love for Boswell, iii. 121; sets out for Edinburgh, iii. 121; and thence to the Hebrides, iii. 121; on Boswell, iii. 121 s.; returns to London, iii. 123; letter to George Steevens, iii. 127-28; in Wales, iii. 135; returns from Wales, iii. 137; writes *The Patriot*, a political pamphlet, iii. 137-38, 140; letter to Mr. Perkins, iii. 139; asks Boswell if they should go on the continent, iii. 141; letter to John Hoole, iii. 142; writes his *Proposals for publishing the Works of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox*, iii. 142; writes Preface to Baret's *Easy Lessons in Italian and English*, iii. 142; *Journal of a Journey to the Hebrides*, published, iii. 143; Latin inscription and translation for a picture of Mary Queen of Scots, iii. 145 s.; letter to Dr. Lawrence, iii. 148; letter to James Macpherson, iii. 150; his fear of death, ii. 252-54; iii. 150-51; iv. 135; vi. 104; his courage, iii. 151-52; his pamphlet, *Taxation no Tyranny*, published, iii. 163, 185; *Political Tracts*, collected and published, iii. 166; speaks to all alike, iii. 173-74; his impressive utterance, iii. 176; thinks himself good-humoured, iii. 209; his argument on the difference between Physician and Doctor of Medicine, iii. 218; his love for Boswell, iii. 226; goes to France with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, iii. 227; runs a race with Baret's, and wins, iii. 228; letter to Mrs. Lucy Porter, iii. 230-31; his private journal of the tour in France, iii. 232-44; observations to Boswell on the French, iii. 245; letter in French to Madame la Comtesse de —, iii. 247; gets up late one morning at Mr. Thrale's, iii. 250; letters to Boswell, iii. 251-53, 256-65; iv. 51-2, 92-4, 97-100, 107-9,

123-25, 129-31, 132-35, 212-13, 216-17; relating to Dr. Percy, iv. 280; v. 65-6, 70-1, 74-92, 96-8, 113-14, 116-17, 119-20, 131-33, 139-40, 208, 272-73, 283-84, 286-87, 292; vi. 1-2, 66-7, 76, 84-5, 94-100; extract from, referring to Boswell's living in London, 183-94; letter to Rev. Dr. Wetherell, Oxford University, iii. 266-68; so much affected at the loss of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale's only son, iv. 3, 4; and Boswell visit Dr. Taylor at Ashbourne, iv. 9; returns to London, iv. 12; the Italian tour abandoned, iv. 37; goes to Bath with the Thrales, iv. 51; visits Bristol, iv. 56; an observer of behaviour, iv. 59; his argument to Boswell in defence of Rev. Mr. James Thomson, iv. 65-9; Burke on the argument for Rev. Mr. Thomson, iv. 69; his power of composition, iv. 69 s.; meets Wilkes at Mr. Dilly's, iv. 86; his epitaph on Goldsmith, iv. 88-9; on an English epitaph to Goldsmith, iv. 90 and s.; letter to Mrs. Boswell, iv. 91-2, 131; his expedition to the Hebrides, the most pleasant journey he ever made, iv. 98; letter to George Steevens, iv. 103; *An Analysis of the Scotch Celtic Language*, by, iv. 110; his *Lives of the Poets*, advertised, iv. 111; letter to Charles O'Connor, iv. 115; writes a dedication to the King for Dr. Zachary Pearce's posthumous works, iv. 116; writes a Prologue to Hugh Kelly's *Word to the Wise*, iv. 117; letter to Mr. Edward Dilly, iv. 128; letter to Mrs. Thrale, quoted, iv. 137 s.; wrote Dr. Dodd's *Speech to the Recorder of London*, iv. 143; Dr. Dodd's sermon, *The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren*, iv. 143; Mrs. Dodd's Petition to the Queen, iv. 144; Petition from the city of London in favour of Dr. Dodd, iv. 144; Dr. Dodd's last solemn Declara-

tion, iv. 145; Dr. Dodd's letter to the King, iv. 146; letter to the Rt. Hon. Charles Jenkinson about Dodd, iv. 147-38; letter to Dr. Dodd, iv. 149-50; reflections on Dr. Dodd, iv. 150; compares two stanzas in imitation of an eminent poet, iv. 160-61 and *æ*; sees a copy of his small Dictionary at Lord Scarsdale's, iv. 163; insensibility to the power of music, iv. 200, 201; his argument against slavery, iv. 204-6; called *Oddity*, iv. 211; recommends a strict attention to truth, iv. 229-30; says he 'loves to fold his legs and have out his talk,' iv. 231; respect for, when at college, v. 5 *æ*; bemoans the loss of his wife, v. 7; 'has a peculiar art of drawing characters,' v. 34; letter to Mr. Strahan, v. 67; letter to Rev. Dr. Wheeler, Oxford, v. 69; letter to Rev. Dr. Edwards, Oxford, v. 69; letter to Mr. John Hussey, v. 71; letter to Mrs. Lucy Porter, v. 94; letter to John Wesley, introducing Boswell, v. 95; letter to Mr. Dilly, v. 95; his places of residence while in London, v. 105 *æ*; letter to Dr. Lawrence, on the loss of his wife, v. 118-19; letter to Mrs. Thrale, v. 122-23; letter to Rev. Dr. Farmer, v. 124; description of the Gordon Riots, v. 125-27; letter to Dr. Beattie, v. 131; letter to a young clergyman, v. 133-34; writes an advertisement for Mr. Thrale at the Parliamentary election, v. 136-37; letter to Lady Southwell, v. 137-38; letter to Rev. Dr. Vyse, v. 140-41; his carelessness, v. 160; tests his mental faculties, v. 160; affected by musical sound, v. 161; letter to Miss Hill Boothby, v. 194 *æ*; letters to Warren Hastings, v. 205-8; letter to Mrs. Lucy Porter, v. 226, 277-78; letter of condolence to Mrs. Strahan, v. 237, 275-76; letter to Mr. Perkins, v. 252, 287-88; dictates his famous letter to Lord Chesterfield to Boswell

from memory, v. 263; furnishes Boswell with a petition in defence of the *Caledonian Mercury*, v. 264-66; letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds, v. 269, 294; vi. 37-8; letter to Thomas Astle, v. 269; letter to Dr. Lawrence, v. 273; his pathetic verses on Mr. Robert Levett, v. 274-75; complains of ill-health, v. 276, 280; letters to Edmund Malone, v. 276-77; extracts from letters to Dr. Lawrence's daughters, v. 279 *æ*, 280 *æ*; letter to a clergyman at Bath, respecting an article in the *Beauties of Johnson*, v. 285-86; letter to Mrs. Boswell, v. 290-91; prayer on leaving Mr. Thrale's family, v. 292-93; letter to Rev. Mr. Wilson, on his dedicating his *Archæological Dictionary* to Johnson, v. 294-95; very ill, vi. 2; letter to Mr. Barry, referring to Mauritius Lowe, vi. 38; letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds introducing Mr. Cruikshanks, vi. 56, 62-3, 89; letter to William Windham, vi. 62; has a stroke of palsy, vi. 63; letter to Mr. Edmund Allen when seized with a stroke of palsy, vi. 63; letter to Rev. Dr. John Taylor when seized with paralysis, vi. 63-4; letter to Mrs. Thrale, vi. 64; letter to Thomas Davies, referring to his paralytic stroke, vi. 65; letter to Mrs. Lucy Porter, vi. 67, 79, 80, 91, 94-5, 104-5; letter to Dr. Brocklesby, vi. 68-9; suffers from gout, vi. 74; suffers with a *sarcocœle*, vi. 74; receives a visit from Mrs. Siddons, vi. 77-8; letter to William Gerard Hamilton, vi. 81; letter to Mrs. Chapon, referring to the Earl of Carlisle's tragedy, vi. 82-3; attacked by asthma and dropsy, vi. 90-1; letter to Mr. Dilly, vi. 92; letter to Mr. Perkins, vi. 92, 106; letter to Mr. Alderman Clark, vi. 93; note to Lord Portmore, vi. 102 *æ*; letters to Ozias Humphrey, vi. 102-3; letter to Rev. Dr. Taylor, vi. 104; letter to Miss Jane Lang-

- ton in a large round hand, vi. 205; much affected at Boswell's application for funds for an Italian tour, vi. 169-70; letter to Rev. Mr. Bagshaw requesting him to put a stone over Mrs. Johnson's grave, vi. 184; extracts from letters to Dr. Brockleby, vi. 186-92; letters to Mr. Hoole, vi. 192-93; letters to Dr. Burney, vi. 193-94; last note to, vi. 210; letter to Mr. Windham, vi. 195-96; letter to William Gerard Hamilton, vi. 197; letter to John Paradise, vi. 197-98; letter to Mr. George Nicol, vi. 198; letter to Mr. Cruikshank, vi. 198-99; letter to Mr. Thomas Davies, vi. 199; letters to Sir Joshua Reynolds, vi. 199-202; letter to John Nichols, vi. 202; prayer *Against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts*, vi. 203 *n.*; letter to Mr. Heeley, vi. 204; letter to Mr. Hector, vi. 210; on the various writings of, vi. 216 *n.*, 217 *n.*; letter to Mr. Green of Lichfield, vi. 227; letter to Mrs. Lucy Porter, vi. 227; letter to Rev. Dr. Vyas, vi. 225 *n.*; his will, vi. 236-38 *n.*; his library sold, vi. 239 *n.*; his death, vi. 240; his funeral, vi. 252; portraits of, vi. 250 *n.*, 254 *n.*; his monument in Lichfield cathedral, vi. 255 *n.*; epitaph on, written by Dr. Parr, vi. 256 *n.*
- Johnson, Elizabeth, Johnson's wife, i. 64, 67; Garrick's mimicry of her, i. 68; lives at Hampstead, i. 151; Johnson prizes her praise of the *Rambler*, i. 167; her death, i. 189; Johnson's prayer for, i. 189-90; Johnson's love for, i. 190; Johnson's epitaph on, i. 195 *n.*; her wedding-ring, i. 190; buried at Bromley, i. 195; Johnson bemoans her loss, iii. 236.
- Fisher, Johnson leaves a legacy to his sons, vi. 236 *n.*
- Michael, i. 10-13, 49.
- Nathaniel, Johnson's brother, i. 11 *n.*; 59 *n.*
- Sarah, Johnson's mother, 20, 23; her ill-health, ii. 12-14; her death, ii. 15.
- Johnson, Samuel, librarian of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, i. 100.
- Thomas, a poor relation, to whose daughter and granddaughter Johnson leaves a legacy, vi. 236 *n.*
- Johnsoniana*, published in 1776, iii. 275; v. 27.
- Johnson's Court, Boswell and Beaucherk have a veneration for, iii. 84.
- Johnson, Sir James, vi. 115.
- Johnstone, Arthur, Johnson desires to have a bust of him, vi. 99.
- Jones, Philip, a fellow student, with whom Johnson played draughts, iii. 285; Jones, Miss, the *Chastress*, i. 205 *n.*
- Sir William, commends the remarks on language in Johnson's *Journey*, iv. 140.
- Jop, Mr., Provost of Aberdeen, iii. 144.
- Jorden, Mr., Johnson's tutor at College, i. 33-35.
- Jortin, his elegant sermons, iv. 240.
- Jour*, French for 'day,' derived from the Latin *dies*, iii. 14.
- Journal, a, is to a man what a mirror is to a lady, iv. 229; Johnson recommends Boswell to keep one, ii. 97; iii. 72, 204; but confesses he could never keep one himself, iii. 72; on keeping a, vi. 14; Swift's *Journal*, vi. 15 and *n.*
- Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, Mrs. Thrale's great entertainment with, iii. 226.
- Journal des Savans*, Johnson's and Gibbon's opinions of the, ii. 195.
- Journals, literary, Johnson discusses these, with George III., ii. 195.
- Journey to the Western Highlands*, Johnson publishes, iii. 143; Boswell receives, iii. 122, 143; commendation of, iii. 152-57; iv. 140; attacks against, iii. 157; sale of, iii. 162; Lord Monboddo on the style of the, iv. 175; quoted, 175 *n.*

- Jubilee, the Shakespearian, ii. 220.
- Judge, ought a judge to engage in trade? iii. 190-91.
- Judgment better than admiration, iii. 206.
- Junius, Johnson attacks, ii. 278.
- Juvenal, Sat. x. quoted, iii. 82; Sat. iii. quoted, iv. 237; Sat. x. Johnson's imitation of, v. 61.
- KAMES, Henry Home, Lord, i. 111;** his *Elements of Criticism*, 'a pretty essay,' ii. 206, 236; references to his *History of Man*, iv. 248; v. 43; *Historical Law Tracts* quoted, iii. 55; his misrepresentations, v. 43, 56.
- Kearley, Mr., bookseller, i. 171**  $\pi$ ; his Life of Johnson, v. 209.
- Keddlestone, Lord Scarsdale's seat, visited, iv. 161-62.**
- Kelly, Mr. Hugh, the poetical staymaker, ii. 202;** author of *A Word to the Wise*, iv. 117; his vanity, vi. 241  $\pi$ .
- Kemble, John, gives Boswell an account of Mrs. Siddons' visit to Johnson, vi. 77-8;** Johnson asks him whether he believed himself to be the characters he represented, vi. 79.
- Ken, Bishop, his strict habit of life, iv. 170  $\pi$ .**
- Kennedy, Dr., Johnson writes a dedication to the King for his *Astronomical Chronology*, ii. 37.**
- Kennicott, Dr. Benjamin, his *Collations*, ii. 272.**
- Mrs., talks to Johnson about her brother, Mr. Chamberlayne, vi. 122.
- Kenrick, William, attacks Johnson's 'Shakespeare,' ii. 157.**
- Dr., *An Epistle to James Boswell, Esq.*, by, ii. 214.
- Kettel Hall, Oxford, Johnson stays at, i. 220  $\pi$ , 237.**
- King, Dr. William, brings Johnson the Oxford diploma of M.A., i. 222.**
- Kippis, Dr., at Mr. Hoole's with Johnson, vi. 116;** edits the first five volumes of the *Biographia*
- Britannica*, iv. 176 and  $\pi$ , 177 and  $\pi$ .
- Knapton, Messrs., booksellers, i. 144.**
- Kneller, Sir Godfrey, story of, iv. 233;** Pope on, iv. 233  $\pi$ .
- Knight, Lady, her account of Mrs. Williams, ii. 125-26  $\pi$ .**
- Knott, Johnson tries unsuccessfully to learn, vi. 118.**
- Knowledge, the diffusion of, a disadvantage, iv. 144;** all, is of value, iii. 204.
- Knowles, Mrs., the quaker lady, who worked sutable pictures, iv. 85, 286;** her conversion of Miss Jane Harvy, iv. 300; description of her conversation with Johnson, iv. 301  $\pi$ .
- Knox, Dr., master of Tunbridge School, vi. 163;** his successful imitation of Johnson's style, and high opinion of Boswell as a biographer, vi. 225 and  $\pi$ , 226.
- Mr. John, bookseller, his praise of Johnson's *Journey*, iii. 155.
- LAIRD of Coll, drowned, iii. 140.**
- Boswell becomes a, vi. 2.
- Land and trade compared, ii. 247;** vi. 2, 3.
- Landlords and tenants, relations of, vi. 2, 3.**
- Langley, Rev. Mr., master of the school at Ashbourne, iv. 140.**
- Langton, Bennet, Johnson's friend, i. 20, 77;** introduced to Johnson by Mr. Levet, i. 199; at Trinity College, Oxford, i. 200; ii. 10, 29-30; 'his mind as exalted as his stature,' ii. 9; Johnson visits, ii. 138-39; contributes to the *Idler*, ii. 5; one of the original members of the Club, ii. 140; letter from Johnson to, iii. 3; marries Lady Roths, iii. 3  $\pi$ ; his manner of living not quite to Johnson's taste, iv. 130; 'earth does not bear a worthier man,' iv. 162; Johnson's anxiety about his affairs, v. 65-6; writes to Boswell on Beauclerk's death, v. 123-24; Johnson asks him to tell him his faults, vi. 114; comical

