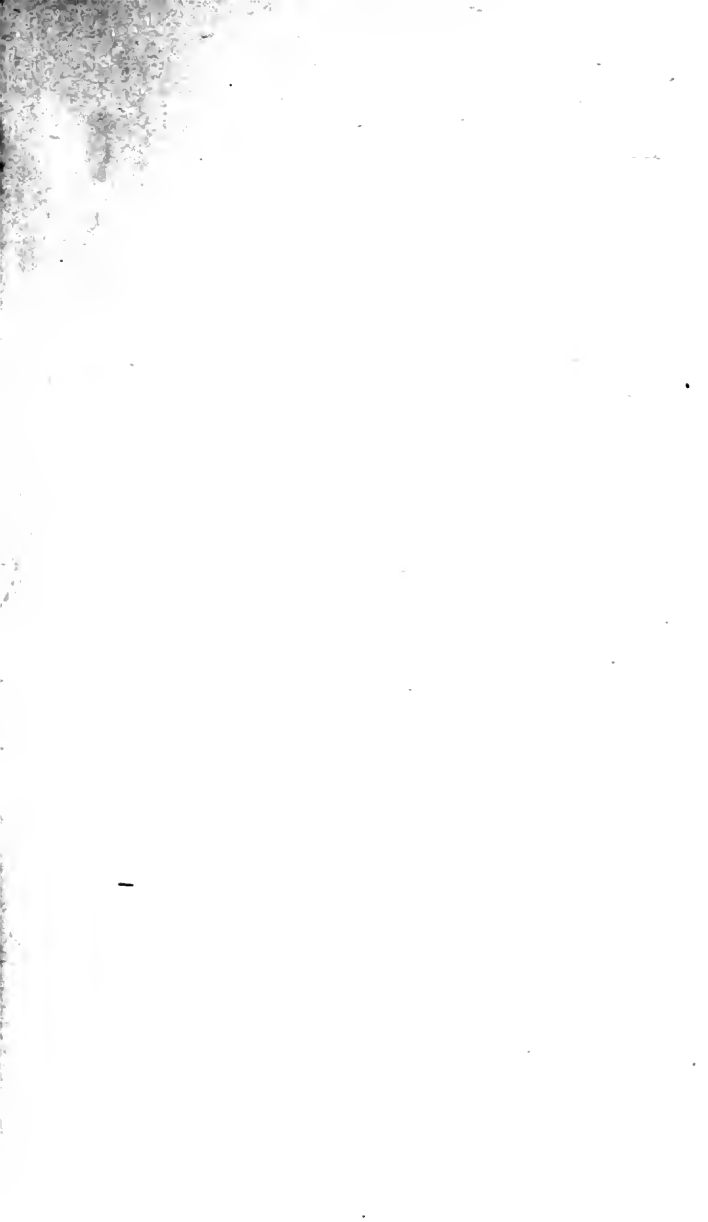




3 1761 06867113 0



Presented to
The Library
of the
University of Toronto
by
THE ESTATE OF THE LATE
LEWIS DUNCAN



JOHNSON'S
LIVES OF THE POETS

VOL. IV.



Johnson, Samuel
iii

JOHNSON'S
LIVES OF THE POETS

A NEW EDITION

WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION
BY
ARTHUR WAUGH,

AUTHOR OF 'ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: A STUDY
OF HIS LIFE AND WORK.'

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO. LD.

PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHANCERY LANE.

MDCCCXCVI.

PR
553
J7
1896
v. 4

LIBRARY
732683
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

CONTENTS
OF
THE FOURTH VOLUME

	PAGE
CONGREVE	1
BLACKMORE	23
FENTON	51
GAY	65
GRANVILLE	85
YALDEN	99
TICKELL	107
HAMMOND	117
SOMERVILLE	125
SAVAGE	131
APPENDIX	267

LIST OF PORTRAITS
IN THE FOURTH VOLUME

	AT PAGE
CONGREVE	1
GAY	65
SAVAGE	131



22

CONGREVE

67

VOL. IV.

B



CONGREVE.

WILLIAM CONGREVE descended from a family in Staffordshire, of so great antiquity that it claims a place among the few that extend their line beyond the Norman Conquest; and was the son of William Congreve, second son of Richard Congreve of Congreve and Stratton.¹ He visited, once at least, the residence of his ancestors; and, I believe, more places than one are still shewn, in groves and gardens, where he is related to have written his *Old Bachelor*.²

Neither the time nor place of his birth are certainly known;³ if the inscription upon his monument be true, he was born in 1672. For the

¹ Concerning the maiden name of the dramatist's mother there is considerable uncertainty. Leigh Hunt affirmed boldly that William Congreve the elder married Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Fitzherbert, and granddaughter of Sir Anthony of that name, the celebrated judge. As Mr. Gosse has pointed out, however (*Life of Congreve*, p. 14), Sir Anthony had been dead more than a hundred and thirty years at the date of the poet's birth, so there is evidently some mistake. Other authorities give the lady's name as Browning; and this is the supposition adopted by Mr. Leslie Stephen in his article on Congreve in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

² Mr. Gosse mentions two: Stratton Hall, and Aldermaston in Berkshire.

³ Malone discovered the entry of his baptism at Bardsey, under date February 10, 1669-70.

place; it was said by himself that he owed his nativity to England, and by every body else that he was born in Ireland. Southern mentioned him with sharp censure, as a man that meanly disowned his native country. The biographers assign his nativity to Bardsa, near Leeds in Yorkshire, from the account given by himself, as they suppose,⁴ to Jacob.

To doubt whether a man of eminence has told the truth about his own birth, is, in appearance, to be very deficient in candour; yet nobody can live long without knowing that falsehoods of convenience or vanity, falsehoods from which no evil immediately visible ensues, except the general degradation of human testimony, are very lightly uttered, and once uttered, are sullenly supported. Boileau, who desired to be thought a rigorous and steady moralist, having told a petty lie to Lewis XIV. continued it afterwards by false dates; thinking himself obliged *in honour*, says his admirer, to maintain what, when he said it, was so well received.

Wherever Congreve was born, he was educated first at Kilkenny,⁵ and afterwards at Dublin,⁶ his father having some military employment that stationed him in Ireland:⁷ but after having passed through the usual preparatory studies, as may be

⁴ The supposition was at least justifiable; for, in his preface to the *Poetical Register* (1719), Giles Jacob expressly says that he is indebted to Congreve for "his free and early communication of what relates to himself."

⁵ Under Dr. Hinton. He apparently entered the school about 1681.

⁶ Where he matriculated on April 5, 1685.

⁷ As commander of the garrison of Youghal.

reasonably supposed with great celerity and success, his father thought it proper to assign him a profession, by which something might be gotten; and about the time of the Revolution sent him, at the age of sixteen,⁸ to study law in the Middle Temple, where he lived for several years, but with very little attention to Statutes or Reports.

His disposition to become an author appeared very early, as he very early felt that force of imagination, and possessed that copiousness of sentiment, by which intellectual pleasure can be given. His first performance was a novel, called *Incognita, or Love and Duty reconciled*:⁹ It is praised by the biographers, who quote some part of the preface, that is indeed, for such a time of life, uncommonly judicious. I would rather praise it than read it.

His first dramattick labour was the *Old Batchelor*; of which he says, in his defence against Collier, "that comedy was written, as several know, some years before it was acted. When I wrote it, I had little thoughts of the stage; but did it, to amuse myself, in a slow recovery from a fit of sickness. Afterwards, through my indiscretion, it was seen, and in some little time more it was acted; and I, through the remainder of my indiscretion, suffered myself to be drawn in, to the prosecution of a difficult and thankless

⁸ He entered the Middle Temple, March 17, 1691, by which time he was twenty-one.

⁹ *Incognita* was licensed December 22, 1691, and published, according to an advertisement in the *London Gazette*, February 25, 1692. Readers who are interested in this first effort of Congreve will find an interesting account of it in Mr. Gosse's *Life*, pp. 19-21.

“study, and to be involved in a perpetual war
“with knaves and fools.”

There seems to be a strange affectation in authors of appearing to have done every thing by chance. The *Old Batchelor* was written for amusement, in the languor of convalescence. Yet it is apparently composed with great elaborateness of dialogue, and incessant ambition of wit. The age of the writer considered, it is indeed a very wonderful performance; for, whenever written, it was acted (1693)¹⁰ when he was not more than twenty-one years old;¹¹ and was then recommended by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Southern, and Mr. Maynwaring. Dryden said that he never had seen such a first play; but they found it deficient in some things requisite to the success of its exhibition, and by their greater experience fitted it for the stage. Southern used to relate of one comedy, probably of this, that when Congreve read it to the players, he pronounced it so wretchedly that they had almost rejected it; but they were afterwards so well persuaded of its excellence, that, for half a year before it was acted, the manager allowed its author the privilege of the house.

Few plays have ever been so beneficial to the writer; for it procured him the patronage of Halifax, who immediately made him one of the commissioners for licensing coaches,¹² and soon

¹⁰ In the month of January.

¹¹ No: twenty-three.

¹² Congreve was not installed in this office till July 12, 1695; so that Johnson's "immediately" lacks something of perspective. He held the post till October 13, 1707. Johnson's facts here are

after gave him a place in the pipe-office, and another in the customs of six hundred pounds a year. Congreve's conversation must surely have been at least equally pleasing with his writings.

Such a comedy, written at such an age, requires some consideration. As the lighter species of dramattick poetry professes the imitation of common life, of real manners, and daily incidents, it apparently presupposes a familiar knowledge of many characters, and exact observation of the passing world; the difficulty therefore is, to conceive how this knowledge can be obtained by a boy.

But if the *Old Batchelor* be more nearly examined, it will be found to be one of those comedies which may be made by a mind vigorous and acute, and furnished with comick characters by the perusal of other poets, without much actual commerce with mankind. The dialogue is one constant reciprocation of conceits, or clash of wit, in which nothing flows necessarily from the occasion, or is dictated by nature. The characters both of men and women are either fictitious and artificial, as those of *Heartwell* and the Ladies; or easy and common, as *Wittol* a tame idiot, *Bluff* a swaggering coward, and *Fondlewife* a jealous puritan; and the catastrophe arises from a mistake not very probably produced, by marrying a woman in a mask.

Yet this gay comedy, when all these deductions are made, will still remain the work of very power-

derived directly from the *Biographia Britannica*; and Mr. Gosse has demonstrated the improbability of Congreve's early possession of this plurality of sinecures.

ful and fertile faculties: the dialogue is quick and sparkling, the incidents such as seize the attention, and the wit so exuberant that it *o'er-informs its tenement*.

Next year he gave another specimen of his abilities in *The Double Dealer*,¹³ which was not received with equal kindness. He writes to his patron the lord Halifax a dedication, in which he endeavours to reconcile the reader to that which found few friends among the audience. These apologies are always useless; *de gustibus non est disputandum*; men may be convinced, but they cannot be pleased, against their will. But though taste is obstinate, it is very variable, and time often prevails when arguments have failed.

Queen Mary conferred upon both those plays the honour of her presence; and when she died, soon after, Congreve testified his gratitude by a despicable effusion of elegiac pastoral;¹⁴ a composition in which all is unnatural, and yet nothing is new.

In another year (1695) his prolific pen produced *Love for Love*; a comedy of nearer alliance to life, and exhibiting more real manners, than either of the former. The character of *Foresight* was then common. Dryden calculated nativities; both Cromwell and king William had their lucky

¹³ *The Double Dealer* appeared in the same year as *The Old Bachelor*, being first played in November 1693. Johnson was apparently misled by the publisher's date, 1694, on the title-page of the first edition; though, as a matter of fact, the play was issued to the public on December 4, 1693.

¹⁴ *The Mourning Bride of Alexis, a Pastoral lamenting the Death of our late gracious Queen Mary, of ever blessed Memory*. 1695.

days; and Shaftesbury himself, though he had no religion, was said to regard predictions. The *Sailor* is not accounted very natural, but he is very pleasant.

With this play was opened the New Theatre,¹⁵ under the direction of Betterton the tragedian; where he exhibited two years afterwards (1697) *The Mourning Bride*,¹⁶ a tragedy, so written as to shew him sufficiently qualified for either kind of dramattick poetry.

In this play, of which, when he afterwards revised it, he reduced the versification to greater regularity, there is more bustle than sentiment: the plot is busy and intricate, and the events take hold on the attention; but, except a very few passages, we are rather amused with noise, and perplexed with stratagem, than entertained with any true delineation of natural characters. This, however, was received with more benevolence than any other of his works, and still continues to be acted and applauded.

But whatever objections may be made either to his comic or tragick excellence, they are lost at once in the blaze of admiration, when it is remembered that he had produced these four plays before he had passed his twenty-fifth year;¹⁷ before other men, even such as are some time to shine in eminence, have passed their probation of literature, or presume to hope for any other notice than such

¹⁵ In Lincoln's Inn Fields, April 30, 1695.

¹⁶ Produced, probably, in February 1697. The play was published March 11, in that year.

¹⁷ Johnson, dating Congreve's birth 1672, continues wrong with regard to his age. He was just twenty-seven when *The Mourning Bride* appeared.

as is bestowed on diligence and inquiry. Among all the efforts of early genius which literary history records, I doubt whether any one can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve.

About this time began the long-continued controversy between Collier and the poets. In the reign of Charles the First the Puritans had raised a violent clamour against the drama, which they considered as an entertainment not lawful to Christians, an opinion held by them in common with the church of Rome ; and Prynne published *Histrio-mastix*,¹⁸ a huge volume, in which stage-plays were censured. The outrages and crimes of the Puritans brought afterwards their whole system of doctrine into disrepute, and from the Restoration the poets and players were left at quiet ; for to have molested them would have had the appearance of tendency to puritanical malignity.

This danger, however, was worn away by time ; and Collier, a fierce and implacable Nonjuror, knew that an attack upon the theatre would never make him suspected for a Puritan ; he therefore (1698) published *A short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*,¹⁹ I believe with no other motive than religious zeal and honest indignation. He was formed for a controvertist ; with sufficient learning ; with diction vehement and pointed, though often vulgar and incorrect ; with unconquerable pertinacity ; with wit in the highest degree keen and sarcastick ; and

⁸ In 1633.

¹⁹ Collier's volume appeared in March 1698.

with all those powers exalted and invigorated by just confidence in his cause.

Thus qualified, and thus incited, he walked out to battle, and assailed at once most of the living writers, from Dryden to D'Urfey.²⁰ His onset was violent: those passages, which while they stood single had passed with little notice, when they were accumulated and exposed together, excited horror; the wise and the pious caught the alarm, and the nation wondered why it had so long suffered irreligion and licentiousness to be openly taught at the publick charge.

Nothing now remained for the poets but to resist or fly. Dryden's conscience, or his prudence, angry as he was, withheld him from the conflict; Congreve and Vanbrugh attempted answers.²¹ Congreve, a very young man, elated with success, and impatient of censure, assumed an air of confidence and security. His chief artifice of controversy is to retort upon his adversary his own words: he is very angry, and, hoping to conquer Collier with his own weapons, allows himself in the use of every term of contumely and contempt; but he has the sword without the arm of Scanderbeg; he has his antagonist's coarseness, but not his strength. Collier replied; for contest was his

²⁰ Four plays in especial were reviewed: Dryden's *Amphitryon* and *King Arthur*, D'Urfey's *Don Quixote*, and Vanbrugh's *Relapse*.

²¹ Vanbrugh's *Short Vindication* was published on June 10, 1698; and Congreve's *Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations* on July 12. These dates are given on the authority of Mr. Gosse's *Life of Congreve*, in which for the first time an account of the whole controversy was given in detail (pp. 96-130).

delight, he was not to be frightened from his purpose or his prey.

The cause of Congreve was not tenable: whatever glosses he might use for the defence or palliation of single passages, the general tenour and tendency of his plays must always be condemned. It is acknowledged, with universal conviction, that the perusal of his works will make no man better; and that their ultimate effect is to represent pleasure in alliance with vice, and to relax those obligations by which life ought to be regulated.

The stage found other advocates, and the dispute was protracted through ten years; but at last Comedy grew more modest, and Collier lived to see the reward of his labour in the reformation of the theatre.

Of the powers by which this important victory was atchieved, a quotation from *Love for Love*, and the remark upon it, may afford a specimen.

Sir Sampson. *Sampson's a very good name; for your Sampsons were strong dogs from the beginning.*

Angel. *Have a care—If you remember, the strongest Sampson of your name pull'd an old house over his head at last.*

“ Here you have the Sacred History burlesqued, and Sampson once more brought into the house of Dagon, to make sport for the Philistines ! ”

Congreve's last play was *The Way of the World*;²² which, though as he hints in his dedication, it was written with great labour and much thought, was received with so little favour, that, being in a high

²² Produced at Lincoln's Inn, early in March 1700.

degree offended and disgusted, he resolved to commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience.

From this time his life ceased to be publick ; he lived for himself and for his friends ; and among his friends was able to name every man of his time whom wit and elegance had raised to reputation. It may be therefore reasonably supposed that his manners were polite, and his conversation pleasing.

He seems not to have taken much pleasure in writing, as he contributed nothing to the *Spectator*, and only one paper to the *Tatler*, though published by men with whom he might be supposed willing to associate ; and though he lived many years after the publication of his *Miscellaneous Poems*,²³ yet he added nothing to them, but lived on in literary indolence ; engaged in no controversy, contending with no rival, neither soliciting flattery by publick commendations, nor provoking enmity by malignant criticism, but passing his time among the great and splendid, in the placid enjoyment of his fame and fortune.

Having owed his fortune to Halifax, he continued always of his patron's party, but, as it seems, without violence or acrimony ; and his firmness was naturally esteemed, as his abilities were revered. His security therefore was never violated ; and when, upon the extrusion of the Whigs, some intercession was used lest Congreve should be displaced, the earl of Oxford made this answer :

²³ His collected works appeared, in 3 vols. octavo, in 1710. Tonson paid him 20*l.* for them ; and his promise to do so is extant in the British Museum.

“ Non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Pœni,
 “ Nec tam aversus equos Tyriâ sol jungit ab urbe.”²⁴

He that was thus honoured by the adverse party, might naturally expect to be advanced when his friends returned to power, and he was accordingly made secretary for the island of Jamaica; a place, I suppose, without trust or care, but which, with his post in the customs, is said to have afforded him twelve hundred pounds a year.²⁵

His honours were yet far greater than his profits. Every writer mentioned him with respect; and, among other testimonies to his merit, Steele made him the patron of his Miscellany, and Pope inscribed to him his translation of the *Iliad*.

But he treated the Muses with ingratitude; for, having long conversed familiarly with the great, he wished to be considered rather as a man of fashion than of wit; and, when he received a visit from Voltaire,²⁶ disgusted him by the despicable foppery of desiring to be considered not as an author but a gentleman; to which the Frenchman replied, “ that if he had been only a gentleman, he should not have come to visit him.”

In his retirement he may be supposed to have applied himself to books; for he discovers more literature than the poets have commonly attained. But his studies were in his latter days obstructed by cataracts in his eyes, which at last terminated

²⁴ Swift to Pope. January 10, 1721.

²⁵ Congreve acted as Commissioner of Wine Licences from December 1705 to December 1714, when he became Secretary for Jamaica. This post, says Mr. Leslie Stephen, carried a salary of 700*l.* His position in the Customs was apparently worth 600*l.* a year.

²⁶ In 1726.

in blindness.²⁷ This melancholy state was aggravated by the gout, for which he sought relief by a journey to Bath; ²⁸ but being overturned in his chariot,²⁹ complained from that time of a pain in his side, and died, at his house in Surrey-street in the Strand, Jan. 29, 1728-9.³⁰ Having lain in state in the Jerusalem-chamber, he was buried in Westminster-abbey, where a monument is erected to his memory by Henrietta dutchess of Marlborough, to whom, for reasons either not known or not mentioned, he bequeathed a legacy of about ten thousand pounds; ³¹ the accumulation of attentive parsimony, which, though to her superfluous and useless, might have given great assistance to the ancient family from which he descended, at that time by the imprudence of his relation reduced to difficulties and distress.

CONGREVE has merit of the highest kind; he is an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot, nor the manner of his dialogue. Of his plays I cannot speak distinctly; for since I inspected them many years have passed; but

²⁷ As early as October 26, 1710, Swift wrote to Stella: "I was to-day to see Mr. Congreve, who is almost blind with cataracts growing on his eyes."

²⁸ In the early spring of 1728.

²⁹ On his return from Bath, in the autumn of 1728.

³⁰ This should be January 19, 1729. Congreve was buried on the 26th of that month.

³¹ "Congreve was very intimate for years with Mrs. Bracegirdle, and lived in the same street, his house very near hers, until his acquaintance with the young Duchess of Marlborough. He then quitted that house. The Duchess showed me a diamond necklace (which Lady Di used afterwards to wear) that cost seven thousand pounds, and was purchased with the money Congreve left her. How much better would it have been to have given it to Mrs. Bracegirdle!"—Dr. YOUNG in SPENCE.

what remains upon my memory is, that his characters are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very little of nature, and not much of life. He formed a peculiar idea of comick excellence, which he supposed to consist in gay remarks and unexpected answers; but that which he endeavoured, he seldom failed of performing. His scenes exhibit not much of humour, imagery, or passion: his personages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every sentence is to ward or strike; the contest of smartness is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor playing to and fro with alternate coruscations. His comedies have therefore, in some degree, the operation of tragedies; they surprise rather than divert, and raise admiration oftener than merriment. But they are the works of a mind replete with images, and quick in combination.

Of his miscellaneous poetry, I cannot say any thing very favourable. The powers of Congreve seem to desert him when he leaves the stage, as Antæus was no longer strong than he could touch the ground. It cannot be observed without wonder, that a mind so vigorous and fertile in dramattick compositions should on any other occasion discover nothing but impotence and poverty. He has in these little pieces neither elevation of fancy, selection of language, nor skill in versification: yet, if I were required to select from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical paragraph, I know not what I could prefer to an exclamation in *The Mourning Bride*:

ALMERIA.

It was a fancy'd noise; for all is hush'd.

LEONORA.

It bore the accent of a human voice.

ALMERIA.

It was thy fear, or else some transient wind
Whistling thro' hollows of this vaulted isle :
We 'll listen——

LEONORA.

Hark !

ALMERIA.

No, all is hush'd, and still as death.—'T is dreadful !
How reverend is the face of this tall pile ;
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made stedfast and immoveable,
Looking tranquillity ! It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight ; the tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chilness to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice ;
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice—my own affrights me with its echoes.

He who reads those lines enjoys for a moment the powers of a poet ; he feels what he remembers to have felt before, but he feels it with great increase of sensibility ; he recognises a familiar image, but meets it again amplified and expanded, embellished with beauty, and enlarged with majesty.³²

³² With reference to Dr. Johnson's constancy to this passage, it is interesting to compare his conversation with Garrick, at a dinner party at Boswell's, on October 16, 1769, when he affirmed that this was "the finest poetical passage he had ever read ; he recollected none in Shakspeare equal to it." *Vide Boswell* (Fitzgerald ed.), i. 367.

Yet could the author, who appears here to have enjoyed the confidence of Nature, lament the death of queen Mary in lines like these :

The rocks are cleft, and new-descending rills
 Furrow the brows of all th' impending hills.
 The water-gods to floods their rivulets turn,
 And each, with streaming eyes, supplies his wanting urn.
 The Fauns forsake the woods, the Nymphs the grove,
 And round the plain in sad distractions rove :
 In prickly brakes their tender limbs they tear,
 And leave on thorns their locks of golden hair.
 With their sharp nails, themselves the Satyrs wound,
 And tug their shaggy beards, and bite with grief the
 ground.

Lo Pan himself, beneath a blasted oak,
 Dejected lies, his pipe in pieces broke.
 See Pales weeping too, in wild despair,
 And to the piercing winds her bosom bare.
 And see yon fading myrtle, where appears
 The Queen of Love, all bath'd in flowing tears ;
 See how she wrings her hands and beats her breast,
 And tears her useless girdle from her waist :
 Hear the sad murmurs of her sighing doves !
 For grief they sigh, forgetful of their loves.

And many years after,³³ he gave no proof that time had improved his wisdom or his wit ; for, on the death of the marquis of Blandford, this was his song :

And now the winds, which had so long been still,
 Began the swelling air with sighs to fill :
 The water-nymphs, who motionless remain'd,
 Like images of ice, while she complain'd,
 Now loos'd their streams: as when descending rains
 Roll the steep torrents headlong o'er the plains.
 The prone creation, who so long had gaz'd,
 Charm'd with her cries, and at her griefs amaz'd,

³³ In *Tears of Amaryllis*. 1705.

Began to roar and howl with horrid yell,
 Dismal to hear, and terrible to tell;
 Nothing but groans and sighs were heard around,
 And Echo multiplied each mournful sound.

In both these funeral poems, when he has yelled out many *syllables* of senseless *dolour*, he dismisses his reader with senseless consolation: from the grave of Pastora rises a light that forms a star; and where Amaryllis wept for Amyntas, from every tear sprung up a violet.

But William is his hero, and of William he will sing;

The hovering winds on downy wings shall wait around,
 And catch, and waft to foreign lands, the flying sound.

It cannot but be proper to shew what they shall have to catch and carry:

'T was now, when flowery lawns the prospect made,
 And flowing brooks beneath a forest shade,
 A lowing heifer, loveliest of the herd,
 Stood feeding by; while two fierce bulls prepar'd
 Their armed heads for fight; by fate of war to prove
 The victor worthy of the fair-one's love.
 Unthought presage of what met next my view;
 For soon the shady scene withdrew.
 And now, for woods, and fields, and springing flowers,
 Behold a town arise, bulwark'd with walls and lofty towers;
 Two rival armies all the plain o'erspread,
 Each in battalia rang'd, and shining arms array'd;
 With eager eyes beholding both from far,
 Namur, the prize and mistress of the war.

The *Birth of the Muse*³⁴ is a miserable fiction. One good line it has, which was borrowed from Dryden. The concluding verses are these:

³⁴ Published November 18, 1697.

This said, no more remain'd. Th' ethereal host
 Again impatient crowd the crystal coast.
 The father, now, within his spacious hands,
 Encompass'd all the mingled mass of seas and lands ;
 And, having heav'd aloft the ponderous sphere,
 He launch'd the world to float in ambient air.

Of his irregular poems, that to Mrs. Arabella Hunt ³⁵ seems to be the best: his ode for Cecilia's Day, ³⁶ however, has some lines which Pope had in his mind when he wrote his own.

His imitations of Horace are feebly paraphras-
 tical, and the additions which he makes are of
 little value. He sometimes retains what were
 more properly omitted, as when he talks of
vervain and *gums* to propitiate Venus.

Of his Translations, the satire of Juvenal was
 written very early, ³⁷ and may therefore be forgiven,
 though it have not the massiness and vigour of
 the original. In all his versions strength and
 sprightliness are wanting: his Hymn to Venus,
 from Homer, is perhaps the best. His lines are
 weakened with expletives, and his rhymes are
 frequently imperfect.

His petty poems are seldom worth the cost of
 criticism: sometimes the thoughts are false, and
 sometimes common. In his verses on lady Gethin, ³⁸
 the latter part is an imitation of Dryden's ode on

³⁵ Published in 1705.

³⁶ *A Hymn to Harmony: written in honour of St. Cecilia's Day*, 1701. Published in 1703.

³⁷ In 1698, as the book is dated. It appears to have been published as early as October 27, 1692. *Vide Mr. Gosse's Life*, p. 26.

³⁸ Prefixed to the third edition of *Reliquiae Gethinianae*, 1703, the Remains of Grace, Lady Gethin, first published in 1699. The lady died October 11, 1697, aged twenty. She was a daughter of Sir George Norton.

Mrs. Killigrew; and Doris, that has been so lavishly flattered by Steele,³⁹ has indeed some lively stanzas, but the expression might be mended; and the most striking part of the character had been already shewn in *Love for Love*. His *Art of Pleasing* is founded on a vulgar but perhaps impracticable principle, and the staleness of the sense is not concealed by any novelty of illustration or elegance of diction.

This tissue of poetry, from which he seems to have hoped a lasting name, is totally neglected, and known only as it is appended to his plays.

While comedy or while tragedy is regarded, his plays are likely to be read; but, except what relates to the stage, I know not that he has ever written a stanza that is sung, or a couplet that is quoted. The general character of his *Miscellanies* is, that they shew little wit, and little virtue.

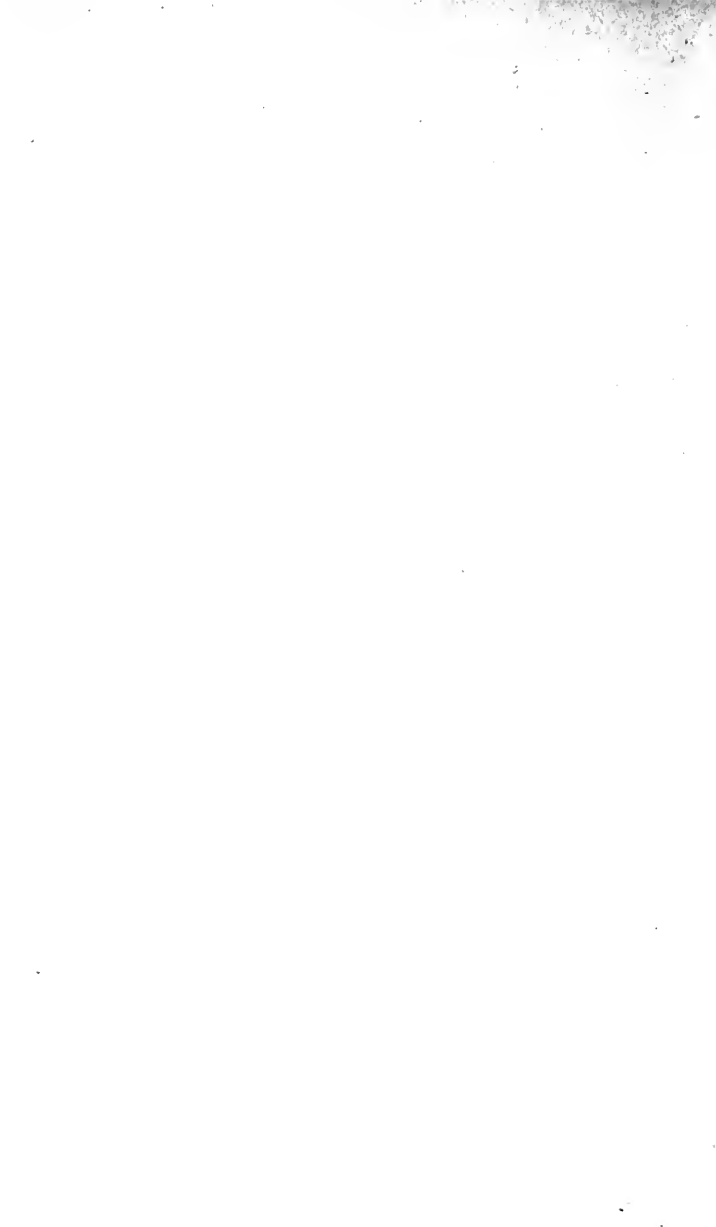
Yet to him it must be confessed that we are indebted for the correction of a national error, and for the cure of our Pindarick madness. He first taught the English writers that Pindar's odes were regular;⁴⁰ and though certainly he had not the fire requisite for the higher species of lyric poetry, he has shewn us that enthusiasm has its rules, and that in mere confusion there is neither grace nor greatness.

³⁹ *Spectator*, No. 422.

⁴⁰ In the *Discourse on the Pindaric Ode*, published in the autumn of 1706.



BLACKMORE



BLACKMORE.

SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE is one of those men whose writings have attracted much notice, but of whose life and manners very little has been communicated, and whose lot it has been to be much oftener mentioned by enemies than by friends.

He was the son of Robert Blackmore of Corsham in Wiltshire, styled by Wood *Gentleman*, and supposed to have been an attorney: having been for some time educated in a country-school, he was sent at thirteen to Westminster; and in 1668 was entered at Edmund-Hall in Oxford, where he took the degree of M.A. June 3, 1676,¹ and resided thirteen years; a much longer time than it is usual to spend at the university; and which he seems to have passed with very little attention to the business of the place; for in his poems, the ancient names of nations or places, which he often introduces, are pronounced by chance. He afterwards travelled: at Padua he was made doctor of physick; and, after having wandered about a year and a half on the Continent, returned home.

¹ Having previously become a Bachelor on April 4, 1674

In some part of his life, it is not known when,² his indigence compelled him to teach a school; an humiliation with which, though it certainly lasted but a little while, his enemies did not forget to reproach him, when he became conspicuous enough to excite malevolence; and let it be remembered for his honour, that to have been once a schoolmaster is the only reproach which all the perspicacity of malice, animated by wit, has ever fixed upon his private life.

When he first engaged in the study of physic, he enquired, as he says, of Dr. Sydenham what authors he should read, and was directed by Sydenham to Don Quixote; *which, said he, is a very good book; I read it still.* The perverseness of mankind makes it often mischievous in men of eminence to give way to merriment. The idle and the illiterate will long shelter themselves under this foolish apophthegm.

Whether he rested satisfied with this direction, or sought for better, he commenced physician, and obtained high eminence and extensive practice. He became Fellow of the College of Physicians, April 12, 1687, being one of the thirty which, by the new charter of king James, were added to the former Fellows.³ His residence was in Cheapside,⁴ and his friends were chiefly in the city. In the early part of Blackmore's time, a citizen was a

² Mr. A. H. Bullen (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*) seems to refer Blackmore's activity as schoolmaster to the years between the taking of his degree and his Continental travels.

³ In 1716 he became Censor of the College; and on August 22 of that year was named an Elect, which office he resigned on October 22, 1722.

⁴ According to Cunningham, at Sadler's Hall.

term of reproach ; and his place of abode was another topick to which his adversaries had recourse, in the penury of scandal.

Blackmore, therefore, was made a poet not by necessity but inclination, and wrote not for a livelihood but for fame ; or, if he may tell his own motives, for a nobler purpose, to engage poetry in the cause of Virtue.

I believe it is peculiar to him, that his first publick work was an heroick poem. He was not known as a maker of verses, till he published (in 1695) *Prince Arthur*, in ten books, written, as he relates,⁵ *by such catches and starts, and in such occasional uncertain hours as his profession afforded, and for the greatest part in coffee-houses, or in passing up and down the streets.* For the latter part of this apology he was accused⁶ of writing *to the rumbling of his chariot-wheels.* He had read, he says, *but little poetry throughout his whole life ; and for fifteen years before had not written an hundred verses, except one copy of Latin verses in praise of a friend's book.*

He thinks, and with some reason, that from such a performance perfection cannot be expected ; but he finds another reason for the severity of his censurers, which he expresses in language such as Cheapside easily furnished. *I am not free of the Poets' Company, having never kissed the governor's hands : mine is therefore not so much as a permission-poem, but a downright interloper.* Those

⁵ In the preface to *King Arthur*, 1697, which Johnson seems to have confused with the earlier poem.

⁶ By Dryden, in his prologue to *The Pilgrim*.

gentlemen who carry on their poetical trade in a joint stock, would certainly do what they could to sink and ruin an unlicensed adventurer, notwithstanding I disturbed none of their factories, nor imported any goods they had ever dealt in. He had lived in the city till he had learned its note.

That *Prince Arthur* found many readers, is certain; for in two years it had three editions;⁷ a very uncommon instance of favourable reception, at a time when literary curiosity was yet confined to particular classes of the nation. Such success naturally raised animosity; and Dennis attacked it⁸ by a formal criticism, more tedious and disgusting than the work which he condemns. To this censure may be opposed the approbation of Locke and the admiration of Molineux, which are found in their printed Letters. Molineux is particularly delighted with the song of *Mopas*, which is therefore subjoined to this narrative.

It is remarked by Pope, that what *raises the hero often sinks the man*. Of Blackmore it may be said, that as the poet sinks, the man rises; the animadversions of Dennis, insolent and contemptuous as they were, raised in him no implacable resentment: he and his critick were afterwards friends; and in one of his latter works he praises Dennis as *equal to Boileau in poetry, and superior to him in critical abilities*.

He seems to have been more delighted with praise than pained by censure, and, instead of

⁷ A second edition appeared in 1696, and a third in 1714. Johnson, therefore, is not strictly right in his "two years."

