



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

16476
45.8

Arnold's English Texts

THE LIFE OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON
BY A. A. A. A.

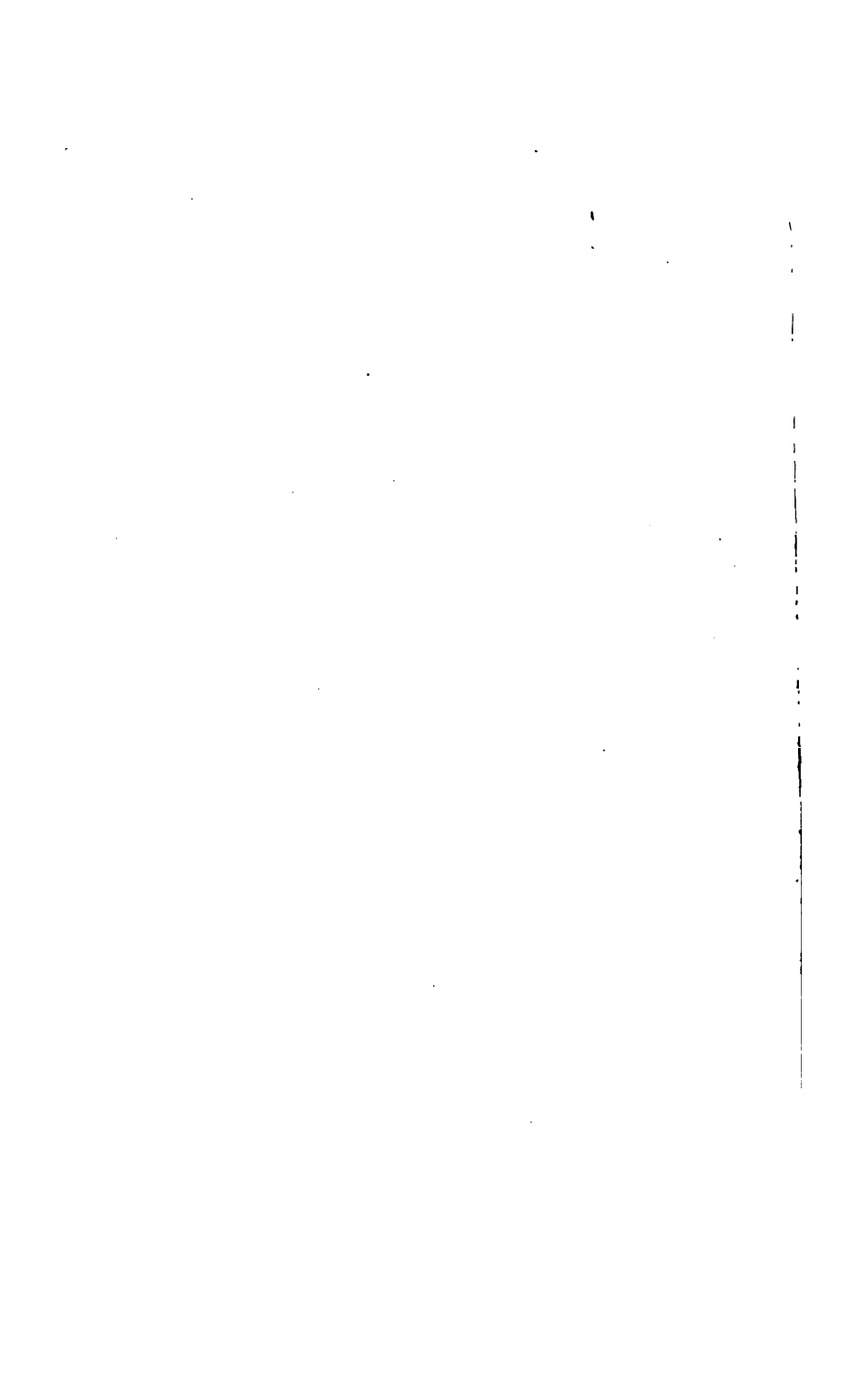
16476 . 45 . 8

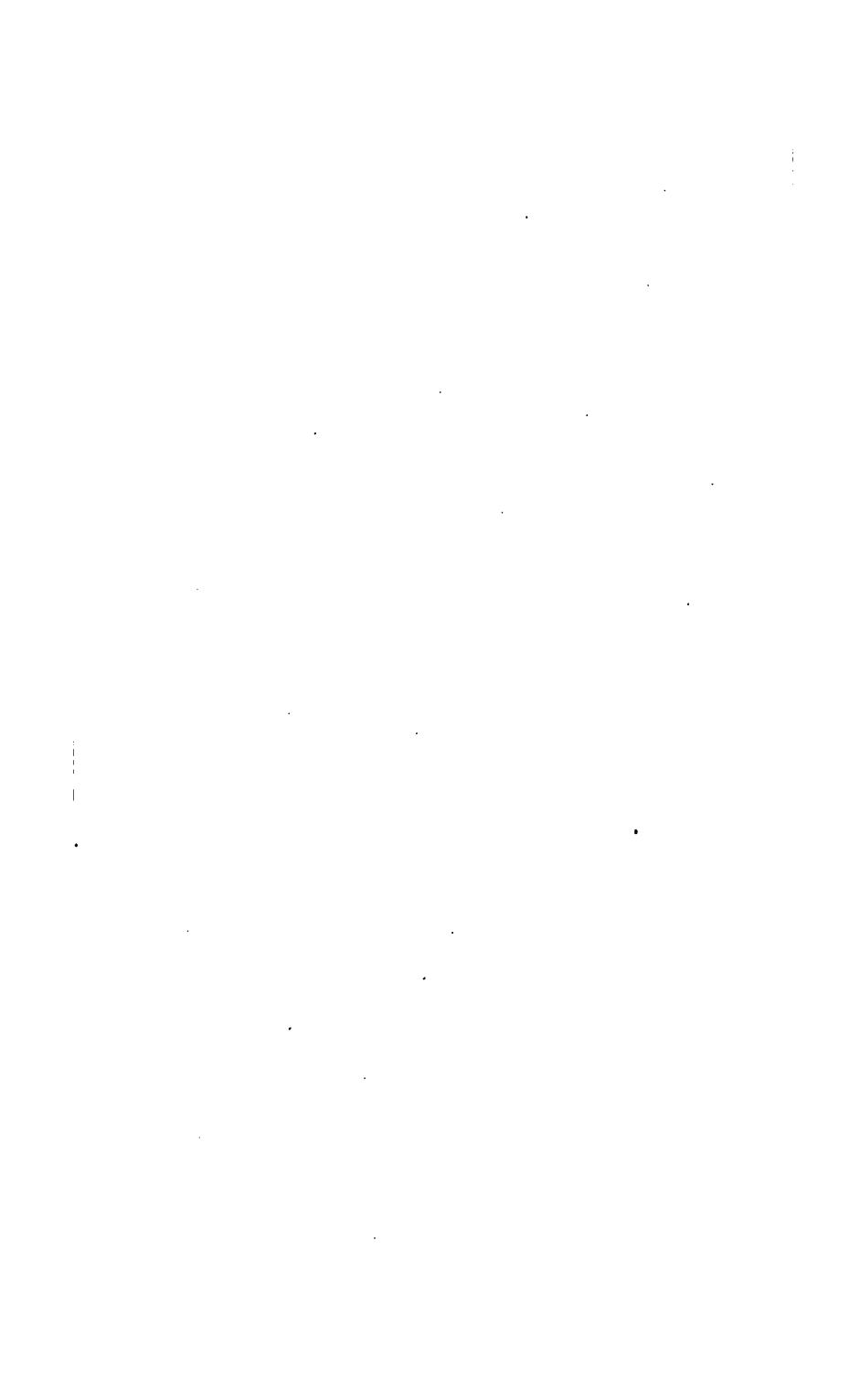
HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY



THE GIFT OF
RICHARD WALDEN HALE
Class of 1892

LWB.







THOMAS BABINGTON, LORD MACAULAY

Merrill's English Texts

THE LIFE OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON

BY
THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

WITH SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF JOHNSON

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY HOMER K. UNDERWOOD, A.M., HEAD OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH IN THE
CLASSICAL HIGH SCHOOL, NEWTON, MASS.



NEW YORK
CHARLES E. MERRILL COMPANY



Merrill's English Texts

THIS series of books includes in complete editions those masterpieces of English Literature that are best adapted for the use of schools and colleges. The editors of the several volumes are chosen for their special qualifications in connection with the texts issued under their individual supervision, but familiarity with the practical needs of the classroom, no less than sound scholarship, characterizes the editing of every book in the series.

In connection with each text, a critical and historical introduction, including a sketch of the life of the author and his relation to the thought of his time, critical opinions of the work in question chosen from the great body of English criticism, and, where possible, a portrait of the author, are given. Ample explanatory notes of such passages in the text as call for special attention are supplied, but irrelevant annotation and explanations of the obvious are rigidly excluded.

CHARLES E. MERRILL COMPANY.

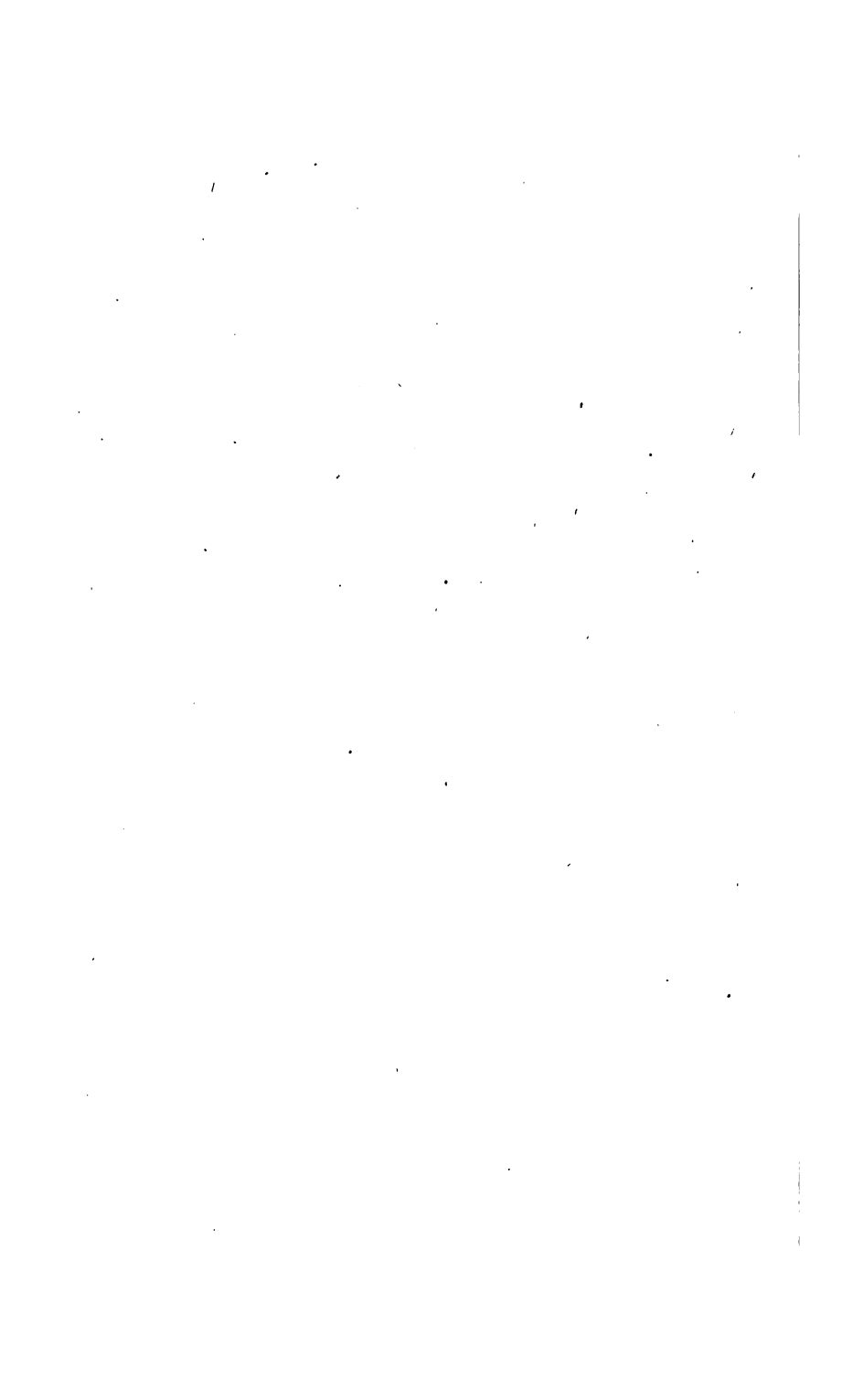
COPYRIGHT, 1911

BY

CHARLES E. MERRILL CO.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	
LIFE OF MACAULAY	5
MACAULAY'S PERSONALITY	13
CRITICAL OPINIONS	18
MACAULAY'S ESSAYS	23
MACAULAY ON JOHNSON	24
THE READING AND STUDY OF THE TEXT	26
PROMINENT FEATURES OF MACAULAY'S STYLE	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31
THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON	35
SELECTIONS FROM JOHNSON'S WRITINGS	93
NOTES	108
CORRELATED READING IN BOSWELL'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON	122
QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR STUDY	124



INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF MACAULAY (1800-1850)

ZACHARY MACAULAY, the father of Thomas Babington Macaulay, was one of England's great heroes of peace. His biography is briefly inscribed on the pedestal which supports his bust in Westminster Abbey. There you may read that he was a man

“ . . . who during forty successive years, partaking in the counsels and the labors which, guided by favoring Providence, rescued Africa from the woes, and the British Empire from the guilt of slavery and the slave-trade, meekly endured the toil, the privation, and the reproach, resigning to others the praise and the reward.”

In 1793 a company under a charter from the king established a colony of liberated slaves in Sierra Leone, Africa. Zachary Macaulay was the first governor and spent six years with the colony midst hardships and difficulties of the keenest sort. When the settlement had begun to thrive, Zachary Macaulay returned to England. In 1799 he married Selina Mills, an extremely attractive lady and the daughter of a prosperous Quaker. It is interesting to know that the teacher and lifelong friend of Miss Mills was Hannah More, who took the deepest interest in the children of her former pupil, particularly in the boy Tom, who did his earliest reading and writing under her direction.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, the eldest of the nine children, was born at Rothley Temple, October 25, 1800. Any one who strives to appreciate the extraordinary attain-

ments of Macaulay both as a statesman and as a man of letters will turn with interest to the account of his childhood, and it will not be a matter of much surprise to find that he who showed such brilliancy and maturity of mind before he was thirty, was a veritable prodigy when he was three. Before he was four he learned to read. His supreme delight was to lie on the rug before the fire with his book spread open upon the floor and a piece of bread-and-butter in his hand. One of the servants told how he used to sit perched on the table near her as she worked, expounding to her out of a volume as big as himself. While still the merest child he was sent as a day-scholar to a Mr. Greaves. Mrs. Macaulay explained to Tom that he would have to learn to study without the solace of bread-and-butter, to which he replied, "Yes, mamma, industry shall be my bread and attention my butter." At another time he accompanied his father to a friend's house for dinner. A cup of hot coffee was accidentally overturned on his legs. The hostess was much worried over the possible injury, but the lad relieved her anxiety by calmly observing, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated."

The boy's incessant reading not only gave him a vocabulary which he used with astonishing accuracy and effect, but it fired him with an ambition to become a writer himself. His childhood compositions included, besides many hymns, *A Compendium of Universal History*, a poem in three cantos called *The Battle of Cheviot*, and the unfinished epic poem immortalizing Olaus Magnus, King of Norway, from whom the Macaulay family was supposed to have derived its name. A significant quality belonging to these early writings was their excellence of form. The magic pen was unquestionably the servant of good judgment, for those who read the productions find perfect spelling, accurate punctuation, and lucid expression everywhere employed.