- scene, vi. 115; 'I know not who will go to heaven if Langton does not,' vi. 114; Johnson's tender expression of him, vi. 240; Johnson leaves him his Polyglot Bible, vi. 237 *n.*; Johnson's letters to, i. 236-37; ii. 1-3, 10-11, 29-30, 172-75, 199, 279; iii. 134-35, 207-8, 223; iv. 126; v. 67-68, 267-68, 280-81; vi. 75-6, 102, 185, 194-95.
- Langton, Mr., Johnson's description of, ii. 139; gives Boswell an account of Johnson's visit to Warley Camp, v. 64.
- Peregrine, Bennet Langton's uncle, ii. 173 *n.*, 174 *n.*, 175 *n.*; his economy, ii. 173; his death, ii. 173.
- Miss, iii. 3.
- little Miss Jenny, Johnson's letter to her, written in large hand, vi. 105.
- the Misses, Johnson's kind remembrance of, vi. 102.
- Language, conversation on the Irish, iv. 236-37; discussion on the origin of, vi. 43-4; Leibnitz on, iii. 13.
- Languages, Greek and Latin, essential to a good education, ii. 119; to know a language, we must know the people, their notions, and manners, ii. 230.
- Lapouchin, Madame, the severity of her punishment, v. 43.
- Latin, with Greek, essential to a good education, ii. 119; Johnson finds fault with Boswell's, ii. 176-77; Boswell's defence of his, ii. 178-80.
- La Trobe, Mr., a Moravian esteemed by Johnson, vi. 244.
- Laud, Archbishop, his Diary quoted, iii. 69.
- Lauder, William, rashly assails Milton, and deceives Johnson by forgeries, i. 184-85; Johnson dictates a letter addressed to Dr. Douglas to, i. 185; dies at the Barbadoes, i. 185 *n.*; Dr. Douglas on, i. 185 *n.*; contributions to *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 185; publishes *An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitations of the Moderns in his Paradise Lost*, i. 186; Johnson writes preface and postscript to the pamphlet on Milton, i. 186.
- Laugh, Johnson's loud, about the testator, iii. 117; Johnson 'laughs like a rhinoceros,' iii. 223.
- Laughers, a man should pass part of his time with, vi. 21.
- Law, reports, English compared with the Scotch arguments, iii. 75; Johnson dictates to Boswell an argument on Scots, iii. 53-7; penal, iii. 56; French have no, for the maintenance of the poor, iii. 223; difficulties in the, as a profession, iv. 181; Johnson's indebtedness to Mr. Ballow for his knowledge of the, iv. 31 and *n.*
- Law, Dr., Bishop of Carlisle, v. 702 *n.*, 115.
- Lawrence, Dr., Johnson's friend and medical adviser, i. 52; iii. 148 and *n.*; Johnson's letter on the death of his wife, v. 118-19; letter from Johnson to, v. 273; Johnson's Latin letter to, v. 279.
- Lawyers, conversation on, iii. 15-16; on their propriety to solicit employment, iii. 272-73.
- Lea, Samuel, i. 25.
- Learning, Society for the Encouragement of, i. 116 and *n.*; in Scotland, iii. 210.
- Lectures, Johnson on, ii. 164; education by, v. 229.
- Lee, Mr., Alderman, iv. 85.
- Lee, Mr. Arthur, an American patriot, iv. 75.
- Leeds, Duke of, song on his marriage, v. 153 and *n.*
- Leibnitz, on language, iii. 13.
- Leland, Dr., of Trinity College, Dublin, ii. 149; Johnson's letter to on receiving the LL.D. from Trinity College, Dublin, ii. 149-50 *n.*; his *History of Ireland*, iii. 111.
- Lenox, Mrs. Charlotte, i. 207; Johnson writes a dedication to her works, i. 207; Johnson translates for her an English version of Brumoy, ii. 20; Johnson writes the dedication to



- her *Female Quixote*, ii. 37; *The Sisters*, v. 149 n.
- Lennox, Mrs., Johnson's praise of, vi. 109.
- Letter to the *Sheriffs of Bristol on the Affairs of America*, Johnson on Burke's work, iv. 189.
- Letter writing, talk on, v. 238-39.
- Levet, Johnson's, ii. 265.
- Lever, Sir Ashton, his museum, vi. 167.
- Levet, Robert, Johnson's humble friend, i. 196-97; introduces Bennet Langton to Johnson, i. 199; marries wretchedly, ii. 40, 50; becomes miserable and finds Johnson's help, ii. 81; shows Boswell Johnson's library, ii. 99; at Johnson's breakfast table, ii. 162; letters from Johnson to, iii. 135, 227-28; iv. 97; Johnson's letter announcing his death, v. 273; Johnson's verses on his memory, v. 274-75.
- Levett, Mr., of Lichfield, i. 50; letter from Johnson to, i. 124-25.
- Lewis, David, verses addressed to Pope, vi. 140; account of, vi. 141 n.
- Mr. F., the 'man who lived in London, and hung loose upon society', i. 182.
- Liberty, private, Johnson insists, is alone valuable, ii. 213; Johnson on liberty of conscience, iii. 105-9; Wilkes's saying, 'Does he talk of liberty?' iv. 225; distinction between liberty of conscience and of teaching, vi. 53.
- Library, the King's, in Paris, iii. 239.
- Lichfield, Johnson born there, i. 10; Johnson tires of it, ii. 206; its small trade, iii. 304; Johnson and Boswell visit, iii. 301; Boswell visits the house where Johnson was born, iii. 301 n.; Johnson's last visit to, vi. 205; the corporation's respect for Johnson, and the traditions of, of Johnson, vi. 205 n.; monument to Johnson in the cathedral, vi. 255 n.
- Lies, 'A man had rather have a hundred lies told about him, than one truth he does not wish to be told,' iii. 77; 'He lies, and he knows he lies, v. 186; Johnson's use of the expression with reference to unintentional mistakes or errors, v. 186.
- Life, Maxwell's description of Johnson's mode of, ii. 265; comparison between savage and civilised, iv. 246-47; comparison between town and country, iv. 254-55; is it happy or miserable? vi. 134; Rev. Ralph Churton's note on, vi. 134 n., 135 n., 136 n.
- Linen, clean Johnson has 'no passion' for, ii. 64.
- Lillibulero, the famous song, iii. 194.
- Lintot, the bookseller, Johnson turns his warehouse into a library, ii. 99.
- List of literary schemes Johnson intended executing, vi. 214-18.
- Literary, Johnson's schemes, vi. 214-18; property, discussion on, iii. 114-15; men, can their lives be entertaining? v. 235; fame, on men of rank aspiring to, v. 248 and n.; frauds, ii. 32.
- Literary Club, founded by Johnson, ii. 139-40; its original members, ii. 140; Johnson dines at, for the last time, vi. 160.
- Literary Magazine, The*, Johnson contributes to, i. 251-52, 263; Johnson's reviews for, i. 253-55; ceases to exist, i. 263.
- Literature, uses of, i. ix.; Johnson's ardour for, i. 44-5; ii. 110; vi. 214; Johnson's determination to maintain the dignity of, v. 123; Johnson's praise of French, vi. 72.
- 'Little people are apt to be jealous,' iv. 60.
- Little things, 'by studying these we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible,' ii. 98.
- Lives of the Poets*, advertised, iv. 3; published in 1779-80, v. 72; inaccurate in minute details, v. 63 n.; Mr. Dilly relates the origin of, iv. 113-14; a bigger work than originally intended, v. 173 n.; attacks on, v. 202.

- Lloyd, Olivia, a young Quakeress loved by Johnson, i. 51.
- Mr., Johnson's Quaker friend, at Birmingham, iii. 206.
- Lobo, Father Jerome, i. 55; Johnson's translation of his *Voyage to Abyssinia*, i. 55; extracts from, i. 55-9, iv. 18.
- Lofft, Mr. Capel, 'this little David of popular spirit,' vi. 112.
- Lombe, Mr. John, iv. 166.
- London, Johnson's poem, i. 86-99; sold for ten guineas, i. 151; Garrick on, i. 152.
- London, the magnitude of, ii. 86; Gwyn's improvements, ii. 181; happiness of life in, ii. 224; Johnson's love for, ii. 266; Boswell wishes to make his chief residence in, iv. 179; Johnson's saying, 'When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life,' iv. 181; life in, superior to any other, v. 78; its extent and variety impress Johnson, vi. 37; 'The town is my element; there are my friends, there are my books,' vi. 191-92.
- London Chronicle, i. 260; ii. 142, 249; Goldsmith's apology in the, for beating Evans, the bookseller, iii. 65.
- Long, Mr. Dudley, v. 220.
- 'Long expected one-and-twenty,' Johnson's verses on the coming of age of Sir John Lade, vi. 245 n., 246.
- Longitude, *Attempt to ascertain at Sea*, a pamphlet written by Johnson for Z. Williams, i. 247.
- Longley, Mr., the Recorder of Rochester, v. 148.
- Longman, Messrs., booksellers, i. 144.
- Louis XIV., on granting a favour, iii. 25.
- Love, a root good for rheumatism, iii. 208.
- Lovat, Lord, verses on his execution, i. 141.
- Love, compared with friendship, iii. 207; and *Madness*, a book stigmatised by Johnson as mingling fact and fiction, vi. 24.
- Low Dutch, Johnson tries to learn, v. 160.
- Lowe, Mauritius, at Mrs. Williams's tea-table, v. 81; his distress, vi. 37; Johnson's efforts to assist, vi. 37, 38; dines with Johnson on Easter Day, vi. 46-7; Johnson leaves a legacy to his children, vi. 237 n.
- Lucan, Lord and Lady, their kindness to Johnson, vi. 159.
- Lumiaden, Mr. Andrew, a friend of Boswell's, iii. 244 n.
- Lusiad, *The*, Mr. Mickle's translation, vi. 86.
- Luton Hoe, Lord Bute's place, visited, v. 262.
- Lutterell, Colonel, declared M.P. for Middlesex against Mr. Wilkes, ii. 258.
- Luxembourg, the palace and gardens of, iii. 241.
- Luxury, Johnson on, iii. 28, 72-3; Goldsmith thinks Englishmen have degenerated owing to, iii. 72-3; Johnson thinks, does good, iv. 61; conversation on, iv. 284-85.
- Lydial, a learned man referred to in the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, ii. 163.
- Lye, Edward, prints his *Saxons and Gothic Dictionary*, ii. 173.
- Lytelton, George, Lord, George III. and Johnson discuss his *History*, ii. 193; his *Dialogues* deemed a nugatory performance, ii. 270; his extreme anxiety as an author, iv. 41; kept back his *History* for fear of Smollett, iv. 41; Johnson's Life of, v. 194; various readings in the Life of, v. 196; Johnson said to be jealous of, v. 194-95 n.
- Thomas, Lord, his vision, vi. 132.
- MACAULAY, Mrs. Catherine, Johnson drinks to, at Trinity College, Cambridge, ii. 148; Johnson jokes with her on her republican principles, ii. 110-11; iii. 74; Johnson tries to help her son at Oxford, iii. 223; 'better that she should redden her own cheeks, than blacken other people's characters,' iv. 53; Boswell desires to see a contest