⁸ In 1696.

slackening, quickened his career. Having in two years produced ten books of *Prince Arthur*, in two years more (1697) he sent into the world *King Arthur* in twelve. The provocation was now doubled, and the resentment of wits and criticks may be supposed to have increased in proportion. He found, however, advantages more than equivalent to all their outrages; he was this year made one of the physicians in ordinary to king William, and advanced by him to the honour of knighthood, with a present of a gold chain and a medal.⁹

The malignity of the wits attributed his knighthood to his new poem; but king William was not very studious of poetry, and Blackmore perhaps had other merit: for he says, in his *Dedication to Alfred*,¹⁰ that *he had a greater part in the succession of the house of Hanover than ever he had boasted.*

What Blackmore could contribute to the Succession, or what he imagined himself to have contributed, cannot now be known. That he had been of considerable use, I doubt not but he believed, for I hold him to have been very honest; but he might easily make a false estimate of his own importance: those whom their virtue restrains from deceiving others, are often disposed by their vanity to deceive themselves. Whether he promoted the Succession or not, he at least approved

⁹ Cf. Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Ep. ii. :—

“ The hero William and the Martyr Charles,
One knighted Blackmore, and one pension'd Quarles.”

¹⁰ 1723.

it, and adhered invariably to his principles and party through his whole life.

His ardour of poetry still continued; and not long after (1700) he published a *Paraphrase on the Book of Job*, and other parts of the Scripture. This performance Dryden, who pursued him with great malignity, lived long enough to ridicule in a Prologue.¹¹

The wits easily confederated against him, as Dryden, whose favour they almost all courted, was his professed adversary. He had besides given them reason for resentment, as in his Preface to *Prince Arthur*, he had said of the Dramatick Writers almost all that was alleged afterwards by Collier; but Blackmore's censure was cold and general, Collier's was personal and ardent; Blackmore taught his reader to dislike, what Collier incited him to abhor.¹²

In his Preface to *King Arthur* he endeavoured to gain at least one friend, and propitiated Congreve by higher praise of his *Mourning Bride* than it has obtained from any other critick.

The same year¹³ he published a *Satire on Wit*;

¹¹ In the Prologue to *The Pilgrim*.

“His man of Uz, stript of his Hebrew robe,
Is just the proverb, and ‘As Poor as Job.’
One would have thought he could no longer jog;
But Arthur was a level; Job’s a bog.”

¹² “Some of these poets, to excuse their guilt, allege for themselves, that the degeneracy of the age makes their lewd way of writing necessary; they pretend the auditors will not be pleased unless they are thus entertained from the stage. . . . And there are among these writers some who think they might have risen to the highest dignities in other professions, had they employed their wit in those ways.”—*Preface to Prince Arthur*, 1695. This is particularly levelled at Dryden.”—CUNNINGHAM.

¹³ *I.e.* 1700.

a proclamation of defiance which united the poets almost all against him, and which brought upon him lampoons and ridicule from every side. This he doubtless foresaw, and evidently despised; nor should his dignity of mind be without its praise, had he not paid the homage to greatness which he denied to genius, and degraded himself by conferring that authority over the national taste, which he takes from the poets, upon men of high rank and wide influence, but of less wit, and not greater virtue.

Here is again discovered the inhabitant of Cheapside, whose head cannot keep his poetry unmingled with trade. To hinder that intellectual bankruptcy which he affects to fear, he will erect a *Bank for Wit*.

In this poem he justly censured Dryden's impurities, but praised his powers; though in a subsequent edition he retained the satire and omitted the praise. What was his reason I know not; Dryden was then no longer in his way.

His head still teemed with heroick poetry, and (1705) he published *Eliza* in ten books. I am afraid that the world was now weary of contending about Blackmore's heroes; for I do not remember that by any author, serious or comical, I have found *Eliza* either praised or blamed. She *dropped*, as it seems, *dead-born from the press*. It is never mentioned, and was never seen by me till I borrowed it for the present occasion. Jacob says, *it is corrected and revised for another impression*; but the labour of revision was thrown away.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cunningham notes that the presentation copy to the Duke

From this time he turned some of his thoughts to the celebration of living characters; and wrote a poem on the *Kit-cat Club*, and *Advice to the Poets how to Celebrate the Duke of Marlborough*; ¹⁵ but on occasion of another year of success, thinking himself qualified to give more instruction, he again wrote a poem of *Advice to a Weaver of Tapestry*. ¹⁶ Steele was then publishing the *Tatler*; and looking round him for something at which he might laugh, unluckily lighted on Sir Richard's work, and treated it ¹⁷ with such contempt, that, as Fenton observes, ¹⁸ he put an end to the species of writers that gave *Advice to Painters*.

Not long after (1712) he published *Creation, a philosophical Poem*, which has been, by my recommendation, inserted in the late collection. Whoever judges of this by any other of Blackmore's performances, will do it injury. The praise given it by Addison (*Spec.* 339) is too well known to be transcribed; but some notice is due to the testimony of Dennis, who calls it a "philosophical Poem, which has equalled that of Lucretius in the beauty of its versification, and infinitely surpassed it in the solidity and strength of its reasoning."

Why an author surpasses himself, it is natural to enquire. I have heard from Mr. Draper, an

of Marlborough, in the British Museum, contains MS. corrections in Blackmore's hand.

¹⁵ *Advice to the Poets.* A Poem occasioned by the wonderful Successes of Her Majesty's Arms under the Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough in Flanders. 1706. CWAROM 1

¹⁶ *Instructions to Vanderbank: A Sequel to the Advice to the Poets.* 1709.

¹⁷ In No. 3 of *The Tatler*, dated April 16, 1709.

¹⁸ In his *Observations on some of Mr. Waller's Poems.*

eminent bookseller, an account received by him from Ambrose Philips, "That Blackmore, as he proceeded in this poem, laid his manuscript from time to time before a club of wits with whom he associated; and that every man contributed, as he could, either improvement or correction; so that," said Philips, "there are perhaps no where in the book, thirty lines together that now stand as they were originally written."

The relation of Philips, I suppose, was true; but when all reasonable, all credible allowance is made for this friendly revision, the author will still retain an ample dividend of praise; for to him must always be assigned the plan of the work, the distribution of its parts, the choice of topicks, the train of argument, and what is yet more, the general predominance of philosophical judgement and poetical spirit. Correction seldom effects more than the suppression of faults: a happy line, or a single elegance, may perhaps be added; but of a large work the general character must always remain; the original constitution can be very little helped by local remedies; inherent and radical dulness will never be much invigorated by extrinsick animation.

This poem, if he had written nothing else, would have transmitted him to posterity among the first favourites of the English Muse; but to make verses was his transcendent pleasure, and as he was not deterred by censure, he was not satiated with praise.

He deviated, however, sometimes into other tracks of literature, and condescended to entertain his readers with plain prose. When the *Spectator*

stopped,¹⁹ he considered the polite world as destitute of entertainment; and in concert with Mr. Hughes, who wrote every third paper, published three times a week the *Lay Monastery*, founded on the supposition that some literary men, whose characters are described, had retired to a house in the country to enjoy philosophical leisure, and resolved to instruct the public, by communicating their disquisitions and amusements. Whether any real persons were concealed under fictitious names, is not known. The hero of the club is one Mr. Johnson; such a constellation of excellence, that his character shall not be suppressed, though there is no great genius in the design, nor skill in the delineation.

“The first I shall name is Mr. Johnson, a
 “gentleman that owes to Nature excellent faculties
 “and an elevated genius, and to industry and
 “application many acquired accomplishments.
 “His taste is distinguishing, just and delicate;
 “his judgement clear, and his reason strong,
 “accompanied with an imagination full of spirit,
 “of great compass, and stored with refined ideas.
 “He is a critick of the first rank; and, what
 “is his peculiar ornament, he is delivered from
 “the ostentation, malevolence, and supercilious
 “temper, that so often blemish men of that char-
 “acter. His remarks result from the nature and
 “reason of things, and are formed by a judgement

¹⁹ For *Spectator* Johnson should have written *Guardian*. *The Guardian* stopped October 1, 1713, ten months later than *The Spectator* (December 6, 1712); and the first number of *The Lay Monk*, as the title should run, appeared November 16, 1713. Forty numbers were published, the last upon February 15, 1714.

“ free, and unbiassed by the authority of those
“ who have lazily followed each other in the same
“ beaten track of thinking, and are arrived only
“ at the reputation of acute grammarians and
“ commentators; men, who have been copying one
“ another many hundred years, without any im-
“ provement; or, if they have ventured farther, have
“ only applied in a mechanical manner the rules
“ of antient criticks to modern writings, and with
“ great labour discovered nothing but their own
“ want of judgement and capacity. As Mr. John-
“ son penetrates to the bottom of his subject, by
“ which means his observations are solid and
“ natural, as well as delicate, so his design is
“ always to bring to light something useful and
“ ornamental; whence his character is the reverse
“ to theirs, who have eminent abilities in in-
“ significant knowledge, and a great felicity in
“ finding out trifles. He is no less industrious
“ to search out the merit of an author, than
“ sagacious in discerning his errors and defects;
“ and takes more pleasure in commending the
“ beauties than exposing the blemishes of a laud-
“ able writing: like Horace, in a long work, he
“ can bear some deformities, and justly lay them
“ on the imperfection of human nature, which
“ is incapable of faultless productions. When
“ an excellent *Drama* appears in publick, and by
“ its intrinsick worth attracts a general applause,
“ he is not stung with envy and spleen; nor
“ does he express a savage nature, in fastening
“ upon the celebrated author, dwelling upon his
“ imaginary defects, and passing over his con-
“ spicuous excellences. He treats all writers

“ upon the same impartial foot ; and is not, like
 “ the little criticks, taken up entirely in finding out
 “ only the beauties of the ancient, and nothing
 “ but the errors of the modern writers. Never
 “ did any one express more kindness and good
 “ nature to young and unfinished authors ; he
 “ promotes their interests, protects their reputa-
 “ tion, extenuates their faults, and sets off their
 “ virtues, and by his candour guards them from
 “ the severity of his judgement. He is not like
 “ those dry criticks, who are morose because
 “ they cannot write themselves, but is himself
 “ master of a good vein in poetry ; and though he
 “ does not often employ it, yet he has sometimes
 “ entertained his friends with his unpublished
 “ performances.”

The rest of the *Lay Monks* seem to be but feeble mortals, in comparison with the gigantic Johnson ; who yet, with all his abilities, and the help of the fraternity, could drive the publication but to forty papers, which were afterwards collected into a volume, and called in the title *A Sequel to the Spectators*.

Some years afterwards (1716 and 1717) he published two volumes of *Essays in prose*,²⁰ which can be commended only as they are written for the highest and noblest purpose, the promotion of religion. Blackmore's prose is not the prose of a poet ; for it is languid, sluggish, and lifeless ; his diction is neither daring nor exact, his flow neither rapid nor easy, and his periods neither smooth nor strong. His account of *Wit* will shew with how

²⁰ *Essays on Several Subjects*. 1716. Second edition, 1717.

little clearness he is content to think, and how little his thoughts are recommended by his language.

“As to its efficient cause, *Wit* owes its production to an extraordinary and peculiar temperament in the constitution of the possessor of it, in which is found a concurrence of regular and exalted ferments, and an affluence of animal spirits, refined and rectified to a great degree of purity; whence, being endowed with vivacity, brightness, and celerity, as well in their reflexions as direct motions, they become proper instruments for the spritely operations of the mind; by which means the imagination can with great facility range the wide field of Nature, contemplate an infinite variety of objects, and, by observing the similitude and disagreement of their several qualities, single out and abstract, and then suit and unite those ideas which will best serve its purpose. Hence beautiful allusions, surprising metaphors, and admirable sentiments, are always ready at hand: and while the fancy is full of images collected from innumerable objects and their different qualities, relations, and habitudes, it can at pleasure dress a common notion in a strange but becoming garb; by which, as before observed, the same thought will appear a new one, to the great delight and wonder of the hearer. What we call *genius* results from this particular happy complexion in the first formation of the person that enjoys it, and is Nature's gift, but diversified by various specifick characters and limitations, as its active fire is blended and allayed by

“ different proportions of phlegm, or reduced and
 “ regulated by the contrast of opposite ferments.
 “ Therefore, as there happens in the composition of
 “ a facetious genius a greater or less, though still
 “ an inferior, degree of judgement and prudence,
 “ one man of wit will be varied and distinguished
 “ from another.”

In these Essays he took little care to propitiate the wits; for he scorns to avert their malice at the expence of virtue or of truth.

“ Several, in their books, have many sarcastical
 “ and spiteful strokes at religion in general; while
 “ others make themselves pleasant with the prin-
 “ ciples of the Christian. Of the last kind, this
 “ age has seen a most audacious example in the
 “ book intituled, *A Tale of a Tub*. Had this
 “ writing been published in a pagan or popish
 “ nation, who are justly impatient of all indignity
 “ offered to the established religion of their country,
 “ no doubt but the author would have received the
 “ punishment he deserved. But the fate of this
 “ impious buffoon is very different; for in a pro-
 “ testant kingdom, zealous of their civil and reli-
 “ gious immunities, he has not only escaped affronts
 “ and the effects of publick resentment, but has
 “ been caressed and patronised by persons of great
 “ figure, and of all denominations. Violent party-
 “ men, who differed in all things besides, agreed
 “ in their turn to shew particular respect and
 “ friendship to this insolent derider of the worship
 “ of his country, till at last the reputed writer is
 “ not only gone off with impunity, but triumphs
 “ in his dignity and preferment. I do not know
 “ that any inquiry or search was ever made after

“ this writing, or that any reward was ever offered
 “ for the discovery of the author, or that the infa-
 “ mous book was ever condemned to be burnt in
 “ publick: whether this proceeds from the exces-
 “ sive esteem and love that men in power, during
 “ the late reign, had for wit, or their defect of zeal
 “ and concern for the Christian Religion, will be
 “ determined best by those who are best acquainted
 “ with their character.”

In another place he speaks with becoming abhorrence of a *godless author* who has burlesqued a Psalm. This author was supposed to be Pope, who published a reward for any one that would produce the coiner of the accusation, but never denied it; and was afterwards the perpetual and incessant enemy of Blackmore.²¹

One of his Essays is upon the Spleen, which is treated by him so much to his own satisfaction, that he has published the same thoughts in the same words; first in the *Lay Monastery*; then in the Essay; and then in the Preface to a Medical

²¹ Pope, however, had already pilloried Blackmore in the *Essay of Criticism*:

“ Might he [Dryden] return and bless once more our eyes,
 New Blackmores and new Milbournes must arise.”

The *godless author* passage was probably responsible for Pope's reply in the *Dunciad*, II. 259, *et seq.*

“ But far o'er all, sonorous Blackmore's strain;
 Walls, steeples, skies, bray back to him again.
 In Tot'nam fields, the Brethren, with amaze,
 Prick all their ears up, and forget to graze;
 Long Chanc'ry-lane retentive rolls the sound,
 And courts to courts return it round and round;
 Thames wafts it thence to Rufus' roaring hall,
 And Hungerford re-echoes bawl for bawl.
 All hail him victor in both gifts of song,
 Who sings so loudly, and who sings so long.”

Treatise on the Spleen. One passage, which I have found already twice, I will here exhibit, because I think it better imagined, and better expressed, than could be expected from the common tenour of his prose :

“ —As the several combinations of splenetic
 “ madness and folly produce an infinite variety
 “ of irregular understanding, so the amicable ac-
 “ commodation and alliance between several virtues
 “ and vices produce an equal diversity in the dis-
 “ positions and manners of mankind ; whence it
 “ comes to pass, that as many monstrous and
 “ absurd productions are found in the moral as in
 “ the intellectual world. How surprising is it to
 “ observe among the least culpable men, some
 “ whose minds are attracted by heaven and earth,
 “ with a seeming equal force ; some who are proud
 “ of humility ; others who are censorious and
 “ uncharitable, yet self-denying and devout ; some
 “ who join contempt of the world with sordid
 “ avarice ; and others, who preserve a great degree
 “ of piety, with ill-nature and ungoverned passions :
 “ nor are instances of this inconsistent mixture
 “ less frequent among bad men, where we often,
 “ with admiration, see persons at once generous
 “ and unjust, impious lovers of their country, and
 “ flagitious heroes, good-natured sharpers, immoral
 “ men of honour, and libertines who will sooner
 “ die than change their religion ; and though it is
 “ true that repugnant coalitions of so high a degree
 “ are found but in a part of mankind, yet none of
 “ the whole mass, either good or bad, are intirely
 “ exempted from some absurd mixture.

He about this time (Aug. 22, 1716) became

one of the *Elects* of the College of Physicians ; and was soon after (Oct. 1) chosen *Censor*. He seems to have arrived late, whatever was the reason, at his medical honours.

Having succeeded so well in his book on *Creation*, by which he established the great principle of all Religion, he thought his undertaking imperfect, unless he likewise enforced the truth of Revelation ; and for that purpose added another poem on *Redemption*.²² He had likewise written, before his *Creation*, three books on the *Nature of Man*.²³

The lovers of musical devotion have always wished for a more happy metrical version than they have yet obtained of the book of Psalms ; this wish the piety of Blackmore led him to gratify, and he produced (1721) *a new Version of the Psalms of David, fitted to the Tunes used in Churches* ; which, being recommended by the archbishops and many bishops, obtained a licence for its admission into publick worship ; but no admission has it yet obtained, nor has it any right to come where Brady and Tate have got possession. Blackmore's name must be added to those of many others, who, by the same attempt, have obtained only the praise of meaning well.

He was not yet deterred from heroick poetry ; there was another monarch of this island, for he did not fetch his heroes from foreign countries, whom he considered as worthy of the Epic muse, and he dignified Alfred (1723) with twelve books.

²² *Redemption, a Divine Poem, in Six Books.* 1722.

²³ Published in 1711.

But the opinion of the nation was now settled; a hero introduced by Blackmore was not likely to find either respect or kindness; *Alfred* took his place by *Eliza* in silence and darkness: benevolence was ashamed to favour, and malice was weary of insulting. Of his four Epic Poems, the first had such reputation and popularity as enraged the criticks; the second was at least known enough to be ridiculed; the two last had neither friends nor enemies.

Contempt is a kind of gangrene, which if it seizes one part of a character corrupts all the rest by degrees. Blackmore, being despised as a poet, was in time neglected as a physician; his practice, which was once invidiously great, forsook him in the latter part of his life; but being by nature, or by principle, averse from idleness, he employed his unwelcome leisure in writing books on physick, and teaching others to cure those whom he could himself cure no longer. I know not whether I can enumerate all the treatises by which he has endeavoured to diffuse the art of healing; for there is scarcely any distemper, of dreadful name, which he has not taught his reader how to oppose. He has written on the small-pox, with a vehement invective against inoculation; on consumptions, the spleen, the gout, the rheumatism, the king's-evil, the dropsy, the jaundice, the stone, the diabetes, and the plague.

Of these books, if I had read them, it could not be expected that I should be able to give a critical account. I have been told that there is something in them of vexation and discontent, discovered by a perpetual attempt to degrade

physick from its sublimity, and to represent it as attainable without much previous or concomitant learning. By the transient glances which I have thrown upon them, I have observed an affected contempt of the Ancients, and a supercilious derision of transmitted knowledge. Of this indecent arrogance the following quotation from his Preface to the Treatise on the Small-pox will afford a specimen; in which, when the reader finds, what I fear is true, that when he was censuring Hippocrates he did not know the difference between *aphorism* and *apophthegm*, he will not pay much regard to his determinations concerning ancient learning.

“As for this book of Aphorisms, it is like my lord Bacon’s of the same title, a book of jests, or a grave collection of trite and trifling observations; of which though many are true and certain, yet they signify nothing, and may afford diversion, but no instruction; most of them being much inferior to the sayings of the wise men of Greece, which yet are so low and mean, that we are entertained every day with more valuable sentiments at the table-conversation of ingenious and learned men.”

I am unwilling, however, to leave him in total disgrace, and will therefore quote from another Preface a passage less reprehensible.

“Some gentlemen have been disingenuous and unjust to me, by wresting and forcing my meaning in the Preface to another book, as if I condemned and exposed all learning, though they knew I declared that I greatly honoured and esteemed all men of superior literature and erudition; and that I only undervalued false or

“superficial learning, that signifies nothing for the
 “service of mankind; and that, as to physick, I
 “expressly affirmed that learning must be joined
 “with native genius to make a physician of the
 “first rank; but if those talents are separated,
 “I asserted, and do still insist, that a man of
 “native sagacity and diligence, will prove a more
 “able and useful practiser, than a heavy notional
 “scholar, encumbered with a heap of confused
 “ideas.”

He was not only a poet and a physician, but produced²⁴ likewise a work of a different kind, *A true and impartial History of the Conspiracy against King William, of glorious Memory, in the Year 1695*. This I have never seen, but suppose it at least compiled with integrity. He engaged likewise in theological controversy, and wrote²⁵ two books against the Arians; *Just Prejudices against the Arian Hypothesis*; and *Modern Arians unmasked*. Another of his works is *Natural Theology, or Moral Duties considered apart from Positive; with some Observations on the Desirableness and Necessity of a supernatural Revelation*.²⁶ This was the last book that he published. He left behind him *The accomplished Preacher, or an Essay upon Divine Eloquence*; which was printed after his death²⁷ by Mr. White of Nayland in Essex, the minister who attended his death-bed, and testified the fervent piety of his last hours. He died on the eighth of October, 1729.²⁸

²⁴ In 1723.

²⁵ In 1721.

²⁶ Published in 1728.

²⁷ In 1731.

²⁸ And was buried at Boxted, in Essex, whither he had retired in 1722 from Earl's Court.

BLACKMORE, by the unremitting enmity of the wits,²⁹ whom he provoked more by his virtue than his dulness, has been exposed to worse treatment than he deserved; his name was so long used to point every epigram upon dull writers, that it became at last a bye-word of contempt: but it deserves observation, that malignity takes hold only of his writings, and that his life passed without reproach, even when his boldness of reprehension naturally turned upon him many eyes desirous to espy faults, which many tongues would have made haste to publish. But those who could not blame, could at least forbear to praise, and therefore of his private life and domestick character there are no memorials.

As an author he may justly claim the honours of magnanimity. The incessant attacks of his enemies, whether serious or merry, are never discovered to have disturbed his quiet, or to have lessened his confidence in himself; they neither awed him to silence nor to caution; they neither provoked him to petulance, nor depressed him to complaint. While the distributors of literary fame were endeavouring to depreciate and degrade him, he either despised or defied them, wrote on as he had written before, and never turned aside to quiet them by civility, or repress them by confutation.³⁰

He depended with great security on his own

²⁹ He was attacked in print by Dryden, Wycherley, Garth, Dennis, Sedley, Smith, Gay, Swift, and Pope.

³⁰ It is interesting to compare Boswell (Fitzgerald ed., ii. 437) on Johnson's kindly attitude to Blackmore. "We find," he says, "the writer's reputation generously cleared by Johnson from the cloud of prejudice which the malignity of contemporary wits had raised around it. In this spirited exertion of justice, he has been imitated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his praise of the architecture of Vanbrugh."

powers, and perhaps was for that reason less diligent in perusing books. His literature was, I think, but small. What he knew of antiquity, I suspect him to have gathered from modern compilers: but though he could not boast of much critical knowledge, his mind was stored with general principles, and he left minute researches to those whom he considered as little minds.

With this disposition he wrote most of his poems. Having formed a magnificent design, he was careless of particular and subordinate elegances; he studied no niceties of versification; he waited for no felicities of fancy; but caught his first thoughts in his first words in which they were presented: nor does it appear that he saw beyond his own performances, or had ever elevated his views to that ideal perfection which every genius born to excel is condemned always to pursue, and never overtake. In the first suggestions of his imagination he acquiesced; he thought them good, and did not seek for better. His works may be read a long time without the occurrence of a single line that stands prominent from the rest.

The poem on *Creation* has, however, the appearance of more circumspection; it wants neither harmony of numbers, accuracy of thought, nor elegance of diction: it has either been written with great care, or, what cannot be imagined of so long a work, with such felicity as made care less necessary.

Its two constituent parts are ratiocination and description. To reason in verse, is allowed to be difficult; but Blackmore not only reasons in verse, but very often reasons poetically; and finds the

art of uniting ornament with strength, and ease with closeness. This is a skill which Pope might have condescended to learn from him, when he needed it so much in his Moral Essays.

In his descriptions both of life and nature, the poet and the philosopher happily co-operate; truth is recommended by elegance, and elegance sustained by truth.

In the structure and order of the poem, not only the greater parts are properly consecutive, but the didactick and illustrative paragraphs are so happily mingled, that labour is relieved by pleasure, and the attention is led on through a long succession of varied excellence to the original position, the fundamental principle of wisdom and of virtue.

As the heroick poems of Blackmore are now little read, it is thought proper to insert, as a specimen from *Prince Arthur*, the song of *Mopas* mentioned by Molineux.

But that which Arthur with most pleasure heard,
Were noble strains, by Mopas sung the bard,
Who to his harp in lofty verse began,
And through the secret maze of Nature ran.
He the great Spirit sung, that all things fill'd,
That the tumultuous waves of Chaos still'd;
Whose nod dispos'd the jarring seeds to peace,
And made the wars of hostile Atoms cease.
All Beings we in fruitful Nature find,
Proceeded from the great Eternal Mind;
Streams of his unexhausted spring of power,
And cherish'd with his influence, endure.
He spread the pure cerulean fields on high,
And arch'd the chambers of the vaulted sky,

Which he, to suit their glory with their height,
 Adorn'd with globes, that reel, as drunk with light.
 His hand directed all the tuneful spheres,
 He turn'd their orbs, and polish'd all the stars.
 He fill'd the Sun's vast lamp with golden light,
 And bid the silver Moon adorn the night,
 He spread the airy Ocean without shores,
 Where birds are wafted with their feather'd oars.
 Then sung the bard how the light vapours rise
 From the warm earth, and cloud the smiling skies.
 He sung how some, chill'd in their airy flight,
 Fall scatter'd down in pearly dew by night.
 How some, rais'd higher, sit in secret steams
 On the reflected points of bounding beams ;
 Till, chill'd with cold, they shade th' ethereal plain,
 Then on the thirsty earth descend in rain.
 How some, whose parts a slight contexture show,
 Sink hovering through the air, in fleecy snow.
 How part is spun in silken threads, and clings
 Entangled in the grass in glewy strings.
 How others stamp to stones, with rushing sound
 Fall from their crystal quarries to the ground.
 How some are laid in trains, that kindled fly
 In harmless fires by night, about the sky.
 How some in winds blow with impetuous force,
 And carry ruin where they bend their course :
 While some conspire to form a gentle breeze,
 To fan the air, and play among the trees.
 How some, enrag'd, grow turbulent and loud,
 Pent in the bowels of a frowning cloud ;
 That cracks, as if the axis of the world
 Was broke, and heaven's bright towers were down-
 wards hurl'd.
 He sung how earth's wide ball, at Jove's command,
 Did in the midst on airy columns stand.
 And how the soul of plants, in prison held,
 And bound with sluggish fetters, lies conceal'd,
 Till with the Spring's warm beams, almost releas't
 From the dull weight, with which it lay oppress't,
 Its vigour spreads, and makes the teeming earth
 Heave up, and labour with the sprouting birth :

The active spirit freedom seeks in vain,
It only works and twists a stronger chain.
Urging its prison's sides to break a way,
It makes that wider, where 'tis forc'd to stay :
Till, having form'd its living house, it rears
Its head, and in a tender plant appears.
Hence springs the oak, the beauty of the grove,
Whose stately trunk fierce storms can scarcely move.
Hence grows the cedar, hence the swelling vine
Does round the elm its purple clusters twine.
Hence painted flowers the smiling gardens bless,
Both with their fragrant scent and gaudy dress.
Hence the white lily in full beauty grows,
Hence the blue violet, and blushing rose.
He sung how sun-beams brood upon the earth,
And in the glebe hatch such a numerous birth ;
Which way the genial warmth in Summer storms
Turns putrid vapours to a bed of worms ;
How rain, transform'd by this prolific power,
Falls from the clouds an animated shower.
He sung the embryo's growth within the womb,
And how the parts their various shapes assume.
With what rare art the wondrous structure 's wrought,
From one crude mass to such perfection brought ;
That no part useless, none misplac'd we see,
None are forgot, and more would monstrous be."

FENTON

FENTON.

THE brevity with which I am to write the account of ELIJAH FENTON is not the effect of indifference or negligence. I have sought intelligence among his relations in his native country, but have not obtained it.

He was born near Newcastle in Staffordshire.¹ of an ancient family, whose estate was very considerable; but he was the youngest of twelve children, and being therefore necessarily destined to some lucrative employment, was sent first to school, and afterwards to Cambridge;² but, with many other wise and other virtuous men, who at that time of discord and debate consulted conscience, whether well or ill informed, more than interest, he doubted the legality of the government, and, refusing to qualify himself for publick employment by the oaths required, left the university without a degree;³ but I never heard that

¹ At Old Shelton Hall, on May 20, 1683. He was the youngest of eleven (not twelve) children, and his father, John Fenton, was an attorney-at-law, and one of the coroners for the county of Stafford. The poet's father died in 1694.

² Fenton matriculated at Jesus College, July 5, 1701, and took his B.A. degree in 1704. He proceeded Master of Arts in 1726, by which time he had migrated to Trinity Hall.

³ This statement is refuted by the College books. *Vide* note 2, *supra*.

the enthusiasm of opposition impelled him to separation from the church.

By this perverseness of integrity he was driven out a commoner of Nature, excluded from the regular modes of profit and prosperity, and reduced to pick up a livelihood uncertain and fortuitous; but it must be remembered that he kept his name unsullied, and never suffered himself to be reduced, like too many of the same sect, to mean arts and dishonourable shifts. Whoever mentioned Fenton, mentioned him with honour.

The life that passes in penury, must necessarily pass in obscurity. It is impossible to trace Fenton from year to year, or to discover what means he used for his support. He was a while secretary to Charles earl of Orrery⁴ in Flanders, and tutor to his young son,⁵ who afterwards mentioned him with great esteem and tenderness. He was at one time assistant in the school of Mr. Bonwicke in Surrey;⁶ and at another kept a school for himself at Sevenoaks in Kent, which he brought into reputation; but was persuaded to leave it (1710) by Mr. St. John, with promises of a more honourable employment.

His opinions, as he was a Nonjuror, seem not to have been remarkably rigid. He wrote with great zeal and affection the praises of queen Anne,⁷ and very willingly and liberally extolled the duke

⁴ Who edited the *Epistles of Phalaris* (1695), and died in 1731.

⁵ The biographer of Swift, born 1707, died 1762. Fenton was his tutor from 1714 till 1720.

⁶ Dr. Garnett (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*) fixes this school at Headley, in Surrey.

⁷ *To the Queen on Her Majesty's Birthday.*

of Marlborough, when he was (1707) at the height of his glory.

He expressed still more attention to Marlborough and his family by an elegiac Pastoral on the marquis of Blandford, which could be prompted only by respect or kindness; for neither the duke nor dutchess desired the praise, or liked the cost of patronage.

The elegance of his poetry entitled him to the company of the wits of his time, and the amiableness of his manners made him loved wherever he was known. Of his friendship to Southern and Pope there are lasting monuments.

He published in 1707⁸ a collection of poems.

By Pope he was once placed in a station that might have been of great advantage. Craggs, when he was advanced to be secretary of state (about 1720), feeling his own want of literature, desired Pope to procure him an instructor, by whose help he might supply the deficiencies of his education. Pope recommended Fenton, in whom Craggs found all that he was seeking. There was now a prospect of ease and plenty; for Fenton had merit, and Craggs had generosity: but the small-pox suddenly put an end to the pleasing expectation.⁹

When Pope, after the great success of his *Iliad*, undertook the *Odyssey*, being, as it seems,

⁸ This volume of *Miscellanies* appeared in 1717. Lintot's Account Book, says Cunningham, under date October 14, 1716, mentions two payments of 21*l.* 10*s.* and 13*l.* 4*s.* 3*d.* respectively made to Fenton for this collection.

⁹ Fenton scarcely occupied the post a year; for Craggs died in 1721.

weary of translating, he determined to engage auxiliaries. Twelve books he took to himself, and twelve he distributed between Broome and Fenton: the books allotted to Fenton were the first, the fourth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth. It is observable that he did not take the eleventh, which he had before translated into blank verse, neither did Pope claim it, but committed it to Broome. How the two associates performed their parts is well known to the readers of poetry, who have never been able to distinguish their books from those of Pope.¹⁰

In 1723 was performed his tragedy of *Mariamne*; to which Southern, at whose house it was written, is said to have contributed such hints as his theatrical experience supplied. When it was shewn to Cibber it was rejected by him, with the additional insolence of advising Fenton to engage himself in some employment of honest labour, by which he might obtain that support which he could never hope from his poetry. The play was acted at the other theatre;¹¹ and the brutal petulance of Cibber was confuted, though perhaps not shamed, by general applause. Fenton's profits are said to have amounted to near a thousand pounds,¹² with which he discharged a debt contracted by his attendance at court.

Fenton seems to have had some peculiar system of versification. *Mariamne* is written in lines

¹⁰ Concerning Fenton's share and remuneration the reader will find further information in the *Lives* of Broome and Pope in this collection.

¹¹ At Lincoln's Inn Theatre, February 22, 1723.

¹² Dr. Young, writing to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, fixed the sum at more than 1,500*l*.

of ten syllables, with few of those redundant terminations which the drama not only admits but requires, as more nearly approaching to real dialogue. The tenor of his verse is so uniform that it cannot be thought casual; and yet upon what principle he so constructed it, is difficult to discover.

The mention of his play brings to my mind a very trifling occurrence. Fenton was one day in the company of Broome his associate, and Ford a clergyman,¹³ at that time too well known, whose abilities, instead of furnishing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wise. They determined all to see the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, which was acted that night; and Fenton, as a dramattick poet, took them to the stage-door; where the door-keeper enquiring who they were, was told that they were three very necessary men, Ford, Broome, and Fenton. The name in the play, which Pope restored to *Brook*, was then *Broome*.

It was perhaps after this play that he undertook to revise the punctuation of Milton's Poems, which, as the author neither wrote the original copy nor corrected the press, was supposed capable of amendment. To this edition he prefixed a short and elegant account of Milton's life, written at once with tenderness and integrity.¹⁴

He published likewise (1729) a very splendid edition of Waller, with notes often useful, often

¹³ Johnson's cousin. Vide note in the *Life of Broome*, *supra*.

¹⁴ This edition appeared in 1727.

entertaining, but too much extended by long quotations from Clarendon. Illustrations drawn from a book so easily consulted, should be made by reference rather than transcription.

The latter part of his life was calm and pleasant. The relict of Sir William Trumbal invited him, by Pope's recommendation, to educate her son; whom he first instructed at home, and then attended to Cambridge. The lady afterwards detained him with her as the auditor of her accounts. He often wandered to London, and amused himself with the conversation of his friends.

He died in 1730,¹⁵ at Easthampstead in Berkshire, the seat of lady Trumbal; and Pope, who had been always his friend, honoured him with an epitaph, of which he borrowed the two first lines from Crashaw.

Fenton was tall and bulky, inclined to corpulence, which he did not lessen by much exercise; for he was very sluggish and sedentary, rose late, and when he had risen, sat down to his book or papers. A woman, that once waited on him in a lodging, told him, as she said, that he would *lie a-bed, and be fed with a spoon*. This, however, was not the worst that might have been prognosticated; for Pope says, in his Letters, that *he died of indolence*; but his immediate distemper was the gout.

Of his morals and his conversation the account

¹⁵ July 13, 1730. Pope's letter to Gay, dated July 21, says: "I have just receiv'd the news of the death of a friend, whom I esteem'd almost as many years as you; poor Fenton. He died at Easthamstead, of indolence and inactivity."

is uniform : he was never named but with praise and fondness, as a man in the highest degree amiable and excellent. Such was the character given him by the earl of Orrery, his pupil ; such is the testimony of Pope,¹⁶ and such were the suffrages of all who could boast of his acquaintance.

By a former writer of his Life¹⁷ a story is told, which ought not to be forgotten. He used, in the latter part of his time, to pay his relations in the country an yearly visit. At an entertainment made for the family by his elder brother, he observed that one of his sisters, who had married unfortunately, was absent ; and found, upon enquiry, that distress had made her thought unworthy of invitation. As she was at no great distance, he refused to sit at the table till she was called, and, when she had taken her place, was careful to shew her particular attention.

His collection of poems is now to be considered. The ode to the *Sun*¹⁸ is written upon a common plan, without uncommon sentiments ; but its greatest fault is its length. No poem should be long of which the purpose is only to strike the fancy, without enlightening the understanding by precept, ratiocination, or narrative. A blaze first pleases, and then tires the sight.

Of *Florelio* it is sufficient to say that it is an occasional pastoral, which implies something neither natural nor artificial, neither comick nor serious.

The next ode is irregular, and therefore de-

¹⁶ Spence.—JOHNSON.

¹⁷ In Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*. 1753.