With all this cleverness, he was not conceited. His parents, and especially his mother, were most judicious in their treat-

ment. They never encouraged him to display his powers of conversation, and they abstained from every kind of remark that might lead him to think himself different from other boys. One result of this wise restraint was that throughout life he was free from literary vanity; another, that he habitually overestimated the knowledge of others. When he said in his essays that every schoolboy knew this and that fact in history, he was judging their information by his own vast intellectual stores.

At the age of twelve Macaulay was sent to a private school in the neighborhood of Cambridge. There he laid the foundation of his future scholarship. One who recognized the promise of the boy at this time was Dean Milner, the president of Queen's College, who frequently entertained him at his college residence on "terms of friendship and almost of equality." This venerable scholar paid a high tribute to his young friend when he wrote his father, "Your lad is a fine fellow. He shall stand before kings. He shall not stand before mean men."

Though faithful in his school work — chiefly Latin, Greek, and mathematics — the boy found time to gratify his insatiable thirst for general literature. He read at random and without restraint, but with an apparent partiality for the lighter and more attractive books. Poetry and prose fiction remained throughout life his favorite reading. He had a marvelous capacity for taking in at a glance the contents of a printed page; and whatever pleased his fancy he remembered, as well as though he had consciously got it by heart. He once said that if all the copies of *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* were to be destroyed, he would from memory alone undertake to reproduce both.

But the gratification of his passion for reading did not remove the burden of grief which he felt in being separated from the family at Clapham. In a letter to his mother begging the privilege of making a visit home, he wrote follows: "You told me I should be happy when I once cr

here, but not an hour passes in which I do not shed tears at thinking of home. Every hope, however unlikely to be realized, affords me some small consolation. Tell me in your next, expressly, if you can, whether or no there is any likelihood of my coming home before the holiday. If I could gain papa's leave, I should select my birthday on October 25th as the time which I should wish to spend at that home which absence renders still dearer to me. If your approbation of my request depends upon my advancing in study, I will work like a cart-horse. If you should refuse it, you will deprive me of the most pleasing illusion which I ever experienced in life."

In 1818 Macaulay entered Trinity College, Cambridge. His inclination was wholly for literature and he gained much distinction as a writer and debater. Twice he won the chancellor's medal for English verse — in 1819 by a poem entitled *Pompeii* and in 1820 by a poem entitled *Evening*. A scholarship was granted him in 1821 for excellence in classical study. Mathematics seemed to be especially distasteful to him. His aversion to this subject as well as to the sciences was not overlooked by the authorities, and he was obliged to try the third time before he was elected a fellow. The fellowship was awarded in 1824. During this same year he contributed several articles of merit to *Knigh's Quarterly Magazine*, a periodical which was largely supported by undergraduates and bachelors of arts at Oxford. Chief among these contributions were the poems *Ivry* and *Naseby* and the *Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton touching the Great Civil War*.

Macaulay was admitted to the bar in 1826. For two years he made no more than a pretense at practice. The two great interests of his life — politics and literature — had already begun to occupy his time and thought. The rise of the young man in the short interval of the next five or six years, bringing honors which might be prized by one twice his age, was indeed remarkable. There was more than a sister's

affection to warrant the entry in Margaret Macaulay's journal under the date of March 15, 1832, that "his name would go down to posterity linked with eventful times and great deeds." On June 25, 1824, Macaulay delivered his first public address before a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society held at Freemasons' Tavern with the Duke of Gloucester in the chair. The *Edinburgh Review* described his speech as "a display of eloquence so signal for rare and matured excellence that the most practiced orator may well admire how it should have come from one who then for the first time addressed a public assembly."

His connection with the *Edinburgh Review* began in 1825, when he published the essay on Milton. His effort met with universal favor. Jeffrey, in acknowledging the manuscript, said, "The more I think the less I can conceive where you picked up that style." During the next seven years Macaulay contributed thirteen essays to the *Edinburgh Review*, including the well known studies of Machiavelli and Dryden and the articles on History and Mill's essay on Government. The position which the young author held among the able men of that day is indicated by his friendship with Samuel Rogers, the poet, Sydney Smith, the essayist and theologian, and Francis Jeffrey, the leading critic of the time. That these eminent writers, the youngest of whom had passed his fifty-eighth birthday, should seek the society of Macaulay was strong proof of the latter's genius.

In his twenty-eighth year Macaulay accepted the office of Commissioner of Bankruptcy offered him by Lord Lyndhurst. The position netted him an income of a thousand pounds per annum, a sum which aided him in providing for his own living and in retrieving the financial losses of his father. Friendship with Lord Landsdowne opportunely opened the way for his entrance into Parliament. In 1830 he was elected a member for Calne. The great triumph of his early years was soon to follow. The speech on the Reform Bill was delivered on the evening of March 2, 1831.

When he had finished the address, the Speaker sent for him and said that "in his prolonged experience he had never seen the House in such a state of excitement." The names of Fox, Burke, and Canning were during that evening in everybody's mouth. Macaulay was hailed as their equal.

The Reform Act was passed. Macaulay was rewarded for his powerful support of the measure by being made a Commissioner of the Board of Control, an organization which represented the Crown in its relations to the East India directors. No man in public life was more engrossed with the affairs of government, but in spite of his many duties he continued to write for the *Edinburgh Review*. Meanwhile the dreaded financial wreck had come to the family at home and Macaulay was paying over to his father's creditors every penny of his salary except what was spent in procuring a decent subsistence for himself. Means of relief appeared in the offer of the post of legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India at a salary of ten thousand pounds a year. Accompanied by his sister Hannah, he sailed from England February 15, 1834.

Macaulay's capacity for reading was never better exhibited than during this voyage to Madras. In less than the four months which were spent en route, he was able to read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil, Horace, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, Bacon's *De Augmentis*, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, *Don Quixote*, Gibbon's *Rome*, Mill's *India*, all the seventy volumes of Voltaire, Sismondi's *History of France*, and the seven thick folios of the *Biographia Britannica*. "He seemed to read through the skin," said one who had often watched the operation, "and this speed was not in his case obtained at the expense of accuracy." Just two months after his arrival he wrote to those at home saying: "Money matters seem likely to go on capitally. My expenses, I find, will be smaller than I anticipated. At Christmas I shall send home a thousand or twelve hundred pounds for my father and you all. I cannot tell you what a comfort it is to me to find that I

shall be able to do this. It reconciles me to all the pains — acute enough, sometimes, God knows — of banishment.”

The work which Macaulay performed in India was not confined to the duties of the Council. He proffered his services to two important committees — the Committee of Public Instruction and the Law Commission. As president of the Committee of Public Instruction, he reorganized the whole educational system and established standards which were more efficient because they were more practical.

The new Penal Code, though ostensibly the product of the Law Commission, was for the most part Macaulay's own work. The value of this code of criminal law gave him his chief title to fame as an Indian statesman. Mr. Fitzjames Stephen, a lawyer of rare ability who was Macaulay's successor, in giving his opinion of this important digest, said: “The Indian Penal Code is to the English criminal law what a manufactured article ready for use is to the materials out of which it is made. It is far simpler, and much better expressed than Livingstone's *Code for Louisiana* and its practical success has been complete. Pocket editions of these codes (the *Code of Criminal Procedure* and the *Penal Code*) are published which may be carried about as easily as a pocket Bible; and I doubt whether even in Scotland, you would find many people who know their Bibles as Indian civilians know their codes.”

In 1838 Macaulay returned to England. The income from his salary had been sufficient to save the credit of his father, but it could not stay the progress of disease. Zachary Macaulay's health failed rapidly, and he died while his son and daughter were on their homeward voyage.

After spending the winter in Italy, Macaulay in 1839 reviewed Mr. Gladstone's book, *Church and State*, and might have settled down to purely literary life; but once more he was drawn into politics. Elected as member for Edinburgh, he was soon admitted into the Cabinet as Secretary-at-War to the Whig ministry of Lord Melbourne. The position,

however, was no gain to Macaulay. He had purposed to write *A History of England* "from the accession of King James II, down to the times within the memory of men still living," but his official duties forced him to lay this project aside.

Lord Melbourne's ministry did not last long; it fell in 1841, and Macaulay was released from office. Though still retaining his seat for Edinburgh and speaking occasionally in the House, he was free to follow his natural bent. His leisure hours were given, as usual, to essay-work for the *Edinburgh Review*, and he wrote in succession *Clive*, *Hastings*, *Frederick the Great*, *Addison*, *Chatham*, etc. But in 1844 his connection with the *Review* came to an end, and he wrote no more for the Blue and Yellow, as it was called. In 1841 he put forth a volume of poems — the *Lays of Ancient Rome* — not without misgivings as to the result. But the fresh and vigorous language at once carried the work into popularity and it had an enormous sale.

On a change of government in 1846, Macaulay, at the request of Lord John Russell, again became a Cabinet minister, this time as Paymaster-General of the Army. Having to seek reelection from his constituents, he went to Scotland for that purpose. After a severe contest, and in spite of a growing unpopularity, he was successful. But the candor and strict integrity of the man had engendered the enmity of the politicians, who created a stronger sentiment against him, and at the general election of the following year he was defeated.

This was the real end of Macaulay's political life. Although pressed to contest other seats, he resolutely declined, and for the next few years worked doggedly at his *History*. In 1848 appeared the first two volumes. Thirteen thousand copies were sold in England in less than four months. On April 4, 1849, Messrs. Harper & Brothers of New York wrote to Macaulay: "We beg you to accept herewith a copy of our cheap edition of your work. There have been three other

editions published by different houses, and another is now in preparation; so there will be six different editions in the market. We have already sold forty thousand copies, and we presume that over sixty thousand copies have been disposed of. Probably, within three months of this time, the sale will amount to two hundred thousand copies." In this same year Macaulay was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University.

By 1852 the people of Edinburgh had repented the rejection of their famous member and took steps to reëlect him free of expense. So thoroughly was the scheme carried out that Macaulay, without having made a single speech and without having visited the city, was returned triumphantly at the top of the poll. The result was very flattering to Macaulay, but he never really entered actively into political life as in his younger days. Forty years of incessant intellectual labors had begun to undermine his health, and he was now unequal to the fatigues that formerly had been a pleasure to him. In 1857 he was created a Peer — Baron Macaulay of Rothley, his birthplace. Still struggling on with his *History* in the intermissions of his malady, he died suddenly on December 28, 1859.

MACAULAY'S PERSONALITY

In Præd's Introduction to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine* there is the following description of Macaulay's appearance: "There came up a short manly figure marvelously upright with a bad neckcloth and one hand in his waist-coat pocket. Of regular beauty he had little to boast; but in faces where there is an expression of great power, or of great good-humor, or both, you do not regret its absence." Trevelyan writes: "He dressed badly but not cheaply. His clothes, though ill put on, were good, and his wardrobe was always enormously overstocked. When in the open air, he wore perfectly new

dark kid gloves, into the fingers of which he never succeeded in inserting his own more than half way."

The young Macaulay was not an athlete. He could not claim the possession of a single one of the accomplishments which are held to be such important assets among boys; namely, the ability to swim, to skate, to shoot, or even to drive. Indeed the only exercise in which he is said to have excelled was that of threading crowded streets with his eyes fixed upon a book.

But the slight eccentricities of dress and the lack of physical dexterity were marks only of the outward man. It was the kingly nature within — uncorrupted through all the years of his life — which made him greater than all his works. His character is fully revealed in the biography written by his nephew, Sir George D. Trevelyan. Every reader will finish the perusal of these volumes feeling more than thankful not only for Trevelyan's masterly narrative of Macaulay's life, but for the collection of delightful letters and the portions of the journal which reflect the humanness as well as the cleverness of the great author and legislator.

Tenderness of feeling seems to have been the chief characteristic of Macaulay's nature. The affection in which he held those near to him dominated every other interest of his mind and heart. A letter which he wrote from Cambridge University shows no trace of that false pride which prompts so many young men to conceal the love which they have for their parents. After thanking his mother in this letter for the report of his brother John's recovery, Macaulay adds: "I am sure it is well worth while being sick to be nursed by a mother. There is nothing which I remember with such pleasure as the time when you nursed me at Aspenden. . . . How sick, and sleepless, and weak I was, lying in bed, when I was told that you were to come. How well I remember with what an ecstasy of joy I saw that face approaching me, in the middle of people that did not care if I died that night, except for the trouble of burying me. The sound of your

voice, the touch of your hand, are present to me now and will be, I trust in God, to my last hour. . . . Such scenes and such recollections are the bright half of human nature and human destiny."

Neither the pressure of duties nor any excitement of the times could supersede the kindly thought which he entertained for his brothers and sisters. Letters written to them after hours of toil or amidst the rush of work were apparently the happiest occupation of his mind. An entertaining letter to Hannah Macaulay, dated June 3, 1831, concludes thus: "But I must stop. This rambling talk has been scrawled in the middle of haranguing, squabbling, swearing, and crying. Since I began it, I have taxed four bills, taken forty depositions, and rated several perjured witnesses."

Macaulay's sympathy was quick to respond to any distress which he saw in the experience of people around him. The wealth which came to him from the immense sale of his *History* was most generously applied to charity. In his journal are numerous entries of his benefactions, sometimes an annuity to support a starving genius and his family, more often gifts of from five to a hundred pounds. This same spirit of benevolence is reflected in the statement of Trevelyan: "He had no mercy for bad writers and notably for bad poets unless they were in want of money, in which case he became, within his means, the most open-handed of patrons." The last words he ever uttered were in dictating a letter addressed to a poor curate to whom he sent twenty-five pounds.

He was keenly affected by whatever was sublime and stirring in literature. In August, 1851, he wrote to his niece Margaret, "I finished the *Iliad* to-day. I never admired the old fellow so much or was so strongly moved by him. What a privilege genius like his enjoys. I read the last five books at a stretch during my walk to-day and was at last forced to turn into a by-path, lest the parties of walkers should see me blubbering for imaginary beings, the creations of a ballad

maker who has been dead two thousand seven hundred years."

Yet this same man who was so tenderly devoted, to his home, who was so gentle in his nature, was stalwart and unswerving in whatever he believed to be just and right. He was bitterly opposed by his fellow countrymen residing in Calcutta for his advocacy of the Act establishing the jurisdiction of the Sudder Court. Referring to the discrimination which had been practiced under the old regime, he wrote to Parliament: "For myself, I can only say that if the Government is to be conducted on such principles, I am utterly disqualified by all my feelings and opinions from bearing any part in it and cannot too soon resign my place to some person better fitted to hold it." Macaulay was sustained and the Act was allowed to stand. As a member of Parliament he stoutly refused to compromise his own convictions with any considerations which merely affected his favor among constituents. He refused to enter into pledges. His views on this subject are set forth in a letter from London on August 3, 1832: "The suffrage of an elector ought not to be asked, or to be given, as a personal favor. To request an honest man to vote according to his conscience is superfluous. To request him to vote against his conscience is an insult."

Clear and inspiring proof of Macaulay's integrity is again to be found in his resignation as a Cabinet minister in order to oppose certain provisions of the West India Bill. This bill, although it provided for the emancipation of the West India slaves, contained features which were objectionable to the most moderate of the Abolitionists. So great was Macaulay's dissatisfaction with this scheme proposed by his colleagues that he relinquished his seat in the Cabinet. His action seemed at the time to involve the ruin of all his political prospects and the forfeiture of the salary with which he hoped to save the family from bankruptcy. It is pleasing to know that his loyalty to principle did not, after all, incur the

slightest loss. The ministers in a short time amended the Bill and refused to accept Macaulay's resignation.