- between her and Johnson, iv. 187.
- Macaulay, Rev. Kenneth, his *History of St. Kilda*, Johnson on, iii. 8.
- Macbean, Johnson's amanuensis, i. 147; author of the *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, iii. 60; iv. 35; Johnson gets him admitted into the Charterhouse, i. 141.
- Maccaronic verses, the etymology of, iv. 285 and *n.*, 286.
- Macclesfield, Earl and Countess of, and Savage, i. 133-36.
- Macdonald, Sir Alexander, introduced to Johnson, iii. 15; conversation with Johnson on lawyers, iii. 15-6; Johnson and Boswell dine at, iii. 31.
- Sir James, ii. 112.
- Lady Margaret, Johnson tells of her popularity, v. 83.
- Ranald, possesses Erse MSS., iii. 161.
- Macdonalds, the precedence of the clan, over other clans, iii. 124.
- Macheath, Captain, Quin refuses to act, in the *Beggar's Opera*, iii. 214.
- Mackenzie, Henry, ii. 32.
- Macklin, Mr., iv. 13.
- Maclaurin, Colin, the mathematician, Goldsmith's story about his yawning, iv. 24.
- John, Lord Dregghorn, iii. 209.
- Maclean, Sir Allan, his lawsuit with the Duke of Argyle, iii. 224 *n.*; iv. 104, 129.
- Mr. Alexander, introduced to Johnson, iii. 248.
- Mr., of Col, drowned, iii. 140.
- Macleod of Rasay, Johnson apologises for a mistake about, iii. 154.
- Macpherson, James, Johnson on the Ossian controversy, ii. 62; iii. 146-49, 180; Johnson's letter to, iii. 161.
- Macquarry, the, sells his estate to a Campbell, iv. 129; particulars of the sale, iv. 136.
- Macquharrie, Mr., dines with Boswell, iii. 160.
- Macqueen, Rev. Donald, iii. 224.
- Macrobius, quoted, iv. 34.
- Madan, Dr., an Irish clergyman, iii. 171.
- Madden, Dr., 'Premium Madden,' i. 261 *n.*; Johnson corrects his poem, i. 261.
- Madmen, Johnson's observations on, iv. 178, 179 *n.*
- Madness, different forms of, ii. 63; and melancholy, iv. 128.
- Magazine, The Literary*, i. 251-55, 263.
- Maitland, Mr., an amanuensis of Johnson's, i. 148.
- Malagrida, a Jesuit, vi. 13 *n.*
- Male succession, Johnson believes in, iii. 117.
- Mallet, David, his Scotch accent, iii. 17; his literary reputation ended with his life, iii. 88; wrote against Byng, ii. 272; his *Life of Bacon*, iv. 196-97; Dr. Warburton on, iv. 197; publishes Bolingbroke's works, i. 268.
- Malone, Edmund, i. viii.; letter from Johnson to, v. 276-77.
- Man, Dr. Franklin's definition of, iv. 246; difference between a well-bred and an ill-bred, vi. 153; comparison between Shakespeare's and Milton's pictures of a, v. 210 *n.*
- Manners, Johnson's rough, vi. 129-30.
- Manning, Mr., the compositor, Johnson asks his pardon, vi. 155.
- Manningham, Dr., iv. 163.
- Mansfield, Chief Justice, his eloquent speech, iii. 44; on reading the *Journey*, iii. 169.
- Mantuanus, a quotation from, vi. 19 and *n.*, 20 *n.*
- Marchmont, Earl of, Boswell visits him for particulars about Pope, v. 46; Johnson's ill-temper on the occasion, v. 48, 92; Johnson accuses him of neglect of Pope's papers, v. 188; immortalised in Pope's line, v. 188.
- Market Bosworth, school in which Johnson was usher, i. 53.
- Mariay, Dr. R., Bishop of Waterford, v. 211.
- Marmalade, Mrs. Boswell's present to Johnson of, iv. 108, 123.
- Marmor Norfolciense*, its malicious republication, i. 106-7.

- Marriage, discussion on, iii. 23; iv. 7, 34; conversation on a daughter making an inferior, iii. 177-78; every man a worse man in proportion as he is unfit for, iii. 297, 301; Johnson's *Life of Waller*, quoted on, ii. 220; qualifications necessary to happiness in, ii. 224; second, ii. 225; Johnson on, ii. 257; late, ii. 272.
- Marriage Bill. Royal. Johnson on, iii. 10.
- Martinelli, Vincenzo, iii. 75; his *History of England*, iii. 70.
- Martin's *Account of the Hebrides*, iv. 244.
- Martyrdom, the proof of religious truth, iii. 105; conversation on, iii. 105-7.
- Mary Queen of Scots, quotation from Johnson's review of Tytler's vindication of, ii. 26; Boswell wants an inscription for a portrait of, iii. 125, 135; Johnson's Latin inscription and translation, iii. 145 n.
- Marylebone Gardens, the fireworks at, vi. 157.
- Mason, Rev. Mr., Boswell adopts his *Memoirs of Gray* as his model, i. 5; *Memoirs of Whitehead*, i. 6; Johnson on his 'Elfrida,' iii. 184; his prosecution of Murray, the bookseller, iv. 297; his *Heroic Epistles*, vi. 149.
- Masquerade, at which Boswell appeared, iii. 61.
- Maittaire, 'a puzzle-headed man,' his account of the Stephani, v. 142; his *Semilia*, and *Book of the Dialects*, v. 142.
- Mattocks, the first man who balanced a straw upon his nose, iv. 233 n.
- Maupeitius, his explanation of the apparent suicide of scorpions, ii. 207 and n.
- Maxwell, Rev. Dr. William, introduced by Mr. Grierson to Johnson, ii. 263; his *Collectanea* concerning Johnson, ii. 262-77; returns to Ireland, ii. 276.
- Mayo, Dr., called the Literary Anvil, iii. 109 n.
- Mead, Dr. Richard, letter from Dr. James, i. 123 n.; on sleep, iv. 170; 'lived more in the broad sunshine of life than almost any man,' v. 59.
- Mediterranean, Johnson desires to see the, iv. 44; all that sets us above savages has come from the, iv. 44; Paoli thinks it a fine subject for a poem, iv. 44.
- Meeke, Mr., Fellow of Trinity, i. 220-22.
- Melancholy, i. 37-9; on habitual, iii. 281-82; conversation on, iv. 16 and n.; 'should be diverted by every means but drinking,' iv. 16; Boswell's fits of, iv. 124 n.
- Melancthon, Boswell writes to Johnson from his tomb, iv. 124 n.
- Melmoth, William, author of *Fitzosborne's letters*, v. 121-22.
- Memis, Dr., his action in the Court of Session, iii. 144; his cause decided against him, iv. 104.
- Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, i. xix.-xv.; *Memoirs of William Whitehead*, i. 6.
- Menagiana, has one good pun, iii. 95.
- Mental faculties, Johnson tests his, v. 160.
- Messiah, Pope's, Johnson's Latin translation of, i. 35, 221.
- Metcalfe, Mr. Phillip, v. 293.
- Methodism, the young Staffordshire women consult Johnson on, iii. 265.
- Methodists, the name first given to some Oxford students, ii. 120-21 n.; expulsion of six Oxford students for being, iii. 44; Johnson's happy illustration in defence of this proceeding, iii. 44.
- Meynell, Mr., v. 79.
- Mickle, Dr. W. J., translator of the *Lusiad*, iii. 39; meets Johnson, iv. 45; writes to Boswell of his long and happy acquaintance with Johnson, vi. 85; gives an interesting account of a dispute with Johnson, vi. 85-6; Johnson dines with, vi. 142.
- Militia, Johnson drawn to serve in the, vi. 152; Lord Mountstuart's bill for Scotch, iii. 273; iv. 12.

- Millar, Mr. Andrew, bookseller, i. 144, 235-36.
- Miller, Lady, her collection of verses, iii. 185-86.
- Milton, Johnson's high opinion of, i. 186-87; iii. 24; Johnson's abhorrence of his political opinions, i. 183; v. 179; Johnson's admiration for the author of *Paradise Lost*, i. 183; v. 178; Johnson's letter about his grand-daughter, i. 183-84; Johnson's postscript for the relief of grand-daughter, i. 186; 'a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones,' vi. 138; Johnson's *Life* of quoted, v. 105, 178.
- Mimicry, Johnson on, iii. 11-12; Foote's, iii. 12; George Faulkener's, iii. 12.
- Ministers, Johnson on the right of Scotch parishes, to choose their own, iii. 97-101.
- Miracles, Johnson on, ii. 108.
- Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, published, i. 138; Warburton on, i. 138.
- Miscellanies*, Mrs. Williams's, some of Johnson's pieces published in, i. 111; ii. 182; subscription for, ii. 181.
- Misers, conversation on, v. 24.
- Misery, the 'doom of man,' conversation on, iv. 201-2.
- Mitre, the, a tavern frequented by Johnson, ii. 66; Boswell's supper at, ii. 87-8; his guests, ii. 88; Johnson and Boswell, to keep up the old custom, dine there alone, v. 44.
- Modes of life, Johnson's, ii. 265.
- Momboddo, Lord, 'does not know when he is talking nonsense,' ii. 224; called by Foote 'an Elzevir edition of Johnson,' iii. 46.; his strange and useless speculations, iii. 115; takes an 'air bath' every morning at four, iv. 169; on Johnson's style, iv. 175; his notion about the Egyptians being woolly-haired, v. 260; unfriendly with Johnson, vi. 107.
- Monckton, Miss, story of, and Johnson, 'Dearest, you are a dunce,' v. 243; Boswell's verses to, v. 244.
- Money, Johnson says, 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for,' iv. 29.
- Montague, Mrs., conversation on her *Essay on Shakespeare*, ii. 235; trembles for Shakespeare, ii. 236; her repartee on Voltaire's invective against Shakespeare, ii. 236.; party at her house, ii. 274; her vanity, iv. 54; sits to Miss Reynolds for her portrait, iv. 245; drops Johnson on account of his *Life of Lord Lyttelton*, v. 211; her stream of conversation, vi. 109.
- Montgomerie, Miss Margaret, Johnson's description of, iv. 162.
- Montrose, Duke of, iv. 241.
- Moody, Mr., the player, iii. 188; clapped on the back by Tom Davies, iii. 192.
- More, Hannah, her flattery of Johnson, iv. 206; her record of the evening after Mrs. Garrick's dinner party, v. 232; her presumption in gross flattery of Johnson, vi. 174.
- Dr. Henry, on a future state, iii. 19.
- Morgan, Maurice, entertains Johnson at Wycombe, vi. 29; his essay on Falstaff, vi. 29.; his anecdote of Johnson's candour, vi. 29.
- Morgagni, the great anatomist, ii. 208.
- Morris, Miss, begs for Johnson's blessing, vi. 250; 'God bless you, my dear,' Johnson's last words, vi. 250.
- Mother, Johnson's sorrow at the death of his, ii. 12-15.
- Mounsey, Dr. Messenger, a coarse talker, ii. 215; his will, ii. 215.
- Mountstuart, Lord, his bill for a Scotch militia, iii. 273; iv. 12.
- Mourning Bride, The*, ii. 233-34.
- Mudge, Rev. Zacariah, ii. 46; v. 215; his sermons, v. 215, 234.
- Mulberry-tree, Shakespeare's, cut down by the Rev. Mr. Gastrel, iv. 5.

- Munro, Dr., consulted by Boswell for Johnson, vi. 97.
- Murphy, Mr. Arthur, writes *A Poetical Epistle to Samuel Johnson*, ii. 27-8; and Mr. Foote, ii. 28-9; commencement of his acquaintance with Johnson, ii. 28-9; account of, ii. 29 s.; his erroneous account of Boswell's meeting with Johnson, ii. 57 s.; introduces Johnson to the Thrales, ii. 154; Johnson's high opinion of, ii. 272; his compliment to Johnson, iv. 48.
- Murray, Mr., Solicitor-General of Scotland, iv. 20-2; influenced by Johnson's arguments on education, iv. 22.
- Museum Deliciae*, v. 20 s.
- Musgrave, Dr. Samuel, v. 19 and s.
- Music, part of a future state, iii. 21; Johnson wished to learn the scale six months before his death, iii. 119 s.; Johnson's insensibility to appreciate, iii. 250; iv. 200.
- Musical score, iii. 176 s.
- Mutton, Johnson's description of bad, vi. 119.
- Myddleton, Colonel, his inscription on Johnson, vi. 253 s.
- NAIRNE, Mr., Scotch judge, afterwards Lord Dunsinnan, iv. 48.
- Napier, Dr. A., i. viii.
- Nares, Rev. Mr., his imitation of Johnson's style, vi. 224.
- Negro, the, Johnson on, iv. 204; cause of, tried in Scotland, iv. 214; decided for the negro, iv. 215.
- Nelson's *Festivals and Fasts*, iii. 298.
- Neni, Count, a Flemish nobleman, iv. 43.
- New Testament, translation of into Erse, iii. 14; Johnson recommends Hammond's Commentary on, iv. 64; the most difficult book in the world, iv. 300-1.
- Newton, Sir Isaac, 'set out as an infidel, and came to be a firm believer,' ii. 116, 270.
- Newton, Dr., on Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, vi. 120 s.; his *Dissertations of the Prophecies*, vi. 120.
- Nichols, Dr. Frank, iii. 201; his *De Anima Medica*, iv. 165.
- John, printer of *Lives of the Poets*, author of *Literary Anecdotes*, v. 174; Johnson's literary memoranda sent to, v. 174 s., 175 s.; Johnson esteems his *Anecdotes*, v. 294; letter from Johnson to, vi. 202; gives Boswell particulars of a conversation with Johnson, vi. 241; Johnson's letter to, about the authors of the *Universal History*, vi. 215-16, 217 s., 218 s.
- Nicol, Mr. George, bookseller, vi. 198.
- 'Nobody was content,' Johnson says, iv. 242.
- 'No, sir,' Johnson's expression, vi. 149.
- Nollekens, his cast of Johnson's head, vi. 253 s.
- Nonjurors, Johnson on, iii. 172; vi. 121.
- Nores, Jason de, his Commentary on Horace's 'Art of Poetry,' iii. 285.
- North, Lord, prohibits the sale of Johnson's *Thoughts on the Falkland Islands*, ii. 279; Johnson on, iii. 4; letter to Rev. Dr. Fothergill, referring to the D.C.L. degree, iii. 180-81.
- Northumberland, Duchess of, her verses for the Bath-Easton vase, iii. 186.
- Duke of, ii. 275.
- Norton, Sir Fletcher, ii. 237; an instance of success, from putting his whole mind to one particular object, iv. 8.
- Noyon, visited, iii. 243.
- Nowell, Mr., Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, Johnson visits, vi. 129-30.
- Nugent, Dr., one of the original members of the Club, ii. 140.
- OAT ale and oat cakes at Lichfield, iii. 303.
- Observatory in Paris, iii. 232.
- Occupation necessary to prevent melancholy, iv. 182.
- O'Connor, Charles, Johnson's