¹⁸ *Ode to the Sun for the New Year*. 1707.

fective. As the sentiments are pious, they cannot easily be new; for what can be added to topicks on which successive ages have been employed!

Of the *Paraphrase on Isaiah* nothing very favourable can be said. Sublime and solemn prose gains little by a change to blank verse; and the paraphrast has deserted his original, by admitting images not Asiatick, at least not Judaical:

—Returning Peace,
Dove-eyed, and rob'd in white—

Of his petty poems some are very trifling, without any thing to be praised either in the thought or expression. He is unlucky in his competitions; he tells the same idle tale with Congreve, and does not tell it so well. He translates from Ovid the same epistle as Pope; but I am afraid not with equal happiness.

To examine his performances one by one would be tedious. His translation from Homer into blank verse will find few readers while another can be had in rhyme. The piece addressed to Lambarde is no disagreeable specimen of epistolary poetry; and his ode to the lord Gower was pronounced by Pope the next ode in the English language to Dryden's Cecilia. Fenton may be justly styled an excellent versifyer and a good poet.

WHATEVER I have said of Fenton is confirmed by Pope in a Letter, by which he communicated to Broome an account of his death.

To

The Rev^d. Mr. BROOME

At PULHAM, near HARLESTONE

NOR

SUFFOLKE

By BECCLES Bag.

D^R SIR.

I intended to write to you on this melancholy subject, the death of Mr. Fenton, before y^{rs} ¹⁹ came; but stay'd to have inform'd myself & you of y^e circumstances of it. All I hear is, that he felt a Gradual Decay, tho so early in Life, & was declining for 5 or 6 months. It was not, as I apprehended, the Gout in his Stomach, but I believe rather a Complication first of Gross Humors, as he was naturally corpulent, not discharging themselves, as he used no sort of Exercise. No man better bore y^e approaches of his Dissolution (as I am told) or with less ostentation yielded up his Being. The great Modesty w^{ch} you know was natural to him, and y^e great Contempt he had for all Sorts of Vanity & Parade, never appeared more than in his last moments: He had a conscious Satisfaction (no doubt) in acting right, in feeling himself honest,

¹⁹ "Dated 17th Aug. 1730. In this letter he says, 'By the public news I find we have lost Mr. Fenton, the sincerest of men and friends. Of what a treasure has one moment robbed me! The world has really become of less value to me since he is out of it. . . . He intended to have withdrawn to me and to lay his bones by mine.'—*Rough Draft of Broome's Letter to Pope.*"—CUNNINGHAM.

true, & un-pretending to more than was his own. So he dyed, as he lived, with that secret, yet sufficient, Contentment.

As to any Papers left behind him, I dare say they can be but few; for this reason, He never wrote out of Vanity, or thought much of the Applause of Men. I know an Instance where he did his utmost to conceal his own merit that way; and if we join to this his natural Love of Ease, I fancy we must expect little of this sort: at least I hear of none except some few further remarks on Waller (w^{ch} his cautious integrity made him leave an order to be given to Mr. Tonson) and perhaps, tho tis many years since I saw it, a Translation of y^e first Book of Oppian. He had begun a Tragedy of Dion, but made small progress in it.

As to his other Affairs, he dyed poor, but honest, leaving no Debts, or Legacies; except of a few p^{ds} to Mr. Trumbull and my Lady, in token of respect, Gratefulness, & mutual Esteem.

I shall with pleasure take upon me to draw this amiable, quiet, deserving, unpretending Christian and Philosophical character, in His Epitaph. There Truth may be spoken in a few words: as for Flourish, & Oratory, & Poetry, I leave them to younger and more lively Writers, such as love writing for writing sake, & w^d rather show their own Fine Parts, yⁿ Report the valuable ones of any other man. So the Elegy I renounce.

I condole with you from my heart, on the loss of so worthy a man, and a Friend to us both. Now he is gone, I must tell you he has done you many a good office, & set your character in y^e

fairest light, to some who either mistook you, or knew you not. I doubt not he has done the same for me.

Adieu : Let us love his Memory, and profit by his example. I am very sincerely

D^r SIR

Your affectionate

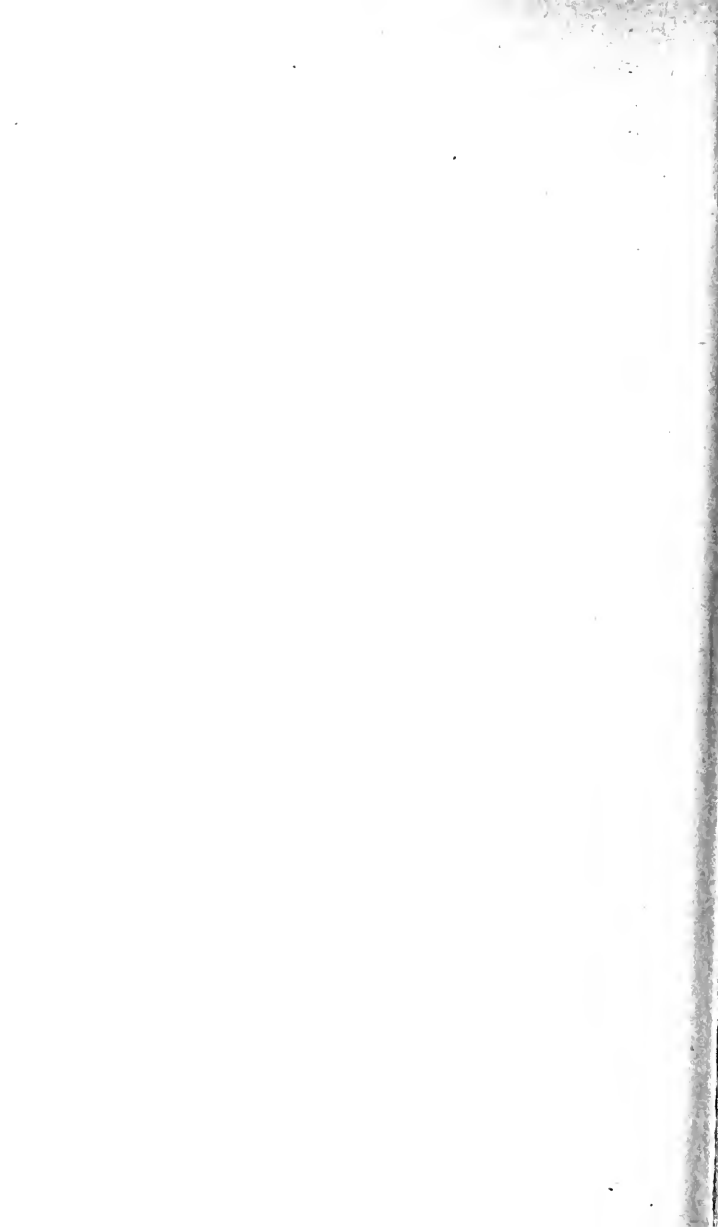
& real Servant

A. POPE

AUG. 29th 1730.



GAY





GAY.

JOHN GAY, descended from an old family that had been long in possession of the manour of Goldworthy¹ in Devonshire, was born in 1688,² at or near Barnstaple, where he was educated by Mr. Luck,³ who taught the school of that town with good reputation, and, a little before he retired from it, published a volume of Latin and English verses. Under such a master he was likely to form a taste for poetry.⁴ Being born without prospect of hereditary riches, he was sent to London in his youth, and placed apprentice with a silk-mercator.

¹ *Goldworthy* does not appear in the *Villare*.—JOHNSON.

² The late John Underhill was the first to clear up the date of Gay's birth. John Gay was the youngest son of William Gay, who lived at the south end of Joy Street, Barnstaple, in a house known as the Red Cross. His baptism is registered in Barnstaple Old Church on September 16, 1685. His ancestors had long held the manor of Goldworthy in Parkham. The poet's mother died in 1694, his father about a year later.

³ Mr. William Rayner was the first master of the free Grammar School under whom Gay studied. Mr. Luck succeeded him on Rayner's removal to Tiverton. Rayner, no less than Luck, had, according to Mr. Austin Dobson, "been accused of versifying."

⁴ "There is preserved in the Forster Library at South Kensington a large-paper copy of Maittaire's *Horace* (Tonson & Watts, 1715), which contains Gay's autograph, and is copiously annotated in his beautiful handwriting."—Mr. Austin Dobson's edition of Gay's *Fables* (Kegan Paul, 1882), p. xii.

How long he continued behind the counter, or with what degree of softness and dexterity he received and accommodated the Ladies, as he probably took no delight in telling it, is not known. The report is, that he was soon weary of either the restraint or servility of his occupation, and easily persuaded his master to discharge him.

The dutchess of Monmouth,⁵ remarkable for inflexible perseverance in her demand to be treated as a princess, in 1712 took Gay into her service as secretary : by quitting a shop for such service, he might gain leisure, but he certainly advanced little in the boast of independence. Of his leisure he made so good use,⁶ that he published next year a poem on *Rural Sports*,⁷ and inscribed it to Mr. Pope, who was then rising fast into reputation. Pope was pleased with the honour ; and when he became acquainted with Gay, found such attractions in his manners and conversation, that he seems to have received him into his inmost confidence ; and a friendship was formed between them which lasted to their separation by death, without any known abatement on either part. Gay was the general favourite of the whole association of wits ; but they regarded him as a play-fellow rather than a partner, and treated him with more fondness than respect.

⁵ There is somewhat of a hiatus here. Gay, apparently, on quitting the silk-mercier's, stayed with his maternal uncle, John Hanmer, a Nonconformist minister in Barnstaple, and was there for some while. Subsequently he returned to London, to try his fortune with his pen, his first poem, *Wine*, appearing in 1708.

⁶ In May 1712 two poems by Gay appeared in Lintot's *Miscellany*—one a copy of verses addressed to Lintot, the other a translation of the story of Arachne from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

⁷ Published by Tonson on January 13, 1713.

Next year⁸ he published *The Shepherd's Week*,⁹ six English Pastorals, in which the images are drawn from real life, such as it appears among the rusticks in parts of England remote from London. Steele, in some papers of the *Guardian*,¹⁰ had praised Ambrose Philips, as the Pastoral writer that yielded only to Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser. Pope, who had also published Pastorals, not pleased to be overlooked, drew up a comparison¹¹ of his own compositions with those of Philips, in which he covertly gave himself the preference, while he seemed to disown it. Not content with this, he is supposed to have incited Gay to write the *Shepherd's Week*, to shew, that if it be necessary to copy nature with minuteness, rural life must be exhibited such as grossness and ignorance have made it. So far the plan was reasonable; but the Pastorals are introduced by a *Proeme*, written with such imitation as they could attain of obsolete language, and by consequence in a style that was never spoken nor written in any language or in any place.

But the effect of reality and truth became conspicuous, even when the intention was to shew them groveling and degraded. These Pastorals became popular, and were read with delight, as just representations of rural manners and occupations, by those who had no interest in the rivalry of the poets, nor knowledge of the critical dispute.

⁸ Meanwhile *The Fan* had appeared on December 8, 1713.

⁹ Published by R. Burleigh on April 15, 1714.

¹⁰ *The Guardian*, April 15, 17, 1713. These articles are now generally allowed to have been written by Tickell.

¹¹ *The Guardian*, April 27, 1713.

In 1713 he brought a comedy called *The Wife of Bath*¹² upon the stage, but it received no applause; he printed it, however; and seventeen years after, having altered it, and, as he thought, adapted it more to the publick taste, he offered it again to the town;¹³ but, though he was flushed with the success of the *Beggar's Opera*, had the mortification to see it again rejected.

In the last year of queen Anne's life, Gay was made secretary to the earl of Clarendon, ambassador to the court of Hanover.¹⁴ This was a station that naturally gave him hopes of kindness from every party; but the Queen's death put an end to her favours, and he had dedicated his *Shepherd's Week* to Bolingbroke, which Swift considered as the crime that obstructed all kindness from the house of Hanover.

He did not, however, omit to improve the right which his office had given him to the notice of the royal family. On the arrival of the princess of Wales, he wrote a poem,¹⁵ and obtained so much favour, that both the Prince and Princess went to see his *What d'ye call it*,¹⁶ a kind of mock-tragedy, in which the images were comick, and the action

¹² It was produced at Drury Lane on May 12, 1713, and was played for three nights only.

¹³ On January 19, 1730, at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It again ran three nights.

¹⁴ The appointment was dated June 8, 1714.

¹⁵ *A Letter to a Lady: Occasioned by the arrival of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales.* This poem, the production of which was due to the advice of Pope and Arbuthnot, appeared on November 20, 1714.

¹⁶ *The What d'ye Call it* was produced at Drury Lane, February 23, 1715; and published on March 19. It was revived six times during the eighteenth century, and always on the occasion of a benefit. For the dates *vide* Underhill's *Gay*, xxxvi.

grave; so that, as Pope relates, Mr. Cromwell, who could not hear what was said, was at a loss how to reconcile the laughter of the audience with the solemnity of the scene.

Of this performance the value certainly is but little; but it was one of the lucky trifles that give pleasure by novelty, and was so much favoured by the audience, that envy appeared against it in the form of criticism; and Griffin a player, in conjunction with Mr. Theobald, a man afterwards more remarkable, produced a pamphlet called the *Key to the What d'ye call it*; which, says Gay, *calls me a blockhead, and Mr. Pope a knave*.¹⁷

But Fortune has always been inconstant. Not long afterwards (1717) he endeavoured to entertain the town with *Three Hours after Marriage*; ¹⁸ a comedy written, as there is sufficient reason for believing, by the joint assistance of Pope and Arbuthnot. One purpose of it was to bring into contempt Dr. Woodward the Fossilist, a man not really or justly contemptible. It had the fate which such outrages deserve: the scene in which Woodward was directly and apparently ridiculed, by the introduction of a mummy and a crocodile, disgusted the audience, and the performance was driven off the stage with general condemnation.

Gay is represented as a man easily incited to

¹⁷ There is here another hiatus. In 1715 and 1716 Gay visited Devonshire and Somerset, writing *Trivia: or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* in 1715, and publishing it on January 26 of the following year.

¹⁸ Produced at Drury Lane, January 16, 1717, and played for seven nights. It was revived March 15, 1746, without success. Lintot published the play on January 21, 1717.

hope, and deeply depressed when his hopes were disappointed. This is not the character of a hero ; but it may naturally imply something more generally welcome, a soft and civil companion. Whoever is apt to hope good from others is diligent to please them ; but he that believes his powers strong enough to force their own way, commonly tries only to please himself.

He had been simple enough to imagine that those who laughed at the *What d'ye call it* would raise the fortune of its author ; and finding nothing done, sunk into dejection. His friends endeavoured to divert him. The earl of Burlington sent him (1716) into Devonshire ;¹⁹ the year after,²⁰ Mr. Pulteney took him to Aix ; and in the following year lord Harcourt invited him to his seat,²¹ where, during his visit, the two rural lovers were killed with lightning, as is particularly told in Pope's Letters.²²

Being now generally known, he published (1720) his *Poems*²³ by subscription with such success, that he raised a thousand pounds ; and called his friends to a consultation, what use might be best made of it. Lewis, the steward of lord

¹⁹ It was in 1715 that Lord Burlington induced Gay to go into Devonshire ; though the poet, it is true, visited that county again, on his own initiative, in 1716.

²⁰ In the summer of 1717.

²¹ At Cockthorpe, in Oxfordshire, whence Gay continually visited Pope, who was busy on his *Homer* at Stanton Harcourt.

²² It is once more necessary to fill a gap by the fact that Gay was on the Continent in 1719. He wrote in September of that year from Dijon to Mrs. Howard : "I am rambling from place to place. In about a month I hope to be in Paris, and in the next month to be in England."

²³ *Poems on Several Occasions*. By John Gay. 1720. In two large quarto volumes.

Oxford, advised him to intrust it to the funds, and live upon the interest; Arbuthnot bade him intrust it to Providence, and live upon the principal; Pope directed him, and was seconded by Swift, to purchase an annuity.

Gay in that disastrous year²⁴ had a present from young Craggs of some South-sea-stock, and once supposed himself to be master of twenty thousand pounds. His friends persuaded him to sell his share; but he dreamed of dignity and splendour, and could not bear to obstruct his own fortune. He was then importuned to sell as much as would purchase an hundred a year for life, *which*, says Fenton, *will make you sure of a clean shirt and a shoulder of mutton every day*. This counsel was rejected; the profit and principal were lost, and Gay sunk under the calamity so low that his life became in danger.²⁵

By the care of his friends, among whom Pope appears to have shewn particular tenderness, his health was restored; and, returning to his studies, he wrote a tragedy called *The Captives*, which he was invited to read before the princess of Wales. When the hour came, he saw the princess and her ladies all in expectation, and advancing with reverence, too great for any other attention, stumbled at a stool, and falling forwards, threw down a weighty Japan screen. The princess

²⁴ Spence.—JOHNSON.

²⁵ His friends, however, rallied round him. He was frequently with the Queensberrys and the Burlingtons; and in 1722 Sir Robert Walpole appointed him to a position as lottery commissioner, with a salary of 150*l.* a year. This post he occupied for nine years. He was also given lodgings in Whitehall by courtesy of the Earl of Lincoln, and stayed there till 1729.

started, the ladies screamed, and poor Gay after all the disturbance was still to read his play.

The fate of *The Captives*, which was acted at Drury-Lane in 1723, I know not; ²⁶ but he now thought himself in favour, and undertook (1726) to write a volume of Fables for the improvement of the young duke of Cumberland.²⁷ For this he is said to have been promised a reward, which he had doubtless magnified with all the wild expectations of indigence and vanity.

Next year the Prince and Princess became King and Queen, and Gay was to be great and happy; but upon the settlement of the household he found himself appointed gentleman usher to the princess Louisa.²⁸ By this offer he thought himself insulted, and sent a message to the Queen, that he was too old for the place. There seem to have been many machinations employed afterwards in his favour; and diligent court was paid to Mrs. Howard, afterwards countess of Suffolk, who was

²⁶ It was produced January 15, 1724, and was played seven nights. The Prince and Princess of Wales were present on the third (author's) night.

²⁷ That Gay had begun writing the *Fables* towards the end of 1725 we know from Pope's letter to Swift, December 14, 1725. The volume appeared in the spring of 1727.

²⁸ The post was apparently a sinecure with a salary of 150*l.* a year. Swift was of opinion that Gay owed the offer to Sir Robert Walpole, whom he believed to be his enemy; and he thoroughly approved of Gay's refusal. Pope, writing to Gay on October 6, 1727, on receipt of the news, says: "I have many years ago magnify'd, in my own mind, and repeated to you, a ninth Beatitude, added to the eight in the Scripture; 'Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.' I could find in my heart to congratulate you on this happy dismissal from all Court-dependance; I dare say I shall find you the better and the honester man for it, many years hence: very probably the healthfuller, and the chearfuller into the bargain."

much beloved by the King and Queen, to engage her interest for his promotion; but solicitations, verses, and flatteries were thrown away; the lady heard them, and did nothing.²⁹

All the pain which he suffered from the neglect, or, as he perhaps termed it, the ingratitude of the court, may be supposed to have been driven away by the unexampled success of the *Beggar's Opera*. This play, written in ridicule of the musical Italian Drama, was first offered to Cibber and his brethren at Drury-Lane, and rejected; it being then carried to Rich, had the effect, as was ludicrously said, of *making Gay rich, and Rich gay*.³⁰

Of this lucky piece, as the reader cannot but wish to know the original and progress, I have inserted the relation which Spence has given in Pope's words.

“Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay, what an odd pretty sort of a thing a Newgate Pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try at such a thing for some time; but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan, This was what gave rise to the *Beggar's Opera*. He began on it; and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the Doctor did not much like the project. As he carried it on, he shewed what he wrote to both of us, and we now-and-then gave a

²⁹ John Underhill (*Gay*, p.1.) gives many reasons for believing that Mrs. Howard was unable rather than unwilling to advance the poet's interests.

³⁰ *The Beggar's Opera* was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields on Monday, January 29, 1728. After a night's rest, it was again played on Wednesday, January 31, and thenceforward for sixty nights.

“ correction, or a word or two of advice; but it
 “ was wholly of his own writing.—When it was
 “ done, neither of us thought it would succeed.—
 “ We shewed it to Congreve; who, after reading
 “ it over, said, It would either take greatly, or be
 “ damned confoundedly.—We were all, at the
 “ first night of it, in great uncertainty of the
 “ event; till we were very much encouraged by
 “ overhearing the duke of Argyle, who sat in the
 “ next box to us, say, ‘ It will do—it must do!
 “ I see it in the eyes of them.’³¹ This was a good
 “ while before the first Act was over, and so gave us
 “ ease soon; for that duke (besides his own good
 “ taste) has a particular knack, as any one now
 “ living, in discovering the taste of the publick.
 “ He was quite right in this, as usual; the good
 “ nature of the audience appeared stronger and
 “ stronger every act, and ended in a clamour of
 “ applause.”

Its reception is thus recorded in the notes to the *Dunciad*:

“ This piece was received with greater applause than was ever known. Besides being acted in London ~~sixty-three~~ days without interruption,³² and renewed the next season with equal applause, it spread into all the great towns of England; was

³¹ Quin related afterwards that the audience at first were ill-disposed, and that the fortunate fate of the opera was decided by the song:—

“ Oh, ponder well! be not severe!”

³² This is not correct. The entire run was only sixty-two nights, which were broken, firstly, by the rest after the *première*, and subsequently by the intervention of benefits, at which stock pieces were always played.

played in many places to the thirtieth and fortieth time; at Bath and Bristol fifty, &c. It made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, where it was performed twenty-four days successively. The ladies carried about with them the favourite songs of it in fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens. The fame of it was not confined to the author only. The person who acted Polly, till then obscure, became all at once the favourite of the town; her pictures were engraved, and sold in great numbers; her Life written, books of letters and verses to her published, and pamphlets made even of her sayings and jests. Furthermore, it drove out of England (for that season) the Italian Opera, which had carried all before it for ten years.³³

Of this performance, when it was printed,³⁴ the reception was different, according to the different opinion of its readers. Swift commended it³⁵ for the excellence of its morality, as a piece that placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light; but others, and among them Dr. Herring,³⁶ afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, censured it as giving encouragement not only to vice but to crimes, by making a highwayman the hero, and dismissing him at last unpunished. It has been even said, that after the

³³ Underhill has the following: "The total sum realised by the initial set of performances was 5,851*l.* 15*s.* Of this Gay received for four author's nights—the third, sixth, ninth, and fifteenth—693*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.*"

³⁴ On February 14, 1728.

³⁵ In the third number of *The Intelligencer*.

³⁶ Herring preached a sermon on the subject at Court.

exhibition of the *Beggar's Opera* the gangs of robbers were evidently multiplied.³⁷

Both these decisions are surely exaggerated. The play, like many others, was plainly written ~~only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is therefore not likely to do good; nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil.~~ Highwaymen and house-breakers seldom frequent the playhouse, or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for any one to imagine that he may rob with safety, because he sees Macheath reprieved upon the stage.

This objection however, or some other rather political than moral, obtained such prevalence, that when Gay produced a second part under the name of *Polly*, it was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain; ³⁸ and he was forced to recompense his repulse by a subscription, which is said to have been so liberally bestowed, that what he called oppression ended in profit. The ³⁹ publication was so much favoured, that though the first part gained him four hundred pounds, near thrice as much was the profit of the second.⁴⁰

He received yet another recompense for this supposed hardship, in the affectionate attention of

³⁷ The ingenious critic who propounded this theory was Sir John Fielding, the presiding magistrate at Bow Street. *Vide Underhill's Gay*, p. lvi.

³⁸ On December 12, 1728. *Polly* was first played at the Haymarket, June 19, 1777, and revived there in 1782, and at Drury Lane in 1813.

³⁹ Spence.—JOHNSON.

⁴⁰ *Vide* note 33, *supra*. The subscriptions for *Polly* realised nearly 1,200*l*.

the duke and dutchess of Queensberry, into whose house he was taken, and with whom he passed the remaining part of his life.⁴¹ The⁴² duke, considering his want of œconomy, undertook the management of his money, and gave it to him as he wanted it. But it is supposed that the discountenance of the Court sunk deep into his heart, and gave him more discontent than the applauses or tenderness of his friends could overpower. He soon fell into his old distemper, an habitual colick, and languished, though with many intervals of ease and cheerfulness, till a violent fit at last seized him, and hurried him to the grave, as Arbuthnot reported, with more precipitance than he had ever known.⁴³ He died on the fourth of December 1732, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.⁴⁴ The letter which brought an account of his death to Swift was laid by for some days unopened, because when he received it he was imprest with the preconception of some misfortune.⁴⁵

After his death was published a second volume of *Fables* more political than the former. His opera of *Achilles* was acted,⁴⁶ and the profits were

⁴¹ The Duchess of Queensbeery was denied the Court for having solicited subscriptions for *Polly*. Vide Cunningham's edition of these *Lives*, ii. 293, for some valuable but somewhat lengthy details.

⁴² Spence.—JOHNSON.

⁴³ Pope and Arbuthnot to Swift, December 5, 1732: "It was the most precipitate case I ever knew, having cut him off in three days."

⁴⁴ On December 23.

⁴⁵ Swift received the letter on the 15th, but did not open it till the 20th.

⁴⁶ At Lincoln's Inn Fields on February 10, 1733. It ran for about twenty nights. The second volume of *Fables* was published in 1738.

given to two widow sisters,⁴⁷ who inherited what he left, as his lawful heirs; for he died without a will, though he had gathered⁴⁸ three thousand pounds. There have appeared likewise under his name a comedy called the *Distrest Wife*,⁴⁹ and the *Rehearsal at Gotham*, a piece of humour.⁵⁰

The character given him by Pope⁵¹ is this, that he was a natural man, without design, who spoke what he thought, and just as he thought it; and that he was of a timid temper, and fearful of giving offence to the great; which caution however, says Pope, was of no avail.

As a poet, he cannot be rated very high. He was, as I once heard a female critick remark, of a lower order.⁵² He had not in any great degree the *mens divinior*, the dignity of genius. Much however must be allowed to the author of a new species of composition, though it be not of the highest kind. We owe to Gay the Ballad Opera; a mode of comedy which at first was supposed to delight only by its novelty, but has now by the experience of half a century been found so well accommodated to the disposition of a popular audience, that it is likely to keep long possession of the stage. Whether this new drama was the product of judgement or of luck, the praise of it must be given to the inventor; and there are

⁴⁷ Katherine Buller and Joanna Fortescue. There was some 6,000*l.* in the whole estate.

⁴⁸ Spence.—JOHNSON.

⁴⁹ Printed in 1743.

⁵⁰ Printed in 1754.

⁵¹ Spence.—JOHNSON.

⁵² *Mrs. Piozzi's Anecdotes*, cited by Cunningham, fixes this remark upon Johnson's own wife.

many writers read with more reverence, to whom such merit of originality cannot be attributed.

His first performance, the *Rural Sports*, is such as was easily planned and executed; it is never contemptible, nor ever excellent. The *Fan* is one of those mythological fictions which antiquity delivers ready to the hand; but which, like other things that lie open to every one's use, are of little value. The attention naturally retires from a new tale of Venus, Diana, and Minerva.

His Fables seem to have been a favourite work; for, having published one volume, he left another behind him. Of this kind of Fables, the authors do not appear to have formed any distinct or settled notion. Phædrus evidently confounds them with *Tales*, and Gay both with *Tales* and *Allegorical Prosopopœias*. A *Fable* or *Apologue*, such as is now under consideration, seems to be, in its genuine state, a narrative in which beings irrational, and sometimes inanimate, *arbores loquuntur, non tantum fera*, are, for the purpose of moral instruction, feigned to act and speak with human interests and passions. To this description the compositions of Gay do not always conform. For a Fable he gives now and then a Tale or an abstracted Allegory; and from some, by whatever name they may be called, it will be difficult to extract any moral principle. They are, however, told with liveliness; the versification is smooth, and the diction, though now-and-then a little constrained by the measure or the rhyme, is generally happy.

To *Trivia* may be allowed all that it claims;

it is spritely, various, and pleasant. The subject is of that kind which Gay was by nature qualified to adorn; yet some of his decorations may be justly wished away. An honest blacksmith might have done for Patty what is performed by Vulcan. The appearance of Cloacina is nauseous and superfluous; a shoeboy could have been produced by the casual cohabitation of mere mortals. Horace's rule is broken in both cases; there is no *dignus vindice nodus*, no difficulty that required any supernatural interposition. A patten may be made by the hammer of a mortal, and a bastard may be dropped by a human strumpet. On great occasions, and on small, the mind is repelled by useless and apparent falsehood.

Of his little Poems the publick judgement seems to be right; they are neither much esteemed, nor totally despised. The story of the Apparition is borrowed from one of the tales of Poggio. Those that please least are the pieces to which *Gulliver* gave occasion; for who can much delight in the echo of an unnatural fiction?

Dione is a counterpart to *Amynta*, and *Pastor Fido*, and other trifles of the same kind, easily imitated, and unworthy of imitation. What the Italians call comedies from a happy conclusion, Gay calls a tragedy from a mournful event; but the style of the Italians and of Gay is equally tragical. There is something in the poetical *Arcadia* so remote from known reality and speculative possibility, that we can never support its representation through a long work. A Pastoral of an hundred lines may be endured; but who

will hear of sheep and goats, and myrtle bowers and purling rivulets, through five acts? Such scenes please Barbarians in the dawn of literature, and children in the dawn of life; but will be for the most part thrown away, as men grow wise, and nations grow learned.



GRANVILLE



GRANVILLE. *

OF GEORGE GRANVILLE, or as others write, *Greenville*, or *Grenville*, afterwards lord Landsdown of Biddeford in the county of Devon, less is known than his name and rank might give reason to expect. He was born about 1667, the son of Bernard Greenville,¹ who was entrusted by Monk with the most private transactions of the Restoration, and the grandson of Sir Bevil Greenville, who died in the King's cause, at the battle of Lansdowne.

His early education was superintended by Sir William Ellis; and his progress was such, that before the age of twelve he was sent to Cambridge,² where he pronounced a copy of his own verses to the princess Mary d'Esté of Modena, then dutchess of York, when she visited the university.

At the accession of king James, being now at eighteen, he again exerted his poetical powers,

¹ By his wife, Anne, daughter and heiress of Cuthbert Morley of Hornby, Yorkshire. The poet was the second son of the marriage.

² Where he matriculated at Trinity, December 14, 1677. He took his M.A. degree in 1679.

and addressed the new monarch in three short pieces, of which the first is profane, and the two others such as a boy might be expected to produce; but he was commended by old Waller, who perhaps was pleased to find himself imitated, in six lines, which, though they begin with nonsense and end with dulness, excited in the young author a rapture of acknowledgement, *in numbers such as Waller's self might use.*³

It was probably about this time that he wrote the poem to the earl of Peterborough, upon his *accomplishment* of the duke of York's marriage with the princess of Modena, whose charms appear to have gained a strong prevalence over his imagination, and upon whom nothing ever has been charged but imprudent piety, an intemperate and misguided zeal for the propagation of popery.

However faithful Granville might have been to the king, or however enamoured of the Queen, he has left no reason for supposing that he approved either the artifices or the violence with which the King's religion was insinuated or obtruded. He endeavoured to be true at once to the King and to the Church.

Of this regulated loyalty he has transmitted to posterity a sufficient proof, in the letter which he wrote to his father about a month before the prince of Orange landed.

³ The line is conveyed from Addison's *Account of the Greatest English Poets*, where it runs:—

“In numbers such as Dorset's self might use.”

“ Mar, near Doncaster, Oct. 6, 1688.

“ To the honourable Mr. Barnard Granville, at
“ the earl of Bathe’s, St. James’s.

“ SIR,

“ Your having no prospect of obtaining
“ a commission for me, can no way alter or cool
“ my desire at this important juncture to venture
“ my life, in some manner or other, for my King
“ and my Country.

“ I cannot bear living under the reproach of
“ lying obscure and idle in a country retirement,
“ when every man who has the least sense of
“ honour should be preparing for the field.

“ You may remember, Sir, with what reluc-
“ tance I submitted to your commands upon Mon-
“ mouth’s rebellion, when no importunity could
“ prevail with you to permit me to leave the
“ Academy: I was too young to be hazarded;
“ but, give me leave to say, it is glorious at any
“ age to die for one’s country, and the sooner the
“ nobler the sacrifice.

“ I am now older by three years. My uncle
“ Bathe was not so old when he was left among
“ the slain at the battle of Newbury; nor you
“ yourself, Sir, when you made your escape from
“ your tutor’s, to join your brother at the defence
“ of Scilly.

“ The same cause is now come round about
“ again. The King has been misled; let those who
“ have misled him be answerable for it. Nobody
“ can deny but he is sacred in his own person,
“ and it is every honest man’s duty to defend it.

“ You are pleased to say, it is yet doubtful if
“ the Hollanders are rash enough to make such

“ an attempt; but, be that as it will, I beg leave
 “ to insist upon it, that I may be presented to his
 “ majesty, as one whose utmost ambition it is to
 “ devote his life to his service, and my country’s,
 “ after the example of all my ancestors.

“ The gentry assembled at York, to agree
 “ upon the choice of representatives for the
 “ county, have prepared an address, to assure his
 “ majesty they are ready to sacrifice their lives
 “ and fortunes for him upon this and all other
 “ occasions; but at the same time they humbly
 “ beseech him to give them such magistrates as
 “ may be agreeable to the laws of the land; for,
 “ at present, there is no authority to which they
 “ can legally submit.

“ They have been beating up for volunteers at
 “ York, and the towns adjacent, to supply the
 “ regiments at Hull; but nobody will list.

“ By what I can hear, every body wishes well
 “ to the King; but they would be glad his
 “ ministers were hanged.

“ The winds continue so contrary, that no
 “ landing can be so soon as was apprehended;
 “ therefore I may hope, with your leave and
 “ assistance, to be in readiness before any action
 “ can begin. I beseech you, Sir, most humbly
 “ and most earnestly, to add this one act of in-
 “ dulgence more to so many other testimonies
 “ which I have constantly received of your good-
 “ ness; and be pleased to believe me always,
 “ with the utmost duty and submission, Sir,

“ Your most dutiful son,

“ and most obedient servant,

“ GEO. GRANVILLE.”

Through the whole reign of king William he is supposed to have lived in literary retirement, and indeed had for some time few other pleasures but those of study in his power. He was, as the biographers observe, the younger son of a younger brother; a denomination by which our ancestors proverbially expressed the lowest state of penury and dependence. He is said, however, to have preserved himself at this time from disgrace and difficulties by œconomy, which he forgot or neglected in life more advanced, and in better fortune.

About this time he became enamoured of the countess of Newburgh,⁴ whom he has celebrated with so much ardour by the name of Mira. He wrote verses to her before he was three and twenty, and may be forgiven if he regarded the face more than the mind. Poets are sometimes in too much haste to praise.

In the time of his retirement it is probable that he composed his dramattick pieces, the *She-Gallants* (acted 1696),⁵ which he revised, and called *Once a Lover and always a Lover*; *The Jew of Venice*,⁶ altered from Shakespeare's *Merchant of*

⁴ This lady's maiden name was Frances Brudenell, and she was daughter of Francis, Lord Brudenell, who died in 1698. She was twice married; first, to the Earl of Newburgh, and, secondly, to Richard Bellew, Baron Dueleek.

⁵ *The She-Gallants* was played at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1696; and is described by Downes as "extraordinary witty and well-acted." It offended the ladies, however, and was speedily withdrawn. It was revived at Drury Lane, under its new name, on March 18 and April 5, 1706. It was also played by Macklin, March 18, 1746, at Drury Lane.

⁶ *The Jew of Venice* was played at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1701; and revived at Drury Lane February 3, 1710; and again, at Lincoln's Inn, May 16, 1717. It also appeared in the bill at Covent Garden, February 11, 1735.

Venice (1701); *Heroick Love*, a tragedy (1698)⁷; *The British Enchanters* (1706), a dramattick poem⁸; and *Peleus and Thetis*, a masque, written to accompany *The Jew of Venice*.

The comedies, which he has not printed in his own edition of his works, I never saw; *Once a Lover and always a Lover*, is said to be in a great degree indecent and gross. Granville could not admire without bigotry; he copied the wrong as well as the right from his masters, and may be supposed to have learned obscenity from Wycherley, as he learned mythology from Waller.

In his *Jew of Venice*, as Rowe remarks, the character of *Shilock* is made comick, and we are prompted to laughter instead of detestation.

It is evident that *Heroick Love* was written, and presented on the stage, before the death of Dryden. It is a mythological tragedy, upon the love of Agamemnon and Chryseis, and therefore easily sunk into neglect, though praised in verse by Dryden, and in prose by Pope.

It is concluded by the wise Ulysses with this speech:

Fate holds the strings, and men like children move
But as they 're led; success is from above.