Tremendous energy of mind as well as extraordinary quickness of memory continued to the very end of his life. No author, unless it was Sir Walter Scott, has ever shown such zeal and capacity for literary work. Sixteen years of intense application in gathering information for the *History* and in writing up to the highest standard within his reach could not impair his intellect although it did destroy his health. "I walked in the portico," he writes in October, 1857, "and learned by heart the noble fourth act of *The Merchant of Venice*. There are four hundred lines of which I knew a hundred and fifty. I made myself perfect master of the whole, the prose letter included, in two hours." Again in 1858 he writes, "I am vexed to think I am losing my German. I resolved to win it back. No sooner said than done. I took Schiller's *History of the War in the Netherlands* out into the garden and read a hundred pages." The very amusements that beguiled his solitary hours were rigorous exercise for his active mind. During his last two years he would often lay aside his book and bury himself in financial calculations connected with the stock market, the revenue returns, the Civil Service estimates, and above all, the clergy list. He would pass an evening in comparing the average duration of the lives of archbishops, prime ministers, and lord chancellors.

Does it not seem natural that this man should have died as he had always wished to die — without pain, without any formal farewell? "They found him in the library seated in his easy-chair and dressed as usual, with his book on the table beside him, still open at the same page."

CRITICAL OPINIONS

JOHN MORLEY, one of the greatest English authors, editors, and statesmen of the present day, explains in the following excerpt the secret of Macaulay's popularity as a writer and emphasizes the value of his essays to men who live in this busy commercial age:

"The first and most obvious secret of Macaulay's place on popular bookshelves is that he has true genius for narration, and narration will always, in the eyes not only of the squatters in the Australian bush, but of the many all over the world, stand first among literary gifts. The common run of plain men, as has been noticed since the beginning of the world, are as eager as children for a story, and like children they will embrace the man who will tell them a story with abundance of details and plenty of color and realistic assurance that it is no make-believe. Macaulay never stops to brood over an incident or a character with an inner eye intent on penetrating to the lowest depths of motive and cause, to the farthest complexity of impulse, calculation, and subtle incentive. The spirit of analysis is not in him, and the divine spirit of meditation is not in him. His whole mind runs in action and movement; it busies itself with eager interest in all objective particulars. . . . Another reason why people have sought Macaulay is that he has in one way or another something to tell them about many of the most striking personages and interesting events in the history of mankind. And he does really tell them something. If any one will be at the trouble to count up the number of those names that belong to the world and time about which Macaulay has found not merely something, but something definite

and pointed, to say, he will be astonished to see how large a portion of the wide historic realm is traversed in that ample flight of reference, allusions, and illustrations, and what unsparing copiousness of knowledge gives substance, meaning, and attraction to that blaze and glare of rhetoric.

“Macaulay came upon the world of letters just as the middle classes were expanding into enormous prosperity, were vastly increasing in numbers, and were becoming more alive than they had ever been before in literary interests.

“His essays are as good as a library; they make an incomparable manual and vade-mecum for a busy uneducated man who has curiosity and enlightenment enough to wish to know a little about the great lives and great thoughts, the shining words and many-colored complexities of action, that have marked the journey of man through the ages.” — *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1876.

WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE, when a young man, was pleased to extend “warm and cordial thanks” to Macaulay for the manner in which he had reviewed his book entitled *The State in its Relations to the Church*. Twenty-five years later Gladstone was the critic. A portion of his estimate of Macaulay’s work is here inserted:

“Wherever and whenever read, he will be read with fascination, with delight, with wonder. And with copious reserve, with questioning scrutiny, with liberty to reject, and with much exercise of that liberty. The contemporary mind may in rare cases be taken by storm; that of the future is incorrupt. The coming generations will not give Macaulay up, but they will probably attach much less value than we have done to his *ipse dixit*. They will hardly accept from him his net solutions of literary and much less of historic problems, yet they will obtain from his marked and telling points of view great aid in solving them. We sometimes fancy that ere long there will be editions of his works in which his readers may be saved from pitfalls by brief, respectful, and judicious

commentary, and that his great achievements may be at once commemorated and corrected by men of slower pace, of drier light, and of more tranquil, broadset, and comprehensive judgment. For his works are in many respects among the prodigies of literature; in some they have never been surpassed. As lights that have shone through the whole universe of letters, they have made their place in the solid firmament of fame. But the tree is greater and better than its fruit; and greater and better yet than the works themselves are the lofty aims and conceptions, the large heart, the independent, manful mind, the pure and noble career." — *Gleanings of Past Years, 1879.*

FREDERICK W. MACDONALD, a prominent clergyman in England, is also widely known as an author and editor. A collection of essays explaining in a delightful way his friendships for certain authors and old books, includes an especially attractive discussion entitled *Early Acquaintance with Macaulay*. Commenting on the charm of Macaulay's essays, Mr. MacDonald says: "It may be admitted that Macaulay was wanting in the imaginative insight that carries a man to the highest regions of thought; but he was superbly endowed with the imagination which makes the past present and brings the distant near, clothing with flesh and blood the shadowy forms of bygone times. His style was the perfect instrument of such a mental organization as his — vivid, quick moving, picturesque, and above all, clear. He was the last man to say—

'I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.'

"He had no thoughts that he could not perfectly express, and the ease and adequacy of the expression give the reader satisfaction and delight. Perfect mastery in any sphere of things, in any kind of work, gives pleasure to those who observe it or come under its influence. When a man does exactly

what he means to do, expresses his thought with precision, and gives it precisely the shape and clothing that seems to him the best; when there is no indistinctness, or inadequacy in the form in which it is presented, one of the great sources of pleasure that literature and art afford is secured. And herein Macaulay has had few equals, and perhaps no superior.

"Macaulay's Essays have laid me under lasting obligation by the way in which they sent me, along this path and that, to the fields of general literature. In this respect no teacher, seeking of set purpose to make me read, could have done more. The allusions and references with which the Essays abound were a constant stimulus. If the reader will follow them to the regions whence Macaulay brought them, he will be carried into many a province of literature that otherwise would have remained unvisited. The invitation to do so is none the less effectual because it is indirect. In speaking of Addison's humor, for example, he compares and contrasts it with that of his contemporaries Swift and Voltaire. His tragedy, *Cato*, is similarly compared with the *Athalie* of Racine, the *Cinna* of Corneille, and the plays of Voltaire and Alfieri. The absolutism of the Tudor princes is illustrated by that of the Cæsars, and the differences between them strikingly exhibited. In describing Addison's voyage from Naples to Rome, Macaulay writes: 'The felucca passed the headland where the oar and trumpet were placed by the Trojan adventurers on the tomb of Misenus, and anchored at night under the shelter of the fabled promontory of Circe. The voyage ended in the Tiber, still overhung with dark verdure, and still turbid with yellow sand, as when it met the eyes of Aeneas.' It was natural thus for him to write. His memory retained all that his omnivorous reading had acquired, and he dropped its wealth in passing reference or allusion at every step. What could be more delightful to a youth in his early thirst for knowledge than to have his path illumined and enriched in this way? These allusions furnished, in many instances, the point of departure 'to fresh woods and

pastures new.' I owe it to Macaulay's *Essays* that while yet in my teens I read Milton's prose works, the *Spectator*, Boswell's *Johnson* and the *Lives of the Poets*, Neal's *History of the Puritans*, Burke on the *French Revolution* and the *Vindiciae Gallicae* of Sir James Mackintosh, Carlyle's *Cromwell*, and many another goodly volume. This was good service done to me, and I recall it with gratitude and pleasure." — *In a Nook with a Book*, Ch. IV, "An Early Acquaintance with Macaulay."

MACAULAY'S ESSAYS

To Macaulay belongs the credit of popularizing the essay. When we think of the wealth of literature — poetry and prose — produced during his time by such writers as Tennyson, Bulwer, Dickens, Thackeray, De Quincey, Ruskin, and Carlyle, we are not likely to underestimate the power of an author who could still interest the masses in essays covering so wide a range of topics. During the period from 1825 to 1844, Macaulay contributed forty essays to the *Edinburgh Review*. Readers were captivated by the clearness, the compactness, the color, and the animation which made subjects generally considered dull appear fresh and fascinating.

A statement by Trevelyan concerning the popularity of the essays (fifty years after the appearance of the first on Milton) may be regarded as entirely trustworthy: "These productions which their author classed as ephemeral are so greedily read and so constantly reproduced that, taking the world as a whole, there is probably never a moment when they are out of the hands of the compositor. The market for them in their native country is so steady and apparently so inexhaustible that it perceptibly falls and rises with the general prosperity of the nation, and it is hardly too much to assert that the demand for Macaulay varies with the demand for coal."

Macaulay's mind was like a powerful lens which brought the personalities of men into bold relief and the scenes of history into the clearest focus. But it was always the real, the tangible, and the practical which he chose to examine. Speculation was, for him, odious if not impossible. "An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia," he proudly asserted. Though he preferred to deal with outward

actions, it was not for the purpose of sparing earnest effort. "He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels a hundred miles to make a fine description," said Thackeray. Every essay showed that he had thoroughly saturated his mind with the subject to be treated. He was never satisfied until he had selected from his vast store of learning numberless allusions, illustrations, and comparisons to enforce and embellish his ideas.

Macaulay's favorite themes were great men and great deeds, and his essays, with but few exceptions, were devoted to subjects in literature and history. In the first group are the well known articles on Milton, Dryden, Southey, Bacon, Madame D'Arblay, Bunyan, Goldsmith, and Johnson; in the history group are the able papers on Machiavelli, Mirabeau, Walpole, Pitt, Clive, Hastings, Frederick the Great, and the Earl of Chatham.

MACAULAY ON JOHNSON

Macaulay wrote the *Life of Samuel Johnson* in 1856 for the eighth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Twenty-five years before this he had written an essay on Johnson for the *Edinburgh Review*. But his real purpose at that time was to criticise an edition of *Boswell's Life of Johnson* by John Wilson Croker. Macaulay had a bitter contempt for Croker, not so much on account of the man's political views as on account of the scandals of his literary life. It is not surprising, therefore, to find more than half of this earlier essay occupied with the most severe arraignment of Croker for his ignorance and carelessness as an editor. The essay itself is much below the standard of Macaulay's other contributions to the *Review*.

The later article on Johnson, belonging to that matchless group of essays on Atterbury, Bunyan, Goldsmith, and Pitt which are to be found in the *Britannica*, reveals Macaulay

at his very best. The sketches were written during the last six years of his life and were the happy diversion of his literary ease. That their composition grew out of a pure love for writing probably accounts for the request which Macaulay made to the editor, Mr. Adam Black, that remuneration should not be so much as mentioned.

A better estimate of these *Britannica* articles could hardly be found than that offered by Trevelyan: "Compact in form, crisp and nervous in style, these five little essays are everything which an article in an encyclopædia should be. The reader, as he travels softly and swiftly along, congratulates himself on having lighted upon what he regards as a most fascinating literary or political memoir; but the student, on a closer examination, discovers that every fact and date and circumstance is distinctly and faithfully recorded in due chronological sequence. Macaulay's belief about himself as a writer was that he improved to the last; and the question of the superiority of his later over his earlier manner may securely be staked upon a comparison between the article on Johnson in the *Edinburgh Review* and the article on Johnson in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The latter of the two is, indeed, a model of that which its eminent subject pronounced to be the essential qualification of a biographer — the art of writing trifles with dignity."

THE READING AND STUDY OF THE TEXT

No one who reads an article in an encyclopædia would think of pausing to make a critical study of the author's language or to consult other books for the meaning of various allusions. It is worth while to remember this fact when we are taking up the biography presented in our text. When Macaulay wrote the *Life of Samuel Johnson* for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, he had no idea that his essay would be studied. Indeed, the critical attitude cannot long be maintained while reading any volume of Macaulay for the first time. "To get at his meaning people have never the need to think twice and they certainly have seldom the time."

First of all the *Life of Samuel Johnson* should be read from beginning to end simply to get the effect as a whole of Macaulay's exquisite portrayal. This initial reading, though undertaken chiefly for the sake of entertainment, should enable a student to recall most of the topics which have been discussed. He should be able to tell in a general way how much of the essay concerns Johnson's personality and how much concerns his writings; and he should be able to name the particular phases of Johnson's life and character which stand out most clearly in the discussion.

The real study of the text should not be either dull or irksome. The contents of the essay will provide the most attractive material for topical recitations. What an interesting fund of knowledge can be turned to immediate use in oral and written compositions upon such subjects as the following: Johnson's independence of spirit; his life at Oxford; the hardships of the first thirty years in London; the production of

his tragedy, *Irene*; the pension from George III; the Literary Club; Johnson's conversation; the household in Fleet Street; Johnson's friendships, early and late; his death. Again, the discussion in the recitation may sometimes show opposite opinions among the students, and these can be expanded into brief and fruitful debates. Thus, some members of the class will be ready to defend Chesterfield for his conduct toward Johnson; others will decline to approve of Johnson's acceptance of the pension, or will refuse to forgive him for certain of his prejudices. Macaulay's attitude in a few matters will be challenged, particularly his severe depreciation of Boswell.

Careful attention should be given to Macaulay's methods of expression and to the rhetorical features of his paragraphs and sentences. Does he as a rule observe the principle of unity in constructing paragraphs? Does he often make use of a topic statement? Can we readily frame such a statement for ourselves when the thought of the paragraph is not summed up? Then there is the principle of continuity. Is the coherence between paragraphs well established? Several important questions will arise in our minds when we examine the structure of Macaulay's sentences. What is to be said regarding his practice of using many short sentences; of employing many balanced phrases? What arrangement — the loose or periodic — does he seem to prefer?

We have a profound admiration for the author's directness and wonderful lucidity. How is the remarkable clearness attained? Some particular features of Macaulay's style are treated in the following section. Which of these artifices of style does the author employ most frequently? Where in the essay are they used with marked success? On the other hand, certain objections have been urged against Macaulay's manner of dealing with a topic; namely, that he is overconfident or "cocksure" in his opinions; that he too often exaggerates; that he too frequently resorts to the effect of climax. Do any or all of these faults appear in the essay

on Johnson? The student should look carefully for these characteristics and thus form his own estimate of the validity of these objections which have been raised by Macaulay's critics.

PROMINENT FEATURES OF MACAULAY'S STYLE

Use of specific, definite terms. In a letter to Mr. Napier, dated April 18, 1842, Macaulay says: "The first rule of all writing is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and concisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers." If examples are needed to enforce this precept, they may be taken in plentiful numbers from the pages of Macaulay's own works. The words which convey his meaning so clearly and effectively are always specific, definite terms. He discusses everything in the concrete. His liking for a particular illustration rather than a general statement is strikingly displayed in the following examples selected from a paragraph in the *Life of Samuel Johnson*: "One surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and index makers;" "Who had feasted among blue ribands in Saint James Square and had lain with fifty pounds weight of iron on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate;" "His pen had failed him;" "He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea;" "He had heard the prime minister roar with laughter."

Comparison and contrast. Macaulay makes abundant use of comparisons. An unfamiliar object, person, or circumstance is clearly explained by a reference to an idea well known to the reader. Cf. "Johnson dressed like a scarecrow, and ate like a cormorant;" "The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus;" "Boswell's mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites;"

"His silly egotism and adulation must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly."

Macaulay constantly employs antithesis to heighten the effect of contrast. Antithesis has been called a figure of arrangement; that is, the opposition of ideas is emphasized by a correspondence in the form and position of the expressions containing these ideas. Cf. "The public, however, listened with little emotion but with much civility;" "He had learned . . . that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die."

Obverse iteration is another device of language which is freely used by Macaulay. Obverse statement, as it is often called, consists in denying the negative instead of affirming the positive. This form of expression is employed in order to take the reader by surprise. Cf. "No opulent gentleman •commoner, panting for one-and-twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect;" "Johnson had failed not because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote *Rasselas*, but because he had foolishly chosen a subject such as he would have at no time been competent to treat."

Rapid accumulation of details. The vigor and animation so conspicuous in Macaulay's style are due to his skill in choosing significant details and presenting them in rapid succession. The paragraph on page 87, beginning "Johnson was now in his seventy-second year" should be examined in this connection.