- letter to, on Irish literature, i. 263-64; second letter to, urging him to write a history of the Irish nation, iv. 115; account of, iv. 115 n.
- Odd, nothing, will last long, iii. 289.
- Oddity, an, Johnson called, iv. 211.
- Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, Bonnell Thornton's burlesque, ii. 84.
- Odes, Colman's, satirising 'cool Mason, and warm Gray,' iii. 183.
- Odyssey*, the story of the, better than the *Aeneid*, vi. 56.
- Ofelius, Johnson's, in the *Art of living in London*, i. 73.
- Ogden, his sermons on prayer commended, iv. 249; his sermon *On the Articles of the Christian Faith*, quoted, v. 258 n.
- Ogilvie, Dr. John, Johnson finds 'no thinking in his writings,' ii. 86; at Boswell's supper party, ii. 88, 90.
- Oglethorpe, General, one of the earliest admirers of Johnson's *London*, i. 93; Johnson and Boswell dine at, iii. 36; his presence of mind in a dilemma, iii. 38; gives an account of the siege of Belgrade, iii. 38; entertains Johnson, Boswell, and Goldsmith, iii. 72; Johnson and others dine at, iii. 87; entertains the 'Irish Dr. Campbell,' iii. 197-98; account of, iii. 197-98; Johnson desires his life should be written, iii. 198; Johnson on his conversation, iv. 62; visits Johnson and they discuss politics, vi. 89.
- Old age, Johnson discourses on, iv. 256; Johnson has no more of it at sixty-eight than at twenty-eight, v. 39 and n.
- Oldfield, Dr., and the Duke of Marlborough, iv. 63.
- Oldham, John, his satire against the Jesuits, i. 86-7.
- Oldys, William, the learned collector of the *Bibliotheca Harleiana*, i. 117.
- Old Testament, Johnson recommends Louth and Patrick's Commentaries on, iv. 64.
- Oliver, Dame, taught Johnson to read, i. 19.
- Omai, a South Sea Islander visits London, iv. 19.
- Opium, Johnson relieved by, but objects to the use of, vi. 9.
- Oracle, public, Johnson considered a kind of, ii. 265.
- Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*, Dr. Brocklesby quotes to Johnson, vi. 234.
- Orange-butter, Johnson describes its manufacture, vi. 40-1.
- Orange-peel, Johnson's mysterious use of, iii. 179; vi. 40 n.
- Oratory, Johnson and Wilkes discourse on, v. 240.
- Orchards, Johnson on, vi. 41-2.
- Original sin, Johnson on, v. 258-59.
- Orme, Robert, his high commendation of the *Journey*, iii. 152; and of Johnson, iv. 286.
- Orrery, John Boyle, Earl of, letter from, to Dr. Birch, about the Dictionary, i. 146; 'not dignified,' vi. 12.
- Osborne, Thomas, the bookseller, impertinent to Johnson, 'and I beat him,' i. 117; v. 160.
- Mr. Francis, 'a conceited fellow,' iii. 50.
- Ossian, Johnson finds no merit in the poems of, ii. 62; vi. 20-1; Johnson disbelieves in the authenticity of the poems ascribed to, iii. 153, 161, 163.
- Ostentation, Johnson's dislike of, v. 145.
- Othello, Johnson on, iv. 47-8.
- Otway, Thomas, Johnson says 'he is all tenderness,' v. 159 n.
- Ovid, referred to by Johnson, iii. 39 n.; quoted by Johnson to Goldsmith at Poet's Corner, iii. 92.
- Oxford, Johnson's residence at the University of, i. 33-49; Johnson visits, i. 200, 219; the M.A. degree of, conferred on Johnson, i. 224; Johnson expatiates on its advantages, ii. 205; Johnson visits, in 1768, ii. 200; Boswell follows him there, ii. 200; Johnson compares it with Cambridge, ii. 191; expulsion of six students

- from, for Methodism, iii. 44; Johnson visits, for the last time, vi. 117.
- PAINTERS**, address of, to George III., written by Johnson, ii. 26.
- Painting, 'can illustrate but not inform,' vi. 154.
- Palais Bourbon, visited, iii. 236.
- Marchand, iii. 234; Johnson's purchases at, iii. 236.
- Royal, visited, iii. 235.
- Palmer, Thomas Fysche, transported for sedition, v. 260  $\pi$ .
- Palmerton, Lord, proposed for the Club, and rejected, vi. 66.
- Palsy, Johnson has a stroke of the, vi. 63.
- Pamphlet, definition of a, v. 20-1; quotation on a, from *Musarum Delicia*, v. 20  $\pi$ .
- Pantheon, the, Johnson and Boswell go to, iii. 27; compared with Ranelagh, iii. 27.
- Panting, Dr. Matthew, master of Pembroke, i. 45.
- Paoli, General, presented to Johnson, ii. 229; their conversation, ii. 229-30; 'he has the loftiest port,' ii. 231; entertains Johnson and Boswell at dinner, iii. 23, 116-17; visits Johnson on Easter Day, iii. 47; talks with Johnson on sight and sound, iii. 47-8; invites Johnson, Goldsmith, and Boswell to dinner, iii. 75; his compliment to Goldsmith, iii. 79; on *She Stoops to Conquer*, iii. 79; Johnson and Boswell dine with, iv. 42; on the fear of death, iv. 156; Johnson dines with, v. 26; thinks Johnson can but live for a short time, vi. 164.
- Papyrus Cursor*, Mr. Caleb Whiteford's *nom de plume*, vi. 155.
- Paradise, John, i. 37; Johnson dines with, vi. 107; Johnson writes to, from Lichfield, vi. 197-98.
- Parents, their affection to their children, instinctive, ii. 246.
- Parker, Mr. Sackville, Johnson's account of, vi. 142.
- Parliament, on good speeches in, iv. 234-35; conversation on place-hunters in, iv. 236; conversation on the Houses of, v. 107-8.
- Parliamentary debates, Johnson's, i. 84-5, 117, 124; vi. 241.
- Parnell, epitaph on, iv. 101; quotation from, iv. 222; Goldsmith's *Life* of, iii. 22; Johnson's *Life* of, v. 191; various readings in the *Life* of, v. 191; a passage is submitted to Johnson, v. 93.
- Parr, Dr., recommended by Johnson to the Norwich Grammar School, v. 154 and  $\pi$ ; on an epitaph on Johnson, vi. 255  $\pi$ ; wrote the epitaph, vi. 256  $\pi$ .
- Party, must not be followed at the expense of truth, iii. 78.
- Paternoster, a, written in *linguam Corvica rusticam*, ii. 231.
- Paterson, Mr. Samuel, his imitation of Sterne, iii. 32; Johnson recommends his son to Reynolds, iv. 95.
- Patrick, Dr. Simon, on the Articles, ii. 250  $\pi$ .
- Patriot, The*, a political pamphlet by Johnson, iii. 138, 140.
- — — a tragedy by J. Simpson, iv. 37.
- Patriotism, 'the last refuge of a scoundrel,' iii. 195.
- Patronage, Church, in Scotland, iii. 97.
- Payne, Mr. William, preface by Johnson to his *Introduction to the Game of Draughts*, i. 260.
- Pearce, Bishop Zachary, his posthumous works, iv. 115-16.
- Peculiarities, Johnson's, ii. 145-46.
- Pelham, Mr., Garrick's ode on, i. 218.
- Pembroke College, Oxford, i. 33-46.
- Lord, his pleasantry about Johnson's 'bow-wow way,' iii. 176  $\pi$ .
- Penal law, iii. 56.
- Penance, Johnson's, at Uttoxeter, vi. 205-6.
- Pennant, his *Tour in Scotland* quoted, iv. 273; discussed, iv. 273-74.
- Pension, Johnson granted a, by George III., ii. 42-3; remarks



- against Johnson on account of his, ii. 42; iii. 94.
- Penurious, a certain, gentleman, who is 'narrow not so much from avarice as from impotence to spend his money,' iv. 48.
- Pepys, Sir Lucas, attends Johnson, v. 7.  
— William Walter, Mrs. Thrale's praise of, v. 220; account of, v. 220 n.
- Percy, Dr., Bishop of Dromore, account of, i. 23-5; 46, 107; Johnson visits, ii. 146-47; dines with Boswell to meet Johnson, ii. 214; Johnson's fun on, iii. 294; letter of, quoted, iii. 298; his altercation with Johnson, iv. 273-76; account of his family, iv. 273 n.; Johnson's letter of apology and explanation, iv. 280; letter to, from Boswell, iv. 280-81; on Johnson's conversation, v. 19.
- Perkins, Mr., manager of Thrale's brewery, iii. 139; hangs up an engraving of Johnson's portrait in the counting-house, iii. 139 n.; letters from Johnson to, v. 252, 287-88; vi. 92, 106.
- Peterborough, Lord, best account of, in Captain Carleton's *Memoirs*, vi. 166.
- Petty, Sir William, his allowance of £3 a year to support nature, ii. 103.
- Peyton, Mr., one of Johnson's amanuenses, i. 148; Johnson sends him on an errand, iii. 13.
- Philidor, Andrew, the chess-player, v. 75.
- Philips, Miss, a singer, introduced by Johnson to Mr. Windham of Dublin, vi. 62.  
— John, the poet, Johnson's epitaph on, in Mrs. Williams's *Miscellanies*, ii. 182; Johnson's *Life of*, v. 193.  
— a musician, epitaph on, i. 112 n.
- Philosophers, ancient, their candour and good humour, iv. 21.
- Physician, or Doctor of Medicine? iii. 144, 218; Johnson's reply to a foppish, vi. 153.
- Pickle-shop, the, next to Northumberland House, instanced by Goldsmith as a mark of luxury, iii. 73.
- Pig, a learned, at Nottingham, vi. 206.
- Pieresc's death, lamented in forty languages, iii. 217.
- Piozzi, Mrs., i. 16 and n.; Boswell's criticisms on, i. 41, 42 n., 61 n.; her account of Johnson's sale of Goldsmith's *Vicar*, ii. 81 n.; mistakes Johnson's meaning, iii. 45 n., 51 n.; her anecdotes of Johnson characterised by Boswell, vi. 174-81.
- Piracies from the *Idler*, ii. 20 n.
- Pitt, William, a minister given by the people to the king, iii. 52; Boswell sends him his *Letter to the People of Scotland*, vi. 95 n.
- Pity, not natural to man, but acquired and improved by reason, ii. 100-1.
- Place de Vendôme, iii. 233.  
— Victoire, iii. 241.
- Plan of the Dictionary, addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield, i. 144-45.
- Plaxton, Rev. G., on Michael Johnson, i. 11 n.
- Players, Johnson's prejudice against, i. 129-30, iv. 186; Johnson's contempt for, iii. 89, 246.
- Plays, Spanish, Johnson on, v. 155.  
'Pleasure is *contrary* to happiness,' iv. 247.
- Plott, R., his *History of Staffordshire*, iv. 190.
- Pococke, Edward, Smith's Latin verses on, iv. 270 and n.
- Poetical Epistle to Samuel Johnson*, by Mr. Murphy, ii. 27, 28.
- Poetical Calendar, The*, Johnson contributes to, ii. 50.
- Poetry, Goldsmith's dispute with Robert Dodsley about, iv. 45; What is poetry? iv. 46.
- Poets, Johnson publishes the first four volumes of his Prefaces to the most eminent English, v. 72; Johnson presents a set to Lord Marchmont, v. 92; Johnson

- completes the *Lives*, v. 173; how the idea of writing them grew and expanded, v. 173-74; history and analysis of the various *Lives*, v. 173-212; Johnson gives Boswell a portion of the original ms. of the *Lives*, v. 209.
- Politian, Johnson proposes to publish the Latin poems of, i. 59.
- 'Political Tracts,' collected, iii. 166; attacks on, iii. 167.
- Politics, Johnson on, ii. 237; modern, devoid of principle, iii. 215.
- Poor, Johnson's curiosity with regard to those in the Seven Provinces, ii. 138; state of those in London, v. 101; on the methods of employing the, v. 143.
- Pope, Alexander, Johnson's translation of his *Messiah* into Latin, i. 35; his appreciation of Johnson's *London*, i. 94; he recommends Johnson to Earl Gower, i. 97; his letter about *London* and *Marmor Norfolkense*, i. 108; 'paper-sparing Pope,' i. 108; controversy on Bolingbroke and, ii. 4-5; Johnson's dissertation on the epitaphs of, ii. 8; conversation on, ii. 232; compared with Dryden, ii. 162, 233; Ruffhead's *Life* of, iii. 24; Warburton's essay on, iii. 24; wrote the *Dunciad* for fame, iii. 183; his *Dying Christian to his Soul*, partly borrowed, iv. 38; quotation from, iv. 202 n.; lines on Sir Geoffrey Kneller, iv. 233 n.; on his translation of Homer, iv. 258; Boswell says Homer plays the bassoon, Pope the flageolet, iv. 258; his characters of men better than those of women, ii. 232; his early appreciation of Johnson, ii. 233; his emotion in repeating the last lines of the *Dunciad*, ii. 232; and Dryden, distinguished by Voltaire, ii. 162; Johnson calls on Lord Marchmont for information concerning, v. 92; Johnson's *Life* of, v. 133; his extraordinary power of versification, v. 184; did not excel in conversation, v. 186; his friends, v. 186; Lord Somerville's account of, v. 187; various readings in the *Life* of, v. 188-89; the *Essay on Man* said to have been first sketched by Bolingbroke, v. 102; Mr. Beauclerk quotes, v. 148-49.
- Population, discussion on, ii. 246-47.
- Porter, Mrs., afterwards Mrs. Johnson, i. 63-4 and n.
- Miss Lucy, i. 15, 72; declines Mrs. Johnson's wedding-ring, i. 191; Johnson's letters to, ii. 13-4, 212; iii. 230-31; v. 94, 226, 227-28; vi. 67, 79-80, 91, 94-5, 104-5, 227; described, iii. 302; Johnson asks for her prayers, vi. 227.
- Porteous, Dr. Beilby, Bishop of Chester, iv. 282.
- Portraits of Johnson, ii. 58; vi. 253 n., 254 n.
- Portrait-painting, Johnson thinks improper for a woman, iii. 208.
- Post-chaise, Johnson's delight in travelling in, iii. 292; iv. 163.
- Postscript, Johnson's, to Lauder's pamphlet on Milton, i. 186.
- Pott, Archdeacon, Johnson recommends his sermons, iii. 298-99.
- Potter, on his translation of *Æschylus*, iv. 258.
- Praise, exaggerated, folly of, v. 220-21.
- Prayer, Johnson's, on the death of his wife, i. 189-90; *Prayers and Meditations*, i. 190; before the study of the law, ii. 150; on engaging in politics, ii. 151; for the dead, iii. 21; forms of, discussed, vi. 128; Johnson is asked to compose some, for family use, vi. 128; Johnson's, against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts, vi. 203 n.; Mr. Strahan edits Johnson's *Prayers and Meditations*, vi. 210.
- Preaching, not generally plain enough, ii. 268.
- Precedents, Johnson on, iii. 16.
- Precocity, in children, of no advantage, iii. 249-50.
- Prefaces, by Johnson, to Lobo's