⁷ *Heroick Love* was played at Lincoln's Inn in 1698; and at Drury Lane on March 19, 1712; October 21, 1725; and March 18, 1766. The present editor has ventured, in this place only in all the *Lives*, to alter an obvious printer's error in the edition of 1783. The text there runs: "*The Jew of Venice*, altered from Shakespeare's *Heroick Love*, a tragedy (1698); *Merchant of Venice* (1701)," &c. The reading adopted in the present text is clearly that of Johnson's intention.

⁸ *The British Enchanters* was produced at the Haymarket, February 21, 1706; and was revived at the same theatre March 22, 1707.

At the accession of queen Anne, having his fortune improved by bequests from his father, and his uncle the earl of Bathe, he was chosen into parliament for Fowey. He soon after engaged in a joint translation of the *Invectives against Philip*, with a design, surely weak and puerile, of turning the thunder of Demosthenes upon the head of Lewis.

He afterwards (in 1706) had his estate again augmented by an inheritance from his elder brother, Sir Bevil Granville, who, as he returned from the government of Barbadoes, died⁹ at sea. He continued to serve in parliament; and in the ninth year of queen Anne was chosen knight of the shire for Cornwall.¹⁰

At the memorable change of the ministry (1710), he was made secretary at war, in the place of Mr. Robert Walpole.¹¹

Next year, when the violence of party made twelve peers in a day, Mr. Granville became¹² *Lord Lansdown Baron Biddeford*, by a promotion justly remarked to be not invidious, because he was the heir of a family in which two peerages, that of the earl of Bathe and lord Granville of Potheridge, had lately become extinct. Being now high in the Queen's favour, he (1712) was appointed comptroller of the household, and a privy counsellor; and to his other honours was added the dedication of Pope's *Windsor Forest*.

⁹ September 15, 1706. The date is Cunningham's.

¹⁰ He was elected in 1710 for the borough of Helston, and the county of Cornwall, and chose the latter.

¹¹ September 29, 1710.

¹² December 30, 1711.

He was advanced next year to be treasurer of the household.

Of these favours he soon lost all but his title; for at the accession of king George his place was given to the earl Cholmondeley, and he was persecuted with the rest of his party. Having protested against the bill for attainting Ormond and Bolingbroke, he was, after the insurrection in Scotland, seized Sept. 26, 1715, as a suspected man, and confined in the Tower till Feb. 8, 1717, when he was at last released, and restored to his seat in parliament; where (1719) he made a very ardent and animated speech against the repeal of the bill to prevent Occasional Conformity, which, however, though it was then printed, he has not inserted into his works.

Some time afterwards (about 1722), being perhaps embarrassed by his profusion, he went into foreign countries, with the usual pretence of recovering his health. In this state of leisure and retirement, he received the first volume of Burnet's History, of which he cannot be supposed to have approved the general tendency, and where he thought himself able to detect some particular falsehoods. He therefore undertook the vindication of general Monk from some calumnies of Dr. Burnet, and some misrepresentations of Mr. Echard. This was answered civilly by Mr. Thomas Burnet and Oldmixon, and more roughly by Dr. Colbatch.

His other historical performance is a defence of his relation Sir Richard Greenville, whom lord Clarendon has shewn in a form very unamiable. So much is urged in this apology, to justify many

actions that have been represented as culpable, and to palliate the rest, that the reader is reconciled for the greater part; and it is made very probable that Clarendon was by personal enmity disposed to think the worst of Greenville, as Greenville was also very willing to think the worst of Clarendon. These pieces were published at his return to England.

Being now desirous to conclude his labours, and enjoy his reputation, he published (1732) a very beautiful and splendid edition of his works, in which he omitted what he disapproved, and enlarged what seemed deficient.

He now went to Court, and was kindly received by queen Caroline; to whom and to the princess Anne he presented his works, with verses on the blank leaves, with which he concluded his poetical labours.

He died in Hanover-square, Jan. 30, 1735,¹³ having a few days before buried his wife, the lady Anne Villiers, widow to Mr. Thynne,¹⁴ by whom he had four daughters, but no son.

Writers commonly derive their reputation from their works; but there are works which owe their reputation to the character of the writer. The publick sometimes has its favourites, whom it rewards for one species of excellence with the honours due to another. From him whom we reverence for his beneficence we do not willingly withhold the praise of genius; a man of exalted

¹³ And was buried, on February 3, in a vault under the chancel of St. Clement Danes.

¹⁴ Cunningham gives the lady's name as Mary. Granville married her in 1711; and she died January 15, 1735.

merit becomes at once an accomplished writer, as a beauty finds no great difficulty in passing for a wit.

Granville was a man illustrious by his birth, and therefore attracted notice: since he is by Pope styled *the polite*, he must be supposed elegant in his manners, and generally loved: he was in times of contest and turbulence steady to his party, and obtained that esteem which is always conferred upon firmness and consistency. With those advantages, having learned the art of versifying, he declared himself a poet; and his claim to the laurel was allowed.

But by a critick of a later generation who takes up his book¹⁵ without any favourable prejudices, the praise already received will be thought sufficient; for his works do not shew him to have had much comprehension from nature, or illumination from learning. He seems to have had no ambition above the imitation of Waller, of whom he has copied the faults, and very little more. He is for ever amusing himself with the puerilities of mythology; his King is Jupiter, who, if the Queen brings no children, has a barren Juno. The Queen is compounded of Juno, Venus, and Minerva. His poem on the dutchess of Grafton's law-suit, after having rattled a while with Juno and Pallas, Mars and Alcides, Cassiope, Niobe, and the Propetides, Hercules, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, at last concludes its folly with profaneness.

His verses to Mira, which are most frequently mentioned, have little in them of either art or nature, of the sentiments of a lover, or the lan-

¹⁵ His poems appeared in 1701, 1712, 1716, and 1721.

guage of a poet : there may be found, now-and-then, a happier effort ; but they are commonly feeble and unaffecting, or forced and extravagant.

His little pieces are seldom either spritely or elegant, either keen or weighty. They are trifles written by idleness, and published by vanity. But his Prologues and Epilogues have a just claim to praise.

The *Progress of Beauty* seems one of his most elaborate pieces, and is not deficient in splendor and gaiety ; but the merit of original thought is wanting. Its highest praise is the spirit with which he celebrates king James's consort, when she was a queen no longer.

The *Essay on unnatural Flights in Poetry* is not inelegant nor injudicious, and has something of vigour beyond most of his other performances : his precepts are just, and his cautions proper ; they are indeed not new, but in a didactick poem novelty is to be expected only in the ornaments and illustrations. His poetical precepts are accompanied with agreeable and instructive notes.

The *Masque of Peleus and Thetis* has here and there a pretty line ; but it is not always melodious, and the conclusion is wretched.

In his *British Enchanters* he has bidden defiance to all chronology, by confounding the inconsistent manners of different ages ; but the dialogue has often the air of Dryden's rhyming plays ; and the songs are lively, though not very correct. This is, I think, far the best of his works ; for if it has many faults, it has likewise passages which are at least pretty, though they do not rise to any high degree of excellence.



YALDEN



YALDEN.

THOMAS YALDEN, the sixth son of Mr. John Yalden of Sussex, was born in the city of Exeter in 1671.¹ Having been educated in the grammar-school belonging to Magdalen College in Oxford, he was in 1690, at the age of nineteen, admitted commoner of Magdalen Hall, under the tuition of *Josiah Pullen*, a man whose name is still remembered in the university. He became next year one of the scholars of Magdalen College, where he was distinguished by a lucky accident.²

It was his turn, one day, to pronounce a declamation; and Dr. Hough, the president,³ happening to attend, thought the composition too good to be the speaker's. Some time after, the doctor finding him a little irregularly busy in the library, set him an exercise for punishment; and, that he might not be deceived by any artifice,

¹ According to Cunningham, Yalden, whose name should be spelt Youlding, was born, not at Exeter, but at Oxford, on January 2, 1670. The authorities he cites are Wood's *Ath. Ox.* and Bloxam's *Magdalen Register*. Wood also states that the poet's father was a page of the presence and a groom of the chamber to Prince Charles, and an exciseman of Oxford after the Restoration. This Thomas Youlding died July 25, 1670, and was buried in Merton Chapel.

² This story is from the *Biographia Britannica*.

³ Afterwards Bishop of Worcester.

locked the door. Yalden, as it happened, had been lately reading on the subject given, and produced with little difficulty a composition which so pleased the president, that he told him his former suspicions, and promised to favour him.

Among his contemporaries in the college were Addison and Sacheverell, men who were in those times friends, and who both adopted Yalden to their intimacy. Yalden continued, throughout his life, to think as probably he thought at first, yet did not lose the friendship of Addison.

When Namur was taken by king William, Yalden made an ode.⁴ There was never any reign more celebrated by the poets than that of William, who had very little regard for song himself, but happened to employ ministers who pleased themselves with the praise of patronage.

Of this ode mention is made in an humorous poem of that time, called *The Oxford Laureat*; in which, after many claims had been made and rejected, Yalden is represented as demanding the laurel, and as being called to his trial, instead of receiving a reward.

His crime was for being a felon in verse,
 And presenting his theft to the king;
 The first was a trick not uncommon or scarce,
 But the last was an impudent thing:
 Yet what he had stol'n was so little worth stealing,
 They forgave him the damage and cost;
 Had he ta'en the whole ode, as he took it piece-mealing,
 They had fin'd him but tenpence at most.

⁴ "Published in 1695, folio. This was not his first appearance as an author. Nine poems with his name to them are printed in Dryden's *Third Miscellany*, 8vo. 1693. One is the *Hymn to Darkness*. In Dryden's *Fourth Miscellany* (8vo. 1694) are seven other poems with Yalden's name to them."—CUNNINGHAM.

The poet whom he was charged with robbing was Congreve.

He wrote another poem on the death of the duke of Gloucester.⁵

In 1710 he became fellow of the college; and next year, entering into orders, was presented by the society with a living in Warwickshire,⁶ consistent with his fellowship, and chosen lecturer of moral philosophy, a very honourable office.

On the accession of queen Anne he wrote another poem; and is said, by the author of the *Biographia*, to have declared himself of the party who had the honourable distinction of High-churchmen.

In 1706 he was received into the family of the duke of Beaufort. Next year he became doctor in divinity,⁷ and soon after resigned his fellowship and lecture; and, as a token of his gratitude, gave the college a picture of their founder.

He was made rector of *Chalton* and *Cleanville*,^{7a} two adjoining towns and benefices in Hertfordshire; and had the prebends, or sinecures, of *Deans*, *Hains*, and *Pendles*, in Devonshire. He had before been chosen, in 1698, preacher of Bridewell Hospital, upon the resignation of Dr. Atterbury.⁸

From this time he seems to have led a quiet

⁵ *The Temple of Fame, a Poem, sacred to the memory of the most Illustrious Prince William, Duke of Gloucester.* 1700.

⁶ The Vicarage of Willoughby. His preferment was dated September 25, 1700, and he resigned in 1709.

⁷ July 1, 1707.

^{7a} This is a mistake for Clanfield; and the two parishes are not in Herts, but close to Horndean, in Hants.

⁸ Yalden did not succeed Atterbury until June 26, 1713, when the latter was promoted to be Bishop of Rochester.

and inoffensive life, till the clamour was raised about Atterbury's plot. Every loyal eye was on the watch for abettors or partakers of the horrid conspiracy; and Dr. Yalden, having some acquaintance with the bishop, and being familiarly conversant with Kelly his secretary, fell under suspicion, and was taken into custody.

Upon his examination he was charged with a dangerous correspondence with Kelly. The correspondence he acknowledged; but maintained, that it had no treasonable tendency. His papers were seized; but nothing was found that could fix a crime upon him, except two words in his pocket-book, *thorough-paced doctrine*. This expression the imagination of his examiners had impregnated with treason, and the doctor was enjoined to explain them. Thus pressed, he told them that the words had lain unheeded in his pocket-book from the time of queen Anne, and that he was ashamed to give an account of them; but the truth was, that he had gratified his curiosity one day, by hearing *Daniel Burgess*⁹ in the pulpit, and those words was a memorial hint of a remarkable sentence by which he warned his congregation to *beware of thorough-paced doctrine, that doctrine, which, coming in at one ear, paces through the head, and goes out at the other*.

Nothing worse than this appearing in his papers, and no evidence arising against him, he was set at liberty.

It will not be supposed that a man of this character attained high dignities in the church;

⁹ A famous Nonconformist divine, who died in 1713.

but he still retained the friendship, and frequented the conversation, of a very numerous and splendid set of acquaintance. He died July 16, 1736, in the 66th year of his age.¹⁰

Of his poems, many are of that irregular kind, which, when he formed his poetical character, was supposed to be Pindarick. Having fixed his attention on Cowley as a model, he has attempted in some sort to rival him, and has written a *Hymn to Darkness*, evidently as a counter-part to Cowley's *Hymn to Light*.

This hymn seems to be his best performance, and is, for the most part, imagined with great vigour, and expressed with great propriety. I will not transcribe it. The seven first stanzas are good; but the third, fourth, and seventh are the best: the eighth seems to involve a contradiction; the tenth is exquisitely beautiful; the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, are partly mythological, and partly religious, and therefore not suitable to each other: he might better have made the whole merely philosophical.

There are two stanzas in this poem where Yalden may be suspected, though hardly convicted, of having consulted the *Hymnus ad Umbram* of *Woverus*, in the sixth stanza, which answers in some sort to these lines:

Illa suo præest nocturnis numine sacris—
Perque vias errare novis dat spectra figuris,
Manesque excitos medios ululare per agros
Sub noctem, et questu notos complere penates.

¹⁰ According to Bloxam's *Magdalen Register*, cited by Cunningham, Yalden was buried in Bridewell precinct.

And again, at the conclusion :

Illa suo senium secludit corpore toto
 Haud numerans jugi fugientia secula lapsu,
 Ergo ubi postreum mundi compage solutâ
 Hanc rerum molem suprema absumpserit hora
 Ipsa leves cineres nube amplectetur opacâ,
 Et prisco imperio rursus dominabitur UMBRA.

His *Hymn to Light*¹¹ is not equal to the other. He seems to think that there is an East absolute and positive where the Morning rises.

In the last stanza, having mentioned the sudden eruption of new created Light, he says,

Awhile th' Almighty wondering stood.

He ought to have remembered that Infinite Knowledge can never wonder. All wonder is the effect of novelty upon Ignorance.

Of his other poems it is sufficient to say that they deserve perusal, though they are not always exactly polished, though the rhymes are sometimes very ill sorted, and though his faults seem rather the omissions of idleness than the negligences of enthusiasm.

¹¹ Dryden's *Third Miscellany*, 1693.

TICKELL



TICKELL.

THOMAS TICKELL, the son of the reverend Richard Tickell, was born in 1686 at Bridekirk in Cumberland; and in April 1701 became a member of Queen's College in Oxford; in 1708 he was made Master of Arts, and two years afterwards was chosen Fellow; ¹ for which, as he did not comply with the statutes by taking orders, he obtained a dispensation from the Crown.² He held his Fellowship till 1726, and then vacated it, by marrying,³ in that year, at Dublin.

Tickell was not one of those scholars who wear away their lives in closets; he entered early into the world, and was long busy in publick affairs; in which he was initiated under the patronage of Addison, whose notice he is said to have gained by his verses in praise of *Rosamond*.

To those verses it would not have been just to deny regard; for they contain some of the most elegant encomiastick strains; and, among the innumerable poems of the same kind, it will be hard

¹ November 9, 1710.

² October 25, 1717.

³ The maiden name of Tickell's wife was Eustace, a lady with a fortune of 8,000*l.* or 10,000*l.* The marriage was celebrated by the Primate of Ireland.

to find one with which they need to fear a comparison. It may deserve observation, that when Pope wrote long afterwards in praise of Addison,⁴ he has copied, at least has resembled, Tickell.

Let joy salute fair Rosamonda's shade.
 And wreaths of myrtle crown the lovely maid.
 While now perhaps with Dido's ghost she roves,
 And hears and tells the story of their loves,
 Alike they mourn, alike they bless their fate,
 Since Love, which made them wretched, made them great.
 Nor longer that relentless doom bemoan,
 Which gain'd a Virgil and an Addison.

TICKELL.

Then future ages with delight shall see
 How Plato's, Bacon's, Newton's, looks agree ;
 Or in fair series laurel'd bards be shown,
 A Virgil there, and here an Addison.

POPE.

He produced another piece of the same kind at the appearance of *Cato*, with equal skill, but not equal happiness.

When the ministers of queen Anne were negotiating with France, Tickell published *The Prospect of Peace*,⁵ a poem, of which the tendency was to reclaim the nation from the pride of conquest to the pleasures of tranquillity. How far Tickell, whom Swift afterwards mentioned as *Whiggissimus*,⁶ had then connected himself with any party, I know not; this poem certainly did not flatter the practices, or promote the opinions, of the men by whom he was afterwards befriended.

⁴ In the verses *To Mr. Addison, occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals*, written in 1715, and published in 1721.

⁵ 1718.

⁶ In his letter to Dr. Sheridan, dated September 25, 1725.

Mr. Addison, however he hated the men then in power, suffered his friendship to prevail over his publick spirit, and gave in the *Spectator*⁷ such praises of Tickell's poem, that when, after having long wished to peruse it, I laid hold on it at last, I thought it unequal to the honours which it had received, and found it a piece to be approved rather than admired. But the hope excited by a work of genius, being general and indefinite, is rarely gratified. It was read at that time with so much favour, that six editions were sold.

At the arrival of king George he sung *The Royal Progress*; which being inserted in the *Spectator*⁸ is well known, and of which it is just to say, that it is neither high nor low.

The poetical incident of most importance in Tickell's life was his publication⁹ of the first book of the *Iliad*, as translated by himself, an apparent opposition to Pope's *Homer*, of which the first part made its entrance into the world at the same time.

Addison declared that the rival versions were both good; but that Tickell's was the best that ever was made; and with Addison the wits, his adherents and followers, were certain to concur. Pope does not appear to have been much dismayed; for, says he, *I have the town, that is, the mob, on my side.* But he remarks, that *it is common for the smaller party to make up in diligence what they want in numbers; he appeals to the people as his proper judges; and if they are not inclined to con-*

⁷ *The Spectator*, No. 523, October 30, 1712.

⁸ *The Spectator*, No. 620, November 15, 1714.

⁹ In June, 1715.

*damn him, he is in little care about the high-flyers at Button's.*¹⁰

Pope did not long think Addison an impartial judge; for he considered him as the writer of Tickell's version. The reasons for his suspicion I will literally transcribe from Mr. Spence's Collection.

“There had been a coldness (said Mr. Pope) between Mr. Addison and me for some time; and we had not been in company together, for a good while, any where but at Button's coffee-house, where I used to see him almost every day.—On his meeting me there, one day in particular, he took me aside, and said he should be glad to dine with me, at such a tavern, if I staid till those people were gone (Budgel and Philips). We went accordingly; and after dinner Mr. Addison said, ‘That he had wanted for some time to talk with me; that his friend Tickell had formerly, whilst at Oxford, translated the first book of the *Iliad*; that he designed to print it, and had desired him to look it over; that he must therefore beg that I would not desire him to look over my first book, because, if he did, it would have the air of double-dealing.’ I assured him that I did not at all take it ill of Mr. Tickell that he was going to publish his translation; that he certainly had as much right to translate any author as myself; and that publishing both was entering on a fair stage. I then added, that I would not desire him to look over my first

¹⁰ Pope to Craggs, July 15, 1715. Johnson's citation is very free.

“ book of the *Iliad*, because he had looked over
“ Mr. Tickell’s ; but could wish to have the benefit
“ of his observations on my second, which I had
“ then finished, and which Mr. Tickell had not
“ touched upon. Accordingly I sent him the
“ second book the next morning ; and Mr. Addison
“ a few days after returned it, with very high
“ commendations.—Soon after it was generally
“ known that Mr. Tickell was publishing the first
“ book of the *Iliad*, I met Dr. Young in the street ;
“ and, upon our falling into that subject, the
“ Doctor expressed a great deal of surprize at
“ Tickell’s having had such a translation so long
“ by him. He said, that it was inconceivable to
“ him, and that there must be some mistake in
“ the matter ; that each used to communicate to
“ the other whatever verses they wrote, even to
“ the least things ; that Tickell could not have
“ been busied in so long a work there without his
“ knowing something of the matter ; and that he
“ had never heard a single word of it till on this
“ occasion. This surprize of Dr. Young, together
“ with what Steele has said against Tickell in
“ relation to this affair,¹¹ make it highly probable
“ that there was some underhand dealing in that
“ business ; and indeed Tickell himself, who is a
“ very fair worthy man, has since, in a manner, as
“ good as owned it to me. [When it was intro-
“ duced into a conversation between Mr. Tickell

¹¹ Steele, in dedicating *The Drummer* to Congreve, spoke of Tickell as “ the reputed translator of the First Book of Homer ” ; but, as Mr. G. A. Aitken points out (*Life of Steele*, ii. 64), Steele was then incensed against Tickell. For further details the reader may consult Johnson’s *Life of Addison* in the present series.

“ and Mr. Pope by a third person, Tickell did not deny it ; which, considering his honour and zeal for his departed friend, was the same as owning it.]”

Upon these suspicions, with which Dr. Warburton¹² hints that other circumstances concurred, Pope always in his *Art of Sinking* quotes this book as the work of Addison.

To compare the two translations would be tedious ; the palm is now given universally to Pope ; but I think the first lines of Tickell’s were rather to be preferred, and Pope seems to have since borrowed something from them in the correction of his own.

When the Hanover succession was disputed, Tickell gave what assistance his pen would supply. His *Letter to Avignon*¹³ stands high among party-poems ; it expresses contempt without coarseness, and superiority without insolence. It had the success which it deserved, being five times printed.

He was now intimately united to Mr. Addison, who, when he went into Ireland as secretary to the lord Sunderland, took him thither, and employed him in publick business ; and when (1717) afterwards he rose to be secretary of state, made him under-secretary. Their friendship seems to have continued without abatement ; for when Addison died, he left him the charge of publishing his works, with a solemn recommendation to the patronage of Craggs.

To these works he prefixed an elegy on the

¹² In his Notes to the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*.

¹³ *An Epistle from a Lady in England to a Gentleman in Avignon*. 1717.

author,¹⁴ which could owe none of its beauties to the assistance which might be suspected to have strengthened or embellished his earlier compositions; but neither he nor Addison ever produced nobler lines than are contained in the third and fourth paragraphs, nor is a more sublime or more elegant funeral poem to be found in the whole compass of English literature.

He was afterwards (about 1725)¹⁵ made secretary to the Lords justices of Ireland, a place of great honour; in which he continued till 1740, when he died on the twenty-third of April at Bath.

Of the poems yet unmentioned the longest is *Kensington Gardens*,¹⁶ of which the versification is smooth and elegant, but the fiction unskilfully compounded of Grecian Deities and Gothick Fairies. Neither species of those exploded Beings could have done much; and when they are brought together, they only make each other contemptible. To Tickell, however, cannot be refused a high place among the minor poets; nor should it be forgotten that he was one of the contributors to the *Spectator*. With respect to his personal character, he is said to have been a man of gay conversation, at least a temperate lover of wine and company, and in his domestick relations without censure.

¹⁴ In the edition of 1721.

¹⁵ Cunningham gives the exact date as May 4, 1724.

¹⁶ Published in 1722.



HAMMOND



HAMMOND.

OF Mr. HAMMOND, though he be well remembered as a man esteemed and caressed by the elegant and great, I was at first able to obtain no other memorials than such as are supplied by a book called *Cibber's Lives of the Poets*;¹ of which I take this opportunity to testify that it was not written, nor, I believe, ever seen, by either of the Cibbers; but was the work of Robert Shiels, a native of Scotland, a man of very acute understanding, though with little scholastick education, who, not long after the publication of his work, died in London of a consumption. His life was virtuous, and his end was pious. Theophilus Cibber, then a prisoner for debt, imparted, as I was told, his name for ten guineas.² The manuscript of Shiels is now in my possession.³

¹ *The Lives of the Poets of G. Britain and Ireland to the Time of Dean Swift*. Compiled from ample materials scattered in a variety of books, and especially from the MS. notes of the late ingenious Mr. Coxeter and others, collected for this design. 1753. 5 vols.

² Johnson is wrong here, and the statement was immediately contradicted. In the *Monthly Review* for May 1792 it was expressly stated that Shiels collected the material, but, "being very raw in authorship," he submitted his work to the correction of Theophilus Cibber, who also supplied notes, and wrote several of the *Lives* himself. Cibber received twenty-one, not ten pounds for his work, and Shiels nearly seventy. *Vide Boswell* (FitzGerald ed.), ii. 119.

³ "What became of that manuscript I know not. I should

I have since found that Mr. Shiels, though he was no negligent enquirer, has been misled by false accounts; for he relates that James Hammond, the author of the *Elegies*, was the son of a Turkey merchant, and had some office at the prince of Wales's court, till love of a lady, whose name was Dashwood,⁴ for a time disordered his understanding. He was unextinguishably amorous, and his mistress inexorably cruel.

Of this narrative, part is true, and part false. He was the second son of Anthony Hammond,⁵ a man of note among the wits, poets, and parliamentary orators in the beginning of this century, who was allied to Sir Robert Walpole by marrying his sister. He was born about 1710,⁶ and educated at Westminster-school; but it does not appear that he was of any university. He was equerry to the prince of Wales,⁷ and seems to have come very early into publick notice, and to have been distinguished by those whose friendship prejudiced

have liked much to examine it. I suppose it was thrown into the fire in that impetuous combustion of papers, which Johnson I think rashly executed when *moribundus*."—BOSWELL. *Ibid*.

⁴ Kitty Dashwood, the toast of the Oxfordshire Jacobites. It was a popular tradition that she jilted Hammond, and he died of a broken heart. She lived till 1779. Walpole, however, says that the lady was in love with Hammond, and broke off the connection when she found that he did not mean marriage. Beattie affirms that Hammond was not in love with her at the time that he wrote the *Elegies*. The case is investigated by Mr. W. P. Courtney, in his article on Hammond in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁵ Of Somersham Place, Huntingdon, and of Jane, his wife, only daughter of Sir Walter Clarges.

⁶ Mr. W. P. Courtney gives the date as May 22, 1710.

⁷ To whose circle he was introduced by Lord Chesterfield, through the kind offices of Noel Broxholme, who afterwards married Hammond's sister.

mankind at that time in favour of the man on whom they were bestowed; for he was the companion of Cobham, Lyttelton, and Chesterfield. He is said to have divided his life between pleasure and books; in his retirement forgetting the town, and in his gaiety losing the student. Of his literary hours all the effects are here exhibited, of which the elegies were written very early, and the Prologue not long before his death.

In 1741,⁸ he was chosen into parliament for Truro in Cornwall, probably one of those who were elected by the Prince's influence; and died next year in June⁹ at Stowe, the famous seat of the Lord Cobham. His mistress long outlived him, and in 1779 died unmarried. The character which her lover bequeathed her was, indeed, not likely to attract courtship.

The Elegies were published after his death;¹⁰ and while the writer's name was remembered with fondness, they were read with a resolution to admire them. The recommendatory preface of the editor, who was then believed, and is now affirmed by Dr. Maty,¹¹ to be the earl of Chesterfield, raised strong prejudices in their favour.

But of the prefacer, whoever he was, it may be reasonably suspected that he never read the poems; for he professes to value them for a very high species of excellence, and recommends them as the genuine effusions of the mind, which expresses a real passion in the language of nature.

⁸ May 13.

⁹ June 7, 1742.

¹⁰ In 1745.

¹¹ Dr. Mathew Maty, author of the *Journal Britannique*. 1750.

But the truth is, these elegies have neither passion, nature, nor manners. Where there is fiction, there is no passion; he that describes himself as a shepherd, and his Neæra or Delia as a shepherdess, and talks of goats and lambs, feels no passion. He that courts his mistress with Roman imagery deserves to lose her; for she may with good reason suspect his sincerity. Hammond has few sentiments drawn from nature, and few images from modern life. He produces nothing but frigid pedantry. It would be hard to find in all his productions three stanzas that deserve to be remembered.

Like other lovers, he threatens the lady with dying; and what then shall follow?

Wilt thou in tears thy lover's corse attend;
 With eyes averted light the solemn pyre,
 Till all around the doleful flames ascend,
 Then, slowly sinking, by degrees expire?
 To sooth the hovering soul be thine the care,
 With plaintive cries to lead the mournful band.
 In sable weeds the golden vase to bear,
 And cull my ashes with thy trembling hand.
 Panchaia's odours be their costly feast,
 And all the pride of Asia's fragrant year,
 Give them the treasures of the farthest East,
 And, what is still more precious, give thy tear.

Surely no blame can fall upon a nymph who rejected a swain of so little meaning?

His verses are not rugged, but they have no sweetness; they never glide in a stream of melody. Why Hammond or other writers have thought the quatrain of ten syllables elegiac, it is difficult to tell. The character of the Elegy is gentleness and

tenity, but this stanza has been pronounced by Dryden,¹² whose knowledge of English metre was not inconsiderable, to be the most magnificent of all the measures which our language affords.

² In a letter to Sir Robert Howard, 1667.



SOMERVILE



SOMERVILE.

OF Mr. SOMERVILE's life I am not able to say any thing that can satisfy curiosity.

He was a gentleman whose estate was in Warwickshire; his house, where he was born in 1692,¹ is called Edston, a seat inherited from a long line of ancestors; for he was said to be of the first family in his county. He tells of himself, that he was born near the Avon's banks. He was bred at Winchester-school, and was elected fellow of New College. It does not appear that in the places of his education, he exhibited any uncommon proofs of genius or literature. His powers were first displayed in the country, where he was distinguished as a poet, a gentleman, and a skilful and useful Justice of the Peace.

Of the close of his life, those whom his poems

¹ "I have received the following account of Somerville from my friend the Rev. Thomas Chaffers, Vice-Principal of Brasenose College:—

"William Somerville was admitted as Founder's kin to Winchester School in 1690, and was then said to have been thirteen years old last Michaelmas. He succeeded one Thomas Hawkins as Fellow of New College, 12th August, 1690, and resigned on succeeding to his patrimonial property in 1704; making a vacancy for his younger brother Edward, who entered into holy orders, and was presented by the College to the living of Adderbury, in Oxfordshire, 1721."—CUNNINGHAM.

have delighted will read with pain the following account, copied from the Letters of his friend Shenstone, by whom he was too much resembled.

“—Our old friend Somerville is dead! I did not imagine I could have been so sorry as I find myself on this occasion.—*Sublatum quærimus*. I can now excuse all his foibles; impute them to age, and to distress of circumstances: the last of these considerations wrings my very soul to think on. For a man of high spirit, conscious of having (at least in one production) generally pleased the world, to be plagued and threatened by wretches that are low in every sense; to be forced to drink himself into pains of the body, in order to get rid of the pains of the mind, is a misery.”—He died July 19, 1742, and was buried at Wotton, near Henley on Arden.

His distresses need not be much pitied: his estate is said to be fifteen hundred a year, which by his death has devolved to lord Somerville of Scotland. His mother indeed, who lived till ninety, had a jointure of six hundred.

It is with regret that I find myself not better enabled to exhibit memorials of a writer, who at least must be allowed to have set a good example to men of his own class, by devoting part of his time to elegant knowledge; and who has shewn, by the subjects which his poetry has adorned, that it is practicable to be at once a skilful sportsman and a man of letters.²

² “His will, which I have examined, is dated 1732: he was a widower, and Lord Somerville was his executor. His wife had left him a house in Beverley in Yorkshire, which he bequeathed to Lord S. He speaks of his cutting sword, his best horse, his

Somervile has tried many modes of poetry ; and though perhaps he has not in any reached such excellence as to raise much envy, it may commonly be said at least, that *he writes very well for a gentleman*. His serious pieces are sometimes elevated, and his trifles are sometimes elegant. In his verses to Addison the couplet which mentions *Clio*³ is written with the most exquisite delicacy of praise ; it exhibits one of those happy strokes that are seldom attained. In his Odes to Marlborough there are beautiful lines ; but in the second Ode he shews that he knew little of his hero, when he talks of his private virtues. His subjects are commonly such as require no great depth of thought or energy of expression. His Fables are generally stale, and therefore excite no curiosity. Of his favourite, *The Two Springs*,⁴ the fiction is unnatural, and the moral inconsequential. In his Tales⁵ there is too much coarseness, with too little care of language, and not sufficient rapidity of narration.

His great work is his *Chace*,⁶ which he undertook in his maturer age, when his ear was improved to the approbation of blank verse, of which however his two first lines give a bad specimen. To this poem praise cannot be totally denied. He is allowed by sportsmen to write with great

best gun, his diamond ring, his ruby ring, his gold buckles and buttons. To New College, Oxford, he leaves the fifteen volumes of Father Montfancon's Antiquities and Mr. Addison's Works, still preserved in the College Library."—CUNNINGHAM.

³ "When panting Virtue her last efforts made,
You brought your Clio to the virgin's aid."

⁴ Published in 1725.

⁵ *Occasional Poems, Translations, Fables, Tales, &c.* 1727.

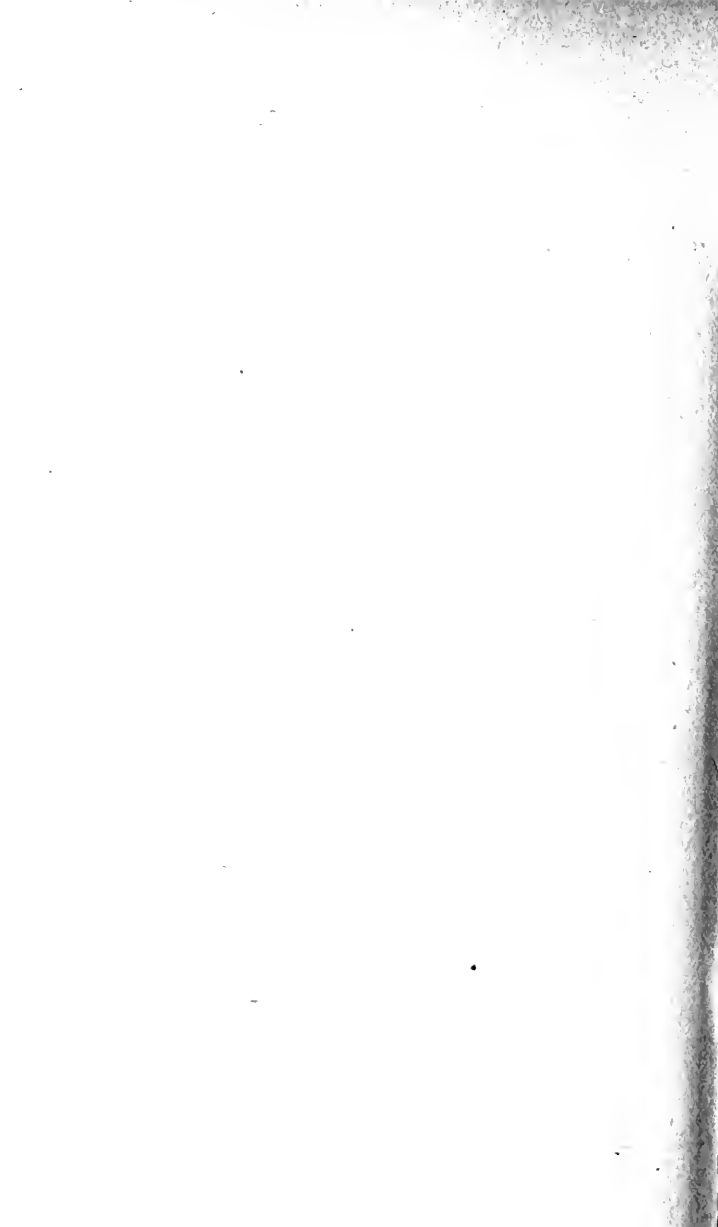
⁶ Published in 1735.

intelligence of his subject, which is the first requisite to excellence; and though it is impossible to interest the common readers of verse in the dangers or pleasures of the chase, he has done all that transition and variety could easily effect; and has, with great propriety, enlarged his plan by the modes of hunting used in other countries.

With still less judgement did he chuse blank verse as the vehicle of *Rural Sports*.⁷ If blank verse be not tumid and gorgeous, it is crippled prose; and familiar images in laboured language have nothing to recommend them but absurd novelty, which, wanting the attractions of Nature, cannot please long. One excellence of the *Splendid Shilling* is, that it is short. Disguise can gratify no longer than it deceives.

⁷ *Field Sports*, published 1742.