Repetition. Ideas are repeated over and over again, but always in language that is fresh and varied. Though more particulars and illustrations are given than are actually needed, the reader is never offended, but rather delights in the author's fecundity. Cf. pages 39-41.

Harsh invective. Macaulay possesses none of that delicate

satire which is to be found in Addison. Our author fights in the open. He administers hard stinging blows. His scorn is compressed into the very meanest epithet or into a brief statement of merciless reproof. Garrick's behavior he describes as "monkey-like impertinence." Mrs. Johnson is a "silly affected old woman." Concerning the edition of Shakespeare he writes: "It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless edition of any great classic."

Many persons try to copy the various features of Macaulay's style, imitating his short sentences, iterations, historical allusions, balanced structure, and other characteristics. He himself deprecated such efforts upon the part of a considerable number of writers in his day. In pointing out the folly of their practice, he said: "But I am a very unsafe model. My manner is I think on the whole a good one, but it is very near to a very bad manner indeed and those characteristics of my style which are most easily copied are the most questionable."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MACAULAY

TEXT

- COMPLETE WORKS. Edited by Lady Trevelyan, in eight volumes. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1866.
- ESSAYS (2 vols.), *History of England* (3 vols.), and *Speeches on Politics and Literature* (1 vol.), in *Everyman's Library*. London: John Dent, and New York: E. P. Dutton.

LIFE AND CRITICISM

- TREVELYAN, SIR GEORGE OTTO, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*. 2 vols. Longmans, Green & Co., 1876. Two volumes in one. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1908.
- BAGEHOT, WALTER, *Thomas Babington Macaulay* (Literary Studies). New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1878.
- BAYNE, PETER, "Macaulay," in *Essays in Biography and Criticism*. Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1858.
- CLARK, J. SCOTT, "Macaulay," in *Study of English Prose Writers*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898.
- GLADSTONE, W. E., "Macaulay," in *Gleanings of Past Years*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879.
- JEBB, R. C., *Macaulay, a Lecture*. Cambridge University Press, 1900.
- MINTO, WILLIAM, *Manual of English Prose Literature*. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1887.
- MORRISON, J. C., *Macaulay (English Men of Letters)*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1879.
- MORLEY, JOHN, "Macaulay," in *Critical Miscellanies* (Second Series). New York: The Macmillan Co., 1893.
- PATTISON, MARK, "Macaulay," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.
- SAINTSBURY, G., *Impressions*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1895.

STEPHEN LESLIE, "Macaulay," in *Dictionary of National Biography*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1890.

WHIPPLE, E. P., "Macaulay," in *Essays and Reviews*. Boston Ticknor, 1861.

JOHNSON

TEXT

COMPLETE WORKS. Edited by Francis P. Whalesby. 11 vols. Oxford, 1825.

LIVES OF THE POETS. Edited by Arthur Waugh. 6 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.

LIVES OF THE POETS (Selected). Edited by Matthew Arnold. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1878. Reprinted 1908.

THE RAMBLER. In the Series of *British Essayists*, vols. XVI.-XVIII. *The Idler*. Ibid., vol. XXVII, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1863.

LONDON. In the *Family Library of British Poetry*, edited by James T. Fields and Edwin P. Whipple. Boston: Riverside Press, 1878, The same collection contains *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and *The Prologue*, spoken by Mr. Garrick at the opening of the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane, 1747.

RASSELAS. Edited by George Birkbeck Hill. Oxford, 1887.

—— Edited by O. F. Emerson. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

—— (*Cassell's National Library*). Edited by Henry Morley.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES. In *English Satires*, edited by O. Smeaton. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

—— In Hale's *Longer English Poems*. New York, Macmillan Co., 1909.

MISCELLANEOUS SELECTIONS. *Johnson*, in *Little Masterpieces* Series, edited by Bliss Perry. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

WIT AND WISDOM OF SAMUEL JOHNSON. Selected and arranged by George Birkbeck Hill. London: Henry Frowde.

LIFE AND CRITICISM

BOSWELL, JAMES, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, including a Tour to the Hebrides*. Edited by George Birkbeck Hill. 6 vols. Clarendon Press, 1887.

—— *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. 2 vols. *Everyman's*

- Library*. London: John Dent, and New York: E. P. Dutton. The text follows that of Malone's sixth edition.
- CARLYLE, T., *Heroes and Hero Worship*.
- CLARE, J. SCOTT, *Study of English Prose Writers*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898.
- HAWTHORNE, N., *Tales, Sketches, etc.* Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1870.
- HAZLITT, W., *Lectures on the English Poets*. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1884.
- HILL, G. B., *Dr. Johnson, His Friends and his Critics*. Oxford, 1878.
- JOHNSON CLUB PAPERS. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899.
- MINTO, W., *Manual of English Prose Literature*. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1887.
- PIOZZI, MRS., *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson*. New York: (Cassell's National Library).
- SECOMBE, THOMAS, *The Age of Johnson (Handbooks of English Literature)*. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1902.
- STEPHEN, LESLIE, *Johnson (English Men of Letters)*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- "Johnson" (*Hours in a Library*). New York: Putnam, 1894.
- TAINÉ, H. A., *History of English Literature*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1875.
- WALLER, J. F., *Boswell and Johnson*. New York: (Cassell's Popular Library).



THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

(SAMUEL JOHNSON, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield,¹ and a bookseller of great note in the midland counties. Michael's abilities and attainments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous churchman, and, though he had qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths² to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite³ in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every traveler who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September, 1709. In the child, the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterward distinguished the man were plainly discernible — great muscular strength, accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to sloth and

procrastination; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch¹ was a specific for this malady. In his third year he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye; and he saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting, and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way; but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel.

He read little Greek, for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry¹ and eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library (of which he now had the command, an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy² of taste, which is the boast of the great public schools³ of England, he never possessed. But he was early familiar with some classical writers who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning.⁴ Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's⁵ works. The name excited his curiosity, and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

2 While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university, but a wealthy neighbor offered assistance; and,

in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College,¹ Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence, he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius²; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

At Oxford, Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church³ by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door; but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner,⁴ panting for one-and-twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen,

his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendancy. In every mutiny against the discipline of the college he was the ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's *Messiah* into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian¹; but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

The time² drew near at which Johnson would, in the ordinary course of things, have become a Bachelor of Arts; but he was at the end of his resources. Those promises of support on which he had relied had not been kept. His family could do nothing for him. His debts to Oxford tradesmen were small indeed, yet larger than he could pay. In the autumn of 1731 he was under the necessity of quitting the university without a degree. In the following winter his father died. The old man left but a pittance; and of that pittance almost the whole was appropriated to the support of his widow. The property to which Samuel succeeded amounted to no more than twenty pounds.

His life, during the thirty years which followed, was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the university, his hereditary malady had broken

22.

read
30 yrs

forth in a singularly cruel form. He had become an incurable hypochondriac.¹ He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons, and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner-table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down and twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on touching every post in the street through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease his senses became morbidly torpid, and his imagination morbidly active. At one time he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another, he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him and gave a dark tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves. But he was under no

temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life; but he was afraid of death: and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of dejection; for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own pure splendor. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium; they reached him refracted, dulled, and discolored by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul; and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him.

With such infirmities of body and of mind, this celebrated man was left, at two-and-twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties.¹ At Lichfield, his birthplace and his early home, he had inherited some friends and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey, a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley, registrar² of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese, a man of distinguished parts, learning, and knowledge of the world, did himself honor by patronizing the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb, moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighborhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however, Johnson could find no way of earning

22

a livelihood. He became usher¹ of a grammar school in Leicestershire; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman; but a life of dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and there earned a few guineas² by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time, and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia.³ He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian,⁴ with notes containing a history of modern Latin verse; but subscriptions did not come in, and the volume never appeared.

! While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as old as himself. To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colors, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys⁵ and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse⁶ from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted; for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little

honor, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding-day till the lady died in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he placed an inscription extolling the charms of her person and of her manners; and when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, "Pretty creature!"

His marriage made it necessary for him to exert himself more strenuously than he had hitherto done. He took a house in the neighborhood of his native town, and advertised for pupils. But eighteen months passed away, and only three pupils came to his academy. Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his schoolroom must have resembled an ogre's den. Nor was the tawdry, painted grandmother whom he called his Titty, well qualified to make provision for the comfort of young gentlemen. David Garrick,¹ who was one of the pupils, used many years later to throw the best company of London into convulsions of laughter by mimicking the endearments of this extraordinary pair.

At length Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of *Irene*² in

26
married

28
1737

manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmesley.

10 Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation, a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place;¹ and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a member of parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state. It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the book-sellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity. Literature had
2 ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of equality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular,—such an author as Thomson, whose *Seasons* were in every library; such an author as Fielding, whose *Pasquin* had had a greater run than any drama since the *Beggars'*

Opera,¹—was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment, measured with a scornful eye that athletic, though uncouth, frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot,² and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad, for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet.

Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during this time of trial. "Harry Hervey," said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man; but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." At Hervey's table Johnson sometimes enjoyed feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpennyworth of meat and a pennyworth of bread at an alehouse near Drury Lane.³

² The effect of the privations and sufferings which

he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly. They now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats and dirty shoes, he became a confirmed sloven. Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries¹ and *alamode* beef-shops, was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat-pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled, and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him, would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy,² but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily the insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable, and in some sense respectable, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who had taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborne, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had



Samuel Johnson L.L.D.

been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had hired to puff the Harleian Library.¹

↳ About a year after Johnson had begun to reside in London, he was fortunate enough to obtain regular employment from Cave, an enterprising and intelligent bookseller, who was proprietor and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. That journal, just entering on the ninth year of its long existence, was the only periodical work in the kingdom which then had what would now be called a large circulation. It was, indeed, the chief source of parliamentary intelligence. It was not then safe, even during a recess, to publish an account of the proceedings of either House without some disguise. Cave, however, ventured to entertain his readers with what he called Reports of the Debates of the Senate of Lilliput. France was Blefuscu; London was Mildendo; pounds were sprugs; the Duke of Newcastle was the Nardac Secretary of State; Lord Hardwicke was the Hurgo Hickrad; and William Pulteney was Wingul Pulnub. To write the speeches was, during several years, the business of Johnson. He was generally furnished with notes, meager, indeed, and inaccurate, of what had been said; but sometimes he had to find arguments and eloquence both for the ministry and for the opposition. He was himself a Tory, not from rational conviction — for his serious opinion was that one form of government was just as good or as bad as another — but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets²

against the Montagues, or the Blues¹ of the Roman circus against the Greens. In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villanies of the Whigs, and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell² preach at Lichfield Cathedral and had listened to the sermon with as much respect and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been completed by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England; and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The prejudices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own Tom Tempest.³ Charles II and James II were two of the best kings that ever reigned. Laud,⁴ a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and learning over whose tomb Art and Genius still continued to weep. Hampden⁵ deserved no more honorable name than that of "the zealot of rebellion." Even the ship-money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland⁶ and Clarendon than by the bitterest Roundheads,⁷ Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a government, the mildest that had ever been known in the world—under

a government which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action, he fancied that he was a slave; he assailed the ministry with obloquy which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one-tenth part of the license allowed to him, would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's tail, and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters¹ and stock-jobbers, the excise and the army, septennial parliaments,² and continental connections. He long had an aversion to the Scotch, an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement, but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation³ during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was indeed necessary to the prosperity of the magazine. But Johnson long afterward owned that, though he had saved appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the opposition.

A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labors, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It

is probable that what he had suffered during his first year in London had often reminded him of some parts of that noble poem in which Juvenal¹ has described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets that overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* had recently appeared, were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold, and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common, much more certainly than between Pope and Horace.

Johnson's *London*² appeared without his name in May, 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem; but the sale was rapid, and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honor of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival genius was welcomed. He made inquiries about the author of *London*. Such a man, he said, could not be long concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted

himself to obtain an academical degree and the mastership of a grammar school for the poor young poet. The attempt failed, and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

(It does not appear that these two men, the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was coming in, ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles; one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and index-makers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse, who, when his shirts were pledged, scrawled Latin verses sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blanket, who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober, and who was at last run over by a hackney coach when he was drunk; Hoole, surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his measures, used to trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sat cross-legged; and the penitent impostor, George Psalmanazar, who, after poring all day, in a humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers,¹ indulged himself at night with literary and theological conversation at an ale-house in the city. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted, was Richard Savage,² an earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribbands³ in Saint James's Square, and had

lain with fifty pounds weight of irons on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate.¹ This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty. His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the Piazza of Covent Garden² in warm weather, and in cold weather as near as he could get to the furnace of a glass-house. Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxation; had seen the leaders of opposition without the mask of patriotism; and had heard the prime minister roar with laughter, and tell stories not over decent. During some months Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson; and then the friends parted, not without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave. Savage went to the west of England; lived there as he had lived everywhere; and, in 1743, died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol jail.

7 Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was strongly excited about his extraordinary character, and his not less extraordinary adventures, a life of him appeared, widely different from the catchpenny lives of eminent men which were then a staple article of manufacture in Grub Street.¹ The style was indeed deficient in ease and variety; and the writer was evidently too partial to the Latin element of our language. But the little work, with all its faults, was a masterpiece. No finer specimen of literary biography existed in any language, living or dead; and a discerning critic might have confidently predicted that the author was destined to be the founder of a new school of English eloquence.

The *Life of Savage* was anonymous; but it was well known in literary circles that Johnson was the writer. During the three years which followed, he produced no important work; but he was not, and indeed could not be, idle. The fame of his abilities and learning continued to grow. Warburton pronounced him a man of parts and genius; and the praise of Warburton² was then no light thing. Such was Johnson's reputation, that, in 1747, several eminent booksellers combined to employ him in the arduous work³ of preparing a *Dictionary of the English Language* in two folio volumes. The sum which they agreed to pay him was only fifteen hundred guineas; and out of this sum he had to pay several poor men of

letters who assisted him in the humbler parts of his task.

The Prospectus of the Dictionary he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit, and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture, with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity; and he had since become Secretary of State. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed doubtless in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waistcoats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts, and uttered strange growls, who dressed like a scarecrow, and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron; but, after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his Dictionary by the end of 1750; but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge volumes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning

definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labor of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, an excellent imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. It is, in truth, not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets in which the fall of Wolsey¹ is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus,² the laurels on the doorposts, the white bull stalking toward the Capitol, the statues rolling down from their pedestals, the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcass before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned, too, that in the concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to Johnson's Charles; and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

For the copyright of the *Vanity of Human Wishes* Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought

on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had, in 1741, made his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields,¹ had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane Theater. The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet attracted each other strongly. -Nature had made them of very different clay; and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw, with more envy than became so great a man, the villa, the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet, which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathized with each other on so many points on which they sympathized with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that, though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained

friends till they were parted by death. Garrick now brought *Irene* out,¹ with alterations sufficient to displeasè the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience. The public, however, listened with little emotion, but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation. After nine representations the play was withdrawn. It is, indeed, altogether unsuited to the stage, and, even when perused in the closet, will be found hardly worthy of the author. He had not the slightest notion of what blank verse should be. A change in the last syllable of every other line would make the versification of the *Vanity of Human Wishes* closely resemble the versification of *Irene*. The poet, however, cleared, by his benefit-nights,² and by the sale of the copyright of his tragedy, about three hundred pounds, then a great sum in his estimation.