- Abyssinia*, i. 56-7; to the *Life of Father Paul*, i. 104; to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 110-11; to the *Harleian Miscellany*, i. 137; to *A System of Ancient Geography*, i. 148; to Mr. Dodsley's *Preceptor*, i. 150; to Lauder's pamphlet on Milton, i. 186; to the *Dictionary*, i. 239-40; to Payne's *Game of Draughts*, i. 260; to the *Catalogue of the Artists' Exhibition*, ii. 37; to Rolt's *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, ii. 31; to Mrs. Williams's *Miscellanies*, ii. 181; to Baret's *Lessons in Italian and English*, iii. 142; to Macbean's *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, iii. 60; to Angel's book on shorthand, iii. 80.
- Prendergast, Col., strange occurrence at his death, iii. 40.
- Present, Johnson does not believe any one is happy in the, iii. 198.
- Priestly, Dr., Johnson on, ii. 269; Johnson's displeasure at the mention of, vi. 72 and *n.*; his works, vi. 72 *n.*, 73 *n.*
- Pringle, Sir John, President of the Royal Society, iii. 271; iv. 18; Boswell vainly endeavours to bring him and Johnson together, iv. 71.
- Printer's devil, an author marries a, v. 235.
- Printing, and the diffusion of knowledge, iv. 44.
- Prior, abused by Johnson and defended by Mrs. Thrale, ii. 227; Johnson on Lord Hailes's censure of, iv. 194-95. — James, i. viii.
- Pritchard, Mrs., her playing mechanical, iii. 196.
- Professor, in Ancient Literature, Johnson appointed, ii. 219.
- Prologues, Johnson's, for Milton's *Comus*, i. 183; for Goldsmith's *Good-Natured Man*, ii. 199; Dryden's and Garrick's compared, iii. 174-75; Johnson's, to Hugh Kelly's *A Word to the Wise*, iv. 117; Sheridan's, to Richard Savage's *Sir Thomas Overbury*, iv. 118.
- Pronunciation, Johnson on, iii. 17-9; Johnson dislikes fastidiousness in, iii. 17; of Sir Gilbert Elliot, iii. 18; Johnson's, iv. 199-200.
- Property, literary, discussion on, iii. 114-15.
- Proposals, for an edition of Shakespeare, ii. 3; for publishing the works of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, iii. 142.
- Prussia, Frederick II., king of, valued himself on three things, ii. 98.
- Psalmazaz, George, v. 16; vi. 108.
- Public censure, power of, possessed by the Church, iv. 66.
- Public speaking, discussion on, iii. 187.
- Puffendorf, on schoolmasters, iii. 15.
- Punch, conversation likened to a bowl of, ii. 8; Blacklock's poem on, ii. 8.
- Punchinello, Johnson dubs Gilbert Cowper the, ii. 273.
- Punishment, Johnson's opinion of, i. 21.
- Puns, Johnson's aversion against, iii. 95; vi. 150.
- Purgatory, a very harmless doctrine, ii. 251; Johnson on the doctrine of, iii. 20-1.
- QUAKERS, Johnson likes individuals, but not the sect, iii. 297.
- Queen, the French, impressed by Mrs. Thrale, iii. 228.
- Queensbury, Duke of, patron of Gay, iii. 214.
- Questions, not the mode of conversation among gentlemen, iv. 7; Johnson's dislike to, iv. 269.
- Quin, the actor, iii. 214.
- Quotation, Wilkes censures, as pedantry, v. 238; defended by Johnson, v. 238.
- RAASAY FAMILY, the, iii. 155-56, 225.
- Rackstrow, Mr., Johnson's colonel in the militia, vi. 152.
- Radcliffe, Dr., the Master of Pembroke College, i. 220.
- 'Rags will always make their

- appearance where they have a right to do it,' vi. 146-47.
- Ralph, Mr. James, anecdote of Dr. Young, v. 197 n., 198 n.
- Rambler, The*, commenced, i. 159; how the name was chosen, i. 159; Johnson's prayer for the success of, i. 160; many papers in it very hastily written, i. 161; collections for, i. 162-64; Hawkins's misstatements concerning, i. 162; reception of, i. 165-66; Mr. Colman's praise of, i. 166-67; Bonnel Thornton's praise of, i. 166; Mrs. Johnson's praise of, i. 167; Smart, the poet, first mentioned it to Burney, i. 166 n.; Edinburgh edition of, i. 167; Dr. Young's admiration for, i. 172; characters in, true to nature, i. 173; the style of, i. 175; translations for, by Mr. James Elphinstone, i. 182; by Mr. F. Lewis, i. 182; date of the last, i. 188; a paper in, translated into French, re-translated into English, and inserted by Murphy in the *Gray's Inn Journal*, ii. 28-9; Johnson's mode of writing for, iv. 50; Johnson says one of the *Rambles* is too wordy, v. 144; Johnson hears that the Empress of Russia will have it translated into Russian, vi. 111.
- Ramsay, Allan, his *Gentle Shepherd*, iii. 75; his observations upon Horace's villa, iv. 251; Johnson dines with, v. 33, 83, 107; a contemporary of Pope, v. 35; his death, vi. 200.
- Ranby, John, his *Doubts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, iv. 207.
- Ranelagh, Johnson often went to, ii. 265; compared with the Pantheon, iii. 27.
- Rank, Johnson's reverence for, ii. 105-6, 110-11.
- Rasselas*, written by Johnson in a week, to pay his mother's funeral expenses, ii. 15; price Johnson received for it, ii. 16-7; Johnson finds, twenty years afterwards, and reads eagerly, ii. 16 n.; compared with Voltaire's *Candide*, ii. 16-7; v. 59; similarity of, and *Vanity of Human Wishes*, ii. 17; Mr. Courtenay on, ii. 19; translations of, iii. 64; American editions of, iii. 63 n.
- Rawlinson, Dr. Richard, v. 204.
- Ray, his collection of north country words, ii. 238.
- Reading, Johnson's, at Oxford, i. 44; should be from inclination, not as a task, ii. 93; Johnson does not read books through, iii. 81; the foundation of knowledge must be gained by, iii. 207; 'what we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression,' iv. 50; Johnson on, iv. 195-96; 'strange there should be so little, in the world, and so much writing,' vi. 55.
- Reasons of the Christian Religion*, Baxter's, Johnson thought the best collection of evidences, vi. 72.
- Reed, Mr. Isaac, supplies Johnson with anecdotes and quotations, v. 175; his knowledge of literary history, v. 175.
- Rehearsal*, the comedy of the, iii. 26 and n.; 'has not wit enough to keep it sweet,' vi. 153.
- Reindeer, introduced into Northumberland, iii. 26 n.
- Religion, Goldsmith says, he takes shoes from the shoemaker, or coats from a tailor, iii. 69.
- Religious truth, martyrdom a proof of, iii. 105.
- Remonstrance, The*, a poem by Mr. Stockdale, ii. 260.
- Residence, Johnson's places of, v. 105 n.
- Respect, Johnson's, for old families, iii. 10.
- Respublica*, written by a bookseller, iv. 58.
- Retaliation*, Goldsmith's, quoted, vi. 152.
- Retirement, The*, a poem by Walsh, quoted by Johnson, ii. 276 and n., 277 n.
- Reviews, Johnson's, in the *Literary Magazine*, i. 253-55; and reviewers of the day, discussed, iv. 40-1, 51.

- Revolution, the, 'was necessary, but it broke our constitution,' vi. 9.
- Reynolds, Sir Joshua, meets Johnson at the Misses Cotterell's, i. 197; contributes to the *Idler*, ii. 5; his reported income in 1762, ii. 40; Johnson consults, as to accepting the pension, ii. 43; visits Devonshire, accompanied by Johnson, ii. 45; 'with-out a rival,' ii. 35; the first proposer of the Club, ii. 140; his first portrait of Johnson, ii. 58; letters from Johnson to, ii. 147, 284; iii. 1; iv. 88, 95-6; v. 269; vi. 89; the party at his house when Johnson described his conversation with the King, ii. 196; explains Johnson's free-speaking of his friends, iii. 157-58; lends his coach to Johnson and Boswell to go to Twickenham, iii. 208; Baretti translates his *Discourses* into Italian, iv. 100; Johnson and Boswell dine with, when Allan Ramsay related his observations on Horace's villa, iv. 251; Johnson and Boswell dine with, and quarrel, v. 40; his discourses to the Royal Academy, v. 72; for which the Empress of Russia presents him with a gold snuff-box, v. 72; Johnson dines with, v. 81; Johnson says he knows no one who has passed through life with more observation than, v. 145; letter from Johnson to, referring to Mauritius Lowe, vi. 37-8; Boswell dines with Johnson at, for the last time, vi. 170; Johnson's letters to, from Ashbourne, vi. 182, 199-202; Johnson makes three requests to, on his death-bed, vi. 247; extracts from letters from Johnson to, vi. 181; letter from Johnson introducing Mr. Cruikshanks, vi. 56, 62-3.
- Mrs. Frances, Johnson remembers her in his will, vi. 237 n.
- Rhetorical gesture, Johnson ridicules, iii. 67.
- Rheumatism, receipt for, iii. 207.
- Rhubarb, cultivated by Sir Alexander Dick, vi. 96.
- Richardson, Jonathan, the painter i. 94.
- — — the younger, i. 94.
- Samuel, the author, i. 110; Johnson suggests an index to the works of, i. 207 n.; assists Johnson in a pecuniary difficulty, i. 249 n.; described by Johnson in the *Rambler*, i. 161; compared with Fielding, ii. 202-3; iii. 54; his novels compared with French novels, ii. 270; his death, ii. 40; 'had little conversation, except about his own works,' v. 167; his vanity, v. 167 n., 168 n.
- Riches, the proper use of, iii. 25.
- Ritter, Joseph, Boswell's Bohemian servant, iii. 251.
- Robertson, Dr. W., on Johnson's *Brownism*, i. 252; sups with Johnson and Boswell, ii. 214; Johnson's respect for, ii. 206; his history like gold packed in wool, iii. 91; on Johnson's character, v. 33-4; his first meeting with Johnson, v. 34; his imitation of Johnson's style, vi. 223.
- Robinson, Sir Thomas, ii. 98, 274.
- Rochester's Poems, iv. 194.
- Rogers, Rev. Mr., Johnson leaves him £100 in trust for Elizabeth Herne, vi. 237 n.
- Rolt, his *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, iii. 193; to which Johnson writes a preface, ii. 31; publishes an edition of Aken-side's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, putting his own name to it, ii. 31.
- Roman Catholic religion, Johnson on the, ii. 249-52; iii. 8-9; iv. 26-7.
- Rome, church of, Johnson supports her doctrines, ii. 249; prefers it to Presbyterianism, ii. 249; has a respect for the 'old religion,' ii. 252; Johnson on, vi. 123.
- Romney, the painter, Cumberland's Odes dedicated to, iv. 51 and n.
- Roscommon, Johnson's Life of, i. 150.
- Ross, Dr. John, vi. 108.
- Roths, Lady, ii. 279, 285; Bennet Langton marries, iii. 3 n.

- Round robin, the famous, about Goldsmith's epitaph, iv. 89-90.
- Rousseau, J. J., his treatise on the inequality of mankind, ii. 102; visited by Boswell, ii. 167; iii. 70; Johnson's ill opinion of, ii. 167-68; Boswell's admiration for, ii. 167-68.
- Rowley's poems, Johnson goes to see the 'originals,' iv. 56.
- Royal Marriage Bill, Johnson on the, iii. 10.
- Rudd, Margaret, execution of, iv. 86; v. 32.
- Ruddiman, Mr. Thomas, i. 168 n.; Boswell proposes to write his Life, iii. 71; v. 74.
- Ruffhead, his Life of Pope, iii. 24.
- Rules, for health, v. 287.
- Runts, Johnson would learn to talk of, v. 40 and n.
- Russia, the Empress of, will have the *Rambler* translated, vi. 111; presents Sir Joshua Reynolds with a gold snuff-box, v. 72.
- Rutty, Dr. John, his *Spiritual Diary and Soliloquies*, iv. 178; specimens of, iv. 173.
- SACHEVERELL, Johnson taken when a child to hear him preach, i. 14.
- Sagacity and intuition discussed, vi. 167.
- Salamanca, Johnson's admiration for the university of, ii. 117.
- Salisbury, Mrs., death of, iii. 119; Johnson's epitaph on, iii. 119.
- Sandwich, Earl of, v. 84; account of, v. 84 n.
- Sansterre, the brewer in Paris, iii. 239.
- Sarcocele, Johnson suffers with a, vi. 74.
- Sarpi, Father Paul, Johnson meditates a translation of his *History of the Council of Trent*, i. 100.
- Sastres, Mr., the Italian master, iv. 31; Johnson leaves him £5 to buy books, vi. 237 n.
- Savage life, Johnson on, iii. 83.  
— Richard, identification with the character of Thales in *London*, denied, i. 97 n.; Johnson's Life of, i. 125, 128-29; strange character, i. 125; Hawkins's reference to, i. 126 n.; Johnson's friendship with, i. 126-27; doubt as to his mother's identity, i. 133-36; his *Sir Thomas Overbury*, revived at Drury Lane, iv. 118.
- Schomberg, Dr., a Jewish physician, iii. 306 n.
- Schoolmaster, authority of, iii. 3; severity of, iii. 4; Johnson's, iii. 4; Puffendorf on, iii. 15; a Scotch, tried for chastising his scholars, iii. 44.
- Score, conversation transmitted in, iii. 276.
- Scotsman, 'much may be made of him, if he be caught young,' iii. 51; Boswell, the most unscot-tified, iii. 96.
- Scotch, Johnson admires everything Scotch, 'but Scotch out-cakes, and Scotch prejudices,' iii. 224; Johnson's attacks on the, vi. 6; the causes of his antipathy to the, vi. 6; on the advisability of a Scotch militia, iii. 273-74.
- Scotland, Johnson's prejudice against, ii. 206-7; only a worse England, iv. 250; very few books printed in, before the Union, iii. 71; the claim of lay patrons to present ministers to parishes in, iii. 96-101; learning in, iii. 210; ms. account of parishes in, with full statistics by Dr. Webster, iii. 128 n.; 'Scotchmen love Scotland better than truth,' iii. 163.
- Scott, John, of Amwell, his elegies, iii. 199.  
— George Lewis, a friend of Thomson, iv. 120.  
— Sir Walter, i. ix.  
— Dr. William, travels with Johnson in a post-chaise, ii. 124; reports to Boswell a saying of Johnson's, ii. 252; Johnson dines with, iv. 263; one of Johnson's executors, vi. 237 n.
- Scoundrel, Johnson declares that Mrs. Thrale by her spoiling will make him a, iv. 12.