SAVAGE





SAVAGE.¹

It has been observed in all ages, that the advantages of nature or of fortune have contributed very little to the promotion of happiness; and that those whom the splendour of their rank, or the

¹ This *Life of Savage* was originally written by Johnson for Cave, the publisher, and appeared in February 1744. Savage died on the last day of July 1743; and it is clear that Johnson at once embarked upon his task of biography from the appearance of the following letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August of that year:—

“MR. URBAN,—As your collections show how often you have owed the ornaments of your poetical pages to the correspondence of the unfortunate and ingenious Mr. Savage, I doubt not but you have so much regard to his memory as to encourage any design that may have a tendency to the preservation of it from insults or calumnies; and, therefore, with some degree of assurance, intreat you to inform the publick, that his life will speedily be published by a person who was favoured with his confidence, and received from himself an account of most of the transactions which he proposes to mention, to the time of his retirement to Swansea, in Wales.

“From that period to his death in the prison of Bristol, the account will be continued from materials still less liable to objection; his own letters, and those of his friends, some of which will be inserted in the work, and abstracts of others subjoined in the margin.

“It may be reasonably imagined, that others may have the same design; but as it is not credible that they can obtain the same materials, it must be expected they will supply from invention the want of intelligence, and that under the title of ‘The Life of Savage,’ they will publish only a novel, filled with romantick adventures, and imaginary amours. You may therefore, perhaps gratify the lovers of truth and wit, by giving me leave to inform

extent of their capacity, have placed upon the summits of human life, have not often given any just occasion to envy in those who look up to them from a lower station: whether it be that apparent superiority incites great designs, and great designs are naturally liable to fatal mis-carriages; or that the general lot of mankind is misery, and the misfortunes of those whose eminence drew upon them an universal attention, have been more carefully recorded, because they were more generally observed, and have in reality been only more conspicuous than those of others, not more frequent, or more severe.

That affluence and power, advantages extrinsic and adventitious, and therefore easily separable from those by whom they are possessed, should very often flatter the mind with expectations of felicity which they cannot give, raises no astonishment; but it seems rational to hope, that intellectual greatness should produce better effects: that minds qualified for great attainments should first endeavour their own benefit; and that they who are most able to teach others the way to happiness, should with most certainty follow it themselves.

But this expectation, however plausible, has been very frequently disappointed. The heroes of

them in your magazine, that my account will be published in 8vo. by Mr. Roberts, in Warwick Lane."

[No signature.]

Cave paid him fifteen guineas for the copyright on December 14, 1743; and some idea of Johnson's despatch in the matter may be gathered from the fact, related by Boswell, that he wrote forty-eight octavo pages at a sitting, without going to bed. *Vide Boswell* (FitzGerald ed.) i. 102.

literary as well as civil history have been very often no less remarkable for what they have atchieved ; and volumes have been written only to enumerate the miseries of the learned, and relate their unhappy lives, and untimely deaths.

To these mournful narratives, I am about to add the Life of Richard Savage, a man whose writings entitle him to an eminent rank in the classes of learning, and whose misfortunes claim a degree of compassion, not always due to the unhappy, as they were often the consequences of the crimes of others, rather than his own.

In the year 1697, Anne Countess of Macclesfield,² having lived for some time upon very uneasy terms with her husband, thought a public confession of adultery the most obvious and expeditious method of obtaining her liberty ; and therefore declared, that the child, with which she was then great, was begotten by the Earl Rivers.³ This, as may be imagined, made her husband no less desirous of a separation than herself, and he prosecuted his design in the most effectual manner ; for he applied not to the ecclesiastical courts for a divorce, but to the parliament for an act, by which his marriage might be dissolved, the nuptial contract totally annulled, and the children of his wife illegitimated. This act, after the usual de-

² *I.e.* Anne Mason, wife of Charles Gerrard, Earl of Macclesfield, who died in 1704.

³ Richard Savage, Earl Rivers, who died August 18, 1712. Concerning the question of Savage's birth there is still much question. Johnson is, at any rate, wrong in saying that the Countess confessed to adultery. She made, as Boswell records, "a strenuous defence by her Counsel." The arguments for and against Savage's claim are set forth in Boswell, q.v. (FitzGerald ed., i. 105).

liberation, he obtained, though without the approbation of some, who considered marriage as an affair only cognizable by ecclesiastical judges; ⁴ and on March 3d ⁵ was separated from his wife, whose fortune, which was very great, was repaid her, and who having, as well as her husband, the liberty of making another choice, was in a short time married to Colonel Brett.

While the Earl of Macclesfield was prosecuting this affair, his wife was, on the 10th of January 1697-8, ⁶ delivered of a son, and the Earl Rivers, by appearing to consider him as his own, left none

⁴ "This year was made remarkable by the dissolution of a marriage solemnised in the face of the church.—*Salmon's Review*.

The following protest is registered in the books of the House of Lords.

Dissentient.

Because that we conceive that this is the first bill of that nature that hath passed, where there was not a divorce first obtained in the Spiritual Court; which we look upon as an ill precedent, and may be of dangerous consequence in the future.

HALIFAX.

ROCHESTER."

—JOHNSON.

⁵ Johnson's date is that upon which the bill first passed the Lords. It was moved there on January 15, 1697-98, and proceeded with at various intervals till March 3, when it passed. It was brought to the Commons on March 5, proceeded on the 7th, 10th, 11th, 14th, and 15th, on which day it was reported without amendments, passed and carried to the Lords.

⁶ Johnson took this date from a *Life of Mr. Richard Savage, written by Mr. Beckingham and another gentleman*, and published in December 1727. Cunningham, however, points out that in *The Earl of Macclesfield's Case*, presented to the Lords in 1698, with a view to divorce, it is stated that Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, under the name of Madam Smith, was delivered of a male child, in Fox Court, near Brook Street, Holborn, at six in the morning of Saturday, January 16, 1696-7, and that the child was baptized on the following Monday, at St. Andrew's, Holborn. The register of the baptism, which is held to refer unquestionably to Savage, is so dated, the child being described as "Richard, son of John Smith and Mary, in Fox Court, in Gray's Inn Lane."

any reason to doubt of the sincerity of her declaration; for he was his godfather, and gave him his own name, which was by his direction inserted in the register of St. Andrew's parish in Holborn, but unfortunately left him to the care of his mother, whom, as she was now set free from her husband, he probably imagined likely to treat with great tenderness the child that had contributed to so pleasing an event. It is not indeed easy to discover what motives could be found to over-balance that natural affection of a parent, or what interest could be promoted by neglect or cruelty. The dread of shame or of poverty, by which some wretches have been incited to abandon or to murder their children, cannot be supposed to have affected a woman who had proclaimed her crimes and solicited reproach, and on whom the clemency of the legislature had undeservedly bestowed a fortune, which would have been very little diminished by the expences which the care of her child could have brought upon her. It was therefore not likely that she would be wicked without temptation, that she would look upon her son from his birth with a kind of resentment and abhorrence; and, instead of supporting, assisting, and defending him, delight to see him struggling with misery, or that she would take every opportunity of aggravating his misfortunes, and obstructing his resources, and with an implacable and restless cruelty continue her persecution from the first hour of his life to the last.

But whatever were her motives, no sooner was her son born, than she discovered a resolution of disowning him; and in a very short time

removed him from her sight, by committing him to the care of a poor woman, whom she directed to educate him as her own, and enjoined never to inform him of his true parents.

Such was the beginning of the life of Richard Savage. Born with a legal claim to honour and to affluence, he was in two months⁷ illegitimated by the parliament, and disowned by his mother, doomed to poverty and obscurity, and launched upon the ocean of life, only that he might be swallowed by its quicksands, or dashed upon its rocks.

His mother could not indeed infect others with the same cruelty. As it was impossible to avoid the inquiries which the curiosity or tenderness of her relations made after her child, she was obliged to give some account of the measures that she had taken; and her mother, the Lady Mason, whether in approbation of her design, or to prevent more criminal contrivances, engaged to transact with the nurse, to pay her for her care, and to superintend the education of the child.

In this charitable office she was assisted by his godmother Mrs. Lloyd, who, while she lived, always looked upon him with that tenderness, which the barbarity of his mother made peculiarly necessary; but her death, which happened in his tenth year,⁸ was another of the misfortunes of

⁷ Johnson's "two months" is dependent upon his incorrect date of Savage's birth. *Vide* note 6, *supra*. The child was fourteen months old when decreed illegitimate, on March 15, 1698.

⁸ In a letter to Mrs. Carter, dated May 10, 1739, and sent with a copy of Mr. Beckingham's *Life*, Savage states that he was *seven* years old at the time of Mrs. Lloyd's death.

his childhood ; for though she kindly endeavoured to alleviate his loss by a legacy of three hundred pounds ; yet, as he had none to prosecute his claim, to shelter him from oppression, or call-in law to the assistance of justice, her will was eluded by the executors, and no part of the money was ever paid.⁹

He was, however, not yet wholly abandoned. The Lady Mason still continued her care, and directed him to be placed at a small grammar-school near St. Alban's, where he was called by the name of his nurse,¹⁰ without the least intimation that he had a claim to any other.

Here he was initiated in literature, and passed through several of the classes, with what rapidity or what applause cannot now be known. As he always spoke with respect of his master, it is probable that the mean rank, in which he then appeared, did not hinder his genius from being distinguished, or his industry from being rewarded ; and if in so low a state he obtained distinction and rewards, it is not likely that they were gained but by genius and industry.

It is very reasonable to conjecture, that his application was equal to his abilities, because his improvement was more than proportioned to the opportunities which he enjoyed ; nor can it be doubted, that if his earliest productions had been

⁹ Boswell (Fitzgerald ed.) i. 406, takes the non-payment of this legacy as evidence that Richard Savage was an impostor, and not the child of Lord Rivers. The argument, however, lacks conviction.

¹⁰ Savage denies this statement in his letter to Mrs. Carter, saying that he passed under another name until he was seventeen, "but not the name of any person with whom he lived."

preserved, like those of happier students, we might in some have found vigorous sallies of that sprightly humour which distinguishes *The Author to be let*, and in others strong touches of that ardent imagination which painted the solemn scenes of *The Wanderer*.

While he was thus cultivating his genius, his father the Earl Rivers was seized with a distemper, which in a short time put an end to his life.¹¹ He had frequently inquired after his son, and had always been amused with fallacious and evasive answers; but, being now in his own opinion on his death-bed, he thought it his duty to provide for him among his other natural children, and therefore demanded a positive account of him, with an importunity not to be diverted or denied. His mother, who could no longer refuse an answer, determined at least to give such as should cut him off for ever from that happiness which competence affords, and therefore declared that he was dead; which is perhaps the first instance of a lye invented by a mother to deprive her son of a provision which was designed him by another, and which she could not expect herself, though he should lose it.

This was therefore an act of wickedness which could not be defeated, because it could not be suspected; the Earl did not imagine there could exist in a human form a mother that would ruin her son without enriching herself, and therefore bestowed upon some other person six thousand pounds, which he had in his will bequeathed to Savage.

¹¹ On August 18, 1712.

The same cruelty which incited his mother to intercept this provision which had been intended him, prompted her in a short time to another project, a project worthy of such a disposition. She endeavoured to rid herself from the danger of being at any time made known to him, by sending him secretly to the American plantations.¹²

By whose kindness this scheme was counteracted, or by whose interposition she was induced to lay aside her design, I know not; it is not improbable that the Lady Mason might persuade or compel her to desist, or perhaps she could not easily find accomplices wicked enough to concur in so cruel an action; for it may be conceived, that those who had by a long gradation of guilt hardened their hearts against the sense of common wickedness, would yet be shocked at the design of a mother to expose her son to slavery and want, to expose him without interest, and without provocation; and Savage might on this occasion find protectors and advocates among those who had long traded in crimes, and whom compassion had never touched before.

Being hindered, by whatever means, from banishing him into another country, she formed soon after a scheme for burying him in poverty and obscurity in his own; and, that his station of life, if not the place of his residence, might keep him for ever at a distance from her, she ordered him to be placed with a shoemaker in Holborn, that, after the usual time of trial, he might become his apprentice.¹³

¹² Savage's Preface to his Miscellany.—JOHNSON.

¹³ Preface to Savage's Miscellanies.—JOHNSON.

These *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several*

It is generally reported, that this project was for some time successful, and that Savage was employed at the awl longer than he was willing to confess; nor was it perhaps any great advantage to him, that an unexpected discovery determined him to quit his occupation.

About this time his nurse, who had always treated him as her own son, died; and it was natural for him to take care of those effects, which by her death were, as he imagined, become his own; he therefore went to her house, opened her boxes, and examined her papers, among which he found some letters written to her by the Lady Mason, which informed him of his birth, and the reasons for which it was concealed.

He was no longer satisfied with the employment which had been allotted him, but thought he had a right to share the affluence of his mother; and therefore without scruple applied to her as her son, and made use of every art to awaken her tenderness, and attract her regard. But neither his letters, nor the interposition of those friends which his merit or his distress procured him, made any impression upon her mind. She still resolved to neglect, though she could no longer disown him.

It was to no purpose that he frequently solicited her to admit him to see her; she avoided him with the most vigilant precaution, and ordered him to be excluded from her house, by whomsoever

Hands appeared in 1726, printed for Samuel Chapman, at the Angel in Pall Mall. They are described upon the title-page as "published by Richard Savage, son of the late Earl Rivers."

he might be introduced, and what reason soever he might give for entering it.

Savage was at the same time so touched with the discovery of his real mother, that it was his frequent practice to walk in the dark evenings¹⁴ for several hours before her door, in hopes of seeing her as she might come by accident to the window, or cross her apartment with a candle in her hand.

But all his assiduity and tenderness were without effect, for he could neither soften her heart, nor open her hand, and was reduced to the utmost miseries of want, while he was endeavouring to awaken the affection of a mother: He was therefore obliged to seek some other means of support; and, having no profession, became by necessity an author.

At this time the attention of all the literary world was engrossed by the Bangorian controversy,¹⁵ which filled the press with pamphlets, and the coffee-houses with disputants. Of this subject, as most popular, he made choice for his first attempt, and, without any other knowledge of the question

¹⁴ See the Plain Dealer.—JOHNSON. The reference is to No. 28.

¹⁵ The Bangorian controversy was aroused, in 1717, by certain doctrines uttered by Dr. Benjamin Hoadley, Bishop of Bangor. The Bishop published a tract, called *A Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-Conformists*, and followed it up on March 31, 1717, by preaching before the King a sermon entitled *The Nature of the Kingdom or Church of God*, in which he affirmed that Christ was the sole Head of His Church, and that obedience in the matters of conscience were due to Him alone. A Committee of Convocation, on May 16, reported that both these utterances tended to subvert all government and discipline in the Church, and to impugn the King's authority in matters ecclesiastical. The reader who is curious to learn more of the Bangorian controversy should consult Mr. Aitken's concise and clear account in his *Life of Richard Steele*, vol. ii. p. 134 *et seq.*

than he had casually collected from conversation, published a poem¹⁶ against the Bishop.

What was the success or merit of this performance, I know not; it was probably lost among the innumerable pamphlets to which that dispute gave occasion. Mr. Savage was himself in a little time ashamed of it, and endeavoured to suppress it, by destroying all the copies that he could collect.

He then attempted a more gainful kind of writing,¹⁷ and in his eighteenth year offered to the stage a comedy borrowed from a Spanish plot, which was refused by the players, and was therefore given by him to Mr. Bullock, who, having more interest, made some slight alterations, and brought it upon the stage, under the title of *WOMAN'S A RIDDLE*,¹⁸ but allowed the unhappy author no part of the profit,¹⁹

Not discouraged however at his repulse, he wrote two years afterwards *LOVE IN A VEIL*, another comedy, borrowed likewise from the Spanish, but with little better success than before; for though it was received and acted,²⁰ yet it appeared so late in the year, that the author obtained no other advantage from it, than the acquaintance of Sir Richard Steele, and Mr. Wilks,²¹ by whom he was pitied, caressed, and relieved.

¹⁶ *The Convocation, or a Battle of Pamphlets, a Poem.* 1717.

¹⁷ Jacob's *Lives of Dramatic Poets.*—JOHNSON.

¹⁸ This play was printed first in 8vo; and afterwards in 12mo, the fifth edition.—JOHNSON.

¹⁹ *Woman's a Riddle* was produced at Lincoln's Inn Theatre, December 4, 1716, and ran twelve nights.

²⁰ Being produced at Drury Lane, June 17, 1718.

²¹ The actor and manager, Steele's colleague at Drury Lane.

Sir Richard Steele, having declared in his favour with all the ardour of benevolence which constituted his character, promoted his interest with the utmost zeal, related his misfortunes, applauded his merit, took all the opportunities of recommending him, and asserted, that "the in-
"humanity of his mother had given him a right to
"find every good man his father."²²

Nor was Mr. Savage admitted to his acquaintance only, but to his confidence, of which he sometimes related an instance too extraordinary to be omitted, as it affords a very just idea of his patron's character.

He was once desired by Sir Richard, with an air of the utmost importance, to come very early to his house the next morning. Mr. Savage came as he had promised, found the chariot at the door, and Sir Richard waiting for him, and ready to go out. What was intended, and whither they were to go, Savage could not conjecture, and was not willing to enquire; but immediately seated himself with Sir Richard; the coachman was ordered to drive, and they hurried with the utmost expedition to Hyde-Park Corner, where they stopped at a petty tavern,²³ and retired to a private room.

²² Plain Dealer.—JOHNSON.

In No. 73, November 30, 1724, Hill wrote a sketch of Savage's life, accompanying an appeal from Savage for subscriptions for a collected edition of his poems. In this sketch was the following sentence, to which Johnson here alludes: "I think it was finely said by a gentleman whose writings and humanity were for many years the admiration of the Kingdom, that 'It ought to be the care of all, in whose power it lay, to lift Mr. Savage above a sense of his mother's cruelty; because a misery so undeserved had intitled him to a right of finding every good man his father.'"

²³ Mr. Aitken (*Steele*, ii. 105) cites Jesse as fixing this house as

Sir Richard then informed him, that he intended to publish a pamphlet, and that he had desired him to come thither that he might write for him. They soon sat down to the work. Sir Richard dictated, and Savage wrote, till the dinner that had been ordered was put upon the table. Savage was surprized at the meanness of the entertainment, and after some hesitation ventured to ask for wine, which Sir Richard, not without reluctance, ordered to be brought. They then finished their dinner, and proceeded in their pamphlet, which they concluded in the afternoon.

Mr. Savage then imagined his task over, and expected that Sir Richard would call for the reckoning, and return home ; but his expectations deceived him, for Sir Richard told him, that he was without money, and that the pamphlet must be sold before the dinner could be paid for ; and Savage was therefore obliged to go and offer their new production to sale for two guineas, which with some difficulty he obtained. Sir Richard then returned home, having retired that day only to avoid his creditors, and composed the pamphlet only to discharge his reckoning.

Mr. Savage related another fact equally uncommon, which, though it has no relation to his life, ought to be preserved. Sir Richard Steele having one day invited to his house a great number of persons of the first quality, they were surprized at the number of liveries which surrounded the table ; and after dinner, when wine

being presumably the "Triumphal Chariot" between "Hercules Pillars" and what is now Hamilton Place.

and mirth had set them free from the observation of a rigid ceremony, one of them enquired of Sir Richard, how such an expensive train of domestics could be consistent with his fortune. Sir Richard very frankly confessed, that they were fellows of whom he would very willingly be rid. And being then asked, why he did not discharge them, declared that they were bailiffs who had introduced themselves with an execution, and whom, since he could not send them away, he had thought it convenient to embellish with liveries, that they might do him credit while they staid.²¹

His friends were diverted with the expedient, and, by paying the debt, discharged their attendance, having obliged Sir Richard to promise that they should never again find him graced with a retinue of the same kind.

Under such a tutor, Mr. Savage was not likely to learn prudence or frugality; and perhaps many of the misfortunes, which the want of those virtues brought upon him in the following parts of his life, might be justly imputed to so unimproving an example.

Nor did the kindness of Sir Richard end in common favours. He proposed to have established him in some settled scheme of life, and to have contracted a kind of alliance with him, by marry-

²¹ Mr. Austin Dobson (*Steele*, p. 222) remarks that "a quasi-colour is given to this story by the fact that it seems to be referred to in *Examiner*, No. 11, which attacks Steele as Mr. Tatler. 'I have heard of a certain Illustrious Person, who having a *Guard du Corps*, that forc'd their attendance upon him, put them into a Livery, and maintain'd them as his Servants: thus answering that famous Question, *Quis custodiet ipsos Custodes?* For he, I think, might properly be said to keep his Keepers, in *English* at least, if not in *Latin*.'"

ing him to a natural daughter,²⁵ on whom he intended to bestow a thousand pounds. But though he was always lavish of future bounties, he conducted his affairs in such a manner, that he was very seldom able to keep his promises, or execute his own intentions; and, as he was never able to raise the sum which he had offered, the marriage was delayed. In the mean time he was officiously informed, that Mr. Savage had ridiculed him; by which he was so much exasperated, that he withdrew the allowance which he had paid him, and never afterwards admitted him to his house.²⁶

It is not indeed unlikely that Savage might by his imprudence, expose himself to the malice of a tale-bearer; for his patron had many follies, which, as his discernment easily discovered, his imagination might sometimes incite him to mention too ludicrously. A little knowledge of the world is sufficient to discover that such weakness is very common, and that there are few who do not sometimes, in the wantonness of thoughtless mirth, or the heat of transient resentment, speak of their friends and benefactors with levity and contempt, though in their cooler moments they want neither sense of their kindness, nor reverence for their virtue. The fault therefore

²⁵ Miss Ousley, who afterwards married Mr. Aynston, a Welsh gentleman. She was an inmate of Steele's house, accepted by his wife.

²⁶ In the *Letter to Mrs. Carter*, already several times cited, Savage affirmed (1) that Steele, so far from making him an allowance, never gave him a single present; and (2) that the reason that the marriage with Miss Ousley never took place was that Savage "declined the proposal, and never could be induced to see the lady."

of Mr. Savage was rather negligence than ingratitude; but Sir Richard must likewise be acquitted of severity, for who is there that can patiently bear contempt from one whom he has relieved and supported, whose establishment he has laboured, and whose interest he has promoted?

He was now again abandoned to fortune, without any other friend than Mr. Wilks;²⁷ a man, who, whatever were his abilities or skill as an actor, deserves at least to be remembered for his virtues,²⁸ which are not often to be found in the world, and perhaps less often in his profession than in others. To be humane, generous, and candid, is a very high degree of merit in any case; but those qualities deserve still greater praise, when they are found in that condition,

²⁷ Here again Savage corrected the *Life* of 1727, affirming that the friend to whom he was indebted was Mrs. Oldfield, and not Wilks.

²⁸ "As it is a loss to mankind when any good action is forgotten. I shall insert another instance of Mr. Wilks's generosity, very little known. Mr. Smith, a gentleman educated at Dublin, being hindered by an impediment in his pronunciation from engaging in orders, for which his friends designed him, left his own country, and came to London in quest of employment, but found his solicitations fruitless, and his necessities every day more pressing. In this distress he wrote a tragedy, and offered it to the players, by whom it was rejected. Thus were his last hopes defeated, and he had no other prospect than of the most deplorable poverty. But Mr. Wilks thought his performance, though not perfect, at least worthy of some reward, and therefore offered him a benefit. This favour he improved with so much diligence, that the house offered him a considerable sum, with which he went to Leyden, applied himself to the study of physic; and prosecuted his design with so much diligence and success, that, when Dr. Boerhaave was desired by the Czarina to recommend proper persons to introduce into Russia the practice and study of physic, Dr. Smith was one of those whom he selected. He had a considerable pension settled on him at his arrival, and was one of the chief physicians at the Russian court."
—JOHNSON.

which makes almost every other man, for whatever reason, contemptuous, insolent, petulant, selfish, and brutal.

As Mr. Wilks was one of those to whom calamity seldom complained without relief, he naturally took an unfortunate wit into his protection, and not only assisted him in any casual distresses, but continued an equal and steady kindness to the time of his death.

By his interposition Mr. Savage once obtained from his mother²⁹ fifty pounds, and a promise of one hundred and fifty more; but it was the fate of this unhappy man, that few promises of any advantage to him were performed. His mother was infected among others with the general madness of the South Sea traffic; and, having been disappointed in her expectations, refused to pay what perhaps nothing but the prospect of sudden affluence prompted her to promise.

Being thus obliged to depend upon the friendship of Mr. Wilks, he was consequently an assiduous frequenter of the theatres; and in a short time the amusements of the stage took such possession of his mind, that he never was absent from a play in several years.

This constant attendance naturally procured him the acquaintance of the players, and, among others, of Mrs. Oldfield, who was so much pleased with his conversation, and touched with his misfortunes, that she allowed him a settled pension of fifty pounds a year, which was during her life regularly paid.

²⁹ "This I write upon the credit of the author of his life, which was published 1727."—JOHNSON.

That this act of generosity may receive its due praise, and that the good actions of Mrs. Oldfield may not be sullied by her general character, it is proper to mention what Mr. Savage often declared in the strongest terms, that he never saw her alone, or in any other place than behind the scenes.

At her death³⁰ he endeavoured to shew his gratitude in the most decent manner, by wearing mourning as for a mother; but did not celebrate her in elegies, because he knew that too great profusion of praise would only have revived those faults which his natural equity did not allow him to think less, because they were committed by one who favoured him; but of which, though his virtue would not endeavour to palliate them, his gratitude would not suffer him to prolong the memory, or diffuse the censure.³¹

In his *Wanderer*,³² he has indeed taken an opportunity of mentioning her, but celebrates her not for her virtue, but her beauty, an excellence which none ever denied her: this is the only encomium with which he has rewarded her liberality, and perhaps he has even in this been too lavish of his praise. He seems to have thought, that never to mention his benefactress would have an appearance of ingratitude, though to have dedicated any particular performance to her memory would have only betrayed an officious

³⁰ October 23, 1730.

³¹ Cunningham, however, quotes Chetwood (*History of the Stage*, 1749) as ascribing to Savage a copy of verses, called *A Poem to the Memory of Mrs. Oldfield*, which was printed in quarto in 1730.

³² *The Wanderer: A Poem. In Five Canto's.* 1729.

partiality, that, without exalting her character, would have depressed his own.

He had sometimes, by the kindness of Mr. Wilks, the advantage of a benefit, on which occasions he often received uncommon marks of regard and compassion ; and was once told by the Duke of Dorset, that it was just to consider him as an injured nobleman, and that in his opinion the nobility ought to think themselves obliged, without solicitation, to take every opportunity of supporting him by their countenance and patronage. But he had generally the mortification to hear that the whole interest of his mother was employed to frustrate his applications, and that she never left any expedient untried, by which he might be cut off from the possibility of supporting life. The same disposition she endeavoured to diffuse among all those over whom nature or fortune gave her any influence, and indeed succeeded too well in her design ; but could not always propagate her effrontery with her cruelty, for some of those, whom she incited against him, were ashamed of their own conduct, and boasted of that relief which they never gave him.

In this censure I do not indiscriminately involve all his relations ; for he has mentioned with gratitude the humanity of one Lady, whose name I am now unable to recollect, and to whom therefore I cannot pay the praises which she deserves for having acted well in opposition to influence, precept, and example.

The punishment which our laws inflict upon those parents who murder their infants is well known, nor has its justice ever been contested ;

but if they deserve death who destroy a child in its birth, what pains can be severe enough for her who forbears to destroy him only to inflict sharper miseries upon him ; who prolongs his life only to make him miserable ; and who exposes him. without care and without pity, to the malice of oppression, the caprices of chance, and the temptations of poverty ; who rejoices to see him overwhelmed with calamities ; and, when his own industry, or the charity of others, has enabled him to rise for a short time above his miseries, plunges him again into his former distress ?

The kindness of his friends not affording him any constant supply, and the prospect of improving his fortune by enlarging his acquaintance necessarily leading him to places of expence, he found it necessary³³ to endeavour once more at dramatic poetry, for which he was now better qualified by a more extensive knowledge, and longer observation. But having been unsuccessful in comedy, though rather for want of opportunities than genius, he resolved now to try whether he should not be more fortunate in exhibiting a tragedy.

The story which he chose for the subject, was that of Sir Thomas Overbury, a story well adapted to the stage, though perhaps not far enough removed from the present age, to admit properly the fictions necessary to complete the plan : for the mind, which naturally loves truth, is always most offended with the violation of those truths of which we are most certain ; and we of course

³³ In 1724.—JOHNSON.

conceive those facts most certain, which approach nearest to our own time.

Out of this story he formed a tragedy, which, if the circumstances in which he wrote it be considered, will afford at once an uncommon proof of strength of genius, and evenness of mind, of a serenity not to be ruffled, and an imagination not to be suppressed.

During a considerable part of the time in which he was employed upon this performance, he was without lodging, and often without meat; nor had he any other conveniences for study than the fields or the street allowed him; there he used to walk and form his speeches, and afterwards step into a shop, beg for a few moments the use of the pen and ink, and write down what he had composed, upon paper which he had picked up by accident.

If the performance of a writer thus distressed is not perfect, its faults ought surely to be imputed to a cause very different from want of genius, and must rather excite pity than provoke censure.

But when under these discouragements the tragedy was finished, there yet remained the labour of introducing it on the stage, an undertaking, which, to an ingenuous mind, was in a very high degree vexatious and disgusting; for, having little interest or reputation, he was obliged to submit himself wholly to the players, and admit, with whatever reluctance, the emendations of Mr. Cibber, which he always considered as the disgrace of his performance.

He had indeed in Mr. Hill³⁴ another critic of

³⁴ Aaron Hill, the dramatist, concerning whom Johnson writes more fully in his *Life of Pope*, *q.v.*

a very different class, from whose friendship he received great assistance on many occasions, and whom he never mentioned but with the utmost tenderness and regard. He had been for some time distinguished by him with very particular kindness, and on this occasion it was natural to apply to him as an author of an established character. He therefore sent this tragedy to him, with a short copy³⁵ of verses, in which he desired his correction. Mr. Hill, whose humanity and politeness are generally known, readily complied with his request; but as he is remarkable for singularity of sentiment, and bold experiments in language, Mr. Savage did not think his play much improved by his innovation, and had even at that time the courage to reject several passages which he could not approve; and, what is still more laudable, Mr. Hill had the generosity not to resent the neglect of his alterations, but wrote the prologue and epilogue, in which he touches on the circumstances of the author with great tenderness.

After all these obstructions and compliances, he was only able to bring his play upon the stage in the summer,³⁶ when the chief actors had retired, and the rest were in possession of the house for their own advantage. Among these, Mr. Savage was admitted to play the part of Sir Thomas Overbury, by which he gained no great reputation, the theatre being a province for which nature

³⁵ Printed in the late collection of his poems.—JOHNSON.

Verses to Aaron Hill, Esq. with Sir Thomas Overbury, expecting him to correct it.

³⁶ June 12, 1723.

seemed not to have designed him ; for neither his voice, look, nor gesture, were such as were expected on the stage ; and he was so much ashamed of having been reduced to appear as a player, that he always blotted out his name from the list, when a copy of his tragedy was to be shown to his friends.

In the publication ³⁷ of his performance he was more successful, for the rays of genius that glimmered in it, that glimmered through all the mists which poverty and Cibber had been able to spread over it, procured him the notice and esteem of many persons eminent for their rank, their virtue, and their wit.

Of this play, acted, printed, and dedicated, the accumulated profits arose to an hundred pounds, which he thought at that time a very large sum, having been never master of so much before.

In the Dedication,³⁸ for which he received ten guineas, there is nothing remarkable. The Preface contains a very liberal encomium on the blooming excellences of Mr. Theophilus Cibber, which Mr. Savage could not in the latter part of his life see his friends about to read without snatching the play out of their hands.³⁹ The generosity

³⁷ In 1724.

³⁸ To Herbert Tryst, Esq. of Herefordshire.—JOHNSON.

³⁹ To this statement of Johnson, Theophilus Cibber replied, in his own *Lives of the Poets*, as follows:—"The truth is, I met Savage one summer in a condition too melancholy for description. He was starving. I supported him, and my father cloathed him 'till his tragedy was brought on the stage, where it met with success in the representation, tho' acted by the young part of the company, in the summer season : whatever might be the merits of his play, his necessities were too pressing to wait 'till winter for its performance. When it was just going to be published (as I met with uncommon encouragement in my young attempt in the part of

of Mr. Hill did not end on this occasion ; for afterwards, when Mr. Savage's necessities returned, he encouraged a subscription to a Miscellany of Poems in a very extraordinary manner, by publishing his story in the *Plain Dealer*,⁴⁰ with some affecting lines,⁴¹ which he asserts to have been written by Mr. Savage upon the treatment received by him from his mother, but of which he was himself the author, as Mr. Savage afterwards declared. These lines, and the paper in which they were inserted, had a very powerful effect upon all but his mother, whom, by making her cruelty more public, they only hardened in her aversion.

Mr. Hill not only promoted the subscription to the Miscellany, but furnished likewise the greatest part of the Poems of which it is composed, and particularly *The Happy Man*, which he published as a specimen.

The subscriptions of those whom these papers should influence to patronize merit in distress,

Somerset) he repeated to me a most extraordinary compliment, as he might then think it, which, he said, he intended to make me in his preface. Neither my youth (for I was then but 18) or vanity was so devoid of judgment as to prevent my objecting to it. I told him, I imagined this extravagancy would have so contrary an effect to his intention, that what he kindly meant for praise, might be misinterpreted, or render him liable to censure, and me to ridicule; I insisted on his omitting it: contrary to his usual obstinacy he consented, and sent his order to the printer to leave it out; it was too late; the sheets were all work'd off, and the play was advertised to come out (as it did) the next day."

⁴⁰ "The *Plain Dealer* was a periodical paper, written by Mr. Hill and Mr. Bond, whom Mr. Savage called the two contending powers of light and darkness. They wrote by turns each six Essays; and the character of the work was observed regularly to rise in Mr. Hill's weeks, and fall in Mr. Bond's."—JOHNSON.

⁴¹ *Verses made for Mr. S-v-g-e, and sent to my Lady M-ls-d, his mother.*

without any other solicitation, were directed to be left at Button's coffee-house; and Mr. Savage going thither a few days afterwards, without expectation of any effect from his proposal, found to his surprise seventy guineas,⁴² which had been sent him in consequence of the compassion excited by Mr. Hill's pathetic representation.

To this Miscellany he wrote a Preface, in which he gives an account of his mother's cruelty in a very uncommon strain of humour, and with a gaiety of imagination, which the success of his subscription probably produced.

The Dedication is addressed to the Lady Mary Wortley Montague, whom he flatters without reserve, and, to confess the truth, with very little art.⁴³ The same observation may be extended to

⁴² "The names of those who so generously contributed to his relief, having been mentioned in a former account, ought not to be omitted here. They were the Duchess of Cleveland, Lady Cheyney, Lady Castlemain, Lady Gower, Lady Lechmere, the Dutchess Dowager and Dutchess of Rutland, Lady Strafford, the Countess Dowager of Warwick, Mrs. Mary Floyer, Mrs. Sofuel Noel, Duke of Rutland, Lord Gainsborough, Lord Milsington, Mr. John Savage."—JOHNSON.

⁴³ "This the following extract from it will prove.

"Since our country has been honoured with the glory of your wit, as elevated and immortal as your soul, it no longer remains a doubt whether your sex have strength of mind in proportion to their sweetness. There is something in your verses as distinguished as your air.—They are as strong as truth, as deep as reason, as clear as innocence, and as smooth as beauty.—They contain a nameless and peculiar mixture of force and grace, which is at once so movingly serene, and so majestically lovely, that it is too amiable to appear any where but in your eyes and in your writings.

"As fortune is not more my enemy than I am the enemy of flattery, I know not how I can forbear this application to your Ladyship, because there is scarce a possibility that I should say more than I believe, when I am speaking of your Excellence."—JOHNSON.

all his Dedications: his compliments are constrained and violent, heaped together without the grace of order, or the decency of introduction: he seems to have written his panegyrics for the perusal only of his patrons, and to have imagined that he had no other task than to pamper them with praises however gross, and that flattery would make its way to the heart, without the assistance of elegance or invention.

Soon afterwards, the death of the king⁴⁴ furnished a general subject for a poetical contest, in which Mr. Savage engaged, and is allowed to have carried the prize of honour from his competitors; but I know not whether he gained by his performance any other advantage than the increase of his reputation; though it must certainly have been with farther views that he prevailed upon himself to attempt a species of writing, of which all the topics had been long before exhausted, and which was made at once difficult by the multitudes that had failed in it, and those that had succeeded.

He was now advancing in reputation, and though frequently involved in very distressful perplexities, appeared however to be gaining upon mankind, when both his fame and his life were endangered by an event, of which it is not yet determined, whether it ought to be mentioned as a crime or a calamity.