About a year after the representation of *Irene* he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition had been brought into fashion by the success of the *Tatler*,³ and by the still more brilliant success of the *Spectator*. A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. The *Lay Monastery*, the *Censor*, the *Freethinker*, the *Plain Dealer*, the *Champion*, and other works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the

adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-sixth year after the appearance of the last number of the *Spectator*, appeared the first number of the *Rambler*. From March, 1750, to March, 1752, this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

From the first the *Rambler* was enthusiastically admired by a few eminent men. Richardson,¹ when only five numbers had appeared, pronounced it equal, if not superior, to the *Spectator*. Young² and Hartley expressed their approbation not less warmly. Bubb Dodington,³ among whose many faults indifference to the claims of genius and learning cannot be reckoned, solicited the acquaintance of the writer. In consequence probably of the good offices of Dodington, who was then the confidential adviser of Prince Frederick,⁴ two of his Royal Highness's gentlemen carried a gracious message to the printing-office, and ordered seven copies for Leicester House.⁵ But these overtures seem to have been very coldly received. Johnson had had enough of the patronage of the great to last him all his life, and was not disposed to haunt any other door as he had haunted the door of Chesterfield.

By the public the *Rambler* was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted they became popular.

The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect, so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics admitted that his diction was too monotonous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humor of some of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson, a question which, seventy years ago, was much disputed, posterity has pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger,¹ his chaplain and his butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycombe, the Vision of Mirza, the Journal of the Retired Citizen, the Everlasting Club, the Dunmow Flich, the Loves of Hilpah and Shalum, the Visit to the Exchange, and the Visit to the Abbey, are known to everybody. But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the Allegory of Wit

and Learning, the Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret, and the sad fate of Aningait and Ajut.

6 The last *Rambler* was written in a sad and gloomy hour. Mrs. Johnson had been given over by the physicians. Three days later she died. She left her husband almost broken-hearted. Many people had been surprised to see a man of his genius and learning stooping to every drudgery, and denying himself almost every comfort, for the purpose of supplying a silly, affected old woman with superfluities, which she accepted with but little gratitude. But all his affection had been concentrated on her. He had neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. To him she was beautiful as the Gummings,¹ and witty as Lady Mary.² Her opinion of his writings was more important to him than the voice of the pit³ of Drury Lane Theater, or the judgment of the *Monthly Review*.⁴ The chief support which had sustained him through the most arduous labor of his life was the hope that she would enjoy the fame and the profit which he anticipated from his Dictionary. She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by eight hundred thousand human beings, he was alone. Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the Dictionary was at length complete.

It had been generally supposed that this great work would be dedicated to the eloquent and

accomplished nobleman to whom the Prospectus had been addressed. He well knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous, and at the same time of delicate and judicious, kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the *Ramblers* had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called *The World*,¹ to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed. In two successive numbers of *The World*, the Dictionary was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a Dictator, nay, of a Pope, over our language, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter² written with singular energy and dignity of thought and language, he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The Dictionary came forth without a dedication. In the preface³ the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically, that the ablest and most malevo-

lent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke,¹ never could read that passage without tears.

The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best lexicographer may well be content if his productions are received by the world with cold esteem. But Johnson's Dictionary was hailed with an enthusiasm such as no similar work has ever excited. It was, indeed, the first dictionary which could be read with pleasure. The definitions show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers, are so skillfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the pages. The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist. He knew little or nothing of any Teutonic language except English, which, indeed, as he wrote it, was scarcely a Teutonic language; and thus he was absolutely at the mercy of Junius² and Skinner.

The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had agreed to pay him had been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to sponging-houses,³ and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent

friend Richardson. It was still necessary for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as Dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his Dictionary. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakespeare by subscription; and many subscribers sent in their names, and laid down their money. But he soon found the task so little to his taste, that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal, which was called the *Literary Magazine*. Few of these papers have much interest; but among them was the very best thing that he ever wrote, a masterpiece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of Jenyns's *Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*.

In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays, entitled the *Idler*. During two years these essays continued to appear weekly. They were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated, while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. The *Idler* may be described as a second part of the *Rambler*, somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.

While Johnson was busied with his *Idlers*, his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her; but he had not failed to contribute largely, out of his small means, to her comfort. In order to defray

the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain, for the book was *Rasselas*.

The success of *Rasselas* was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish¹ must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favorite theme, the Vanity of Human Wishes; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the Princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. The *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* took different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting-woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendor. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

About the plan of *Rasselas* little was said by the

critics; and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakespeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakespeare has not sinned in this way more grievously than Johnson. Rasselas and Imlac, Nekayah and Pekuah, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century — for the Europe which Imlac describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century — and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of that law of gravitation which Newton discovered and which was not fully received even at Cambridge till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from Bruce's *Travels*. But Johnson, not content with turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters, and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox¹ or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt. Into a land of harems, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ballrooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is described as the indissoluble compact. A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice,

no!
he
did

exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of each other. "Such," says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been, and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle,¹ and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the oracle of Delphi.

By such exertions as have been described, Johnson supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate Dictionary he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. The excise, which was a favorite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the Lord Privy Seal² by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade." A pension he had defined as pay given to a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner as a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these defini-

tions would himself be pensioned. But that was a time of wonders. George the Third¹ had ascended the throne; and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends, and conciliated many of the old enemies of his house. The city was becoming mutinous²; Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening to kiss hands.³ The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters; and Johnson was one of the most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

This event produced a change in Johnson's whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood⁴ he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence; to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil⁵ or the sheriff's officer.

One laborious task indeed he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakespeare; he had lived on those subscriptions during some years, and he could not without disgrace omit to perform

his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly exhorted him to make an effort, and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolutions, month followed month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness. He determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer doze away and trifle away his time; but the spell under which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches. "My indolence," he wrote on Easter Eve in 1764, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter, 1765, came and found him still in the same state. "My time," he wrote, "has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me." Happily for his honor, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane,¹ and had actually gone himself, with some of his friends, at one in the morning, to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl

of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill,¹ who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity, and burning with party spirit, was looking for some man of established fame and Tory politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane Ghost in three cantos, nicknamed Johnson Pomposo, asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating. This terrible word proved effectual; and in October, 1765, appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakespeare.

This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contained some good passages, is not in his best manner. The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had during many years observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is the note on the character of Polonius.² Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's³ admirable examination of *Hamlet*. But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless, edition of any great classic. The reader may turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators.

Johnson had, in his Prospectus, told the world that he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive is indisputable. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our literature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of Shakespeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion, that in the two folio volumes of the English Dictionary there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age, except Shakespeare and Ben. Even from Ben¹ the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works of Æschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakespeare, without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger,² Ford, Decker, Webster, Marlowe, Beaumont, or Fletcher. His detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honored him had

little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, however, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience, and he sank back into the repose from which the sting of satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honored by the University of Oxford with a Doctor's degree, by the Royal Academy¹ with a professorship, and by the King with an interview, in which his Majesty most graciously expressed a hope that so excellent a writer would not cease to write. In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775, Johnson published only two or three political tracts, the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked as he worked on the *Life of Savage* and on *Rasselas*.

But though his pen was now idle his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation, directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel. His colloquial talents were, indeed, of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humor, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every sentence which dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of the *Rambler*. But in his talk there were no pompous

triads,¹ and little more than a fair proportion of words in *osity* and *ation*. All was simplicity, ease, and vigor. He uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice, and a justness and energy of emphasis, of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and by the asthmatic gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence generally ended. Nor did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed without the alteration of a word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a subject; on a fellow-passenger in a stage-coach, or on the person who sat at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends, whose abilities and knowledge enabled them, as he once expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club, which gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a

whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunkmaker and the pastry cook. Nor shall we think this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity. Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature, Reynolds of the arts, Burke of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist, of the age. Garrick brought to the meetings his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits, — Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life; and Topham Beauclerk, renowned for his amours, his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit. To predominate over such a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society Johnson predominated. Burke might, indeed, have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club.

Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethern, and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell, a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honorable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humor, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi, and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems and imbibing the juices of stronger plants. He must have fastened himself on somebody. He might have fastened himself on Wilkes,¹ and have become the fiercest patriot in the Bill of Rights Society.² He might have fastened himself on Whitefield,³ and have become the loudest field preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on Johnson. The pair might seem ill matched. For Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country. To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of

Boswell must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. Johnson hated to be questioned; and Boswell was eternally catechizing him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as, "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?" Johnson was a water-drinker, and Boswell was a winebibber, and indeed little better than a habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion, in which he said things which the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master; the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practiced in the Parliament House of Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits his chief business was to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto notebooks with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials, out of which was afterward constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world.

Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important indeed to his

fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale, one of the most opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit, was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert young women, who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do or say what they may, are always agreeable. In 1765 the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson, and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to any other in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society — his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity — increased the interest which his new associates took in him. For these things were the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and adversity. In a vulgar hack writer, such oddities would have excited only disgust. But in a man of genius, learning, and virtue, their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark, and a

still more pleasant apartment at the villa, of his friends on Streatham Common. A large part of every year he passed in those abodes — abodes which must have seemed magnificent and luxurious indeed when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his Abyssinian tale called “the endearing elegance of female friendship.” Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him; and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanted to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of Buck and Macaroni.¹ It should seem that a full half of Johnson’s life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the family sometimes to Bath, and sometimes to Brighton, once to Wales, and once to Paris. But he had at the same time a house in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was

his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces and, begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner — a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinach, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed an old lady¹ named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins,² whose family he had known many years before in Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor named Levett,³ who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other, and with Johnson's negro servant Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they transferred their hostilities from the servant to the master, complained that a better table was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham,

or to the Mitre Tavern. And yet he, who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who, but for his bounty, must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly and Levett, continued to torment him and to live upon him.

The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty-fourth year by an important event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the Middle Ages. A wish to become intimately acquainted with a state of society so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness; and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell importuned him to attempt the adventure, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August, 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering.

about two months through the Celtic region, sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in recording his adventures. About the beginning of 1775 his *Journey to the Hebrides* was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature. The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the Scotch had at length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. It was, of course, not to be expected that an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian polity and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedgerows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East Lothian.¹ But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield² at their head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved

to anger by a little unpalatable truth which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him, whom they chose to consider as the enemy of their country, with libels much more dishonorable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets, five-shilling books.¹ One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed; another for being a pensioner; a third informed the world that one of the Doctors' uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson,² whose *Fingal* had been proved in the *Journey* to be an impudent forgery, threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the impostor had not been too wise to encounter it, would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, "like a hammer on the red son of the furnace."

Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into controversy; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which is the more extraordinary because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists

are made. In conversation, he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry; and when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use of sarcasm and invective. But when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him; but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Kenricks,¹ Campbells, MacNicol, and Hendersons, did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter:

Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum.

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a

shuttlecock which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apothegm of Bentley,¹ that no man was ever written down but by himself.

Unhappily, a few months after the appearance of the *Journey to the Hebrides* Johnson did what none of his envious assailants could have done, and to a certain extent succeeded in writing himself down. The disputes between England and her American colonies had reached a point at which no amicable adjustment was possible. Civil war was evidently impending; and the ministers seem to have thought that the eloquence of Johnson might with advantage be employed to inflame the nation against the opposition here, and against the rebels beyond the Atlantic. He had already written two or three tracts in defense of the foreign and domestic policy of the government; and those tracts, though hardly worthy of him, were much superior to the crowd of pamphlets which lay on the counters of Almon and Stockdale.² But his *Taxation No Tyranny* was a pitiable failure. The very title was a silly phrase, which can have been recommended to his choice by nothing but a jingling alliteration which he ought to have despised. The arguments were such as boys use in debating societies. The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus. Even Boswell was forced to own that,

in this unfortunate piece, he could detect no trace of his master's powers. The general opinion was that the strong faculties which had produced the Dictionary and the *Rambler* were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote *Rasselas* in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He never willingly read or thought or talked about affairs of state. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother country was a question about which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson.¹ Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

On Easter Eve, 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers in London, called upon him. Though

he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley¹ downward, was in contemplation, and to ask him to furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, — a task for which he was pre-eminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was unrivaled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed; — from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults; from the recollections of such men as Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button²; Cibber,³ who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists; Orrery,⁴ who had been admitted to the society of Swift; and Savage, who had rendered services of no very honorable kind to Pope. The biographer therefore sat down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anecdote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes, — small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.

The *Lives of the Poets* are, on a whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied. For, however erroneous they may be, they are never silly. They are the judgments of a mind trammelled by prejudice and deficient in sensibility, but vigorous and acute. They therefore generally contain a portion of valuable truth which deserves to be separated from the alloy; and, at the very worst, they mean something, a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions.

Savage's Life Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that Life, will turn to the other Lives, will be struck by the difference of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circumstances he had written little and talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in constant habit of elaborate composition, was less perceptible than formerly; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skillful critic in the *Journey to the Hebrides*, and in the *Lives of the Poets* is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader.

10

Among the *Lives* the best are perhaps those of Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The very worst is, beyond all doubt, that of Gray.

This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure; but even those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone¹ computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very short prefaces, he had stipulated for only two hundred guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. [Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems to have been singularly unskillful and unlucky in his literary bargains.] He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time. Yet several writers of his time sold their copyrights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson received four thousand five hundred pounds for the *History of Charles V*; and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the *History of Charles V* is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the *Lives of the Poets*.

Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him.

44

SAMUEL JOHNSON

That inevitable event of which he never thought without horror was brought near to him; and his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependents to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and, in the silence of his home, he regretted even the noise of their scolding matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more; and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world, tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband, a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, her worst offenses had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness, ending in sunny good-humor. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia,¹ in whom nobody but

45

herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion. But the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner toward him changed. She was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham; she never pressed him to return; and, if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him that he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been formed by himself. In a solemn and tender prayer he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left forever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June, 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which, however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of dis-

eases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an Italian fiddler; that all London was crying shame upon her; and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron¹ and the two pictures in *Hamlet*. He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She meanwhile fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mount Cenis,² and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.

He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper which closes the series of his *Idlers*, seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples but for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labors which had made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard, and he seems to have wished even to keep its

existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the government might be induced to increase his pension to six hundred pounds a year; but this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. That winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he, courageous against pain, but timid against death, urged his surgeons to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham¹ sat much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch at night by the bed. Frances Burney,² whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death, and of that which lies beyond death; and he spoke much of the mercy of God, and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died on the 13th of Decem-

ber, 1784. He was laid, a week later, in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian, — Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.

Since his death, the popularity of his works — the *Lives of the Poets*, and, perhaps, the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, excepted — has greatly diminished. His Dictionary has been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his *Rambler* or his *Idler* is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of *Rasselas* has grown somewhat dim. But though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do. The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons, and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities¹ of his intellect and of his temper, serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.

SELECTIONS FROM JOHNSON'S WRITINGS

TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON

September 25, 1750.

DEAR SIR,

You have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother; and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please God that she should rather mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother's death to Mrs. Strahan, and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears; but tears are neither to *you* nor to *me* of any farther use, when once the tribute to nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and excite, and elevate, his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death: a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent; and a death resigned, peace-

ful and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope, that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts; and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God: yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal; and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come; for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, dear Sir,

Your most obliged, most obedient,

And most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE EARL OF
CHESTERFIELD

February 7, 1755.

MY LORD,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the "World," that two papers in which my dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well-pleased to have his all neglected, be it never so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at

last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed until I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I shall conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,

Your lordship's most humble,

Most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE PREFACE TO THE
DICTIONARY

Though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow: and it may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what could it avail me? I have protracted my work until most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and

miscarriage are empty sounds; I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

FROM THE RAMBLER, No. 68

The great end of prudence is to give cheerfulness to those hours which splendour cannot gild, and acclamation cannot exhilarate; those soft intervals of unbended amusement, in which a man shrinks to his natural dimensions, and throws aside the ornaments or disguises, which he feels in privacy to be useless encumbrances, and to lose all effect when they become familiar. To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition, the end to which every enterprise and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution.