- Scrimshaw, Charles, a relation of Johnson's, vi. 235 n.
- Scrofula, Johnson afflicted with, i. 17-8; Johnson 'touched' for, i. 18.
- Sea life, Johnson's horror of, iii. 278-79.
- Secker, Archbishop, quoted on conversation, i. 9; his political character, v. 168.
- Second sight, discussed, iii. 8; Johnson is willing to believe in, iii. 169.
- Seed, Jeremiah, 'has a fine style,' iv. 249.
- Senate of Lilliput, i. 84.
- Seraglio, Johnson's, v. 70.
- Serious Call*, Law's, Johnson thinks very fine, ii. 268.
- Servants, Johnson likes truth in, ii. 100; why do women, have lower wages than men? iii. 72; Johnson's kindness to, vi. 32-3.
- Settle, Elkanah, the last city poet, iv. 81-2.
- Séigné, Mme., complains of the 'task of existence,' iv. 59.
- Sèvres, the manufactory of china at, visited, iii. 237, 240.
- Seward, Miss, her letters quoted, i. 16, 38; Boswell meets, iv. 2; her verses on Lichfield, vi. 164; Johnson compliments her on her description of the Arctic Ocean, vi. 164.
- Rev. Mr., entertains Johnson and Boswell at Lichfield, iv. 2; publishes an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, iv. 2; his observations on volcanoes, iv. 2, 153; Johnson on, iv. 154.
- William, account of, iv. 125 n.; Johnson gives him an introduction to Boswell, iv. 125.
- Shakespeare, Johnson's edition of, published, ii. 156-57; admirable Preface to, ii. 158; attacked by Kenrick, ii. 157; occupied all Johnson's time in 1764-65, ii. 159; proposals for a new edition of, i. 262; jubilee in honour of, ii. 220; jestingly compared with Congreve, ii. 233; mistaken by Voltaire, ii. 235; many of his plays the worse for being acted, ii. 238; Steevens' collection of translations accessible to, ii. 260-61; Johnson's edition of, republished by Steevens, iii. 60-1; discussion on two of Johnson's notes on, iv. 60; conversation on the witches of, v. 83; Colman on the learning of, v. 157.
- Sharpe, Dr. Gregory, account of him and his ranting prayer, ii. 273.
- Sharpe's 'Letters on Italy,' iv. 60.
- Shaving, numerous ways of, iv. 165.
- Shaw, Cuthbert, publishes his poem, *The Race*, ii. 187; his portrait of Johnson in verse, ii. 188.
- Rev. William, his Erse grammar, iv. 109; travels to obtain materials for a Gaelic Dictionary, vi. 87; denies the authenticity of Ossian's poems, vi. 37, 87.
- Shebbeare, Dr., his *Letters on the English Nation*, written under the name of Battista Angeloni, v. 247.
- Shelburne, Lord, Johnson on the early advancement of, iv. 43; a man of coarse manners, but of ability and information, vi. 12; Goldsmith's blundering speech to, vi. 13.
- Shenstone, Mr., quoted, on taverns, iii. 291; on Johnson's *Rambler*, iii. 292.
- Sheridan, Mrs., ii. 30 n.
- Charles, his *Account of the late Revolution in Sweden*, iv. 287.
- Richard Brinsley, his prologue to Savage's play, iv. 118; proposed by Johnson, a member of the Club, iv. 119; his popularity in England, v. 78; threatens to go to America, vi. 52.
- Thomas, Johnson on the performance of *Cato*, ii. 30, 43; his wife, ii. 55; her novels, ii. 55-6; lectures at Edinburgh, ii. 52; promises Boswell to introduce him to Johnson, ii. 52; pensioned, ii. 53; teaches pronunciation to Mr. Alex. Wedderburne, ii. 53; 'Sherry is dull,' ii. 115; gives a medal to Home

- for his tragedy of *Douglas*, iii. 170-71; invited in hopes of effecting a reconciliation with Johnson, vi. 163; Johnson wishes to renew their acquaintance, vi. 58; characterised by Johnson, vi. 5; Johnson denies his story of a victory of, in conversation, vi. 5.
- Sherlock, Bishop, his elegant style, iv. 249.
- She Stoops to Conquer*, dedicated to Johnson, iii. 71 and *n.*; Paoli on, iii. 79; Johnson on, iii. 89.
- Shiels, Robert, one of Johnson's amanuenses, i. 147; his character, iv. 39 and *n.*, 40 *n.*
- Shipley, Dr., Bishop of St. Asaph, vi. 81; chaplain to the Duke of Cumberland, iv. 251.
- Shorthand, Johnson cannot believe in the taking down of speeches in Parliament, iii. 79; writes a preface to a book on, iii. 80; Boswell's method of, iv. 271; experiments on, by Johnson, iv. 271.
- Sibbald, Sir Robert, the Scottish antiquary, Life of, iv. 228.
- Siddons, Mrs., visits Johnson, vi. 77; Johnson jokes her about the want of seats, vi. 77; talks of different actresses and of Garrick, vi. 78.
- Sidney, Sir Philip, quoted, iv. 134 and *n.*
- Simpson, Joseph, Johnson's letter to, ii. 21-2; his tragedy, *The Patriot*, iv. 37.
- Sinclair, Sir John, v. 272.
- 'Sixpence, Boswell lend me, not to be repaid,' vi. 28.
- Slavery, Johnson's argument against, iv. 204-6.
- Sleep, Dr. Mead on, iv. 170; Dr. Cullen on, iv. 170.
- Smalridge, his sermons commended, iv. 249.
- Smart, Christopher, Johnson's account of, i. 251; his madness, ii. 63; or Derrick the better poet, vi. 29.
- Smith, Dr. Adam, an upholder of rhyme as against blank verse, ii. 92; his *Wealth of Nations*, iii. 271; on the wealth of the Universities, iv. 23; his letter subjoined to Hume's Life, iv. 122; compared with Johnson, v. 163 *n.*: Johnson's rudeness to, vi. 23-4.
- Smith, Rev. Mr., vicar of Southill, v. 261.
- Smollet, Tobias, letter to John Wilkes, relating to Francis Barber, ii. 23; editor of the *Critical Review*, iv. 41.
- Society of Procurators, the Scotch, obtain a royal charter to call themselves solicitors, v. 263; the *Caledonian Mercury*, issues a jocular paragraph on, v. 263; take an action against the *Caledonian Mercury*, in which Boswell is counsel, v. 264.
- Solander, Dr., his expedition with Mr. Banks, iii. 5.
- Somerset coffee-house, in the Strand, iii. 279.
- Somerville, Lord, says he had dined with Pope, and found him 'gay and entertaining,' v. 187; his encouragement of Boswell, and Boswell's tribute to his memory, v. 187 *n.*
- Sorbonne Library, visited, iii. 240.
- South, Dr., Johnson recommends his Sermons on Prayer, ii. 250.
- Southill, Johnson's visit to Squire Dilly there, v. 256.
- South Sea, travellers' narratives of, principally conjecture, iv. 19.
- Southwell, Lady, account of, v. 137 *n.*; Johnson's letters to about Mauritius Lowe, v. 137-38.
- Lord (second), his good breeding and fine manners, v. 138 *n.*; vi. 12.
- Spain, Johnson advises Boswell to travel in, ii. 116.
- Spectator, The*, Johnson praises, iii. 216; the part not written by Addison full of bad papers, iv. 41; Grove's Essay on Novelty, one of the finest pieces in the English language, iv. 41.
- Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, noticed by Johnson in Paris, iii. 239.
- Speeches in Parliament, on good, iv. 234-35.



- Spence, Rev. Joseph, his anecdotes, v. 201.
- Spottiswoode, his conversation with Johnson, v. 28.
- Stanton, Mr., manager of the Lichfield theatre, iii. 304.
- Stanyan, Temple, author of *An Account of Switzerland and Greece*, v. 60.
- Statuary and architecture, conversation on, iii. 280-81.
- Staunton, Dr., Johnson's letter to, ii. 28.
- Sir George, vi. 148.
- Steele, Sir Richard, quoted, ii. 153 n.; his *Christian Hero*, iii. 288-89; 'he practised the lighter vices', iii. 289.
- Stevens, George, the possessor of the dial plate of Johnson's watch in Boswell's time, ii. 210; republishes Johnson's *Shakespeare*, iii. 61; letters from Johnson to, iii. 127-28; iv. 103; Johnson proposes him for the Club, iii. 128; Topham Beauclerk on, iv. 283; supplies Johnson with anecdotes and quotations, v. 175; contributed largely to the Apophthegms, vi. 18; gives Boswell some particulars, vi. 157.
- Stella in Mourning*, a poem attributed to Johnson, i. 140.
- Sterne, his popularity, iii. 77.
- Stewart, Mr. Francis, one of Johnson's amanuenses, i. 143.
- Still, Bishop, Harrington's character of, applied by Boswell to Johnson, vi. 252 n.
- Stillingfleet, Mr. Benjamin, account of, v. 243.
- Stockdale, Rev. Percival, his panegyric on Johnson, ii. 260.
- Stopford, Hon. Col., introduced to Johnson, iii. 221.
- Strahan, Mrs., letter from Johnson to, v. 275-76.
- William, the printer, endeavours to get Johnson into the House of Commons, ii. 280; lends Johnson his coach, iii. 81; says 'small certainties are the bane of men of talents', iii. 173; and Cadell purchases Blair's Sermons, iv. 101; a difference between him and Johnson, v. 67; his death, v. 237.
- Strahan, Rev. George, Johnson visits at Islington, vi. 106; Johnson leaves him some books, vi. 237 n.; attends Johnson in his last illness, vi. 248.
- Strickland, Mrs., sister of Charles Townley, iv. 121 n.
- Stuart, the family of, discussed, iii. 74; iv. 157.
- Mr. Andrew, his letters to Lord Mansfield, iii. 84.
- Colonel James, v. 79; died at Jamaica, v. 116 n.
- Rev. William, vicar of Luton, introduced to Johnson, vi. 35.
- Student, The*, contribution to, i. 184.
- Studies, Johnson's advice to Boswell as to his, ii. 136-37.
- Style, Johnson's, i. 175; is formed upon various writers, i. 176-77; several writers compared by Boswell, i. 180; Addison's, i. 180-81; must be defined, before determining what is good and bad, iii. 48; Dr. Blair says, Johnson's is 'too pompous,' iv. 174.
- St. Clement Danes, Church of, Johnson attends there with Boswell, iii. 69, 203.
- St. Cloud, visited, iii. 240.
- St. Denis, visited, iii. 242.
- St. Eustatia, visited, iii. 241.
- St. Germain, the library of, iii. 241.
- St. John's Gate, Johnson met Savage at, i. 126.
- St. Kilda, Account of, ii. 204-5; Johnson tells Boswell to buy, iii. 7; Macaulay's History of, iii. 8.
- St. Mary's Church, Lichfield, iv. 1.
- St. Mary Redcliffe, Church of, at Bristol, where the supposed Rowley mss. were found, iv. 57.
- St. Paul's, it is proposed to erect monuments to eminent persons in, iii. 93; Milton's should be the first, iii. 93.
- St. Quentin, visited, iii. 243.
- St. Roque's Church, iii. 233.
- Subordination, conversation on, iv. 263-64.

## 316 LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON

- Succession, Johnson believes in male, iii. 117; the rules of, purely legal, iii. 260.
- Sugar Cane, The*, Grainger's poem, iii. 293 and *n.*; Johnson's review on, for the *London Chronicle*, ii. 142.
- Suspicion, Johnson on, iv. 137-38.
- Swift, Dean, i. iv.; Johnson attacks him, but praises the *Tale of a Tub*, ii. 114, 216; iii. 169-70; puts his name to only two works, iii. 170; Johnson's Life of, v. 199; various readings in the Life of, v. 200-1.
- Swinfen, Dr., i. 37-8, 46-50.
- Swinton, Mr., his list of authors of the *Universal History*, i. 122.
- Sydenham, Johnson's Life of, i. 14.
- TACITUS, rather made notes for an historical work, than wrote a history, iii. 46.
- Talk and conversation distinguished, vi. 24.
- Talking to himself, one of Johnson's habits, ii. 144.
- Tasso, General Paoli repeats some stanzas from his *Jerusalem*, v. 33.
- Taste, difference of, is really difference of skill, iii. 148.
- Tavern-chair, the throne of human felicity, iii. 291 *n.*
- Taverns, Johnson on the comforts of, iii. 290-91.
- Taxation no Tyranny*, Johnson's political pamphlet, iii. 163, 183; eliminations from, i. 164-66; quoted, iv. 204.
- Taylor, Demosthenes, v. 20; the most silent man, v. 20.
- Chevalier, a celebrated oculist, v. 90.
- Dr., by Johnson's advice enters at Christ Church, Oxford, i. 47; Johnson's school-fellow and friend, i. 31, 130; summoned by Johnson on the death of his wife, i. 192; letter to, i. 193; sends his coach to take Johnson and Boswell from Lichfield to Ashbourne, iv. 9; Boswell's description of him and his household, iv. 9; Johnson's description of, iv. 141; dissimilarity of character between Johnson and Taylor, iv. 183; his fine cattle, iv. 152; at Ashbourne, iv. 140; his manner of life monotonous to Johnson, iv. 156; Johnson's dispute with, iv. 157-58; his hospitality, iv. 209; Johnson writes to, when struck with paralysis, vi. 63; Boswell writes down all he can tell about Johnson, vi. 208; Johnson's letter to, in his last illness, vi. 104.
- Taylor, Jeremy, remarks on his prayer, vi. 121.
- Tea, Hanway's essay on, i. 257.
- Temperate, Johnson could be abstemious but not, ii. 231.
- Temple, Sir William, Malone on Johnson's imitation of the style of, i. 176 *n.*; the first writer who gave cadence to English prose, iv. 259 and *n.*; Johnson said he had formed his style on that of, iv. 176, 259 *n.*; makes his companions drink his bumpers for him, v. 32.
- Rev. W. J., a friend of Boswell's, presented to Johnson, iii. 167; his condemnation of Johnson's political pamphlets, iii. 168.
- Testator, Johnson's joke about the, iii. 117; when his peals of laughter resound from Temple Bar to Fleet Ditch, iii. 118.
- Texts, charitable, Mr. Langton gave Johnson, vi. 115 *n.*
- Theobald and Warburton, Johnson on, ii. 4.
- Theocritus, Johnson on, v. 141-42.
- Thicknesse, Philip, his *Journey through France and Spain*, 'entertaining,' iv. 237.
- Thomson, sees everything with a poetical eye, ii. 115; Johnson's praise of, ii. 215; had true genius, his fault a cloud of words, iv. 45; Johnson reads a passage from, omitting every other line, iv. 45; Boswell communicates some facts about, to Johnson, v. 63; his sisters, v. 63.
- Rev. James, arraigned for defamation, Boswell defends, iv.