On the 20th of November 1727, Mr. Savage came from Richmond, where he then lodged, that he might pursue his studies with less interruption,

⁴⁴ June 11, 1727.

with an intent to discharge another lodging which he had in Westminster; and accidentally meeting two gentlemen his acquaintances, whose names were Merchant and Gregory, he went in with them to a neighbouring coffee-house, and sat v drinking till it was late, it being in no time of Mr. Savage's life any part of his character to be the first of the company that desired to separate. He would willingly have gone to bed in the same house; but there was not room for the whole company, and therefore they agreed to ramble about the streets, and divert themselves with such amusements as should offer themselves till morning.

In this walk they happened unluckily to discover a light in Robinson's coffee-house, near Charing-cross, and therefore went in. Merchant, with some rudeness, demanded a room, and was told that there was a good fire in the next parlour, which the company were about to leave, being then paying their reckoning. Merchant, not satisfied with this answer, rushed into the room, and was followed by his companions. He then petulantly placed himself between the company and the fire, and soon after kicked down the table. This produced a quarrel, swords were drawn on both sides, and one Mr. James Sinclair was killed. Savage, having wounded likewise a maid that held him, forced his way with Merchant out of the house; but being intimidated and confused, without resolution either to fly or stay, they were taken in a back-court by one of the company and some soldiers, whom he had called to his assistance.

Being secured and guarded that night, they were in the morning carried before three justices, who committed them to the Gatehouse, from whence, upon the death of Mr. Sinclair, which happened the same day, they were removed in the night to Newgate, where they were however treated with some distinction, exempted from the ignominy of chains, and confined, not among the common criminals, but in the Press-yard.

When the day of trial came, the court was crowded in a very unusual manner, and the public appeared to interest itself as in a cause of general concern. The witnesses against Mr. Savage and his friends were, the woman who kept the house, which was a house of ill fame, and her maid, the men who were in the room with Mr. Sinclair, and a woman of the town, who had been drinking with them, and with whom one of them had been seen in bed. They swore in general, that Merchant gave the provocation, which Savage and Gregory drew their swords to justify; that Savage drew first, and that he stabbed Sinclair when he was not in a posture of defence, or while Gregory commanded his sword; that after he had given the thrust he turned pale, and would have retired, but the maid clung round him, and one of the company endeavoured to detain him, from whom he broke, by cutting the maid on the head, but was afterwards taken in a court.

There was some difference in their depositions; one did not see Savage give the wound, another saw it given when Sinclair held his point towards the ground; and the woman of the town asserted, that she did not see Sinclair's sword at all: this

difference however was very far from amounting to inconsistency; but it was sufficient to shew, that the hurry of the dispute was such, that it was not easy to discover the truth with relation to particular circumstances, and that therefore some deductions were to be made from the credibility of the testimonies.

Sinclair had declared several times before his death, that he received his wound from Savage, nor did Savage at his trial deny the fact, but endeavoured partly to extenuate it, by urging the suddenness of the whole action, and the impossibility of any ill design, or premeditated malice, and partly to justify it by the necessity of self-defence, and the hazard of his own life, if he had lost that opportunity of giving the thrust: he observed, that neither reason nor law obliged a man to wait for the blow which was threatened, and which, if he should suffer it, he might never be able to return; that it was always allowable to prevent an assault, and to preserve life by taking away that of the adversary, by whom it was endangered.

With regard to the violence with which he endeavoured to escape, he declared, that it was not his design to fly from justice, or decline a trial, but to avoid the expences and severities of a prison; and that he intended to have appeared at the bar without compulsion.

This defence, which took up more than an hour, was heard by the multitude that thronged the court with the most attentive and respectful silence: those who thought he ought not to be acquitted, owned that applause could not be refused

him; and those who before pitied his misfortunes, now revered his abilities.

The witnesses which appeared against him were proved to be persons of characters which did not entitle them to much credit; a common strumpet, a woman by whom strumpets were entertained, and a man by whom they were supported; and the character of Savage was by several persons of distinction asserted to be that of a modest inoffensive man, not inclined to broils, or to insolence, and who had, to that time, been only known for his misfortunes and his wit.

Had his audience been his judges, he had undoubtedly been acquitted; but Mr. Page, who was then upon the bench, treated him with his usual insolence and severity,⁴⁵ and when he had summed up the evidence, endeavoured to exasperate the jury, as Mr. Savage used to relate it, with this eloquent harangue:

‘Gentlemen of the jury, you are to consider that Mr. Savage is a very great man, a much greater man than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; that he wears very fine clothes, much finer clothes than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; that he has abundance of money in his pocket, much more money than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; but, gentlemen of the jury, is it not a very hard case, gentlemen of the jury, that Mr. Savage should therefore kill you or me, gentlemen of the jury?’

Mr. Savage, hearing his defence thus misre-

⁴⁵ Cf. Pope *To Mr. Fortescue*

“Slander or poison dread from Delia’s rage,
Hard words or hanging, if your judge be Page.”

presented, and the men who were to decide his fate incited against him by invidious comparisons, resolutely asserted, that his cause was not candidly explained, and began to recapitulate what he had before said with regard to his condition, and the necessity of endeavouring to escape the expences of imprisonment; but the judge having ordered him to be silent, and repeated his orders without effect, commanded that he should be taken from the bar by force.

The jury then heard the opinion of the judge, that good characters were of no weight against positive evidence, though they might turn the scale where it was doubtful; and that though, when two men attack each other, the death of either is only manslaughter; but where one is the aggressor, as in the case before them, and, in pursuance of his first attack, kills the other, the law supposes the action, however sudden, to be malicious. They then deliberated upon their verdict, and determined that Mr. Savage and Mr. Gregory were guilty of murder, and Mr. Merchant, who had no sword, only of manslaughter.

Thus ended this memorable trial, which lasted eight hours. Mr. Savage and Mr. Gregory were conducted back to prison, where they were more closely confined, and loaded with irons of fifty pounds weight: four days afterwards they were sent back to the court to receive sentence; on which occasion Mr. Savage made, as far as it could be retained in memory,⁴⁶ the following speech.

⁴⁶ This speech is taken, *vide* note 47, *infra*, from the *Life* of 1727. Savage said of it, in the letter to Mrs. Carter, that the report was "genuine and exact."

“ It is now, my Lord, too late to offer any thing
“ by way of defence or vindication ; nor can we
“ expect from your Lordships, in this court, but the
“ sentence which the law requires you, as judges,
“ to pronounce against men of our calamitous
“ condition.—But we are also persuaded, that as
“ mere men, and out of this seat of rigorous
“ justice, you are susceptible of the tender passions,
“ and too humane, not to commiserate the unhappy
“ situation of those, whom the law sometimes
“ perhaps—exacts—from you to pronounce upon.
“ No doubt you distinguish between offences, which
“ arise out of premeditation, and a disposition
“ habituated to vice or immorality, and transgres-
“ sions, which are the unhappy and unforeseen
“ effects of casual absence of reason, and sudden
“ impulse of passion : we therefore hope you will
“ contribute all you can to an extension of that
“ mercy, which the gentlemen of the jury have
“ been pleased to shew Mr. Merchant, who (allow-
“ ing facts as sworn against us by the evidence)
“ has led us into this our calamity. I hope this
“ will not be construed, as if we meant to reflect
“ upon that gentleman, or remove any thing from
“ us upon him, or that we repine the more at our
“ fate, because he has no participation of it : No,
“ my Lord ! For my part, I declare nothing could
“ more soften my grief, than to be without any
“ companion in so great a misfortune.”⁴⁷

Mr. Savage had now no hopes of life, but from the mercy of the crown, which was very earnestly solicited by his friends, and which, with whatever

⁴⁷ Mr. Savage's Life.—JOHNSON.

difficulty the story may obtain belief, was obstructed only by his mother.

To prejudice the Queen against him, she made use of an incident, which was omitted in the order of time, that it might be mentioned together with the purpose which it was made to serve. Mr. Savage, when he had discovered his birth, had an incessant desire to speak to his mother, who always avoided him in publick, and refused him admission into her house. One evening walking, as it was his custom, in the street that she inhabited, he saw the door of her house by accident open; he entered it, and, finding no person in the passage to hinder him, went up stairs to salute her. She discovered him before he could enter her chamber, alarmed the family with the most distressful outcries, and when she had by her screams gathered them about her, ordered them to drive out of the house that villain, who had forced himself in upon her, and endeavoured to murder her. Savage, who had attempted with the most submissive tenderness to soften her rage, hearing her utter so detestable an accusation, thought it prudent to retire; and, I believe, never attempted afterwards to speak to her.

But, shocked as he was with her falsehood and her cruelty, he imagined that she intended no other use of her lye, than to set herself free from his embraces and solicitations, and was very far from suspecting that she would treasure it in her memory, as an instrument of future wickedness, or that she would endeavour for this fictitious assault to deprive him of his life.

But when the Queen was solicited for his

pardon, and informed of the severe treatment which he had suffered from his judge, she answered, that, however unjustifiable might be the manner of his trial, or whatever extenuation the action for which he was condemned might admit, she could not think that man a proper object of the King's mercy, who had been capable of entering his mother's house in the night, with an intent to murder her.

By whom this atrocious calumny had been transmitted to the Queen; whether she that invented had the front to relate it; whether she found any one weak enough to credit it, or corrupt enough to concur with her in her hateful design. I know not: but methods had been taken to persuade the Queen so strongly of the truth of it, that she for a long time refused to hear any one of those who petitioned for his life.

Thus had Savage perished by the evidence of a bawd, a strumpet, and his mother, had not justice and compassion procured him an advocate of rank too great to be rejected unheard, and of virtue too eminent to be heard without being believed. His merit and his calamities happened to reach the ear of the Countess of Hertford,⁴⁸ who engaged in his support with all the tenderness that is excited by pity, and all the zeal which is kindled by generosity; and, demanding an audience of the Queen, laid before her the whole series of

⁴⁸ "Frances Thynn, afterwards (1748) Duchess of Somerset, to whom Thomson dedicated his poem of *Spring* and Shenstone his *Ode on Rural Elegance*. Her only child was married to Sir Hugh Smithson, Bart., created (1766) Duke of Northumberland. When she interceded for Savage, she was a lady of the bedchamber to the Queen. She died July, 1754."—CUNNINGHAM.

his mother's cruelty, exposed the improbability of an accusation by which he was charged with an intent to commit a murder that could produce no advantage, and soon convinced her how little his former conduct could deserve to be mentioned as a reason for extraordinary severity.

The interposition of this Lady was so successful, that he was soon after admitted to bail, and, on the 9th of March 1728, pleaded the King's pardon.

It is natural to enquire upon what motives his mother could prosecute him in a manner so outrageous and implacable; for what reason she could employ all the arts of malice, and all the snares of calumny, to take away the life of her own son, of a son who never injured her, who was never supported by her expence, nor obstructed any prospect of pleasure or advantage; why she should endeavour to destroy him by a lye—a lye which could not gain credit, but must vanish of itself at the first moment of examination, and of which only this can be said to make it probable, that it may be observed from her conduct, that the most execrable crimes are sometimes committed without apparent temptation.

This mother is still alive,⁴⁹ and may perhaps even yet, though her malice was so often defeated, enjoy the pleasure of reflecting, that the life, which she often endeavoured to destroy, was at least shortened by her maternal offices; that though she could not transport her son to the plantations, bury him in the shop of a mechanic, or hasten the

⁴⁹ That is, was alive in 1744, when the *Life of Savage* first appeared. She died at her house in Old Bond Street, on October 11, 1753.

hand of the public executioner, she has yet had the satisfaction of imbittering all his hours, and forcing him into exigences that hurried on his death.

It is by no means necessary to aggravate the enormity of this woman's conduct, by placing it in opposition to that of the Countess of Hertford; no one can fail to observe how much more amiable it is to relieve, than to oppress, and to rescue innocence from destruction, than to destroy without an injury.

Mr. Savage, during his imprisonment, his trial, and the time in which he lay under sentence of death, behaved with great firmness and equality of mind, and confirmed by his fortitude the esteem of those who before admired him for his abilities.⁵⁰ The peculiar circumstances of his life were made more generally known by a short account,⁵¹ which was then published, and of which several thousands were in a few weeks dispersed over the nation: and the compassion of mankind operated so powerfully in his favour, that he was enabled, by frequent presents, not only to support himself, but to assist

⁵⁰ The single-volume edition (1800) of these *Lives* has the following note, signed "E."

"It appears that during his confinement he wrote a letter to his mother, which he sent to Theophilus Cibber, that it might be transmitted to her through the means of Mr. Wilks. In his Letter to Cibber he says—'as to death, I am easy, and dare meet it like a man—all that touches me is the concern of my friends, and a reconciliation with my mother.—I cannot express the agony I felt when I wrote the letter to her—if you can find any decent excuse for showing it to Mrs. Oldfield, do; for I would have all my friends (and that admirable lady in particular) be satisfied I have done my duty towards it.—Dr. Young to-day sent me a letter, most passionately kind.'"

⁵¹ Written by Mr. Beckingham and another gentleman.—
JOHNSON.

Mr. Gregory in prison ; and, when he was pardoned and released, he found the number of his friends not lessened.

The nature of the act for which he had been tried was in itself doubtful ; of the evidences which appeared against him, the character of the man was not unexceptionable, that of the woman notoriously infamous : she, whose testimony chiefly influenced the jury to condemn him, afterwards retracted her assertions. He always himself denied that he was drunk, as had been generally reported. Mr. Gregory, who is now ⁵² Collector of Antigua, is said to declare him far less criminal than he was imagined, even by some who favoured him : and Page himself afterwards confessed, that he had treated him with uncommon rigour. When all these particulars are rated together, perhaps the memory of Savage may not be much sullied by his trial.

Some time after he obtained his liberty, he met in the street the woman that had sworn with so much malignity against him. She informed him, that she was in distress, and, with a degree of confidence not easily attainable, desired him to relieve her. He, instead of insulting her misery, and taking pleasure in the calamities of one who had brought his life into danger, reproved her gently for her perjury ; and changing the only guinea that he had, divided it equally between her and himself.

This is an action which in some ages would have made a saint, and perhaps in others a hero, and which, without any hyperbolical encomiums,

⁵² That is, of course, in 1744.

must be allowed to be an instance of uncommon generosity, an act of complicated virtue ; by which he at once relieved the poor, corrected the vicious, and forgave an enemy ; by which he at once remitted the strongest provocations, and exercised the most ardent charity.

Compassion was indeed the distinguishing quality of Savage ; he never appeared inclined to take advantage of weakness, to attack the defenceless, or to press upon the falling : whoever was distressed was certain at least of his good wishes ; and when he could give no assistance to extricate them from misfortunes, he endeavoured to sooth them by sympathy and tenderness.

But when his heart was not softened by the sight of misery, he was sometimes obstinate in his resentment, and did not quickly lose the remembrance of an injury. He always continued to speak with anger of the insolence and partiality of Page, and a short time before his death revenged it by a satire.⁵³

It is natural to enquire in what terms Mr. Savage spoke of this fatal action, when the danger was over, and he was under no necessity of using any art to set his conduct in the fairest light. He was not willing to dwell upon it ; and, if he transiently mentioned it, appeared neither to consider himself as a murderer, nor as a man wholly free from the guilt of blood.⁵⁴ How much and

⁵³ Printed in the late collection.—JOHNSON.

The satire in question was called "A Character," and appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1741.

⁵⁴ In one of his letters he styles it "a fatal quarrel, but too-well known."—JOHNSON.

how long he regretted it, appeared in a poem which he published many years afterwards. On occasion of a copy of verses, in which the failings of good men were recounted, and in which the author had endeavoured to illustrate his position, that "the best may sometimes deviate from virtue," by an instance of murder committed by Savage in the heat of wine, Savage remarked, that it was no very just representation of a good man, to suppose him liable to drunkenness, and disposed in his riots to cut throats.

He was now indeed at liberty, but was, as before, without any other support than accidental favours and uncertain patronage afforded him; sources by which he was sometimes very liberally supplied, and which at other times were suddenly stopped; so that he spent his life between want plenty; or, what was yet worse, between beggary and extravagance; for as whatever he received was the gift of chance, which might as well favour him at one time as another, he was tempted to squander what he had, because he always hoped to be immediately supplied.

Another cause of his profusion was the absurd kindness of his friends, who at once rewarded and enjoyed his abilities, by treating him at taverns, and habituating him to pleasures which he could not afford to enjoy, and which he was not able to deny himself, though he purchased the luxury of a single night by the anguish of cold and hunger for a week.

The experience of these inconveniences determined him to endeavour after some settled income, which, having long found submission and

intreaties fruitless, he attempted to extort from his mother by rougher methods. He had now, as he acknowledged, lost that tenderness for her, which the whole series of her cruelty had not been able wholly to repress, till he found, by the efforts which she made for his destruction, that she was not content with refusing to assist him, and being neutral in his struggles with poverty, but was as ready to snatch every opportunity of adding to his misfortunes, and that she was to be considered as an enemy implacably malicious, whom nothing but his blood could satisfy. He therefore threatened to harass her with lampoons, and to publish a copious narrative of her conduct, unless she consented to purchase an exemption from infamy, by allowing him a pension.

This expedient proved successful. Whether shame still survived, though virtue was extinct, or whether her relations had more delicacy than herself, and imagined that some of the darts which satire might point at her would glance upon them; Lord Tyrconnel, whatever were his motives, upon his promise to lay aside his design of exposing the cruelty of his mother, received him into his family, treated him as his equal, and engaged to allow him a pension of two hundred pounds a year.

This was the golden part of Mr. Savage's life; and for some time he had no reason to complain of fortune; his appearance was splendid, his expences large, and his acquaintance extensive. He was courted by all who endeavoured to be thought men of genius, and caressed by all who valued themselves upon a refined taste. To admire Mr.

Savage, was a proof of discernment; and to be acquainted with him, was a title to poetical reputation. His presence was sufficient to make any place of publick entertainment popular; and his approbation and example constituted the fashion. So powerful is genius, when it is invested with the glitter of affluence! Men willingly pay to fortune that regard which they owe to merit, and are pleased when they have an opportunity at once of gratifying their vanity, and practising their duty.

This interval of prosperity furnished him with opportunities of enlarging his knowledge of human nature, by contemplating life from its highest gradations to its lowest; and, had he afterwards applied to dramatick poetry, he would perhaps not have had many superiors; for as he never suffered any scene to pass before his eyes without notice, he had treasured in his mind all the different combinations of passions, and the innumerable mixtures of vice and virtue, which distinguish one character from another; and, as his conception was strong, his expressions were clear, he easily received impressions from objects, and very forcibly transmitted them to others.

Of his exact observations on human life he has left a proof, which would do honour to the greatest names, in a small pamphlet, called, *The Author to be let*,⁵⁵ where he introduces Iscariot Hackney, a prostitute scribbler, giving an account of his birth, his education, his disposition and morals, habits of life, and maxims of conduct.

⁵⁵ Printed in his Works, vol. ii. p. 231.—JOHNSON.

In the introduction are related many secret histories of the petty writers of that time, but sometimes mixed with ungenerous reflections on their birth, their circumstances, or those of their relations; nor can it be denied, that some passages are such as Iscariot Hackney might himself have produced.

He was accused likewise of living in an appearance of friendship with some whom he satirised, and of making use of the confidence which he gained by a seeming kindness to discover failings and expose them: it must be confessed, that Mr. Savage's esteem was no very certain possession, and that he would lampoon at one time those whom he had praised at another.

It may be alleged, that the same man may change his principles, and that he, who was once deservedly commended, may be afterwards satirised with equal justice, or that the poet was dazzled with the appearance of virtue, and found the man whom he had celebrated, when he had an opportunity of examining him more narrowly, unworthy of the panegyrick which he had too hastily bestowed; and that, as a false satire ought to be recanted, for the sake of him whose reputation may be injured, false praise ought likewise to be obviated, lest the distinction between vice and virtue should be lost, lest a bad man should be trusted upon the credit of his encomiast, or lest others should endeavour to obtain the like praises by the same means.

But though these excuses may be often plausible, and sometimes just, they are very

seldom satisfactory to mankind; and the writer, who is not constant to his subject, quickly sinks into contempt, his satire loses its force, and his panegyrick its value, and he is only considered at one time as a flatterer, and as a calumniator at another.

To avoid these imputations, it is only necessary to follow the rules of virtue, and to preserve an unvaried regard to truth. For though it is undoubtedly possible, that a man, however cautious, may be sometimes deceived by an artful appearance of virtue, or by false evidences of guilt, such errors will not be frequent; and it will be allowed, that the name of an author would never have been made contemptible, had no man ever said what he did not think, or misled others but when he was himself deceived.

If *The Author to be let* was first published in a single pamphlet, and afterwards inserted in a collection of pieces relating to the Dunciad, which were addressed by Mr. Savage to the Earl of Middlesex, in a⁵⁶ dedication which he was prevailed upon to sign, though he did not write it, and in which there are some positions, that the true author would perhaps not have published under his own name, and on which Mr. Savage afterwards reflected with no great satisfaction; the enumeration of the bad effects of the uncontrolled freedom of the press, and the assertion that the "liberties taken by the writers of Journals with their superiors were exorbitant and unjustifiable," very ill became men, who have them-

⁵⁶ See his Works, vol. ii. p. 233.—JOHNSON.

selves not always shewn the exactest regard to the laws of subordination in their writings, and who have often satirised those that at least thought themselves their superiors, as they were eminent for their hereditary rank, and employed in the highest offices of the kingdom. But this is only an instance of that partiality which almost every man indulges with regard to himself; the liberty of the press is a blessing when we are inclined to write against others, and a calamity when we find ourselves overborne by the multitude of our assailants; as the power of the crown is always thought too great by those who suffer by its influence, and too little by those in whose favour it is exerted; and a standing army is generally accounted necessary by those who command, and dangerous and oppressive by those who support it.

Mr. Savage was likewise very far from believing, that the letters annexed to each species of bad poets in the Bathos, were, as he was directed to assert, "set down at random;" for when he was charged by one of his friends with putting his name to such an improbability, he had no other answer to make, than that "he did not think of it;" and his friend had too much tenderness to reply, that next to the crime of writing contrary to what he thought, was that of writing without thinking.

After having remarked what is false in this dedication, it is proper that I observe the impartiality which I recommend, by declaring what Savage asserted, that the account of the circumstances which attended the publication of the

Dunciad, however strange and improbable, was exactly true.

The publication of this piece at this time raised Mr. Savage a great number of enemies among those that were attacked by Mr. Pope, with whom he was considered as a kind of confederate, and whom he was suspected of supplying with private intelligence and secret incidents:⁵⁷ so that the ignominy of an informer was added to the terror of a satirist.

That he was not altogether free from literary hypocrisy, and that he sometimes spoke one thing, and wrote another, cannot be denied; because he himself confessed, that, when he lived with great familiarity with Dennis, he wrote an epigram⁵⁸ against him.

Mr. Savage however set all the malice of all the pigmy writers at defiance, and thought the friendship of Mr. Pope cheaply purchased by

⁵⁷ Johnson is willing to extenuate Savage's servility; but it is now certain that he supplied Pope with much information about the poetasters of the *Dunciad*. Further facts with regard to the relation of Pope and Savage may be sought in Professor Court-hope's *Life of Pope*, p. 325-6.

⁵⁸ "This epigram was, I believe, never published.

Should Dennis publish you had stabb'd your brother,
Lampoon'd your monarch, or debauch'd your mother;
Say, what revenge on Dennis can be had,
Too dull for laughter, for reply too mad?
On one so poor you cannot take the law,
On one so old your sword you scorn to draw.
Uncag'd then, let the harmless monster rage,
Secure in dulness, madness, want, and age."—JOHNSON.

Although Johnson says the epigram was never published, Cunningham found it in the *Grub Street Journal* of July 1, 1731; and in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for the same year. It is also printed in full in Warburton's note on the *Dunciad*, i. 106, where the commentator refers its authorship to "our incorrigible poet," Pope himself.

being exposed to their censure and their hatred ; nor had he any reason to repent of the preference, for he found Mr. Pope a steady and unalienable friend almost to the end of his life.

About this time, notwithstanding his avowed neutrality with regard to party, he published a panegyrick on Sir Robert Walpole,⁵⁹ for which he was rewarded by him with twenty guineas, a sum not very large, if either the excellence of the performance, or the affluence of the patron be considered ; but greater than he afterwards obtained from a person of yet higher rank, and more desirous in appearance of being distinguished as a patron of literature.

As he was very far from approving the conduct of Sir Robert Walpole, and in conversation mentioned him sometimes with acrimony, and generally with contempt ; as he was one of those who were always zealous in their assertions of the justice of the late opposition, jealous of the rights of the people, and alarmed by the long-continued triumph of the court ; it was natural to ask him what could induce him to employ his poetry in praise of that man who was, in his opinion, an enemy to liberty, and an oppressor of his country ? He alleged, that he was then dependent upon the Lord Tyrconnel, who was an implicit follower of the ministry ; and that being enjoined by him, not without menaces, to write in praise of his leader, he had not resolution sufficient to sacrifice the pleasure of affluence to that of integrity.

⁵⁹ Printed in folio in 1732.

On this, and on many other occasions, he was ready to lament the misery of living at the tables of other men, which was his fate from the beginning to the end of his life ; for I know not whether he ever had, for three months together, a settled habitation, in which he could claim a right of residence.

To this unhappy state it is just to impute much of the inconstancy of his conduct ; for though a readiness to comply with the inclination of others was no part of his natural character, yet he was sometimes obliged to relax his obstinacy, and submit his own judgement, and even his virtue, to the government of those by whom he was supported : so that, if his miseries were sometimes the consequences of his faults, he ought not yet to be wholly excluded from compassion, because his faults were very often the effects of his misfortunes.

In this gay period⁶⁰ of his life, while he was surrounded by affluence and pleasure, he published *The Wanderer*, a moral poem, of which the design is comprised in these lines :

I fly all public care, all venal strife,
 To try the still compar'd with active life ;
 To prove, by these the sons of men may owe
 The fruits of bliss to bursting clouds of woe ;
 That ev'n calamity, by thought refin'd,
 Inspirits and adorns the thinking mind.

And more distinctly in the following passage :

By woe, the soul to daring action swells ;
 By woe, in plaintless patience it excels ;

⁶⁰ 1729.—JOHNSON.

From patience, prudent clear experience springs,
And traces knowledge thro' the course of things!
Thence hope is form'd, thence fortitude, success,
Renown:—whate'er men covet and caress.

This performance was always considered by himself as his master-piece; and Mr. Pope, when he asked his opinion of it, told him, that he read it once over, and was not displeas'd with it, that it gave him more pleasure at the second perusal, and delighted him still more at the third.

It has been generally objected to *The Wanderer*, that the disposition of the parts is irregular; that the design is obscure, and the plan perplexed; that the images, however beautiful, succeed each other without order; and that the whole performance is not so much a regular fabrick, as a heap of shining materials thrown together by accident, which strikes rather with the solemn magnificence of a stupendous ruin, than the elegant grandeur of a finished pile.

This criticism is universal, and therefore it is reasonable to believe it at least in a great degree just; but Mr. Savage was always of a contrary opinion, and thought his drift could only be missed by negligence or stupidity, and that the whole plan was regular, and the parts distinct.

It was never denied to abound with strong representations of nature, and just observations upon life; and it may easily be observed, that most of his pictures have an evident tendency to illustrate his first great position, "that good is the consequence of evil." The sun that burns up the mountains, fructifies the vales; the deluge that rushes down the broken rocks with

dreadful impetuosity, is separated into purling brooks; and the rage of the hurricane purifies the air.

Even in this poem he has not been able to forbear one touch upon the cruelty of his mother,⁶¹ which, though remarkably delicate and tender, is a proof how deep an impression it had upon his mind.

This must be at least acknowledged, which ought to be thought equivalent to many other excellences, that this poem can promote no other purposes than those of virtue, and that it is written with a very strong sense of the efficacy of religion.

But my province is rather to give the history of Mr. Savage's performances, than to display their beauties, or to obviate the criticisms which they have occasioned; and therefore I shall not dwell

⁶¹ "What are thy fruits, O lust? Short blessings,
bought
With long remorse, the seed of bitter thought;
Perhaps some babe to dire diseases born,
Doom'd for another's crimes through life to mourn;
Or murder'd to preserve a mother's fame;
Or cast obscure; the child of want and shame!
False pride! what vices on our conduct steal,
From the world's eye one frailty to conceal!
Ye cruel mothers!—soft those words command;
So near shall cruelty and mother stand?
Can the dove's bosom snaky venom draw?
Can its foot sharpen, like the vulture's claw?
Can the fond goat, or tender fleecy dam,
Howl like the wolf, to tear the kid or lamb?
Yes, there are mothers . . . There I fear'd his aim,
And, conscious, trembled at the coming name;
Then, with a sigh, his issuing words opposed!
Straight with a falling tear the speech he clos'd.
That tenderness which ties of blood deny,
Nature repaid me from a stranger's eye."

upon the particular passages which deserve applause : I shall neither shew the excellence of his descriptions, nor expatiate on the terrifick portrait of suicide, nor point out the artful touches, by which he has distinguished the intellectual features of the rebels, who suffered death in his last canto. It is, however, proper to observe, that Mr. Savage always declared the characters wholly fictitious, and without the least allusion to any real persons or actions.

From a poem so diligently laboured, and so successfully finished, it might be reasonably expected that he should have gained considerable advantage ; nor can it, without some degree of indignation and concern, be told, that he sold the copy for ten guineas, of which he afterwards returned two, that the two last sheets of the work might be reprinted, of which he had in his absence intrusted the correction to a friend, who was too indolent to perform it with accuracy.

A superstitious regard to the correction of his sheets was one of Mr. Savage's peculiarities : he often altered, revised, recurred to his first reading or punctuation, and again adopted the alteration ; he was dubious and irresolute without end, as on a question of the last importance, and at last was seldom satisfied : the intrusion or omission of a comma was sufficient to discompose him, and he would lament an error of a single letter as a heavy calamity. In one of his letters relating to an impression of some verses, he remarks, that he had, with regard to the correction of the proof, "a spell upon him ;" and indeed the anxiety with which he dwelt upon the minutest and most trifling

niceties, deserved no other name than that of fascination.

That he sold so valuable a performance for so small a price, was not to be imputed either to necessity, by which the learned and ingenious are often obliged to submit to very hard conditions; or to avarice, by which the booksellers are frequently incited to oppress that genius by which they are supported; but to that intemperate desire of pleasure, and habitual slavery to his passions, which involved him in many perplexities. He happened at that time to be engaged in the pursuit of some trifling gratification, and, being without money for the present occasion, sold his poem to the first bidder, and perhaps for the first price that was proposed, and would probably have been content with less, if less had been offered him.

This poem was addressed to the Lord Tyrconnel, not only in the first lines, but in a formal dedication filled with the highest strains of panegyrick, and the warmest professions of gratitude, but by no means remarkable for delicacy of connection or elegance of style.

These praises in a short time he found himself inclined to retract, being discarded by the man on whom he had bestowed them, and whom he then immediately discovered not to have deserved them. Of this quarrel, which every day made more bitter, Lord Tyrconnel and Mr. Savage assigned very different reasons, which might perhaps all in reality concur, though they were not all convenient to be alleged by either party. Lord Tyrconnel affirmed, that it was the constant practice of Mr. Savage to enter a tavern with any company that

proposed it, drink the most expensive wines with great profusion, and when the reckoning was demanded, to be without money: If, as it often happened, his company were willing to defray his part, the affair ended, without any ill consequences; but, if they were refractory, and expected that the wine should be paid for by him that drank it, his method of composition was, to take them with him to his own apartment, assume the government of the house, and order the butler in an imperious manner to set the best wine in the cellar before his company, who often drank till they forgot the respect due to the house in which they were entertained, indulged themselves in the utmost extravagance of merriment, practised the most licentious frolics, and committed all the outrages of drunkenness.

Nor was this the only charge which Lord Tyrconnel brought against him: Having given him a collection of valuable books, stamped with his own arms, he had the mortification to see them in a short time exposed to sale upon the stalls, it being usual with Mr. Savage, when he wanted a small sum, to take his books to the pawnbroker.

Whoever was acquainted with Mr. Savage easily credited both these accusations: for, having been obliged, from his first entrance into the world, to subsist upon expedients, affluence was not able to exalt him above them; and so much was he delighted with wine and conversation, and so long had he been accustomed to live by chance, that he would at any time go to the tavern without scruple, and trust for the reckoning to the liberality of his company, and frequently of company to

whom he was very little known. This conduct indeed very seldom drew upon him those inconveniences that might be feared by any other person; for his conversation was so entertaining, and his address so pleasing, that few thought the pleasure which they received from him dearly purchased, by paying for his wine. It was his peculiar happiness, that he scarcely ever found a stranger, whom he did not leave a friend; but it must likewise be added, that he had not often a friend long, without obliging him to become a stranger.

Mr. Savage, on the other hand, declared, that Lord Tyrconnel ⁶² quarrelled with him, because he would subtract from his own luxury and extravagance what he had promised to allow him, and that his resentment was only a plea for the violation of his promise: He asserted, that he had done nothing that ought to exclude him from that subsistence which he thought not so much a favour, as a debt, since it was offered him upon conditions, which he had never broken; and that his only fault was, that he could not be supported with nothing.

He acknowledged, that Lord Tyrconnel often exhorted him to regulate his method of life, and not to spend all his nights in taverns, and that he appeared desirous, that he would pass those hours with him, which he so freely bestowed upon others. This demand Mr. Savage considered as a censure of his conduct, which he could never patiently bear; and which, in the latter and cooler part of

⁶² His expression in one of his letters was, "that Lord Tyrconnel had involved his estate, and therefore poorly sought an occasion to quarrel with him."—JOHNSON.

his life, was so offensive to him, that he declared it as his resolution, "to spurn that friend who "should presume to dictate to him;" and it is not likely, that in his earlier years he received admonitions with more calmness.

He was likewise inclined to resent such expectations, as tending to infringe his liberty, of which he was very jealous, when it was necessary to the gratification of his passions; and declared, that the request was still more unreasonable, as the company to which he was to have been confined was insupportably disagreeable. This assertion affords another instance of that inconsistency of his writings with his conversation, which was so often to be observed. He forgot how lavishly he had, in his Dedication to *The Wanderer*, extolled the delicacy and penetration, the humanity and generosity, the candour and politeness, of the man, whom, when he no longer loved him, he declared to be a wretch without understanding, without good-nature, and without justice; of whose name he thought himself obliged to leave no trace in any future edition of his writings; and accordingly blotted it out of that copy of *The Wanderer* which was in his hands.

During his continuance with the Lord Tyrconnel, he wrote *The Triumph of Health and Mirth*, on the recovery of Lady Tyrconnel from a languishing illness.⁶³ This performance is remarkable, not only for the gaiety of the ideas, and the

⁶³ *Verses, Occasion'd by the Right Honourable the Lady Viscountess Tyrconnel's Recovery at Bath.* By Richard Savage, son of the late Earl Rivers. London: printed for A. Millar. 1730.

melody of the numbers, but for the agreeable fiction upon which it is formed. Mirth, overwhelmed with sorrow for the sickness of her favourite, takes a flight in quest of her sister Health, whom she finds reclined upon the brow of a lofty mountain, amidst the fragrance of perpetual spring, with the breezes of the morning sporting about her. Being solicited by her sister Mirth, she readily promises her assistance, flies away in a cloud, and impregnates the waters of Bath with new virtues, by which the sickness of Belinda is relieved.

As the reputation of his abilities, the particular circumstances of his birth and life, the splendour of his appearance, and the distinction which was for some time paid him by Lord Tyrconnel, intitled him to familiarity with persons of higher rank than those to whose conversation he had been before admitted, he did not fail to gratify that curiosity, which induced him to take a nearer view of those whom their birth, their employments, or their fortunes, necessarily place at a distance from the greatest part of mankind, and to examine whether their merit was magnified or diminished by the medium through which it was contemplated; whether the splendour with which they dazzled their admirers was inherent in themselves, or only reflected on them by the objects that surrounded them; and whether great men were selected for high stations, or high stations made great men.

For this purpose he took all opportunities of conversing familiarly with those who were most conspicuous at that time for their power or their

influence; he watched their looser moments, and examined their domestick behaviour, with that acuteness which nature had given him, and which the uncommon variety of his life had contributed to increase, and that inquisitiveness which must always be produced in a vigorous mind, by an absolute freedom from all pressing or domestick engagements. His discernment was quick, and therefore he soon found in every person, and in every affair, something that deserved attention; he was supported by others, without any care for himself, and was therefore at leisure to pursue his observations.