It is, indeed, at home that every man must be known by those who would make a just estimate either of his virtue or felicity; for smiles and embroidery are alike occasional, and the mind is often dressed for show in painted honour and fictitious benevolence.

Every man must have found some whose lives, in every house but his own, were a continual series of hypocrisy, and who concealed under fair appearances bad qualities, which, whenever they thought themselves out of the reach of censure, broke out from their restraint, like winds imprisoned in their caverns, and whom every one had reason to love, but they whose love a wise man is chiefly solicitous

to procure. And there are others who, without any show of general goodness, and without the attractions by which popularity is conciliated, are received among their own families as bestowers of happiness, and revered as instructors, guardians, and benefactors.

FROM THE LIFE OF COWLEY

His diction was in his own time censured as negligent. He seems not to have known, or not to have considered, that words being arbitrary must owe their power to association, and have influence, and that only, which custom has given them. Language is the dress of thought, and as the noblest mien or most graceful action would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross employments of rustics or mechanics, so the most heroic sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction: but gold may be so concealed in baser matter that only a chymist can recover it; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words that none but philosophers can dis-

tinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction, being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye; and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once. The pleasures of reason imply something sudden and unexpected, that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with the consciousness of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

THE CHARACTER OF POLONIUS

From Notes on Hamlet

Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observations, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining to dotage. His mode of oratory is truly represented as designed to ridicule the practice of those times, of prefaces that made no introduction, and of method that embarrassed rather than explained. This part of his character is accidental, the rest is natural. Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, and knows not that it is become weak. Such a man excels in general principles, but fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and t in foresight. While he depends upon his

memory, and can draw from his repositories of knowledge, he utters weighty sentences, and gives useful counsel; but as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to sudden dereliction of his faculties; he loses the order of his ideas, and entangles himself in his own thoughts, till he recovers the leading principle, and falls again into his former train. This idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius.

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY MR. GARRICK, at the Opening of the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane, 1747.

When Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes
First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakspeare rose;
Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new:
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain.
His powerful strokes presiding Truth impress'd,
And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast.

Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,
To please in method, and invent in rule;
His studious patience and laborious art,
By regular approach assail'd the heart:
Cold approbation gave the lingering bays,
For those, who durst not censure, scarce could praise.
A mortal born, he met the general doom,
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.

The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakspeare's flame,
Themselves they studied — as they felt they writ;
Intrigue was plot, obsenity was wit.
Vice always found a sympathetic friend;
They pleased their age, and did not aim to mend.
Yet bards like these aspir'd to lasting praise,
And proudly hoped to pimp in future days.
Their cause was general, their supports were strong,
Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long:

Till Shame regain'd the post that Sense betray'd,
And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her aid.

Then, crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refined,
For years the power of Tragedy declined;
From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,
Till Declamation roar'd, while Passion slept;
Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,
Philosophy remain'd though Nature fled.
But forced, at length, her ancient reign to quit,
She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of Wit;
Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful day,
And Pantomine and Song confirm'd her sway.

But who the coming changes can presage,
And mark the future periods of the Stage?
Perhaps, if skill could distant times explore,
New Behns, new Durfeys, yet remain in store;
Perhaps, where Lear has raved, and Hamlet died,
On flying cars new sorcerers may ride:
Perhaps (for who can guess th' effects of chance?)
Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance.

Hard is his lot that, here by Fortune placed,
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;
With every meteor of caprice must play,
And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.
Ah! let not Censure term our fate our choice,
The stage but echoes back the public voice;
The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
For we that live to please, must please, to live.

Then prompt no more the follies to decry.
As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die;
'Tis yours, this night, to bid the reign commence
Of rescued Nature and reviving Sense;
To chase the charms of Sound, the pomp of Show,
For useful Mirth, and salutary Wo;
Bid scenic Virtue form the rising age,
And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage.

CARDINAL WOLSEY

FROM THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,
 Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:
 To him the church, the realm, their powers consign,
 Through him the rays of regal bounty shine,
 Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,
 His smile alone security bestows:
 Still to new heights his restless wishes tower,
 Claim leads to claim, and power advances power;
 Till conquest unresisted ceased to please,
 And rights submitted, left him none to seize.
 At length his sovereign frowns — the train of state
 Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
 Where'er he turns, he meets a stranger's eye,
 His suppliants scorn him, and his folloers fly;
 Now drops at once the pride of awful state,
 The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
 The regal palace, the luxurious board,
 The liveried army, and the menial lord.
 With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,
 He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.
 Grief aids disease, remember's folly stings,
 And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.
 Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace repine.
 Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end be thine?
 Or livest thou now, with safer pride content,
 The wisest justice on the banks of Trent?
 For, why did Wolsey, near the steeps of fate,
 On weak foundations raise th' enormous weight?
 Why but to sink beneath misfortune's blow,
 With louder ruin to the gulfs below?

TRUE OBJECTS OF DESIRE

FROM THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull Suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?
Inquirer, cease; petitions yet remain
Which Heaven may hear, nor deem Religion vain.
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.
Safe in His power, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer;
Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,
Secure, whate'er He gives, He gives the best.
Yet, when the sense of Sacred Presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth they fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions and a will resign'd;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal for retreat.
These goods for man the laws of heaven ordain,
These goods He grants, who grants the power to gain.
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

ON THE DEATH OF
MR. ROBERT LEVETT
A PRACTISER IN PHYSICS

Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mine,
As on we toil from day to day,

By sudden blasts or slow decline,
Our social comforts drop away.

Well tried through many a varying year,
See Levett to the grave descend,
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
Obscurely wise and coarsely kind;
Nor letter'd arrogance deny
Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting nature called for aid,
And hovering death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest cavern known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,
No petty gain disdain'd by pride,
The modest wants of every day
The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure th' Eternal Master found
The single talent well employed.

The busy day — the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm — his powers were bright,
Though now his *eightieth* year was nigh.

Then, with no fiery throbbing pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.

TO MRS. THRALE

On her completing her thirty-fifth year

AN IMPROMPTU

Oft in danger, yet alive
We are come to thirty-five;
Long may better years arrive,
Better years than thirty-five!
Time his hours should never drive
O'er the bounds of thirty-five.
High to soar, and deep to dive,
Nature gives at thirty-five;
For, howe'er we boast and strive,
Life declines from thirty-five.
He that ever hopes to thrive
Must begin by thirty-five;
And all who wisely wish to wive
Must look on Thrale at thirty-five.

NOTES

35, 1. **Lichfield.** This town is in Staffordshire and almost in the exact center of England. A statue of Johnson stands in the marketplace facing the house in which he was born. The Lichfield cathedral with three spires is an imposing structure in the Early English style.

2. **Taking the oaths.** These were the oaths of allegiance and supremacy imposed by Parliament upon the clergy, office holders, etc., after that revolution which brought William and Mary to the throne of England in 1688.

3. **Jacobite.** A member of the party which adhered to James II (Latin *Jacobus*) after his fall in 1688, and later sought the restoration of his descendants.

36, 1. **Royal touch.** Scrofula was formerly known as King's Evil, from the belief that the touch of the sovereign had power to cure it. This superstition arose in France, where the notion of the divine character of royalty early took form. The custom of giving to the sufferer a small coin, called the touchpiece, is, however, of English origin, and first appears in the time of Henry VII, 1485-1509.

37, 1. **Attic poetry.** The poetry of the ancient Athenians, who wrote in the Attic dialect of the Greek. Some of these great writers were Sophocles, Æschylus, Demosthenes, Lysias.

2. **Augustan delicacy.** Octavianus, afterward Augustus, grandnephew of Julius Cæsar and first emperor of Rome, was a patron and lover of literature. The poets Horace and Virgil and the historian Livy in his reign brought the Latin language to the highest state of perfection. The English schools and universities have always laid great stress on the study of Latin, and for standards of taste and style have naturally turned to the writers of the Augustan Period.

3. **The great public schools.** They are not at all like the public schools of the United States. In England the name applies to such institutions as Harrow, Eton, Rugby, and Winchester, where large tuition fees are charged. The

boys are grouped in forms, instead of classes. The sixth form is the highest.

4. **Restorers of learning.** Men who revived the study of Greek and Latin literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. John Colet (1466-1519), founder of St. Paul's School, and Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), author of *Utopia*, exerted such an influence in England.

5. **Folio volume of Petrarch.** A folio is the largest form of a printed book. The name, like quarto, octavo, etc., refers to the number of times the printer folds the large sheet of paper on which the book has been printed. Petrarch was an Italian poet of the fourteenth century, 1304-74. He wrote a number of Latin treatises and poems, but his fame to-day rests chiefly on his Italian sonnets.

38, 1. **Pembroke College.** The University of Oxford comprises a number of colleges. Pembroke College was founded in 1624.

2. **Macrobius.** Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, a Latin grammarian who lived in the early part of the fifth century of our era. His best known work is called *Saturnales*, and consists of a series of dialogues chiefly concerning the use of language, i.e., grammar and rhetoric.

3. **Christ Church.** One of the most famous Oxford colleges. It was founded in the early part of the sixteenth century by Cardinal Wolsey.

4. **Gentleman commoner.** An undergraduate who, in return for a special payment, was accorded certain privileges in the way of comfort and social consideration. This institution no longer exists.

39, 1. **Not exactly Virgilian.** As applied to style, this would mean that Johnson's translation did not possess the characteristics of true epic poetry, which owes much of its charm to sublime imagery and dignified expression. The rhythm was likewise lacking in the fine melody which is to be found in perfect Latin hexameter.

2. **The time, etc.** Johnson resided at Oxford for more than a year. Attendance for three years is necessary in order to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

40, 1. **Hypochondriac.** One who is morbidly anxious about his health, and generally depressed. This disease afflicted Johnson with "perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a defection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery."

41, 1. **Midland counties.** A name given collectively to nearly all the inland counties of England. Boswell speaks of

Johnson's residing chiefly at Birmingham during this period, although he spent some time with friends in Leicestershire and Staffordshire.

2. **Registrar.** A clerk, or recorder, of the local ecclesiastical court presided over by the bishop or his chancellor.

42, 1. **Usher.** An under-teacher or assistant in a school.

2. **A few guineas.** A guinea was equal to twenty-one shillings, about \$5.11.

3. **Abyssinia.** A Christian kingdom in Africa near the Red Sea. The book here referred to was an account of a voyage to Abyssinia by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit.

4. **Politian.** A Florentine poet, born in 1454 at Monte Pulciano in Tuscany, from which town he took his name.

5. **Queensberrys and Lepels.** That is, the aristocracy. The names of two noble families are taken as types of the aristocracy.

6. **Ceruse.** A cosmetic prepared from white lead.

43, 1. **David Garrick.** Garrick was in a certain sense the greatest of English actors, for his range included both comedy and tragedy. Throughout his life (1716-79) he maintained his friendship for Johnson in spite of frequent petty quarrels.

2. **The tragedy of Irene.** The story of the play is briefly this: Mahomet captures Constantinople. He falls in love with a fair Greek maiden and begs her to become a Moham-medan so that he may marry her. Irene consents. The soldiers become angry and form a conspiracy to dethrone the king. Mahomet resolves to make an end of the conspiracy, and save his throne. He calls the nobles together and sends for Irene. Then he kills her, saying, "Judge by this whether your emperor is able to bridle his affections or not."

44, 1. **Sinecure place.** An office yielding a salary, but involving no duties.

45, 1. **Beggars' Opera.** A parody on the court written by the poet Gay, and produced by the well-known manager Rich in 1727. It had considerable political significance and enormous popular success — so great, indeed, that it was said that the "Beggars' Opera" had "made Gay rich, and Rich gay."

2. **A porter's knot.** A pad for supporting burdens on the head.

3. **Drury Lane.** A small street near Covent Garden; from it the most famous of the London theaters takes its name.

46, 1. **Ordinaries.** Places where meals were served to all at fixed prices per meal. — **Alamode beef-shops** refers to any

sort of cheap eating-house. Beef *à la mode* is a sort of stewed beef with vegetables.

2. **Sycophancy.** The behavior of a slanderer, or common tale-bearer. The literal meaning of the Greek word is *fig-showing*; its original signification has never been positively determined. One explanation which has been offered regarding the earliest application of the term is as follows: Among the ancient Greeks, rewards were offered for the detection of any persons who failed to protect a sacred fig-tree growing upon their land. Consequently unprincipled men, out of enmity for the land holder or for the sake of a reward, would secretly despoil a tree, leaving the broken branches and figs upon the ground. The same men would then fetch officers to see the tree, and the owner would be held responsible for the offence. A person who indulged in such calumny was called a *sychophant*, or fig-shower.

47, 1. **To puff the Harleian Library.** The Harleian Library was a magnificent collection of books and manuscripts formed by Robert Harley, afterward Earl of Oxford (temp. Anne.) The manuscripts, which are of the utmost value, are now in the British Museum. Osborne, the bookseller, who had purchased the Harleian Library, employed Dr. Johnson to prepare a catalogue for it. As to the story alluded to here, Boswell says: "It has been confidently related with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him, but it was not in his shop, it was in my own chamber.'"

2. **The Capulets . . . the Montagues.** Two noble families of Verona, constantly at feud. An incident in their quarrels serves as the basis for the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

48, 1. **The Blues . . . the Greens.** The charioteers of the Roman circus were distinguished by the color of their liveries, and by the curious vagary of history the supporters of either side developed into something like the modern political party. The feeling was strong in Rome, but ran highest in the Constantinople of the sixth century, when sport, politics, and religion were inextricably tangled. Under the Emperor Justinian (527-67 A.D.) the disorder created by the quarrels of the factions were so serious that, as Gibbon says, "the laws were silent, and the bonds of society were relaxed." The classical account of this interesting matter is in Chapter XL of Gibbon's History.

2. **Sacheverell.** A famous Tory preacher in the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14). He preached the doctrine of passive obedience to the Crown, and his sermons at St. Paul's Chapel and the Derby assizes were made the occasion of his trial before the House of Lords. In 1710 he was condemned and suspended from preaching. His great popularity under these circumstances was cleverly used by Harley against his rival the Duke of Marlborough.

3. **Tom Tempest.** A character in one of Johnson's essays (*The Idler*, No. 10, June 17, 1758). He is represented as the typical Jacobite, the staunch supporter of the Stuarts, who asserts that William III burned Whitehall, that Bishop Tillotson died an atheist, that Queen Anne was poisoned, and similar absurdities.

4. **Laud.** Archbishop of Canterbury, 1633-45. Laud and Thomas Wentworth (Lord Strafford) were the chief supporters of Charles I in his attempt to govern Parliament (Government of Thorough). Laud sought to reform the English Church by restoring the ornaments and observances of the preceding century. For this and for the evil advice he was alleged to have given the king, he was beheaded by order of Parliament in 1645.

It should be remembered that Macaulay was as violent a Whig as Johnson was a Tory, and his remarks on the great Rebellion (1642-48) must be read in the light of this fact.

5. **Hampden.** A statesman and patriot in the great Rebellion. His name is associated with the famous ship-money tax, a tax levied by Charles I without the consent of Parliament. Hampden refused to pay this tax in order to make a test case, and although seven out of the twelve judges decided in favor of the king, the real victory lay with the supporters of parliamentary government (1637).

6. **Falkland.** Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, a scholar and man of great cultivation. In the great Rebellion he sympathized with the parliamentary party up to 1642, when, taking alarm at the doctrinal development of his associates, he cast his lot with the royalists by becoming Secretary of State. He died in 1643. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, the author of the famous history of the Rebellion, was a prominent figure throughout the war and the Restoration. In 1660 he was made Lord Chancellor. His daughter Anne married the Duke of York, afterward James II, and became the mother of Queen Mary (wife of William III) and Queen Anne.

7. **Roundheads.** A nickname given to the Puritans, and

more loosely to the parliamentary party. They cut their hair close, deeming the long curls of their enemies, the cavaliers, worldly and sinful.