- 64; Johnson's argument in defence of, iv. 65-9; Burke on Johnson's argument, iv. 69; Lord Thurlow's argument on the case of, iv. 69-71; Lord Hailes on Johnson's defence, iv. 66.
- Thornton, Mr. Bonnell, praise of the *Rambler*, i. 166; publishes a mock *Rambler*, i. 175 n.; his burlesque 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,' ii. 84.
- Thoughts on the Coronation of George III.*, by Mr. Gwyn, corrected and improved by Johnson, ii. 33.
- Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting the Falkland Islands*, Johnson publishes, ii. 277-78; iii. 4.
- Johnson's, all on a great scale, vi. 87.
- Thrale, Miss, impresses the Queen, iii. 228.
- Mr. and Mrs., lose their only son, iv. 3; Johnson's great sorrow, iv. 3-4; his letter of condolence to, iv. 6; their rather cool reception of Johnson, iv. 17.
- Mr., successful in a contested election, iii. 140; contests the election for Southwark, v. 136; his death, related by Johnson, v. 222; Johnson one of his executors, v. 223.
- Mrs., Johnson's introduction to, ii. 151, 154; Johnson's account of the father of, ii. 151-52; Johnson's account of, ii. 154-55; Johnson stays with, ii. 181; *The Three Warnings*, poem by, ii. 182; price paid for Johnson's letters to, ii. 197 n.; Boswell meets her at Johnson's house, ii. 226; she invites him to Streatham, ii. 227; defends Prior against Johnson, ii. 227-28; Johnson and Boswell dine at, iii. 81; Johnson goes to, that he might be better taken care of, iii. 127; reads Boswell's *Journal of a Tour*, till she is almost blind, iii. 226; Johnson goes to France with Mr. and Mrs., iii. 227; loves Johnson, iii. 269; Johnson says, she will make him a scoundrel, iv. 12; a letter from Johnson to, quoted, iv. 137 n.; has something of the insolence of wealth, v. 17; writes to Johnson from Bath, v. 121-22; her saying about Johnson's conversation, v. 251; letter from Johnson to, vi. 64; 'has done everything wrong since Thrale's bride was off her neck,' vi. 111; informs Johnson of her marriage with Signor Piozzi, vi. 172; extracts from a letter of Johnson's on the occasion, vi. 172-73; her change of tone regarding Johnson, vi. 174-79; instances of her inaccuracy, vi. 174-80; censured for relating Johnson's rudeness to Mr. Cholmondeley, vi. 178; Johnson had apologised for the rudeness, vi. 178-79; the report spread that Johnson wished to marry, vi. 221 n.
- Three Crowns, the, an inn at Lichfield, Johnson and Boswell stay at, iii. 301.
- Thuanus*, Johnson contemplated a translation of, vi. 244.
- Thurlow, Lord, his opinion on the matter of Mr. Thomson, iv. 69-71; letter to Johnson relating to Macbean's admission into the Charterhouse, v. 139; 'is a fine fellow; he fairly puts his mind to yours,' vi. 17; the only man Johnson could wish to prepare for meeting, vi. 160-61; his reply to Boswell, vi. 168-69; calls on Sir J. Reynolds, to acquaint him of the failure of the 'pious negotiation,' vi. 182; Johnson's letter to, vi. 182-83.
- Tickell Richard, Various Readings in the Life of, v. 193.
- Tillotson, much applauded, but not to be imitated, iv. 249.
- Toleration, discussed, iii. 104.
- Tooke, Horne, Johnson on, v. 16; *Divisions of Purley*, v. 58 n.
- Toplady, Rev. A. M., vicar of Broad Hembury, iii. 108.
- Tory, Boswell tells Johnson he is a zealous, v. 251; Johnson defines a, v. 251-52.
- Towers, Dr. Joseph, his letter to Johnson, against his political

- pamphlets, iii. 167; extract from his *Essay on Johnson's Life*, v. 178 and 179 *ss.*
- Townshend, Rt. Hon. Charles, iii. 77.
- Charles, the early friend of Akenside, iv. 14; vi. 151.
- Trade does not bring so much money into a nation as is supposed, ii. 243; conversation on, ii. 272.
- Translation, by Elphinstone, for the *Rambler*, i. 182; by Mr. F. Lewis, i. 182; Johnson once wrote six sheets of in a day, iv. 44; Johnson on, v. 262; impossible to be perfect in poetry, iv. 44, 258.
- Transpire, Johnson's definition of the word, v. 46-7.
- Travelling, Johnson's enthusiasm about, iv. 270; Boswell the best travelling companion in the world, iv. 206.
- Traveller, The*, Goldsmith's, reviewed by Johnson, ii. 143; 'not so fine a poem, since Pope's time,' ii. 162; Johnson's share in, ii. 162; Langton says there is not a bad line in it, iv. 253; Charles Fox called it one of the finest poems in the language, iv. 253.
- Travellers generally mean to tell the truth, iv. 237.
- Trianon, visited, iii. 238.
- Trimlestown, Lord, iv. 228.
- Trinity, Johnson's belief in the doctrine of, iii. 120.
- College, Dublin, presents Johnson with its LL.D. degree, ii. 149.
- Tristram Shandy*, 'did not last,' iii. 289.
- Trotter, Beatrix, the mother of the poet Thomson, v. 63.
- Truth, Johnson likes, in his servants, iii. 100; Johnson recommends a strict attention to, iv. 229; 'That truth which bears the semblance of a lie,' iv. 231 *ss.*; physical and moral, Johnson's definition of the difference of, v. 146; may it ever be violated? vi. 138.
- Trotz, Professor, his edition of the ancient Frisick laws, ii. 138.
- Tunbridge Wells, Johnson visits, i. 149 *ss.*
- Turkish Spy, The*, Boswell asks Johnson if it is a genuine book, vi. 35; written originally in Arabic, vi. 36 *ss.*
- Turk's Head, the, a coffee-house in the Strand, ii. 108, 114, 124, 127.
- Turton, Dr., Goldsmith's physician, iv. 166.
- Twalmley, Johnson compares Boswell to the great, vi. 30.
- Twiss's *Travels in Spain*, Johnson on, iii. 193.
- Tyers, Tom, Boswell meets, ii. 254; account of, v. 9-10.
- Tyrawley, Lord, Lord Chesterfield's witty saying about, iii. 67.
- Tytler, Mr., his vindication of Mary Queen of Scots, ii. 26; his commendation of Johnson's *Journey*, iii. 156.
- UNDERSTANDING, 'Sir, I have found you an argument, but I am not obliged to find you an,' vi. 148.
- Universal Chronicle, The*, the *Idler* appears in, ii. 5.
- Universal History*, list of authors of the, vi. 215-16, 217 *ss.*, 218 *ss.*
- Universal Passion, The*, Young's, Johnson's high estimate of, v. 198.
- Universal Visitor, The*, a miscellany to which Johnson contributed, i. 140 *ss.*, 251; ii. 192.
- Urban, Sylvanus, the name under which Mr. Edward Cave edited the *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 80.
- Usher, the great luminary of the Irish Church, ii. 276.
- Utrecht, Boswell finds dull after London, ii. 135.
- Utterance, Johnson's impressive, iii. 176.
- VALLANCY, COLONEL, visits Johnson, vi. 107.
- Vanity of Human Wishes*, Johnson's imitation of Juvenal, pub-

- lished, i. 150; price paid for, i. 151; Garrick on, i. 152; fine conclusion of, i. 153; similarity between, and *Rasselas*, ii. 17.
- Vansittart, Dr. Robert, ii. 22; iii. 49.
- Vase, Lady Miller's, at Bath-Easton, verses for, iii. 185-86.
- Vauxhall Garden, founded by Mr. Jonathan Tyers, v. 9.
- Veal, Mrs., the appearance of, an invention of Defoe's, iii. 21.
- Versailles, visited, iii. 237.
- Verses, Boswell's, on Matrimony, ii. 257; by Lewis to Pope, vi. 140.
- Vertot, René Aubert, Sieur de, compared with Goldsmith, iii. 92.
- Vesey, Mr., Burke on, when proposed as a member of the Club, v. 167.
- Vestris, Johnson asked if it were true he was teaching him to dance, v. 217-18.
- Vicar of Wakefield*, Johnson tells of his selling it for Goldsmith, ii. 80.
- Vicious intromission, argument on, iii. 53-7.
- Vilette, Rev. Mr., curate at Newgate, vi. 162-63 and *π*.
- Violin-playing, Johnson on, iii. 80.
- Virgil, Johnson on Homer and, iv. 196; compared with Theocritus, v. 141-42; Baskerville's edition of, presented by Johnson to Trinity College, Oxford, ii. 219; a favourite quotation from, ii. 273.
- Virtue and Vice, ii. 96-7; never accustom your mind to mingle, iii. 102; discussed, v. 46, 54.
- Vision of Theodore, i. 150.
- Voltaire, his *Candide*, published before *Rasselas*, ii. 16; Boswell tells him of Johnson's remarks on the King of Prussia, ii. 99; in revenge for which he attacks Johnson, ii. 158 and *π*; his analysis of the difference between Dryden and Pope, ii. 162; Johnson on, ii. 270.
- Vows, Johnson's horror of, v. 61.
- Vyse, Rev. Dr., ii. 12 *π*; iv. 126-27; letter to Boswell, iv. 127-28; letters from Johnson to, v. 140-41; vi. 235 *π*.
- Wakefield, Vicar of*, Goldsmith's, sold by Johnson, ii. 80.
- Wales, Johnson visits, with the Thrales, iii. 135-37.
- Wall, Boswell wishes to have a good garden, vi. 41.
- Dr., a physician at Oxford, vi. 127.
- Waller, his verses on Amoret, quoted, iii. 207 *π*; never drank wine, v. 29 *π*; Johnson's Life of, v. 177; various readings in, v. 177-78; his *Divine Poesy* quoted, vi. 124 *π*.
- Walker, Mr. Joseph Cooper, i. 263.
- Mr., the actor, iii. 214.
- John, discusses with Johnson the art of reading, vi. 42-4.
- Walmsley, Gilbert, an early Lichfield friend, i. 50-4; his efforts to get Johnson appointed master of a school, i. 52; his advice to Johnson about *Irene*, i. 70; recommends Johnson to Mr. Colson, i. 71-2.
- Mrs., sister of Molly Aston, iii. 307.
- Walpole, Sir Robert, Boswell describes his character, i. 96; a minister given by the King to the people, iii. 52; 'always talked bawdy at his table,' iv. 62; obscene pamphlet against, iv. 240.
- Horace, Johnson's opinion of, vi. 148.
- Walton, Isaac, his Lives, one of Johnson's favourite books, iii. 210, 210 *π*; Dr. Horne's reprint of the Lives of, iii. 133; new edition proposed, iii. 286.
- Wanderer, The*, by Savage, Johnson praises, vi. 122.
- War, conversation on, iv. 266-67.
- Warburton, Dr., letter from, to Dr. Birch, i. 4; praised Johnson at a time when praise was of value to him, i. 138; commends Johnson's independence, i. 214; 'the worst of Warburton is that he has a rage for saying something when there is nothing to

- be said,' li. 4; Johnson praises his learning to George iii., li. 193; his controversy with Lowth, li. 193; made a bishop by Pope, li. 193 *n.*; Johnson's tribute to, v. 184; Dr. Parr's eulogy of, v. 184-85 *n.*; his genius and fertility, v. 185; his *Divine Legation* praised, v. 186; his too strong expressions, v. 186; on Mallet's *Life of Bacon*, iv. 197.
- Ward, Dr. Joshua, a celebrated quack, v. 90.
- Warley Camp, Johnson's visit to, v. 64-5.
- Warnings, The Thrus*, Mrs. Thrale's poem, ii. 182.
- Warren, Mr., the first bookseller in Birmingham, i. 56.
- Warton, Dr. Joseph, contributes to the *Adventurer*, i. 205; his *Essay on Pope*, ii. 111; iii. 24; iv. 230; Johnson's letters to, l. 204-5; letter to, on his opinion of Lear, ii. 261.
- Rev. Thomas, letter to, on the study of ancient authors, i. 219; notes of, on Johnson's visit to Oxford in 1754, i. 220-22; contributes to the *Idler*, ii. 5; letter to, introducing Baretti, li. 9; letters to, i. 224-28, 231-32, 237, 238-39, 265; li. 8-9, 219, 261; asking notes for Shakespeare, li. 9, 261; Johnson introduces Boswell to, iii. 287; 'has powder without ball,' v. 146; talks of biography with Johnson, v. 287.
- Watson, Dr., Bishop of Llandaff, v. 252.
- Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith's, iii. 271.
- Wealth and poverty discussed, iii. 271-72; the insolence of wealth is a wretched thing, v. 17.
- Weather, Johnson's contempt for those who talk of the, vi. 193 *n.*
- Webster, Dr. Alexander, promises Johnson information about the Highlands, iii. 124; disappoints Johnson, iii. 128.
- Wedderburne, Mr. Alexander, his efforts to get rid of his Scotch accent, li. 53-4; the high position he attained, iv. 12.
- Welch, Mr. Saunders, Johnson's friend, iv. 227, 220 *n.*; letter to, on travelling, iv. 218-20; on London poor, v. 101; 'his swelling diction,' vi. 22.
- Welwyn, Mr. Young's residence, v. 253.
- Wentworth, Mr., Johnson's school-master, l. 24-5.
- Wesley, John, his conversation, iv. 231; Johnson says he can talk well on any subject, iv. 299; Johnson introduces Boswell to, v. 95.
- Westminster, Boswell sends one of his boys to school at, iv. 22.
- Abbey, Poets' Corner, iii. 92; Johnson buried in, vi. 252.
- Wetherell, Dr., Master of University College, Oxford, iii. 203, 266-68, 282; vi. 142.
- Whales, Goldsmith said, if Johnson were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales, iii. 87.
- Wheeler, Dr. Benjamin, Johnson gives Dr. Burney a letter of introduction to, v. 69, 134.
- Whiggism, a negation of all principle, ii. 96.
- Whigs, 'all made the same way,' ii. 96 *n.*
- Whig and Tory, Johnson's definition of, v. 251-52; a bottomless Whig, vi. 59.
- White, Rev. Henry, sacrist of Lichfield Cathedral, Johnson's letter to, iii. 63-4; Johnson relates to him the account of his penance at Uttoxeter, v. 205.
- Mrs., Johnson leaves her a legacy of £100, vi. 236 *n.*
- Whiteford, Mr. Caleb, his cross-readings of the newspapers, vi. 155.
- Whitehead, Paul, l. 92; his complimentary verses to Garrick, ii. 69.
- Mr. William, Mason's *Memoirs* of, l. 6, 146; his *Elegy to Lord Villiers*, v. 249.
- Whitfield, George, his oratory, ii. 229; Johnson on, v. 208-9.
- Whole Duty of Man, The*, who was the author? iii. 93 and *n.*