More circumstances to constitute a critick on human life could not easily concur; nor indeed could any man, who assumed from accidental advantages more praise than he could justly claim from his real merit, admit an acquaintance more dangerous than that of Savage; of whom likewise it must be confessed, that abilities really exalted above the common level, or virtue refined from passion, or proof against corruption, could not easily find an abler judge, or a warmer advocate.

What was the result of Mr. Savage's enquiry, though he was not much accustomed to conceal his discoveries, it may not be entirely safe to relate, because the persons whose characters he criticised are powerful; and power and resentment are seldom strangers; nor would it perhaps be wholly just, because what he asserted in conversation might, though true in general, be heightened by some momentary ardour of imagination, and, as it can be delivered only from

memory, may be imperfectly represented; so that the picture at first aggravated, and then unskilfully copied, may be justly suspected to retain no great resemblance of the original.

It may however be observed, that he did not appear to have formed very elevated ideas of those to whom the administration of affairs, or the conduct of parties, has been intrusted; who have been considered as the advocates of the crown, or the guardians of the people; and who have obtained the most implicit confidence, and the loudest applauses. Of one particular person, who has been at one time so popular as to be generally esteemed, and at another so formidable as to be universally detested, he observed, that his acquisitions had been small, or that his capacity was narrow, and that the whole range of his mind was from obscenity to politicks, and from politicks to obscenity.

But the opportunity of indulging his speculations on great characters was now at an end. He was banished from the table of Lord Tyrconnel, and turned again adrift upon the world, without prospect of finding quickly any other harbour.⁶⁴ As prudence was not one of the virtues by which he was distinguished, he had made no provision against a misfortune like this. And though it is not to be imagined but that the separation must for some time have been preceded by coldness, peevishness, or neglect, though it was undoubtedly the consequence of accumulated provocations on

⁶⁴ This separation from Lord Tyrconnel seems to have taken place about 1735.

both sides ; yet every one that knew Savage will readily believe, that to him it was sudden as a stroke of thunder ; that, though he might have transiently suspected it, he had never suffered any thought so unpleasing to sink into his mind, but that he had driven it away by amusements, or dreams of future felicity and affluence, and had never taken any measures by which he might prevent a precipitation from plenty to indigence.

This quarrel and separation, and the difficulties to which Mr. Savage was exposed by them, were soon known both to his friends and enemies ; nor was it long before he perceived, from the behaviour of both, how much is added to the lustre of genius by the ornaments of wealth.

His condition did not appear to excite much compassion ; for he had not always been careful to use the advantages he enjoyed with that moderation which ought to have been with more than usual caution preserved by him, who knew, if he had reflected, that he was only a dependant on the bounty of another, whom he could expect to support him no longer than he endeavoured to preserve his favour by complying with his inclinations, and whom he nevertheless set at defiance, and was continually irritating by negligence or encroachments.

Examples need not be sought at any great distance to prove, that superiority of fortune has a natural tendency to kindle pride, and that pride seldom fails to exert itself in contempt and insult ; and if this is often the effect of hereditary wealth, and of honours enjoyed only by the merit of others, it is some extenuation of any indecent triumphs to

which this unhappy man may have been betrayed, that his prosperity was heightened by the force of novelty, and made more intoxicating by a sense of the misery in which he had so long languished, and perhaps of the insults which he had formerly borne, and which he might now think himself entitled to revenge. It is too common for those who have unjustly suffered pain, to inflict it likewise in their turn with the same injustice, and to imagine that they have a right to treat others as they have themselves been treated.

That Mr. Savage was too much elevated by any good fortune, is generally known; and some passages of his Introduction to *The Author to be let* sufficiently shew, that he did not wholly refrain from such satire as he afterwards thought very unjust, when he was exposed to it himself; for when he was afterwards ridiculed in the character of a distressed poet, he very easily discovered, that distress was not a proper subject for merriment, or topick of invective. He was then able to discern, that, if misery be the effect of virtue, it ought to be revered; if of ill-fortune, to be pitied; and if of vice, not to be insulted, because it is perhaps itself a punishment adequate to the crime by which it was produced. And the humanity of that man can deserve no panegyrick, who is capable of reproaching a criminal in the hands of the executioner.

But these reflections, though they readily occurred to him in the first and last parts of his life, were, I am afraid, for a long time forgotten; at least they were, like many other maxims, treasured up in his mind, rather for shew than

use, and operated very little upon his conduct, however elegantly he might sometimes explain, or however forcibly he might inculcate, them.

His degradation therefore from the condition which he had enjoyed with such wanton thoughtlessness, was considered by many as an occasion of triumph. Those who had before paid their court to him without success, soon returned the contempt which they had suffered; and they who had received favours from him, for of such favours as he could bestow he was very liberal, did not always remember them. So much more certain are the effects of resentment than of gratitude: it is not only to many more pleasing to recollect those faults which place others below them, than those virtues by which they are themselves comparatively depressed; but it is likewise more easy to neglect, than to recompense; and though there are few who will practise a laborious virtue, there will never be wanting multitudes that will indulge an easy vice.

Savage, however, was very little disturbed at the marks of contempt which his ill-fortune brought upon him, from those whom he never esteemed, and with whom he never considered himself as levelled by any calamities: and though it was not without some uneasiness that he saw some, whose friendship he valued, change their behaviour; he yet observed their coldness without much emotion, considered them as the slaves of fortune and the worshippers of prosperity, and was more inclined to despise them, than to lament himself.

It does not appear that, after this return of

his wants, he found mankind equally favourable to him, as at his first appearance in the world. His story, though in reality not less melancholy, was less affecting, because it was no longer new; it therefore procured him no new friends; and those that had formerly relieved him, thought they might now consign him to others. He was now likewise considered by many rather as criminal, than as unhappy; for the friends of Lord Tyrconnel, and of his mother, were sufficiently industrious to publish his weaknesses, which were indeed very numerous; and nothing was forgotten, that might make him either hateful or ridiculous.

It cannot but be imagined, that such representations of his faults must make great numbers less sensible of his distress; many, who had only an opportunity to hear one part, made no scruple to propagate the account which they received; many assisted their circulation from malice or revenge; and perhaps many pretended to credit them, that they might with a better grace withdraw their regard, or withhold their assistance.

Savage however, was not one of those, who suffered himself to be injured without resistance, nor was less diligent in exposing the faults of Lord Tyrconnel, over whom he obtained at least this advantage, that he drove him first to the practice of outrage and violence; for he was so much provoked by the wit and virulence of Savage, that he came with a number of attendants, that did no honour to his courage, to beat him at a coffee-house. But it happened that he had left the place a few minutes, and his lordship had, without danger, the pleasure of boasting how he

would have treated him. Mr. Savage went next day to repay his visit at his own house; but was prevailed on, by his domesticks, to retire without insisting upon seeing him.

Lord Tyrconnel was accused by Mr. Savage of some actions, which scarcely any provocations will be thought sufficient to justify; such as seizing what he had in his lodgings, and other instances of wanton cruelty, by which he increased the distress of Savage, without any advantage to himself.

These mutual accusations were retorted on both sides, for many years, with the utmost degree of virulence and rage; and time seemed rather to augment than diminish their resentment. That the anger of Mr. Savage should be kept alive, is not strange, because he felt every day the consequences of the quarrel; but it might reasonably have been hoped, that Lord Tyrconnel might have relented, and at length have forgot those provocations, which, however they might have once inflamed him, had not in reality much hurt him.

The spirit of Mr. Savage indeed never suffered him to solicit a reconciliation; he returned reproach for reproach, and insult for insult; his superiority of wit supplied the disadvantages of his fortune, and enabled him to form a party, and prejudice great numbers in his favour.

But though this might be some gratification of his vanity, it afforded very little relief to his necessities; and he was very frequently reduced to uncommon hardships, of which, however, he never made any mean or importunate complaints, being

formed rather to bear misery with fortitude, than enjoy prosperity with moderation.

He now thought himself again at liberty to expose the cruelty of his mother, and therefore, I believe, about this time,⁶⁵ published *The Bastard*, a poem remarkable for the vivacious sallies of thought in the beginning, where he makes a pompous enumeration of the imaginary advantages of base birth; and the pathetick sentiments at the end, where he recounts the real calamities which he suffered by the crime of his parents.

The vigour and spirit of the verses, the peculiar circumstances of the author, the novelty of the subject, and the notoriety of the story to which the allusions are made, procured this performance a very favourable reception; great numbers were immediately dispersed, and editions were multiplied with unusual rapidity.

One circumstance attended the publication, which Savage used to relate with great satisfaction. His mother, to whom the poem was with "due reverence" inscribed, happened then to be at Bath, where she could not conveniently retire from censure, or conceal herself from observation; and no sooner did the reputation of the poem begin to spread, then she heard it repeated in all places of concourse, nor could she enter the assembly-rooms, or cross the walks, without being saluted with some lines from *The Bastard*.

This was perhaps the first time that ever she

⁶⁵ Johnson places *The Bastard* too late. It was published, by T. Worrall in London, and by S. Harding in Dublin, in the year 1728, "inscribed with all due Reverence to Mrs. Bret, once Countess of Macclesfield."

discovered a sense of shame, and on this occasion the power of wit was very conspicuous; the wretch who had, without scruple, proclaimed herself an adulteress, and who had first endeavoured to starve her son, then to transport him, and afterwards to hang him, was not able to bear the representation of her own conduct; but fled from reproach, though she felt no pain from guilt, and left Bath with the utmost haste, to shelter herself among the crowds of London.

Thus Savage had the satisfaction of finding, that, though he could not reform his mother, he could punish her, and that he did not always suffer alone.

The pleasure which he received from this increase of his poetical reputation, was sufficient for some time to overbalance the miseries of want, which this performance did not much alleviate; for it was sold for a very trivial sum to a bookseller, who, though the success was so uncommon that five impressions were sold,⁶⁶ of which many were undoubtedly very numerous, had not generosity sufficient to admit the unhappy writer to any part of the profit.

The sale of this poem was always mentioned by Savage with the utmost elevation of heart, and referred to by him as an incontestable proof of a general acknowledgement of his abilities. It was indeed the only production of which he could justly boast a general reception.

⁶⁶ Cunningham refers this statement to *The Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1737, where also the poem is reprinted, as "revised by the author."

But though he did not lose the opportunity which success gave him, of setting a high rate on his abilities, but paid due deference to the suffrages of mankind when they were given in his favour, he did not suffer his esteem of himself to depend upon others, nor found any thing sacred in the voice of the people when they were inclined to censure him; he then readily shewed the folly of expecting that the publick should judge right, observed how slowly poetical merit had often forced its way into the world; he contented himself with the applause of men of judgement, and was somewhat disposed to exclude all those from the character of men of judgement who did not applaud him.

But he was at other times more favourable to mankind than to think them blind to the beauties of his works, and imputed the slowness of their sale to other causes; either they were published at a time when the town was empty, or when the attention of the publick was engrossed by some struggle in the parliament, or some other object of general concern; or they were by the neglect of the publisher not diligently dispersed, or by his avarice not advertised with sufficient frequency. Address, or industry, or liberality, was always wanting; and the blame was laid rather on any person than the author.

By arts like these, arts which every man practises in some degree, and to which too much of the little tranquillity of life is to be ascribed, Savage was always able to live at peace with himself. Had he indeed only made use of these expedients to alleviate the loss or want of fortune or

reputation, or any other advantages, which it is not in man's power to bestow upon himself, they might have been justly mentioned as instances of a philosophical mind, and very properly proposed to the imitation of multitudes, who, for want of diverting their imaginations with the same dexterity, languish under afflictions which might be easily removed.

It were doubtless to be wished, that truth and reason were universally prevalent; that every thing were esteemed according to its real value; and that men would secure themselves from being disappointed in their endeavours after happiness, by placing it only in virtue, which is always to be obtained; but if adventitious and foreign pleasures must be pursued, it would be perhaps of some benefit, since that pursuit must frequently be fruitless, if the practice of Savage could be taught, that folly might be an antidote to folly, and one fallacy be obviated by another.

But the danger of this pleasing intoxication must not be concealed; nor indeed can any one, after having observed the life of Savage, need to be cautioned against it. By imputing none of his miseries to himself, he continued to act upon the same principles, and to follow the same path; was never made wiser by his sufferings, nor preserved by one misfortune from falling into another. He proceeded throughout his life to tread the same steps on the same circle; always applauding his past conduct, or at least forgetting it, to amuse himself with phantoms of happiness, which were dancing before him; and willingly turned his eyes from the light of reason, when it would have dis-

covered the illusion, and shewn him, what he never wished to see, his real state.

He is even accused, after having lulled his imagination with those ideal opiates, of having tried the same experiment upon his conscience; and, having accustomed himself to impute all deviations from the right to foreign causes, it is certain that he was upon every occasion too easily reconciled to himself, and that he appeared very little to regret those practices which had impaired his reputation. The reigning error of his life was, that he mistook the love for the practice of virtue, and was indeed not so much a good man, as the friend of goodness.

This at least must be allowed him, that he always preserved a strong sense of the dignity, the beauty, and the necessity of virtue, and that he never contributed deliberately to spread corruption amongst mankind. His actions, which were generally precipitate, were often blameable; but his writings, being the productions of study, uniformly tended to the exaltation of the mind, and the propagation of morality and piety.

These writings may improve mankind, when his failings shall be forgotten; and therefore he must be considered, upon the whole, as a benefactor to the world; nor can his personal example do any hurt, since, whoever hears of his faults, will hear of the miseries which they brought upon him, and which would deserve less pity, had not his condition been such as made his faults pardonable. He may be considered as a child exposed to all the temptations of indigence, at an age when resolution was not yet strengthened by con-

viction, nor virtue confirmed by habit ; a circumstance which in his *Bastard* he laments in a very affecting manner :

—No Mother's care

Shielded my infant innocence with prayer :
No Father's guardian-hand my youth maintain'd,
Call'd forth my virtues, or from vice restrain'd.

The Bastard, however it might provoke or mortify his mother, could not be expected to melt her to compassion, so that he was still under the same want of the necessities of life ; and he therefore exerted all the interest which his wit, or his birth, or his misfortunes, could procure, to obtain, upon the death of Eusden,⁶⁷ the place of Poet Laureat, and prosecuted his application with so much diligence, that the King publicly declared it his intention to bestow it upon him ; but such was the fate of Savage, that even the King, when he intended his advantage, was disappointed in his schemes ; for the Lord Chamberlain, who has the disposal of the laurel, as one of the appendages of his office, either did not know the King's design, or did not approve it, or thought the nomination of the Laureat an encroachment upon his rights, and therefore bestowed the laurel upon Colley Cibber.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ September 27, 1730.

⁶⁸ Tyrconnel interested himself in this matter upon Savage's behalf. In Lady Sundon's *Memoirs* (1847), a letter was printed from Tyrconnel to Mrs. Clayton, which Cunningham quotes, advocating Savage's claim. The letter is so interesting that it seems best to re-copy it.

“Arlington Street, Nov. 8, 1730.

“MADAM,—I flatter myself that you will be so good to pardon the freedom of this address, it being in behalf of one who has two pretensions to the Royal goodness that seldom fail of success ; first,

Mr. Savage, thus disappointed, took a resolution of applying to the queen, that, having once given him life, she would enable him to support it, and therefore published a short poem on her birth-day, to which he gave the odd title of *Volunteer Laureat*. The event of this essay he has himself related in the following letter, which he prefixed to the poem, when he afterwards reprinted it in *The Gentleman's Magazine*,⁶⁹ from whence I have copied it intire,⁷⁰ as this was one of the few attempts in which Mr. Savage succeeded.

“ Mr. URBAN,

“ In your Magazine for February you pub-

that he stands in need of it, and that in the opinion of the best judges he is qualified for it in the particular for which I beg leave humbly to recommend him; it is to the place of Poet-Laureate. The best judges of poetry that I mean are the Queen and Mr. Pope; I have heard that her Majesty has approved of his poetry. That he lives is entirely owing to the unparalleled goodness of both their Majesties, which godlike perfection they possess in the highest degree, a virtue inseparable from the greatest minds. After this, you will easily perceive I mean Richard Savage, who is the bearer of this. I know from my friend Sir William Strickland, that he was much obliged to you upon the unhappy occasion, and if any more favour was shown him upon my appearing for him, I acknowledge it with all the gratitude due to so great an obligation. After this, I need say nothing for his loyalty and good affection to the government. I should think him the last of mankind that would not sacrifice his life for their Majesties' service, to whom he owes it. The favour of great princes is generally invidious; but I know nobody that does not rejoice in the share you have of her Majesty's, who is too discerning a Princess to bestow undeservedly. Producing obscure merit, as in the case of Stephen Duck, has done you a great deal of honour, and if you are so good to favour Mr. Savage in this instance, he stands too much in need of it, and it will lay a very great obligation on me, who have the honour to be, with the greatest esteem and respect, Madam, your most obedient humble servant,

TYRCONNEL.”

⁶⁹ April 1738.

⁷⁰ The poem is inserted in the late collection.—JOHNSON.

"lished the last *Volunteer Laureat*, written
 "on a very melancholy occasion, the death of the
 "royal patroness of arts and literature in general,
 "and of the author of that poem in particular; I
 "now send you the first that Mr. Savage wrote
 "under that title.—This gentleman, notwith-
 "standing a very considerable interest, being, on
 "the death of Mr. Eusden, disappointed of the
 "Laureat's place, wrote the before-mentioned
 "poem; which was no sooner published, but the
 "late Queen sent to a bookseller for it: the
 "author had not at that time a friend either to
 "get him introduced, or his poem presented at
 "court; yet such was the unspeakable goodness
 "of that Princess, that notwithstanding this act
 "of ceremony was wanting, in a few days after
 "publication, Mr. Savage received a Bank-bill
 "of fifty pounds, and a gracious message from
 "her Majesty, by the Lord North and Guilford,
 "to this effect; "That her Majesty was highly
 "pleased with the verses; that she took particu-
 "larly kind his lines there relating to the King;
 "that he had permission to write annually on the
 "same subject; and that he should yearly receive
 "the like present, till something better (which
 "was her Majesty's intention) could be done for
 "him." After this, he was permitted to present
 "one of his annual poems to her Majesty, had the
 "honour of kissing her hand, and met with the
 "most gracious reception. Yours, &c."

Such was the performance,¹ and such its re-

¹ The phrase "Such was the performance" is explained by

ception ; a reception which, though by no means unkind, was yet not in the highest degree generous : to chain down the genius of a writer to an annual panegyric, shewed in the Queen too much desire of hearing her own praises, and a greater regard to herself than to him on whom her bounty was conferred. It was a kind of avaricious generosity, by which flattery was rather purchased, than genius rewarded.

Mrs. Oldfield had formerly given him the same allowance with much more heroic intention ; she had no other view than to enable him to prosecute his studies, and to set himself above the want of assistance, and was contented with doing good without stipulating for encomiums.

Mr. Savage however was not at liberty to make exceptions, but was ravished with the favours which he had received, and probably yet more with those which he was promised ; he considered himself now as a favourite of the Queen, and did not doubt but a few annual poems would establish him in some profitable employment.

He therefore assumed the title of *Volunteer Laureat*, not without some reprehensions from Cibber, who informed him, that the title of *Laureat* was a mark of honour conferred by the King, from whom all honour is derived, and which

the fact that in the original edition of *The Life of Savage*, the text of the poem was printed after the letter to "Mr. Urban." When the complete *Lives* were published Johnson omitted the poem in this context, because it was contained in the collection ; and he never restored it. Cunningham, feeling the difficulty, re-inserted it in the text ; but it has seemed best to the present editor to preserve Johnson's latest text undisturbed, and to relegate the poem, as Mrs. Napier did, to an Appendix which will be found at the end of the present volume.

therefore no man has a right to bestow upon himself; and added, that he might, with equal propriety, style himself a Volunteer Lord, or Volunteer Baronet. It cannot be denied that the remark was just; but Savage did not think any title, which was conferred upon Mr. Cibber, so honourable as that the usurpation of it could be imputed to him as an instance of very exorbitant vanity, and therefore continued to write under the same title, and received every year the same reward.

He did not appear to consider these encomiums as tests of his abilities, or as any thing more than annual hints to the Queen of her promise, or acts of ceremony, by the performance of which he was intitled to his pension, and therefore did not labour them with great diligence, or print more than fifty each year, except that for some of the last years he regularly inserted them in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, by which they were dispersed over the kingdom.

Of some of them he had himself so low an opinion, that he intended to omit them in the collection of poems, for which he printed proposals,⁷² and solicited subscriptions; nor can it

⁷² Cunningham has reproduced these from *The Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1737:

“ PROPOSALS,

For Printing, by Subscription,

The Works in Prose and Verse of RICHARD SAVAGE, Esq.,
Son of the *late* Earl Rivers.

CONDITIONS.

First, That this Book be printed in large Octavo, with a very neat Letter, and on a fine Paper.

seem strange, that, being confined to the same subject, he should be at some times indolent, and at others unsuccessful; that he should sometimes delay a disagreeable task, till it was too late to perform it well; or that he should sometimes repeat the same sentiment on the same occasion, or at others be misled by an attempt after novelty to forced conceptions and far-fetched images.

He wrote indeed with a double intention, which supplied him with some variety; for his business was to praise the Queen for the favours which he had received, and to complain to her of the delay of those which she had promised: in some of his pieces, therefore, gratitude is predominant, and in some discontent; in some he represents himself as happy in her patronage, and in others as disconsolate to find himself neglected.

Her promise, like other promises made to this unfortunate man, was never performed, though he took sufficient care that it should not be forgotten. The publication of his *Volunteer Laureat* procured him no other reward than a regular remittance of fifty pounds.

Secondly, That each Subscriber do pay half a guinea in hand.

Thirdly, That this Book be delivered in Sheets to the Subscribers by Michaelmas-day next.

Fourthly, That no more Copies be printed than are subscribed for.

N.B. In this Book will be several Pieces in Prose and Verse, humorous, serious, moral, and divine, never before printed.

Subscriptions are taken in, and Receipts deliver'd, at Mrs. Norton's, the Rainbow Coffee-house, in Lancaster-court, near St. Martin's Church, in the Strand; at Mr. Doddesly's, at Tully's Head, in Pall Mall; and at Mr. Millar's, at Buchanan's Head, over-against St. Clement-Dane, without Temple-Bar. Gentlemen in the Country may subscribe to their own Booksellers, to forward to E. Cave, at St. John's Gate, or their Correspondents in London."

He was not so depressed by his disappointments as to neglect any opportunity that was offered of advancing his interests. When the Princess Anne was married,⁷³ he wrote a poem⁷⁴ upon her departure, only, as he declared, "because "it was expected from him," and he was not willing to bar his own prospects by any appearance of neglect.

He never mentioned any advantage gained by this poem, or any regard that was paid to it; and therefore it is likely that it was considered at court as an act of duty to which he was obliged by his dependence, and which it was therefore not necessary to reward by any new favour: or perhaps the Queen really intended his advancement, and therefore thought it superfluous to lavish presents upon a man whom she intended to establish for life.

About this time⁷⁵ not only his hopes were in danger of being frustrated, but his pension likewise of being obstructed, by an accidental calumny. The writer of *The Daily Courant*, a paper then published under the direction of the ministry, charged him with a crime, which, though very great in itself, would have been remarkably invidious in him, and might very justly have incensed the Queen against him. He was accused by name of influencing elections against the court, by appearing at the head of a tory mob; nor did the accuser fail to aggravate his crime, by representing it as the effect of the most atrocious

⁷³ March 14, 1734.

⁷⁴ Printed in the late collection.—JOHNSON.

⁷⁵ 1735.

ingratitude, and a kind of rebellion against the Queen, who had first preserved him from an infamous death, and afterwards distinguished him by her favour, and supported him by her charity. The charge, as it was open and confident, was likewise by good fortune very particular. The place of the transaction was mentioned, and the whole series of the rioter's conduct related. This exactness made Mr. Savage's vindication easy; for he never had in his life seen the place which was declared to be the scene of his wickedness, nor ever had been present in any town when its representatives were chosen. This answer he therefore made haste to publish, with all the circumstances necessary to make it credible; and very reasonably demanded, that the accusation should be retracted in the same paper, that he might no longer suffer the imputation of sedition and ingratitude. This demand was likewise pressed by him in a private letter to the author of the paper, who, either trusting to the protection of those whose defence he had undertaken, or having entertained some personal malice against Mr. Savage, or fearing, lest, by retracting so confident an assertion, he should impair the credit of his paper, refused to give him that satisfaction.

Mr. Savage therefore thought it necessary, to his own vindication, to prosecute him in the King's Bench; but as he did not find any ill effects from the accusation, having sufficiently cleared his innocence, he thought any farther procedure would have the appearance of revenge; and therefore willingly dropped it.

He saw soon afterwards a process commenced

in the same court against himself, on an information in which he was accused of writing and publishing an obscene pamphlet.

It was always Mr. Savage's desire to be distinguished; and, when any controversy became popular, he never wanted some reason for engaging in it with great ardour, and appearing at the head of the party which he had chosen. As he was never celebrated for his prudence, he had no sooner taken his side, and informed himself of the chief topicks of the dispute, than he took all opportunities of asserting and propagating his principles, without much regard to his own interest, or any other visible design than that of drawing upon himself the attention of mankind.

The dispute between the bishop of London and the chancellor is well known to have been for some time the chief topick of political conversation; and therefore Mr. Savage, in pursuance of his character, endeavoured to become conspicuous among the controvertists with which every coffee-house was filled on that occasion. He was an indefatigable opposer of all the claims of ecclesiastical power, though he did not know on what they were founded; and was therefore no friend to the Bishop of London. But he had another reason for appearing as a warm advocate for Dr. Rundle; for he was the friend of Mr. Foster and Mr. Thomson, who were the friends of Mr. Savage.

Thus remote was his interest in the question, which however, as he imagined, concerned him so nearly, that it was not sufficient to harangue and

dispute, but necessary likewise to write upon it.

He therefore engaged with great ardour in a new Poem, called by him, *The Progress of a Divine*; ⁷⁶ in which he conducts a profligate priest by all the gradations of wickedness from a poor curacy in the country, to the highest preferments of the church, and describes with that humour which was natural to him, and that knowledge which was extended to all the diversities of human life, his behaviour in every station; and insinuates, that this priest, thus accomplished, found at last a patron in the Bishop of London.

When he was asked by one of his friends, on what pretence he could charge the bishop with such an action? he had no more to say, than that he had only inverted the accusation, and that he thought it reasonable to believe, that he, who obstructed the rise of a good man without reason, would for bad reasons promote the exaltation of a villain.

The clergy were universally provoked by this satire; and Savage, who, as was his constant practice, had set his name to his performance, was censured in *The Weekly Miscellany* ⁷⁷ with severity, which he did not seem inclined to forget.

⁷⁶ *The Progress of a Divine. A Satire.* Published April 1735.

⁷⁷ "A short satire was likewise published in the same paper, in which were the following lines:

"For cruel murder doom'd to hempen death,
Savage, by royal grace, prolong'd his breath.
Well might you think he spent his future years
In prayer, and fasting, and repentant tears.
—But, O vain hope!—the truly Savage cries,
"Priests, and their slavish doctrines, I despise.

But a return of invective was not thought a sufficient punishment. The Court of King's Bench was therefore moved against him, and he was obliged to return an answer to a charge of obscenity. It was urged, in his defence, that obscenity was criminal when it was intended to promote the practice of vice ; but that Mr. Savage had only introduced obscene ideas, with the view

Shall I—

Who, by free-thinking to free action fir'd,
 In midnight brawls a deathless name acquir'd,
 Now stoop to learn of ecclesiastic men?—
 —No, arm'd with rhyme, at priests I'll take my aim,
 Though prudence bid me murder but their fame."

WEEKLY MISCELLANY.

An answer was published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, written by an unknown hand, from which the following lines are selected :

Transform'd by thoughtless rage, and midnight wine,
 From malice free, and push'd without design ;
 In equal brawl if Savage lung'd a thrust,
 And brought the youth a victim to the dust ;
 So strong the hand of accident appears,
 The royal hand from guilt and vengeance clears.

Instead of wasting "all thy future years,
 "Savage, in prayer and vain repentant tears ;"
 Exert thy pen to mend a vicious age,
 To curb the priest, and sink his high-church rage ;
 To shew what frauds the holy vestments hide,
 The nests of avarice, lust, and pedant pride ;
 Then change the scene, let merit brightly shine,
 And round the patriot twist the wreath divine :
 The heavenly guide deliver down to fame ;
 In well-tun'd lays transmit a Foster's name ;
 Touch every passion with harmonious art,
 Exalt the genius, and correct the heart.
 Thus future times shall royal grace extol ;
 Thus polish'd lines thy present fame enrol.

—But grant—

—Maliciously that Savage plung'd the steel,
 And made the youth its shining vengeance feel ;
 My soul abhors the act, the man detests,
 But more the bigotry in priestly breasts.

GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, May 1735."—JOHNSON.

of exposing them to detestation, and of amending the age, by shewing the deformity of wickedness. This plea was admitted; and Sir Philip Yorke, who then presided in that court, dismissed the information with encomiums upon the purity and excellence of Mr. Savage's writings.

The prosecution, however, answered in some measure the purpose of those by whom it was set on foot; for Mr. Savage was so far intimidated by it, that, when the edition of his poem was sold, he did not venture to reprint it; so that it was in a short time forgotten, or forgotten by all but those whom it offended.

It is said, that some endeavours were used to incense the Queen against him: but he found advocates to obviate at least part of their effect; for though he was never advanced, he still continued to receive his pension.

This poem drew more infamy upon him than any incident of his life; and, as his conduct cannot be vindicated, it is proper to secure his memory from reproach, by informing those whom he made his enemies, that he never intended to repeat the provocation; and that, though, whenever he thought he had any reason to complain of the clergy, he used to threaten them with a new edition of *The Progress of a Divine*, it was his calm and settled resolution to suppress it for ever.

He once intended to have made a better reparation for the folly or injustice with which he might be charged, by writing another poem, called *The Progress of a Free-thinker*, whom he intended to lead through all the stages of vice and folly, to convert him from virtue to wickedness, and from

religion to infidelity, by all the modish sophistry used for that purpose; and at last to dismiss him by his own hand into the other world.

That he did not execute this design is a real loss to mankind, for he was too well acquainted with all the scenes of debauchery to have failed in his representations of them, and too zealous for virtue not to have represented them in such a manner as should expose them either to ridicule or detestation.

But this plan was, like others, formed and laid aside, till the vigour of his imagination was spent, and the effervescence of invention had subsided; but soon gave way to some other design, which pleased by its novelty for a while, and then was neglected like the former.

He was still in his usual exigences, having no certain support but the pension allowed him by the Queen, which, though it might have kept an exact œconomist from want, was very far from being sufficient for Mr. Savage, who had never been accustomed to dismiss any of his appetites without the gratification which they solicited, and whom nothing but want of money withheld from partaking of every pleasure that fell within his view.

His conduct with regard to his pension was very particular. No sooner had he changed the bill, than he vanished from the sight of all his acquaintances, and lay for some time out of the reach of all the enquiries that friendship or curiosity could make after him; at length he appeared again pennyless as before, but never informed even those whom he seemed to regard

most, where he had been, nor was his retreat ever discovered.

This was his constant practice during the whole time that he received the pension from the Queen: He regularly disappeared and returned. He indeed affirmed that he retired to study, and that the money supported him in solitude for many months; but his friends declared, that the short time in which it was spent sufficiently confuted his own account of his conduct.

His politeness and his wit still raised him friends, who were desirous of setting him at length free from that indigence by which he had been hitherto oppressed; and therefore solicited Sir Robert Walpole in his favour with so much earnestness, that they obtained a promise of the next place that should become vacant, not exceeding two hundred pounds a year. This promise was made with an uncommon declaration, "that it was not the promise of a minister to a petitioner, but of a friend to his friend."

Mr. Savage now concluded himself set at ease for ever, and, as he observes in a poem⁷⁸ written on that incident of his life, trusted and was trusted; but soon found that his confidence was ill-grounded, and this friendly promise was not inviolable. He spent a long time in solicitations, and at last despaired and desisted.

He did not indeed deny that he had given the minister some reason to believe that he should not strengthen his own interest by advancing him,

⁷⁸ *The Poet's Dependence on a Statesman.* Printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for April 1736.

for he had taken care to distinguish himself in coffee-houses as an advocate for the ministry of the last years of Queen Anne, and was always ready to justify the conduct, and exalt the character of Lord Bolingbroke, whom he mentions with great regard in an epistle upon authors,⁷⁹ which he wrote about that time, but was too wise to publish, and of which only some fragments have appeared, inserted by him in the *Magazine* after his retirement.

To despair was not, however, the character of Savage; when one patronage failed, he had recourse to another. The prince was now extremely popular, and had very liberally rewarded the merit of some writers whom Mr. Savage did not think superior to himself, and therefore he resolved to address a poem to him.

For this purpose he made choice of a subject, which could regard only persons of the highest rank and greatest affluence, and which was therefore proper for a poem intended to procure the patronage of a prince; and having retired for some time to Richmond, that he might prosecute his design in full tranquillity, without the temptations of pleasure, or the solicitations of creditors, by which his meditations were in equal danger of being disconcerted, he produced a poem *On Public Spirit, with regard to Publick Works*.⁸⁰

The plan of this poem is very extensive, and comprises a multitude of topicks, each of which

⁷⁹ *On False Historians, a Satire*. Printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1741.

⁸⁰ *Of Public Spirit in regard to Public Works, an Epistle to His Royal Highness, Frederick, Prince of Wales*. 1737.

might furnish matter sufficient for a long performance, and of which some have already employed more eminent writers; but as he was perhaps not fully acquainted with the whole extent of his own design, and was writing to obtain a supply of wants too pressing to admit of long or accurate enquiries, he passes negligently over many publick works, which, even in his own opinion, deserved to be more elaborately treated.

But though he may sometimes disappoint his reader by transient touches upon these subjects, which have often been considered, and therefore naturally raise expectations, he must be allowed amply to compensate his omissions, by expatiating, in the conclusion of his work, upon a kind of beneficence not yet celebrated by any eminent poet, though it now appears more susceptible of embellishments, more adapted to exalt the ideas, and affect the passions, than many of those which have hitherto been thought most worthy of the ornaments of verse. The settlement of colonies in uninhabited countries, the establishment of those in security, whose misfortunes have made their own country no longer pleasing or safe, the acquisition of property without injury to any, the appropriation of the waste and luxuriant bounties of nature, and the enjoyment of those gifts which heaven has scattered upon regions uncultivated and unoccupied, cannot be considered without giving rise to a great number of pleasing ideas, and bewildering the imagination in delightful prospects; and, therefore, whatever speculations they may produce in those who have confined themselves to political studies, naturally fixed the attention,

and excited the applause, of a poet. The politician, when he considers men driven into other countries for shelter, and obliged to retire to forests and deserts, and pass their lives and fix their posterity in the remotest corners of the world, to avoid those hardships which they suffer or fear in their native place, may very properly enquire, why the legislature does not provide a remedy for these miseries, rather than encourage an escape from them. He may conclude, that the flight of every honest man is a loss to the community; that those who are unhappy without guilt ought to be relieved; and the life, which is overburthened by accidental calamities, set at ease by the care of the publick; and that those, who have by misconduct forfeited their claim to favour, ought rather to be made useful to the society which they have injured, than be driven from it. But the poet is employed in a more pleasing undertaking than that of proposing laws, which, however just or expedient, will never be made, or endeavouring to reduce to rational schemes of government societies which were formed by chance, and are conducted by the private passions of those who preside in them. He guides the unhappy fugitive from want and persecution, to plenty, quiet, and security, and seats him in scenes of peaceful solitude, and undisturbed repose.

Savage has not forgotten, amidst the pleasing sentiments which this prospect of retirement suggested to him, to censure those crimes which have been generally committed by the discoverers of new regions, and to expose the enormous wickedness of making war upon barbarous nations because they cannot resist, and of invading

countries because they are fruitful; of extending navigation only to propagate vice, and of visiting distant lands only to lay them waste. He has asserted the natural equality of mankind, and endeavoured to suppress that pride which inclines men to imagine that right is the consequence of power.

His description of the various miseries which force men to seek for refuge in distant countries, affords another instance of his proficiency in the important and extensive study of human life; and the tenderness with which he recounts them, another proof of his humanity and benevolence.

It is observable, that the close of this poem discovers a change which experience had made in Mr. Savage's opinions. In a poem written by him in his youth, and published in his *Miscellanies*, he declares his contempt of the contracted views and narrow prospects of the middle state of life, and declares his resolution either to tower like the cedar, or be trampled like the shrub; but in this poem, though addressed to a prince, he mentions this state of life as comprising those who ought most to attract reward, those who merit most the confidence of power, and the familiarity of greatness; and, accidentally mentioning this passage to one of his friends, declared, that in his opinion all the virtue of mankind was comprehended in that state.