49, 1. **Dissenters.** Those who are not members of the established Church of England. — **Stock-jobbers** refers to the directors of the Bank of England (established in 1694), who were Whigs, Non-conformists, and city men. — **Excise.** An internal duty, raised principally on food products, ales, spirits, and the like.

2. **Septennial Parliaments.** By an act passed in 1716, Parliament was *ipso facto* dissolved at the end of seven years, reckoning from the time when the writs of election were issued. This was to guard against the danger of Parliament retaining control of the government after it had ceased to represent the people, as happened during the great Rebellion.

3. **The conduct of the nation.** The Scotch surrendered Charles I into the hands of his enemies, the parliamentarians, by whom he was executed in 1649.

50, 1. **Juvenal.** The great Roman satirical poet, who lived during the first century of our era. Johnson's poem "London," mentioned below, is an imitation of the third satire of Juvenal.

2. **Johnson's London.** This is a poem of two hundred and sixty-three lines in rhyming iambic couplets. The author satirizes the life and manners of public men and inveighs against the condition of the poor. The following lines describe conditions which kept Johnson in obscurity for many years:

This mournful truth is everywhere confess'd,
 Slow rises worth by poverty distress'd:
 But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
 Where looks and merchandise and smiles are sold:
 Where won by bribes, by flatterers implored,
 The groom retails the favours of his lord.

51, 1. **Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers.** Rabbi (literally "my master") is a Hebrew title of respect applied to all scholars of law and theology. The Christian fathers are the early doctors or scholars of the Church, whose works are chiefly commentaries on the Bible and exposition of Christian doctrine. The best known of the fathers is probably St. Augustine (died 429).

2. **Richard Savage.** This extraordinary person gave himself out as the son of Anne, Countess of Macclesfield. This story Johnson accepted. The truth, probably, will never be

known, but the weight of modern authority inclines toward accepting Savage's story.

3. **Blue Ribbands.** Knights of the Order of the Garter are distinguished by a blue ribbon worn across the breast on state occasions. This order, founded by Edward III in 1347, is doubtless the most honorable now in existence. — **St. James's Square** is a fashionable quarter of London, near St. James's Palace, the residence of the Court during the eighteenth century.

52, 1. **Newgate.** A famous London prison.

2. **Piazza of Covent Garden.** Covent Garden is the great marketplace of London, where fruit, vegetables, and flowers are still sold. The piazza is a sort of arcade or covered passage surrounding the open marketplace.

53, 1. **Grub Street.** The present Milton Street, Cripplegate, London; the name was changed in 1830. From the seventeenth century the term Grub Street has been applied to the company of authors, poetasters, literary hacks, and the like that collected, if not actually in Grub Street, at least in its vicinity, where food and lodging were comparatively cheap.

2. **Warburton.** A well-known scholar and critic, who became Bishop of Gloucester; he died in 1779. He is perhaps best remembered to-day by his relations with Pope, which, commencing in violent enmity, ended in warmest friendship.

3. **Arduous work.** Johnson employed six amanuenses, whom he paid out of his contract sum of fifteen hundred guineas (about \$7500).

55, 1. **The fall of Wolsey.** The passage is to be found among the selections from Johnson's writings, page 104. Thomas Wolsey (1471-1530), Cardinal and chief minister of Henry VIII, having incurred the ill-will of the king by opposing his marriage with Anne Boleyn, was obliged to forfeit all his property and resign his office. In February he was granted a full pardon and was restored to the archbishopric of York. But new and greater sorrows awaited him. On his journey to be installed, he was arrested by Sir William Kingston, keeper of the Tower, on the charge of high treason. The great Cardinal was now rapidly failing in health; he was allowed to proceed to Leicester Abbey, where he expired three days after his arrival.

2. **Sejanus.** Lucius Aelius Sejanus (died 31 A.D.), a favorite of the emperor Tiberius, was made commander of the prætorian guard. Sejanus was the worst type of Roman "despot." He urged the emperor to retire to Capri for the

benefit of his health; Tiberius yielded, leaving Sejanus at the head of the empire. The villainous deputy sovereign, after poisoning the son of Tiberius, declared himself the emperor. He was put to death by the senate.

56, 1. **Goodman's Fields.** A London theater built in 1729 and pulled down in 1746. Garrick's performances made the playhouse famous.

57, 1. **Garrick now brought Irene out.** It was produced with an excellent company, including the famous Barry and Mrs. Pritchard. Boswell gives a detailed account of the performance.

2. **Benefit-nights.** The play was produced for nine consecutive nights. Johnson was given the receipts for the third, the sixth, and the ninth performances.

3. **The Tatler . . . the Spectator.** Steele founded the *Tatler* in 1709 and the *Spectator* in 1711. Addison, however, was the real editor of the latter periodical, for he contributed the great majority of the papers.

58, 1. **Richardson.** Samuel Richardson, the author of *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Pamela*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, was doubtless the second greatest novelist of the eighteenth century, Fielding being clearly the first. Richardson's stilted and extravagantly long novels had an extraordinary vogue. Johnson described him as an "author who had enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue."

2. **Young.** Thomas Young, a clergyman, and author of the well-known poem called *Night Thoughts*. He died in 1765. — **David Hartley** was a metaphysician and physiologist, whose best known work is his *Observations on Man*.

3. **Bubb Dodington.** George Bubb Dodington, afterward Lord Malcolm, was prominent in politics of the first half of the eighteenth century. He was a member of the Leicester House party.

4. **Prince Frederick.** Frederick, Prince of Wales, the eldest son of George II and father of George III.

5. **Leicester House.** The London residence of the Prince of Wales, who in this reign was constantly in opposition to his father, George II, and the Government.

59, 1. **Sir Roger, etc.** These are characters and scenes from the *Spectator*, while those that follow are of course from the *Rambler*.

60, 1. **The Gunnings.** Two sisters whose beauty — preserved in the exquisite portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds has become proverbial. The one, Elizabeth, became

Duchess of Hamilton, and the other, Maria, Countess of Coventry.

2. **Lady Mary.** Lady Mary Wortley Montague, daughter of the Duke of Kingston, was famous for her wit and intellect. She traveled extensively for those days, and her wide experience and ready wit have placed her letters among English classics. Henry Fielding was her cousin, and Pope fancied himself in love with her.

3. **The pit.** The name given to that section of the theater on the floor of the house, directly behind the orchestra. Seats here were considered less desirable and were sold at lower prices. The 'voices of the pit' would mean the opinion of the masses.

4. **The Monthly Review.** The *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* were literary periodicals published in Johnson's time, advocating respectively Whig and Tory principles. Johnson discussed the relative merits of the two journals in his conversation with the king. See Boswell's biography under the year 1767.

61, 1. **The World.** A weekly periodical published between 1753 and 1756. Among its distinguished contributors were Horace Walpole and Lord Cork.

2. **In a letter.** This letter will be found among the selections from Johnson's writings, page 95 of this text.

3. **In the preface.** Read the portion of the preface which is to be found among the selections from Johnson's works on page 97 in this text. Johnson's Dictionary should certainly be examined. Some one of the earlier editions may be found in almost any public library. The passages illustrating the uses of words will furnish very agreeable reading. The definitions of *excise*, *pension*, and *oats* are famous statements indicating that there were certain lapses in Johnson's work when sober judgment gave way to prejudice.

62, 1. **Horne Tooke.** A well-known philologist and political writer.

2. **Junius.** François Junius, a French philologist of the seventeenth century; not to be confused with the author of the Letters of Junius. — Skinner was an English philologist and a contemporary of Junius. His great work, *Etymology of the English Language*, appeared in 1671.

3. **Sponging-houses.** "A house to which debtors are taken before commitment to prison, where bailiffs sponge upon them, or riot at their cost." (Johnson's Dictionary).

64, 1. **Miss Lydia Languish.** A character in Sheridan's play, *The Rivals*. She has a passion for novels, and the scene

in which she hides *Peregrine Pickle* under the sofa is well known.

65, 1. **Mrs. Lennox.** A poet and novelist, best known now as the friend of Dr. Johnson, who wrote a dedication for her play, *The Female Quixote*. — **Frances Sheridan**, herself an author, is better known as the mother of Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

66, 1. **Hector** quote Aristotle, etc. Hector, the hero of the Trojan war, lived in the twelfth century B.C.; Aristotle lived in the fourth. The Temple of Apollo was plundered by Constantine the Great (272–337 A.D.), who enriched his new city by the sacred tripods and the statues of the Heliconian Muses. The oracle at Delphi had, therefore, ceased to exist by the end of the fourth century of our era. **Julio Romano** was a Roman painter of the sixteenth century. He was said to have been the favorite pupil of Raffael. These anachronisms are to be found in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cresida*, II, ii, and in *A Winter's Tale*, V, ii.

2. **Lord Privy Seal.** A Cabinet minister. Temple held this office in the Newcastle-Pitt ministry in 1757–61.

67, 1. **George the Third.** He became king in 1760.

2. **The city was becoming mutinous**, etc. This passage is an admirable example of Macaulay's vivid, picturesque style. He is merely announcing that the Whig ministry had gone out and the Tories were coming into power. But note how Macaulay selects the most significant details. The city (London) was as notoriously Whig as Oxford was Tory. The **Cavendishes** and **Bentincks** were great Whig families that owed their greatness to that idol of the Whigs, William III.

3. **Kiss hands.** New ministers on taking office kiss the sovereign's hand.

4. **For the first time since his boyhood.** Johnson was now in his fifty-third year. His letter accepting the pension will be found in Boswell's life under the year 1762.

5. **Printer's devil.** The newest apprentice lad in the pressroom, whose duty it is to run errands and to help the pressmen. For the legend explaining the origin of the name, see Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

68, 1. **Cock Lane.** This episode drew so much attention that the phrase "Cock Lane Ghost" has become almost proverbial for any gross imposition.

69, 1. **Churchill.** Charles Churchill, author of *The Rosciad*. Although in holy orders, he was the friend and associate of the brilliant and dissolute Wilkes, and was described by Boswell as one of the reigning wits of the day.

2. **Polonius.** A character in the play of *Hamlet*, Lord

Chamberlain to the King of Denmark. This note on Polonius will be found among the selections from Johnson's writings, page 100.

3. **Wilhelm Meister.** The hero of Goethe's novel of that name. Under the disguise of a discussion between an actress and Wilhelm the manager of a theater, Goethe produced what was perhaps the first philosophic criticism of the play *Hamlet*.

70, 1. **Ben. Ben Johnson,** a great Elizabethan dramatist and the friend of Shakespeare. The use of his Christian name is familiar to readers of Elizabethan literature, and Macaulay has skilfully availed himself of this to avoid the awkwardness of two Jonsons (Johnson) in the same paragraph.

2. **Massinger, Ford,** etc. These are the principal Elizabethan dramatists.

71, 1. **Royal Academy.** An institution for the cultivation of the arts, founded in 1769 by George III. It is best known to-day by its annual exhibition of paintings, held every spring at Burlington House, in London. Johnson was made professor of ancient literature.

72, 1. **Pompous triads.** The word *triad* signifies the union or conjunction of three. Thus in music the term is used to designate a chord of three tones. The reference here is to Johnson's fondness for building up a sentence in balanced phrases or clauses.

74, 1. **Wilkes.** John Wilkes was perhaps the most conspicuous figure of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Politician, wit, demagogue, scholar, and rake, he was at once the most hideous and captivating man of his time. Some account of him should be read in any English history. Interesting letters giving an account of the Wilkes troubles may be found in *Readings in English History* by Edward P. Cheyney (Ginn & Co.).

2. **Bill of Rights Society.** "A great democratic association called the Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights, which was formed in 1769 for the purpose of assisting Wilkes in his struggle with the Court, and of advocating political changes of the most drastic character." Lecky iii, 189.

3. **Whitefield.** One of the founders of the Methodist sect. He commenced this work in connection with the two Wesleys, but afterward separated from them on a doctrinal point. He made several visits to America, and died at Newburyport in Massachusetts in 1779.

77, 1. **Buck and Macaroni.** Slang phrases current in the eighteenth century and corresponding roughly to "swell."

Buck means originally a he-goat, but Murray's Dictionary cites the old Norsk "Bokki" — my good fellow.

The word *macaroni* as applied to a fop or exquisite was doubtless derived from the "Macharoni Club," formed in London about the middle of the eighteenth century. Horace Walpole describes it thus: "On Saturday at the Macharoni Club (which is composed of all the traveled young men who wear long curls and spying glasses) they played again." — *To Hertford*, February 6, 1764.

78, 1. An old lady. She was Miss Anna Williams, daughter of a learned Welsh physician. Boswell says, "She was a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature."

2. Mrs. Desmoulins. Daughter of Dr. Swinfen, Johnson's godfather, and a widow of Mr. Desmoulins, a writing master.

3. Quack doctor named Levett. "An obscure practiser of physick amongst the lower people, his fees being sometimes very small sums, sometimes whatever provisions his patients could afford him. It appears from Johnson's diary that their acquaintance commenced about the year 1746; and such was Johnson's predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that I have heard him say that he should not be satisfied, though attended by all the College of Physicians, unless he had Levett with him." — *Boswell*.

Macaulay's broad ridicule seems imprudent when we think of Johnson's friendship with this man. See the verses, "On the Death of Dr. Levett," included among the selections from Johnson's works on page 105.

80, 1. Berwickshire and East Lothian. Districts of Scotland and the Border between England and Scotland.

2. Lord Mansfield. William Murray, afterward Earl of Mansfield, a Scotchman by birth, was a famous jurist and statesman in the reign of George III. In 1756 he became Chief Justice of England. Students of American history will recall his speeches on the Revolution.

81, 1. Five-shilling books. A name applied to cheap literature.

2. Macpherson. In 1762 James Macpherson published *Fingal*, an epic poem in eight books, purporting to be a translation from the Gaelic of a hitherto unknown Scotch bard, called Ossian, who was said to have flourished in the third century. This poem produced a sensible effect on the literature of the end of the eighteenth century, as it fell in with the tendency toward romanticism and a return to nature. Goethe translated long extracts from it and inserted them in his novel *Werther*.

Johnson boldly declared that *Fingal* was an impudent forgery, and Hume and Gibbon doubted its authenticity. The defense of Macpherson was undertaken officially, but not very successfully, by the Highland Society of Edinburgh. The truth seems to be that Macpherson constructed his poem from various fragments that he had collected in the Highlands. These, with considerable skill, he translated, arranged, and strung together on a thread of his own.

82, 1. **Kenrick, Campbell, etc.** These were Scotchmen, all of whom attacked Johnson with more or less violence. Mac-Nichol was a parson, and Campbell an officer in the navy.

2. **Maxime, etc.** "If thou wilt, greatly do I desire to contend with thee."

83, 1. **Bentley.** Richard Bentley was a great scholar of the generation before Johnson. He was master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and produced successful editions of many of the classics, including Horace and Terence. His edition of Milton, however, was reckoned very bad.

2. **Almon and Stockdale.** Well-known booksellers.

84, 1. **Wilson.** Richard Wilson was a Welsh landscape painter of this period.

85, 1. **Cowley.** A lyric poet of the seventeenth century, the contemporary of Milton. Johnson considered him "undoubtedly the best of the metaphysical poets."

2. **Button.** A coffee-house in Russell Street, Covent Garden, which was the resort of the wits and authors of London. Addison, Steele, Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot were in the habit of meeting here. In Dryden's time the most popular rendezvous for literary men was Will's Coffee-House, named from the original owner, William Urwin.

3. **Cibber.** An actor and dramatic poet, born in 1671, died 1756. He was poet laureate to George II, and during the latter part of his life was virtual dictator of the English theatre.

4. **Orrery.** The Earl of Orrery was a member of the Boyle family. He published a work on Swift.

87, 1. **Malone.** Edmund Malone is best known as an eminent Shakesperian scholar. He was, however, a good general critic also, and is well known as having exposed the forgeries of Thomas Chatterton, which that "marvelous boy" had claimed were copies of several ancient poems written by one Rowley, a priest in Bristol, who lived in the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV. Malone died in 1812.