- Wife, Johnson's sufferings on the loss of his, i. 226.
- Wilkes, Mr., his *jeu d'esprit* on the *Dictionary*, i. 246; letter to, from Smollett, relating to Francis Barber, ii. 23; his exertions for the cause of freedom, ii. 223; and in the House of Commons, ii. 258; Johnson describes, as a scholar, and a gentleman, iv. 185; gets Francis Barber discharged when pressed, ii. 22-4; Boswell anxious to bring him and Johnson together, iv. 72-4; dines with Messrs. Dilly to meet Johnson, iv. 75; says of Johnson, 'What! does he talk of liberty?' iv. 225; Burke's pun on the occasion when he was carried on the shoulders of the mob, v. 24; joins Johnson in railing against Scotland, v. 237-38; his sentimental anecdote, vi. 180 n.
- Dr., 112 n.
- Will, Johnson makes his, vi. 236-40 n.
- Williams, Mr. Zachariah, i. 223 n., 247; Johnson writes a pamphlet for, 247; death of, 248 n.
- Williams, Mrs. Anna, account of how Johnson sheltered her, i. 188; Garrick refuses an order to the theatre for, ii. 59; Garrick's benefit night to, ii. 59 n.; Johnson frequents her tea-table, ii. 85; Lady Knight's account of, ii. 125-26 n.; her blindness, ii. 126 n.; Johnson writes the Preface to her *Miscellanies*, ii. 181; proceeds of, ii. 181 n.; Johnson's kindness to, iv. 35; her death, vi. 69.
- Williams, Miss Helena Maria, her *Ode on the Peace*, vi. 116.
- Wilson, Rev. Mr., dedicates his *Archaeological Dictionary* to Johnson, v. 294; Johnson's letter to, v. 294-95.
- Wilton, Miss, daughter of the sculptor, iii. 129.
- Windham, Mr., Johnson expresses to him his wonder at the jealousy of the Scotch, iii. 158; a friend both of Johnson and Boswell, vi. 23, 36; 'Don't be afraid, sir, you will soon make a very pretty rascal,' vi. 36; letters from Johnson to, vi. 62, 195-96; goes forty miles out of his way to see and hear Johnson, vi. 189; his attention to Johnson during his illness, vi. 240; Johnson leaves him some books, vi. 237.
- Wine, Johnson on drinking, iii. 277-78; the influence of, iv. 49-50; the pleasure and danger of, iv. 246; discussion on its effects, iv. 246-47; the merits of different kinds of, v. 28-9, 30-2.
- Winter, *Ode on*, published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, i. 143.
- Winter's Walk, *The*, a poem attributed to Johnson, i. 140-41.
- Wise, Mr., Radclivian librarian, visited by Johnson, i. 221, 224, 228.
- Witches, general belief in, iii. 36; of Shakespeare's, conversation on, v. 83.
- Woffington, Peg, Garrick grumbles at, for making his tea too strong, iv. 265.
- Women, more genteel than men, iv. 59; Johnson's joking depreciation of, vi. 126.
- Woodhouse, Mr., the poetical shoemaker, ii. 271.
- Words, Johnson on, iii. 14.
- Wordy, Johnson says one of the *Ramblers* was too, v. 144.
- World Displayed, *The*, Johnson writes an introduction to, ii. 80.
- Wronghead, Sir Francis, a character in *The Provoked Husband*, described by Johnson, ii. 203.
- YONGE, Sir William, writes the epilogue to *Irene*, i. 156; his pronunciation, iii. 19.
- Young, Dr., his admiration for the *Rambler*, i. 172; Mr. James Ralph's anecdote of, 197 n., 198 n.; his *Night Thoughts*, ii. 242; v. 198; Mr. Herbert Croft's *Life of*, v. 196; Johnson's account of his genius and writings,

- v. 196-97; Mr. Langton's account of, v. 197.
- Young, Mr., son of the author of *Night Thoughts*, Johnson and Boswell visit, v. 254.
- Mr., Professor of Greek, at Glasgow, vi. 226.
- Yvery, History of the House of, Boswell thinks a most meritorious work, vi. 34.
- Zuck, George, Luke, and Felicien ii. 163 n.



## INDEX TO THE PORTRAITS

- ABINGTON, Mrs.**, iii. 158-59.  
**Aikin, Miss.** *See* Barbauld, Mrs.
- BANKS, Sir Joseph**, iii. 1.  
**Barbauld, Mrs.**, iv. 175.  
**Barber, Francis**, ii. 23.  
**Baretti, Joseph**, iv. 100.  
**Barry, Spranger**, i. 156.  
**Birch, Rev. Thomas, D.D.**, i. 149.  
**Boothby, Sir Brook**, v. 195.  
**Boswell, James**, ii. 52.  
**Brocklesby, Dr.**, vi. 237.  
**Bunbury, Sir Th. Charles**, iii. 129.  
**Burke, Edmund**, ii. 140.  
**Burney, Dr. Charles**, ii. 63.  
 — **Frances (Mme. D'Arbly)**,  
 vi. 223.
- CADELL, Thomas, the elder**, iii. 269.  
**Campanella, Rev. Dr. Thomas**, iii. 187.  
**Cave, Edward**, i. 112.  
**Chambers, Sir William**, vi. 25.  
**Chamier, Anthony**, ii. 140.  
**Chesterfield, fourth Earl of**, i. 212.  
**Cholmondeley, George J.**, vi. 178.  
**Collins, William**, *Frontispiece*  
 vol. ii.  
**Colman, George, the elder**, iii. 184.  
**Cowper, William**, v. 36.  
**Cumberland, Richard**, iv. 51.
- DARWIN, Dr. Erasmus**, iv. 125.  
**Dodsley, Robert**, i. 69.  
**Dunning, John (first Lord Ash-**  
**burnton)**, iv. 131.  
**Dyer, Samuel**, ii. 172.
- FARMER, Dr.**, v. 124.  
**Foote, Samuel**, ii. 28.
- Fox, Charles James**, iii. 129; iv. 268.
- GARRICK, David**, i. 68; v. 233.  
**Gibbon, Edward**, iii. 288; v. 211.  
**Goldsmith, Oliver**, ii. 140.  
**Gray, Thomas**, iv. 40.
- HANWAY, Jonas**, i. 257.  
**Hastings, Warren**, v. 203-8.  
**Hawkesworth, Dr. John**, i. 149.  
**Hogarth, William**, i. 110.  
**Hoole, John**, v. 224.
- JOHNSON, Samuel**, i. 239; ii. 1;  
 iii. 300; v. 13.
- KEMBLE, Frances**, vi. 77.
- LANGTON, Bennet**, iv. 130.  
**Leland, Dr. Thomas**, ii. 149.  
**Linley, Miss.** *See* Sheridan, Mrs.  
 R. B.
- MACAULAY, Mrs. Catherine**, ii. 148.  
**Mason, Rev. William**, iii. 184.  
**Montague, Mrs.**, ii. 235.  
**More, Hannah**, iv. 296.  
**Murphy, Arthur**, ii. 272.
- NEWTON, John, Bishop of Bristol**  
 and Dean of St. Paul's, vi. 120.  
**Nichols, John**, v. 174.  
**North, Frederick, Lord**, ii. 279.  
**Northcote, James**, iii. 159.
- O'BRIEN, Nelly**, iii. 158.  
**Oglethorpe, General**, iii. 197.
- PAOLI, General**, ii. 221.  
**Parr, Rev. Dr. Samuel**, v. 154.

- Percy, Dr. Thomas, Dean of Carlisle, iv. 273.
- Piozzi, Signor and Mrs., vi. 174-81.
- Pitt, William, the son, vi. 95.
- Porter, Mrs. (afterwards Mrs. Johnson), i. 64.
- Miss Lucy, i. 15.
- Powell, Harriet, iii. 158.
- Prince of Wales (George iv.), *Frontispiece* vol. vi.
- REYNOLDS, Frances, vi. 237.
- Sir Joshua, iii. 157.
- Richardson, Samuel, i. 207 *π*.
- SEWARD, William, F.R.S., iv. 125.
- Shebbeare, Dr. John, v. 247.
- Sheridan, Thomas (father of R. B. Sheridan), ii. 115.
- Mrs. R. B. as St. Cecilia, *Frontispiece* vol. iii.
- Siddons, Mrs., vi. 77-78.
- Smith, Adam, iii. 271.
- Steevens, George, *Frontispiece* vol. iv.
- Sterne, Rev. Laurence, iii. 77.
- Strahan, William, the King's Printer, ii. 280.
- THRALE, Henry, iv. 43.
- Thurlow, first Lord, iv. 69.
- Tooke, Horne, v. 16.
- Tyers, Thomas, v. 9.
- VESTRIE, Auguste, *Frontispiece* vol. v.
- WALPOLE, Horace (fourth Earl of Oxford), vi. 148.
- Warton, Rev. Thomas, i. 220.
- Whiteford, Caleb, vi. 155.
- Whitehead, Paul, i. 92.
- Wilkes, John, iv. 72.
- Williams, Anna, i. 187.
- Windham, Right Hon. William, vi. 189.

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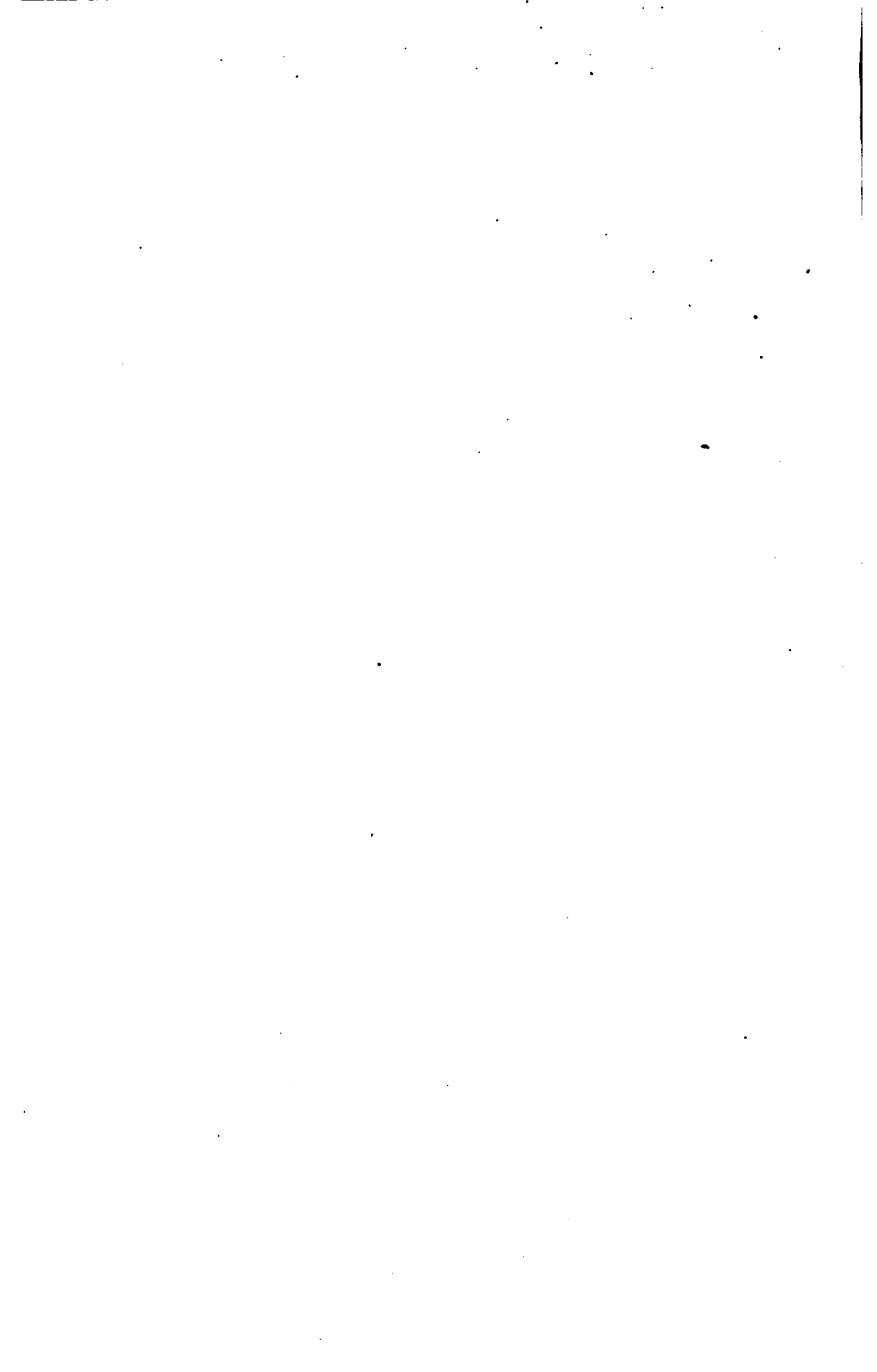
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