88, 1. **A music-master from Brescia.** This, of course, is Piozzi, Mrs. Thrale's second husband. This marriage nearly

broke Johnson's heart. He wrote to Sir John Hawkins: "Poor Thrale, I thought that either her virtue or her voice would have restrained her from such a marriage. She is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over; and her friends, if she has any left, to forget or pity." In spite of the obloquy that the unhappy pair have endured, we now know that Piozzi was a worthy and amiable person, who made his wife happy and contented during the twenty-five years of their union. Mrs. Piozzi's valuable *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson* was published in 1786.

90, 1. **The Ephesian matron.** A character in the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter (temp. Nero) which is almost the only classical novel which has survived. The two pictures refer to *Hamlet*, III, iv.

2. **Mount Cenis.** One of the principal Alpine passes leading into Italy.

91, 1. **Windham.** William Windham was an intimate friend of Johnson, and a member of the club.

2. **Frances Burney.** Afterward Mme. d'Arbly, a distinguished novelist, whose best-known work is *Evelina*.

92, 1. **Anfractuosities.** "The state of being anfractuious, or full of windings and twinings."

CORRELATED READING IN BOSWELL'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

It will prove both entertaining and profitable to correlate the study of this essay with the reading of portions of Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*. It is no derogation of Macaulay's ability to say that readers of this article frequently desire to learn more about the personality of the great Dictator of English Letters. Students must turn to Boswell in order to get the full background of any scene or incident in Johnson's life. Thus will they become acquainted with a biography which, says Carlyle, "is beyond any product of the eighteenth century, giving more real insight into the history of England during those days than twenty other Books, falsely entitled 'Histories,' which take to themselves that special aim."

Direction can be given to the examination of Boswell's *Life* by having selected passages read aloud by members of the class. Many editions of the work are available; the volumes can be borrowed from any public library. An inexpensive and attractive text appears in the *Everyman's Library* Series (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York). The following topics representing attractive portions of the biography are given by way of suggestion. The passages may be readily located by referring to the index of any edition of Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

I. Johnson's Academy. II. The performance of Irene. III. Death of Johnson's wife. IV. The Chesterfield incident. V. Boswell's first meeting with Johnson. VI. Formation of the Literary Club. VII. Johnson's introduction into the family of the Thrales. VIII. Johnson meets the King.

BOSWELL'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

IX. Boswell entertains at dinner (Oct. 16, 1769). X. The Epitaph on Goldsmith and the *Round Robin* Petition. XI. Johnson's humane interference in behalf of Mr. Dodd. XII. Johnson gives an opinion concerning Garrick's fame (1778). XIII. He entertains Mr. Edwards, a fellow-collegian. XIV. Parting adieu of Streatham. XV. Mrs. Siddons visits Johnson. XVI. Johnson's love of children. XVII. His kindness to animals. XVIII. Particulars of Johnson's last moments.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR STUDY

LORD MACAULAY

1. Give some account of the life and influence of Zachary Macaulay. 2. Who was Hannah More? What advantages did Macaulay gain from being a protégé of this talented woman? 3. Do you know anything about the lives of Macaulay's brothers and sisters? (See *Dictionary of National Biography* under Zachary Macaulay.)
4. Give details concerning Macaulay's early life, his mental precocity, and his childhood compositions. 5. What traits did he exhibit while attending the private school near Cambridge? 6. In what ways did he win distinction at Cambridge University?
7. Mention some of his contributions to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*. 8. Why did he not give much attention to the practice of law? 9. When did Macaulay contribute his first essay to the *Edinburgh Review*? How did the editor, Francis Jeffrey, regard the young man's effort? 10. How long did Macaulay's connection with the *Review* last?
11. Tell about Macaulay's entrance into Parliament and his famous speech on the Reform Bill. 12. Why was Macaulay willing to accept the position in India? What valuable work did he perform outside his duties as member of the Council?
13. What literary work did he accomplish during the three years following his return from India? 14. Give some account of the success of the History.
15. How did the electors of Edinburgh compensate Macaulay for their opposition to his candidacy in 1847?

16. Describe Macaulay's appearance. 17. What was the one exercise in which he was said to excel? 18. Give some details to show Macaulay's tenderness of feeling. 19. What actions revealed his strict integrity and high moral sense? 20. Tell about his remarkable energy of mind. 21. His wonderful memory.

22. Mention the subjects of some of Macaulay's essays. 23. Why are his essays popular? 24. What are the prominent characteristics of Macaulay's style?

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

1. What characteristics of mind and temperament did Samuel Johnson exhibit during his boyhood? 2. What were the chief traits which he displayed while at Oxford?

3. After reading the paragraph beginning on page 39, would you say that the opening sentence is a clue to the main subject? 4. What is the real topic of the paragraph? 5. Note the author's effective use of concrete illustrations. 6. What is the figure used in describing the influence of Johnson's religion?

7. What explanation would you give for Johnson's affection for Mrs. Porter?

8. Why was the School a failure?

9. What is meant by the "patronage of the great"?

10. What were the effects of the hard struggle in London upon Johnson's manners and disposition?

11. Describe Johnson's connection with the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

12. What were the prejudices which he brought up to London? 13. What gave rise to his hatred of the Scotch?

14. Who were Johnson's early friends? 15. Do you think he would have cared as much for them in the days of his prosperity?

16. Why does Macaulay regard the *Life of Savage* a masterpiece?

17. Do you think Macaulay means to excuse Chesterfield's conduct toward Johnson?

18. Try to express in a general statement the thought of lines 11 to 21 on page 54. Is Macaulay's way better?

19. Do you see any warrant for the short paragraph on page 55?

20. Why did Johnson and Garrick repel each other? What were the points on which they could agree?

21. What were the chief merits of *The Idler*?

22. Did Johnson incur any considerable loss in bringing out his Dictionary without a dedication? 23. Account for the popularity of this publication.

24. What faults in the plan of *Rasselas* are criticised by Macaulay? Are these faults enough in themselves wholly to discredit the work?

25. Would it be just to accuse Johnson of being unprincipled in accepting the pension? (It would be worth while to consult Boswell in reference to this topic.) 26. Is Johnson's indolence during the next three or four years to be attributed entirely to his acceptance of a pension?

27. Why was Johnson's edition of Shakespeare a failure?

28. Explain the power and charm of Johnson's conversation. 29. What enabled him to predominate over all the distinguished members of the club?

30. What advantage did Johnson derive from his intimacy with the Thrales?

31. Does the paragraph on page 75 violate the principle of unity?

32. What new light is thrown upon Johnson's character in the account of the affairs in his own household?

33. Why was the journey to the Hebrides such an important event in Johnson's life?

34. How far does Johnson's own case go to establish the truth of the apothegm that no man was ever written down but by himself?

35. Exactly what is your feeling toward Johnson for his having written "Taxation No Tyranny"?

36. Upon what does Macaulay base his opinion in judging the *Lives of the Poets* to be the best of Johnson's works?

37. Does Macaulay seem too severe in his censure of Mrs. Thrale? Read Boswell's account of Mrs. Thrale's marriage or consult the *Encyclopædia Britannica* for an account of Piozzi.

38. Examine the paragraph (p. 90) containing the account of Johnson's illness and death to find striking illustrations of some of the features of Macaulay's style; namely, his use of specific words, balanced structure, and rapid accumulation of details.

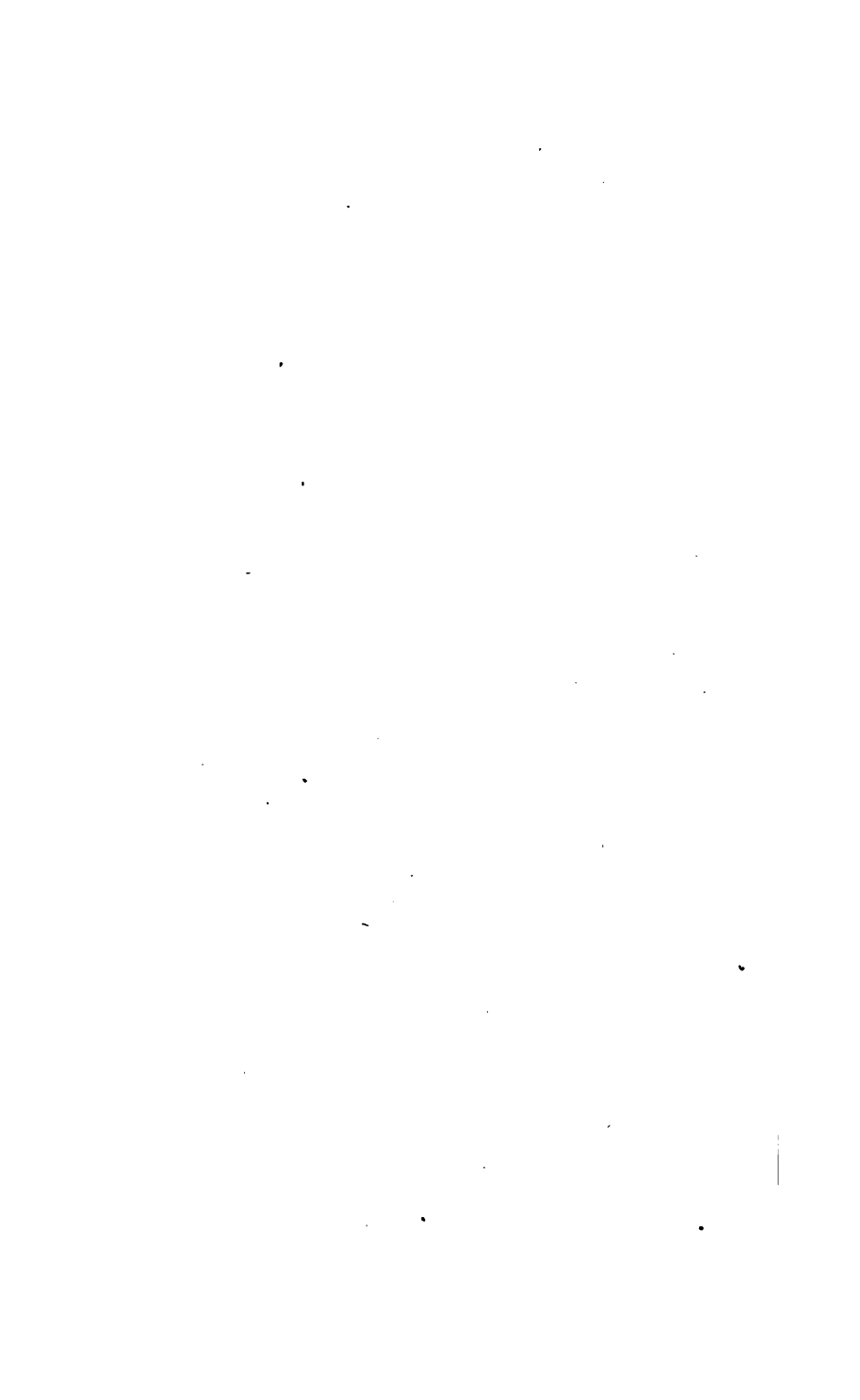
39. What were Johnson's prejudices?

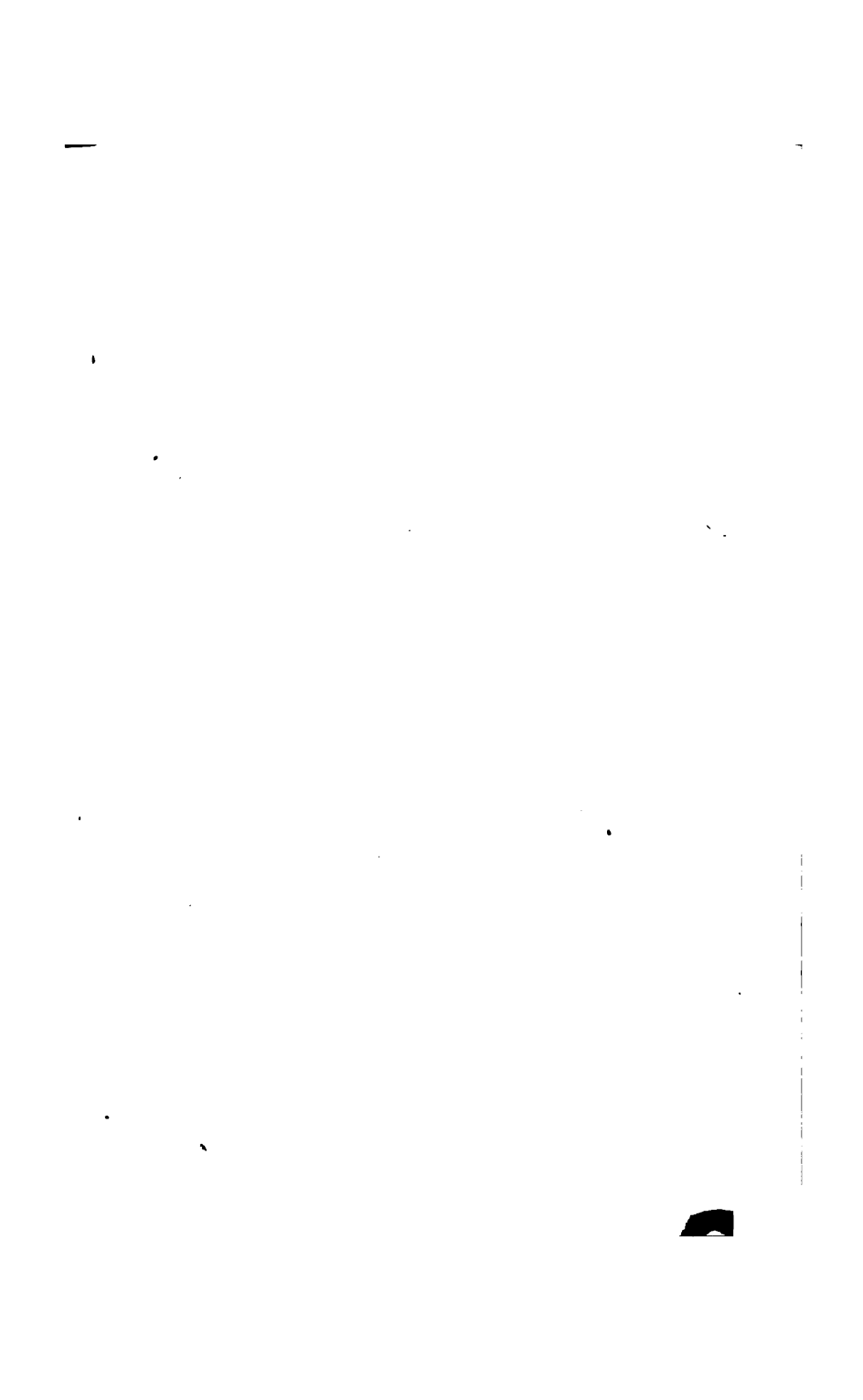
40. What is meant by the Johnsonian style?

41. How did Johnson exert his greatest influence?

THEME ASSIGNMENTS

1. Describe Samuel Johnson at the age of sixteen.
 2. Johnson at Oxford.
 3. Johnson's friends, early and late.
 4. Mrs. Johnson.
 5. The Literary Club.
 6. The Chesterfield incident.
 7. Johnson's household.
 8. A dinner at the Mitre Tavern.
 9. Early struggles in London.
 10. An imaginary conversation with Dr. Johnson.
 11. Johnson's independence.
 12. James Boswell.
 13. Johnson and the Thrales.
 14. Effects of Johnson's malady.
 15. The charm of Macaulay's essays.
 16. Macaulay, a character study.
-







This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it
beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

APR 14 '69 H

2 CANCELLED



16476.45.8

Life of Samuel Johnson,

Widener Library

003313627



3 2044 086 772 639