In describing villas and gardens, he did not omit to condemn that absurd custom which prevails among the English, of permitting servants to receive money from strangers for the entertainment

that they receive, and therefore inserted in his poem these lines ;

But what the flowering pride of gardens rare,
However royal, or however fair,
If gates, which to access should still give way,
Ope but, like Peter's paradise, for pay ?
If perquisited varlets frequent stand,
And each new walk must a new tax demand ?
What foreign eye but with contempt surveys ?
What Muse shall from oblivion snatch their praise ?

But before the publication of his performance he recollected, that the Queen allowed her garden and cave at Richmond to be shewn for money, and that she so openly countenanced the practice, that she had bestowed the privilege of shewing them as a place of profit on a man, whose merit she valued herself upon rewarding, though she gave him only the liberty of disgracing his country.

He therefore thought, with more prudence than was often exerted by him, that the publication of these lines might be officiously represented as an insult upon the Queen, to whom he owed his life and his subsistence ; and that the propriety of his observation would be no security against the censures which the unseasonableness of it might draw upon him ; he therefore suppressed the passage in the first edition, but after the Queen's death thought the same caution no longer necessary, and restored it to the proper place.

The poem was therefore published without any political faults, and inscribed to the Prince ; but Mr. Savage, having no friend upon whom he could prevail to present it to him, had no other method of attracting his observation than the

publication of frequent advertisements, and therefore received no reward from his patron, however generous on other occasions.

This disappointment he never mentioned without indignation, being by some means or other confident that the Prince was not ignorant of his address to him; and insinuated, that, if any advances in popularity could have been made by distinguishing him, he had not written without notice, or without reward.

He was once inclined to have presented his poem in person, and sent to the printer for a copy with that design; but either his opinion changed, or his resolution deserted him, and he continued to resent neglect without attempting to force himself into regard.

Nor was the publick much more favourable than his patron, for only seventy-two were sold, though the performance was much commended by some whose judgement in that kind of writing is generally allowed. But Savage easily reconciled himself to mankind without imputing any defect to his work, by observing that his poem was unluckily published two days after the prorogation of the parliament,⁸¹ and by consequence at a time when all those who could be expected to regard it were in the hurry of preparing for their departure, or engaged in taking leave of others upon their dismission from publick affairs.

It must be however allowed, in justification of the publick, that this performance is not the most excellent of Mr. Savage's works; and that, though it cannot be denied to contain many striking senti-

⁸¹ Which took place June 21, 1737.

ments, majestic lines, and just observations, it is in general not sufficiently polished in the language, or enlivened in the imagery, or digested in the plan.

Thus his poem contributed nothing to the alleviation of his poverty, which was such as very few could have supported with equal patience ; but to which it must likewise be confessed, that few would have been exposed who received punctually fifty pounds a year ; a salary which, though by no means equal to the demands of vanity and luxury, is yet found sufficient to support families above want, and was undoubtedly more than the necessities of life require.

But no sooner had he received his pension, than he withdrew to his darling privacy, from which he returned in a short time to his former distress, and for some part of the year generally lived by chance, eating only when he was invited to the tables of his acquaintances, from which the meanness of his dress often excluded him, when the politeness and variety of his conversation would have been thought a sufficient recompense for his entertainment.

He lodged as much by accident as he dined, and passed the night sometimes in mean houses, which are set open at night to any casual wanderers, sometimes in cellars, among the riot and filth of the meanest and most profligate of the rabble ; and sometimes, when he had not money to support even the expences of these receptacles, walked about the streets till he was weary, and lay down in the summer upon a bulk, or in the winter, with his associates in poverty, among the ashes of a glass-house.

In this manner were passed those days and those nights which nature had enabled him to have employed in elevated speculations, useful studies, or pleasing conversation. On a bulk, in a cellar, or in a glass-house among thieves and beggars, was to be found the Author of *The Wanderer*, the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations; the man whose remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senates, and whose delicacy might have polished courts.

It cannot but be imagined that such necessities might sometimes force him upon disreputable practices: and it is probable that these lines in *The Wanderer* were occasioned by his reflections on his own conduct:

Though misery leads to happiness, and truth,
 Unequal to the load, this languid youth,
 (O, let none censure, if, untried by grief,
 If, amidst woe, untempted by relief,
 He stoop'd reluctant to low arts of shame,
 Which then, ev'n then, he scorn'd, and blush'd to name.

Whoever was acquainted with him was certain to be solicited for small sums, which the frequency of the request made in time considerable, and he was therefore quickly shunned by those who were become familiar enough to be trusted with his necessities; but his rambling manner of life, and constant appearance at houses of public resort, always procured him a new succession of friends, whose kindness had not been exhausted by repeated requests; so that he was seldom absolutely with-

out resources, but had in his utmost exigences this comfort, that he always imagined himself sure of speedy relief.

It was observed, that he always asked favours of this kind without the least submission or apparent consciousness of dependence, and that he did not seem to look upon a compliance with his request as an obligation that deserved any extraordinary acknowledgements; but a refusal was resented by him as an affront, or complained of as an injury; nor did he readily reconcile himself to those who either denied to lend, or gave him afterwards any intimation that they expected to be repaid.

He was sometimes so far compassionated by those who knew both his merit and distresses, that they received him into their families, but they soon discovered him to be a very incommodious inmate; for, being always accustomed to an irregular manner of life, he could not confine himself to any stated hours, or pay any regard to the rules of a family, but would prolong his conversation till midnight, without considering that business might require his friend's application in the morning; and, when he had persuaded himself to retire to bed, was not, without equal difficulty, called up to dinner; it was therefore impossible to pay him any distinction without the entire subversion of all œconomy, a kind of establishment which, wherever he went, he always appeared ambitious to overthrow.

It must therefore be acknowledged, in justification of mankind, that it was not always by the negligence or coldness of his friends that Savage

was distressed, but because it was in reality very difficult to preserve him long in a state of ease. To supply him with money was a hopeless attempt; for no sooner did he see himself master of a sum sufficient to set him free from care for a day, than he became profuse and luxurious. When once he had entered a tavern, or engaged in a scheme of pleasure, he never retired till want of money obliged him to some new expedient. If he was entertained in a family, nothing was any longer to be regarded there but amusements and jollity; wherever Savage entered, he immediately expected that order and business should fly before him, that all should thenceforward be left to hazard, and that no dull principle of domestic management should be opposed to his inclination, or intrude upon his gaiety.

His distresses, however afflictive, never dejected him; in his lowest state he wanted not spirit to assert the natural dignity of wit, and was always ready to repress that insolence which the superiority of fortune incited, and to trample on that reputation which rose upon any other basis than that of merit: he never admitted any gross familiarities, or submitted to be treated otherwise than as an equal. Once, when he was without lodging, meat, or clothes, one of his friends, a man not indeed remarkable for moderation in his prosperity, left a message, that he desired to see him about nine in the morning. Savage knew that his intention was to assist him; but was very much disgusted that he should presume to prescribe the hour of his attendance,

and, I believe, refused to visit him, and rejected his kindness.

The same invincible temper, whether firmness or obstinacy, appeared in his conduct to the Lord Tyrconnel, from whom he very frequently demanded, that the allowance which was once paid him should be restored; but with whom he never appeared to entertain for a moment the thought of soliciting a reconciliation, and whom he treated at once with all the haughtiness of superiority, and all the bitterness of resentment. He wrote to him, not in a style of supplication or respect, but of reproach, menace, and contempt;⁸² and appeared determined, if he ever regained his allowance, to hold it only by the right of conquest.

As many more can discover, that a man is richer than that he is wiser than themselves, superiority of understanding is not so readily acknowledged as that of fortune; nor is that haughtiness, which the consciousness of great abilities incites, borne with the same submission as the tyranny of affluence; and therefore Savage, by asserting his claim to deference and regard, and by treating those with contempt whom better fortune animated to rebel against him, did not

⁸² Boswell (Fitzgerald ed.), i. 100, gives the following example of Savage's letters to Tyrconnel:—

“Right Honourable BRUTE, and BOOBY,

“I find you want (as Mr. — is pleased to hint,) to swear away my life, that is, the life of your creditor, because he asks you for a debt. The publick shall soon be acquainted with this, to judge whether you are not fitter to be an Irish Evidence, than to be an Irish Peer.—I defy and despise you. I am,

“Your determined adversary, R. S.”

fail to raise a great number of enemies in the different classes of mankind. Those who thought themselves raised above him by the advantages of riches, hated him because they found no protection from the petulance of his wit. Those who were esteemed for their writings feared him as a critic, and maligned him as a rival, and almost all the smaller wits were his professed enemies.

Among these Mr. Miller⁸³ so far indulged his resentment as to introduce him in a farce, and direct him to be personated on the stage, in a dress like that which he then wore; a mean insult, which only insinuated that Savage had but one coat, and which was therefore despised by him rather than resented; for though he wrote a lampoon against Miller, he never printed it: and as no other person ought to prosecute that revenge from which the person who was injured desisted, I shall not preserve what Mr. Savage suppressed: of which the publication would indeed have been a punishment too severe for so impotent an assault.

The great hardships of poverty were to Savage not the want of lodging or of food, but the neglect and contempt which it drew upon him. He complained, that as his affairs grew desperate, he found his reputation for capacity visibly decline; that his opinion in questions of criticism was no longer regarded, when his coat was out of fashion; and that those who, in the interval of his prosperity, were always encouraging him to great undertakings by encomiums on his genius and assu-

⁸³ Joe Miller, actor and humourist, who died August 15, 1738.

rances of success, now received any mention of his designs with coldness, thought that the subjects on which he proposed to write were very difficult, and were ready to inform him, that the event of a poem was uncertain, that an author ought to employ much time in the consideration of his plan, and not presume to sit down to write in confidence of a few cursory ideas, and a superficial knowledge; difficulties were started on all sides, and he was no longer qualified for any performance but *The Volunteer Laureat*.

Yet even this kind of contempt never depressed him; for he always preserved a steady confidence in his own capacity, and believed nothing above his reach which he should at any time earnestly endeavour to attain. He formed schemes of the same kind with regard to knowledge and to fortune, and flattered himself with advances to be made in science, as with riches, to be enjoyed in some distant period of his life. For the acquisition of knowledge he was indeed far better qualified than for that of riches; for he was naturally inquisitive and desirous of the conversation of those from whom any information was to be obtained, but by no means solicitous to improve those opportunities that were sometimes offered of raising his fortune; and he was remarkably retentive of his ideas, which, when once he was in possession of them, rarely forsook him; a quality which could never be communicated to his money.

While he was thus wearing out his life in expectation that the Queen would some time recollect her promise, he had recourse to the

usual practice of writers, and published proposals for printing his works by subscription, to which he was encouraged by the success of many who had not a better right to the favour of the publick; but, whatever was the reason, he did not find the world equally inclined to favour him; and he observed with some discontent, that, though he offered his works at half a guinea, he was able to procure but a small number in comparison with those who subscribed twice as much to Duck.⁸⁴

Nor was it without indignation that he saw his proposals neglected by the Queen, who patronised Mr. Duck's with uncommon ardour, and incited a competition among those who attended the court, who should most promote his interest, and who should first offer a subscription. This was a distinction to which Mr. Savage made no scruple of asserting that his birth, his misfortunes, and his genius, gave a fairer title, than could be pleaded by him on whom it was conferred.

Savage's applications were however not universally unsuccessful; for some of the nobility countenanced his design, encouraged his proposals, and subscribed with great liberality. He related of the Duke of Chandos particularly, that, upon receiving his proposals, he sent him ten guineas.

But the money which his subscriptions afforded

⁸⁴ Stephen Duck, who began life as a thresher, and became in turn Yeoman of the Guard, Keeper of the Queen's Library, and incumbent of Byfleet, in Surrey. He believed himself a poet, and published his verses by subscription. He committed suicide in 1756. *Vide* Mrs. Napier's edition of the *Lives*, vol. ii. p. 391.

him was not less volatile than that which he received from his other schemes; whenever a subscription was paid him, he went to a tavern; and, as money so collected is necessarily received in small sums, he never was able to send his poems to the press, but for many years continued his solicitation, and squandered whatever he obtained.

This project of printing his works was frequently revived; and, as his proposals grew obsolete, new ones were printed with fresher dates. To form schemes for the publication was one of his favourite amusements; nor was he ever more at ease than when, with any friend who readily fell in with his schemes, he was adjusting the print, forming the advertisements, and regulating the dispersion of his new edition, which he really intended some time to publish, and which, as long as experience had shewn him the impossibility of printing the volume together, he at last determined to divide into weekly or monthly numbers, that the profits of the first might supply the expences of the next.

Thus he spent his time in mean expedients and tormenting suspense, living for the greatest part in fear of prosecutions from his creditors, and consequently skulking in obscure parts of the town, of which he was no stranger to the remotest corners. But wherever he came, his address secured him friends, whom his necessities soon alienated; so that he had perhaps a more numerous acquaintance than any man ever before attained, there being scarcely any person eminent on any account to whom he was not known, or

whose character he was not in some degree able to delineate.

To the acquisition of this extensive acquaintance every circumstance of his life contributed. He excelled in the arts of conversation, and therefore willingly practised them: He had seldom any home, or even a lodging in which he could be private; and therefore was driven into public-houses for the common conveniences of life and supports of nature. He was always ready to comply with every invitation, having no employment to withhold him, and often no money to provide for himself; and by dining with one company, he never failed of obtaining an introduction into another.

Thus dissipated was his life, and thus casual his subsistence; yet did not the distraction of his views hinder him from reflection, nor the uncertainty of his condition depress his gaiety. When he had wandered about without any fortunate adventure by which he was led into a tavern, he sometimes retired into the fields, and was able to employ his mind in study, or amuse it with pleasing imaginations; and seldom appeared to be melancholy, but when some sudden misfortune had just fallen upon him, and even then in a few moments he would disentangle himself from his perplexity, adopt the subject of conversation, and apply his mind wholly to the objects that others presented to it.

This life, unhappy as it may be already imagined, was yet embittered, in 1738, with new calamities. The death of the Queen⁸⁵ deprived

⁸⁵ November 20, 1737.

him of all the prospects of preferment with which he so long entertained his imagination; and, as Sir Robert Walpole had before given him reason to believe that he never intended the performance of his promise, he was now abandoned again to fortune.

He was however, at that time, supported by a friend; and as it was not his custom to look out for distant calamities, or to feel any other pain than that which forced itself upon his senses, he was not much afflicted at his loss, and perhaps comforted himself that his pension would be now continued without the annual tribute of a panegyric.

Another expectation contributed likewise to support him: he had taken a resolution to write a second tragedy upon the story of Sir Thomas Overbury, in which he preserved a few lines of his former play, but made a total alteration of the plan, added new incidents, and introduced new characters; so that it was a new tragedy, not a revival of the former.

Many of his friends blamed him for not making choice of another subject; but, in vindication of himself, he asserted, that it was not easy to find a better; and that he thought it his interest to extinguish the memory of the first tragedy, which he could only do by writing one less defective upon the same story; by which he should entirely defeat the artifice of the booksellers, who, after the death of any author of reputation, are always industrious to swell his works, by uniting his worst productions with his best.

In the execution of this scheme, however, he

proceeded but slowly, and probably only employed himself upon it when he could find no other amusement; but he pleased himself with counting the profits, and perhaps imagined, that the theatrical reputation which he was about to acquire, would be equivalent to all that he had lost by the death of his patroness.

He did not, in confidence of his approaching riches, neglect the measures proper to secure the continuance of his pension, though some of his favourers thought him culpable for omitting to write on her death; but on her birth-day next year,⁸⁶ he gave a proof of the solidity of his judgment, and the power of his genius. He knew that the track of elegy had been so long beaten, that it was impossible to travel in it without treading in the footsteps of those who had gone before him; and that therefore it was necessary, that he might distinguish himself from the herd of encomiasts, to find out some new walk of funeral panegyrick.

This difficult task he performed in such a manner, that his poem⁸⁷ may be justly ranked among the best pieces that the death of princes has produced. By transferring the mention of her death to her birth-day, he has formed a happy combination of topicks, which any other man would have thought it very difficult to connect in one view, but which he has united in such a manner, that the relation between them appears natural; and it may be justly said, that what no

⁸⁶ March 1, 1738.

⁸⁷ *A Poem, sacred to the memory of her late Majesty; humbly addressed to his Majesty.*

other man would have thought on, it now appears scarcely possible for any man to miss.

The beauty of this peculiar combination of images is so masterly, that it is sufficient to set this poem above censure; and therefore it is not necessary to mention many other delicate touches which may be found in it, and which would deservedly be admired in any other performance.

To these proofs of his genius may be added, from the same poem, an instance of his prudence, an excellence for which he was not so often distinguished; he does not forget to remind the King, in the most delicate and artful manner, of continuing his pension.

With regard to the success of this address, he was for some time in suspence, but was in no great degree solicitous about it; and continued his labour upon his new tragedy with great tranquillity, till the friend who had for a considerable time supported him, removing his family to another place, took occasion to dismiss him. It then became necessary to enquire more diligently what was determined in his affair, having reason to suspect that no great favour was intended him, because he had not received his pension at the usual time.

It is said, that he did not take those methods of retrieving his interest, which were most likely to succeed; and some of those who were employed in the Exchequer, cautioned him against too much violence in his proceedings; but Mr. Savage, who seldom regulated his conduct by the advice of others, gave way to his passion, and demanded of Sir Robert Walpole, at his levee, the reason of the

distinction that was made between him and the other pensioners of the Queen, with a degree of roughness which perhaps determined him to withdraw what had been only delayed.

Whatever was the crime of which he was accused or suspected, and whatever influence was employed against him, he received soon after an account that took from him all hopes of regaining his pension; and he had now no prospect of subsistence but from his play, and he knew no way of living for the time required to finish it.

So peculiar were the misfortunes of this man, deprived of an estate and title by a particular law, exposed and abandoned by a mother, defrauded by a mother of a fortune which his father had allotted him, he entered the world without a friend; and though his abilities forced themselves into esteem and reputation, he was never able to obtain any real advantage, and whatever prospects arose were always intercepted as he began to approach them. The king's intentions in his favour were frustrated; his dedication to the Prince, whose generosity on every other occasion was eminent, procured him no reward; Sir Robert Walpole, who valued himself upon keeping his promise to others, broke it to him without regret; and the bounty of the Queen was, after her death, withdrawn from him, and from him only.⁸⁸

Such were his misfortunes, which yet he bore, not only with decency, but with cheerfulness; nor was his gaiety clouded even by his last disappoint-

⁸⁸ Savage recounts this fact in a letter to Dr. Birch, dated September 1, 1738.

ments, though he was in a short time reduced to the lowest degree of distress, and often wanted both lodging and food. At this time he gave another instance of the insurmountable obstinacy of his spirit: his clothes were worn out; and he received notice, that at a coffee-house some clothes and linen were left for him: the person who sent them did not, I believe, inform him to whom he was to be obliged, that he might spare the perplexity of acknowledging the benefit; but though the offer was so far generous, it was made with some neglect of ceremonies, which Mr. Savage so much resented, that he refused the present, and declined to enter the house till the clothes that had been designed for him were taken away.

His distress was now publickly known, and his friends, therefore, thought it proper to concert some measures for his relief; and one of them⁸⁹ wrote a letter to him, in which he expressed his concern "for the miserable withdrawing of his pension;" and gave him hopes, that in a short time he should find himself supplied with a competence, "without any dependence on those little creatures which we are pleased to call the Great."

The scheme proposed for this happy and independent subsistence, was, that he should retire into Wales, and receive an allowance of fifty pounds a year, to be raised by a subscription, on which he was to live privately in a cheap place, without aspiring any more to affluence, or having any farther care of reputation.

⁸⁹ That is, Pope.

This offer Mr. Savage gladly accepted, though with intentions very different from those of his friends; for they proposed that he should continue an exile from London for ever, and spend all the remaining part of his life at Swansea; but he designed only to take the opportunity, which their scheme offered him, of retreating for a short time, that he might prepare his play for the stage, and his other works for the press, and then to return to London to exhibit his tragedy, and live upon the profits of his own labour.

With regard to his works, he proposed very great improvements, which would have required much time, or great application; and when he had finished them, he designed to do justice to his subscribers, by publishing them according to his proposals.

As he was ready to entertain himself with future pleasures, he had planned out a scheme of life for the country, of which he had no knowledge but from pastorals and songs. He imagined that he should be transported to scenes of flowery felicity, like those which one poet has reflected to another; and had projected a perpetual round of innocent pleasures, of which he suspected no interruption from pride, or ignorance, or brutality.

With these expectations he was so enchanted, that when he was once gently reproached by a friend for submitting to live upon a subscription, and advised rather by a resolute exertion of his abilities to support himself, he could not bear to debar himself from the happiness which was to be found in the calm of a cottage, or lose the oppor-

tunity of listening, without intermission, to the melody of the nightingale, which he believed was to be heard from every bramble, and which he did not fail to mention as a very important part of the happiness of a country life.

While this scheme was ripening, his friends directed him to take a lodging in the liberties of the Fleet, that he might be secure from his creditors, and sent him every Monday a guinea, which he commonly spent before the next morning, and trusted, after his usual manner, the remaining part of the week to the bounty of fortune.

He now began very sensibly to feel the miseries of dependence. Those by whom he was to be supported, began to prescribe to him with an air of authority, which he knew not how decently to resent, nor patiently to bear; and he soon discovered, from the conduct of most of his subscribers, that he was yet in the hands of "little creatures."

Of the insolence that he was obliged to suffer, he gave many instances, of which none appeared to raise his indignation to a greater height, than the method which was taken of furnishing him with clothes. Instead of consulting him, and allowing him to send a taylor his orders for what they thought proper to allow him, they proposed to send for a taylor to take his measure, and then to consult how they should equip him.

This treatment was not very delicate, nor was it such as Savage's humanity would have suggested to him on a like occasion; but it had scarcely deserved mention, had it not, by affecting him in an uncommon degree, shewn the peculiarity of his character. Upon hearing the design that

was formed, he came to the lodging of a friend with the most violent agonies of rage ; and, being asked what it could be that gave him such disturbance, he replied with the utmost vehemence of indignation, " That they had sent for a taylor " to measure him."

How the affair ended was never enquired, for fear of renewing his uneasiness. It is probable, that, upon recollection, he submitted with a good grace to what he could not avoid, and that he discovered no resentment where he had no power.

He was, however, not humbled to implicit and universal compliance ; for when the gentleman, who had first informed him of the design to support him by a subscription, attempted to procure a reconciliation with the Lord Tyrconnel, he could by no means be prevailed upon to comply with the measures that were proposed.

A letter was written for him⁹⁰ to Sir William Lemon,⁹¹ to prevail upon him to interpose his good offices with Lord Tyrconnel, in which he solicited Sir William's assistance " for a man who really " needed it as much as any man could well do ; " and informed him, that he was retiring " for ever " to a place where he should no more trouble his " relations, friends, or enemies ; " he confessed, that his passion had betrayed him to some conduct with regard to Lord Tyrconnel, for which he could not but heartily ask his pardon ; and as he imagined Lord Tyrconnel's passion might be yet so

⁹⁰ By Mr. Pope.—JOHNSON.

⁹¹ Sir William Lemon, of Northall, Bart., who married, in 1737, Anne Brett, daughter of the former Countess of Macclesfield, and half-sister to Savage.

high, that he would not "receive a letter from "him," begged that Sir William would endeavour to soften him; and expressed his hopes that he would comply with his request, and that "so small a relation would not harden his heart "against him."

That any man should presume to dictate a letter to him, was not very agreeable to Mr. Savage; and therefore he was, before he had opened it, not much inclined to approve it. But when he read it, he found it contained sentiments entirely opposite to his own, and, as he asserted, to the truth; and therefore, instead of copying it, wrote his friend a letter full of masculine resentment and warm expostulations. He very justly observed, that the style was too supplicatory, and the representation too abject, and that he ought at least to have made him complain with "the "dignity of a gentleman in distress." He declared that he would not write the paragraph in which he was to ask Lord Tyrconnel's pardon; for, "he despised his pardon, and therefore could not "heartily, and would not hypocritically, ask it." He remarked, that his friend made a very unreasonable distinction between himself and him; for, says he, when you mention men of high rank "in your own character," they are "those little "creatures whom we are pleased to call the great;" but when you address them "in mine," no servility is sufficiently humble. He then with great propriety explained the ill consequences which might be expected from such a letter, which his relations would print in their own defence, and which would for ever be produced as a full answer to all that he

should allege against them ; for he always intended to publish a minute account of the treatment which he had received. It is to be remembered, to the honour of the gentleman by whom this letter was drawn up, that he yielded to Mr. Savage's reasons, and agreed that it ought to be suppressed.

After many alterations and delays, a subscription was at length raised, which did not amount to fifty pounds a year, though twenty were paid by one gentleman ;⁹² such was the generosity of mankind, that what had been done by a player without solicitation, could not now be effected by application and interest ; and Savage had a great number to court and to obey for a pension less than that which Mrs. Oldfield paid him without exacting any servilities.

Mr. Savage however was satisfied, and willing to retire, and was convinced that the allowance, though scanty, would be more than sufficient for him, being now determined to commence a rigid œconomist, and to live according to the exactest rules of frugality ; for nothing was in his opinion more contemptible than a man, who, when he knew his income, exceeded it ; and yet he confessed, that instances of such folly were too common, and lamented that some men were not to be trusted with their own money.

Full of these salutary resolutions, he left London in July 1739, having taken leave with great tenderness of his friends, and parted from

⁹² That is, Pope. *Vide* Pope's letters to Mallet of December 17, 1739, and January 25, 1741.

the author of this narrative with tears in his eyes. He was furnished with fifteen guineas, and informed, that they would be sufficient, not only for the expence of his journey, but for his support in Wales for some time; and that there remained but little more of the first collection. He promised a strict adherence to his maxims of parsimony, and went away in the stage-coach; nor did his friends expect to hear from him, till he informed them of his arrival at Swansea.

But when they least expected, arrived a letter dated the fourteenth day after his departure, in which he sent them word, that he was yet upon the road, and without money; and that he therefore could not proceed without a remittance. They then sent him the money that was in their hands, with which he was enabled to reach Bristol, from whence he was to go to Swansea by water.

At Bristol he found an embargo laid upon the shipping, so that he could not immediately obtain a passage; and being therefore obliged to stay there some time, he with his usual felicity, ingratiated himself with many of the principal inhabitants, was invited to their houses, distinguished at their publick feasts, and treated with a regard that gratified his vanity, and therefore easily engaged his affection.

He began very early after his retirement to complain of the conduct of his friends in London, and irritated many of them so much by his letters, that they withdrew, however honourably, their contributions; and it is believed, that little more was paid him than the twenty pounds a year,

which were allowed him by the gentlemen who proposed the subscription.

After some stay at Bristol he retired to Swansea, the place originally proposed for his residence, where he lived about a year, very much dissatisfied with the diminution of his salary; but contracted, as in other places, acquaintance with those who were most distinguished in that country, among whom he has celebrated Mr. Powel and Mrs. Jones, by some verses which he inserted in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.⁹³

Here he completed his tragedy, of which two acts were wanting when he left London, and was desirous of coming to town to bring it upon the stage. This design was very warmly opposed, and he was advised by his chief benefactor to put it into the hands of Mr. Thomson and Mr. Mallet, that it might be fitted for the stage, and to allow his friends to receive the profits, out of which an annual pension should be paid him.

This proposal he rejected with the utmost contempt. He was by no means convinced that the judgement of those, to whom he was required to submit, was superior to his own. He was now determined, as he expressed it, to be "no longer

⁹³ Reprinted in the late collection.—JOHNSON.

The poems in question are thus enumerated by Cunningham: "*The Employment of Beauty, a Poem*. Addressed to Mrs. Bridget Jones, a young Widow Lady of Llanelly, Carmarthenshire (*Gent.'s Mag.* for June, 1741). *Verses sent to Mrs. Bridget Jones with The Wanderer, a Poem* (*Gent.'s Mag.* July, 1741). *Epitaph on Mrs. Jones, Grandmother to Mrs. Bridget Jones, of Llanelly, in Carmarthenshire* (*Gent.'s Mag.* Oct. 1741). *Valentine's Day, a Poem*, addressed to a young Widow Lady (*Gent.'s Mag.* March 1742). *To John Powell, Esq., Barrister-at-Law* (*Gent.'s Mag.* Sept. 1742). The letter prefixed is dated 'Bristol, Sept. 10,' 1742."

“kept in leading-strings,” and had no elevated idea of “his bounty, who proposed to pension ‘him out of the profits of his own labours.’”

He attempted in Wales to promote a subscription for his works, and had once hopes of success; but in a short time afterwards formed a resolution of leaving that part of the country, to which he thought it not reasonable to be confined for the gratification of those, who, having promised him a liberal income, had no sooner banished him to a remote corner, than they reduced his allowance to a salary scarcely equal to the necessities of life.

His resentment of this treatment, which, in his own opinion at least, he had not deserved, was such, that he broke off all correspondence with most of his contributors, and appeared to consider them as persecutors and oppressors; and in the latter part of his life declared, that their conduct toward him, since his departure from London, “had been perfidiousness improving on perfidiousness, and inhumanity on inhumanity.”

It is not to be supposed, that the necessities of Mr. Savage did not sometimes incite him to satirical exaggerations of the behaviour of those by whom he thought himself reduced to them. But it must be granted, that the diminution of his allowance was a great hardship, and that those who withdrew their subscription from a man, who, upon the faith of their promise, had gone into a kind of banishment, and abandoned all those by whom he had been before relieved in his distresses, will find it no easy task to vindicate their conduct.

It may be alleged, and perhaps justly, that he

was petulant and contemptuous; that he more frequently reproached his subscribers for not giving him more, than thanked them for what he received; but it is to be remembered, that his conduct, and this is the worst charge that can be drawn up against him, did them no real injury; and that it therefore ought rather to have been pitied than resented; at least, the resentment it might provoke ought to have been generous and manly; epithets which his conduct will hardly deserve that starves the man whom he has persuaded to put himself into his power.

It might have been reasonably demanded by Savage, that they should, before they had taken away what they promised, have replaced him in his former state, that they should have taken no advantages from the situation to which the appearance of their kindness had reduced him, and that he should have been recalled to London before he was abandoned. He might justly represent, that he ought to have been considered as a lion in the toils, and demand to be released before the dogs should be loosed upon him.

He endeavoured, indeed, to release himself, and, with an intent to return to London, went to Bristol, where a repetition of the kindness which he had formerly found invited him to stay. He was not only caressed and treated, but had a collection made for him of about thirty pounds, with which it had been happy if he had immediately departed for London; but his negligence did not suffer him to consider, that such proofs of kindness were not often to be expected, and that this ardour of benevolence was in a great degree the effect of

novelty, and might, probably, be every day less; and therefore he took no care to improve the happy time, but was encouraged by one favour to hope for another, till at length generosity was exhausted, and officiousness wearied.

Another part of his misconduct was the practice of prolonging his visits to unseasonable hours, and disconcerting all the families into which he was admitted. This was an error in a place of commerce which all the charms of his conversation could not compensate; for what trader would purchase such airy satisfaction by the loss of solid gain, which must be the consequence of midnight merriment, as those hours which were gained at night were generally lost in the morning?

Thus Mr. Savage, after the curiosity of the inhabitants was gratified, found the number of his friends daily decreasing, perhaps without suspecting for what reason their conduct was altered; for he still continued to harass, with his nocturnal intrusions, those that yet countenanced him, and admitted him to their houses.

But he did not spend all the time of his residence at Bristol in visits or at taverns, for he sometimes returned to his studies, and began several considerable designs. When he felt an inclination to write, he always retired from the knowledge of his friends, and lay hid in an obscure part of the suburbs, till he found himself again desirous of company, to which it is likely that intervals of absence made him more welcome.

He was always full of his design of returning to London, to bring his tragedy upon the stage; but, having neglected to depart with the money

that was raised for him, he could not afterwards procure a sum sufficient to defray the expences of his journey ; nor perhaps would a fresh supply have had any other effect, than, by putting immediate pleasures in his power, to have driven the thoughts of his journey out of his mind.

While he was thus spending the day in contriving a scheme for the morrow, distress stole upon him by imperceptible degrees. His conduct had already wearied some of those who were at first enamoured of his conversation ; but he might, perhaps, still have devolved to others, whom he might have entertained with equal success, had not the decay of his clothes made it no longer consistent with their vanity to admit him to their tables, or to associate with him in publick places. He now began to find every man from home at whose house he called ; and was therefore no longer able to procure the necessaries of life, but wandered about the town, slighted and neglected, in quest of a dinner, which he did not always obtain.

To complete his misery, he was pursued by the officers for small debts which he had contracted ; and was therefore obliged to withdraw from the small number of friends from whom he had still reason to hope for favours. His custom was to lie in bed the greatest part of the day, and to go out in the dark with the utmost privacy, and after having paid his visit return again before morning to his lodging, which was in the garret of an obscure inn.

Being thus excluded on one hand, and confined on the other, he suffered the utmost extremities of

poverty, and often fasted so long that he was seized with faintness, and had lost his appetite, not being able to bear the smell of meat, till the action of his stomach was restored by a cordial.

In this distress, he received a remittance of five pounds from London, with which he provided himself a decent coat, and determined to go to London, but unhappily spent his money at a favourite tavern. Thus was he again confined to Bristol, where he was every day hunted by bailiffs. In this exigence he once more found a friend, who sheltered him in his house, though at the usual inconveniences with which his company was attended; for he could neither be persuaded to go to bed in the night, nor to rise in the day.

It is observable, that in these various scenes of misery, he was always disengaged and cheerful: he at some times pursued his studies, and at others continued or enlarged his epistolary correspondence; nor was he ever so far dejected as to endeavour to procure an increase of his allowance by any other methods than accusations and reproaches.

He had now no longer any hopes of assistance from his friends at Bristol, who as merchants, and by consequence sufficiently studious of profit, cannot be supposed to have looked with much compassion upon negligence and extravagance, or to think any excellence equivalent to a fault of such consequence as neglect of œconomy. It is natural to imagine, that many of those, who would have relieved his real wants, were discouraged from the exertion of their benevolence by observation of the use which was made of their favours, and con-

viction that relief would only be momentary, and that the same necessity would quickly return.

At last he quitted the house of his friend, and returned to his lodging at the inn, still intending to set out in a few days for London; but on the 10th of January, 1742-3, having been at supper with two of his friends, he was at his return to his lodgings arrested for a debt of about eight pounds, which he owed at a coffee-house, and conducted to the house of a sheriff's officer. The account which he gives of this misfortune, in a letter to one of the gentlemen with whom he had supped, is too remarkable to be omitted.

“It was not a little unfortunate for me, that
“I spent yesterday's evening with you; because
“the hour hindered me from entering on my new
“lodging; however, I have now got one, but such
“an one as I believe nobody would chuse.

“I was arrested at the suit of Mrs. Read, just
“as I was going up stairs to bed, at Mr. Bowyer's;
“but taken in so private a manner, that I believe
“nobody at the White Lion is apprised of it.
“Though I let the officers know the strength (or
“rather weakness) of my pocket, yet they treated
“me with the utmost civility; and even when
“they conducted me to confinement, it was in
“such a manner, that I verily believe I could
“have escaped, which I would rather be ruined
“than have done, notwithstanding the whole
“amount of my finances was but threepence half-
“penny.

“In the first place I must insist, that you
“will industriously conceal this from Mrs. S——s,
“because I would not have her good-nature suffer

“ that pain, which, I know, she would be apt to
“ feel on this occasion.

“ Next, I conjure you, dear Sir, by all the ties
“ of friendship, by no means to have one uneasy
“ thought on my account; but to have the same
“ pleasantry of countenance, and unruffled serenity
“ of mind, which (God be praised!) I have in this,
“ and have had in a much severer calamity.
“ Furthermore, I charge you, if you value my
“ friendship as truly as I do yours, not to utter, or
“ even harbour, the least resentment against Mrs.
“ Read. I believe she has ruined me, but I freely
“ forgive her; and (though I will never more have
“ any intimacy with her) I would, at a due dis-
“ tance, rather do her an act of good, than ill will.
“ Lastly (pardon the expression), I absolutely
“ command you not to offer me any pecuniary
“ assistance, nor to attempt getting me any from
“ any one of your friends. At another time, or on
“ any other occasion, you may, dear friend, be
“ well assured, I would rather write to you in the
“ submissive style of a request, than that of a
“ peremptory command.

“ However, that my truly valuable friend may
“ not think I am too proud to ask a favour,
“ let me entreat you to let me have your boy to
“ attend me for this day, not only for the sake of
“ saving me the expence of porters, but for the
“ delivery of some letters to people whose names
“ I would not have known to strangers.

“ The civil treatment I have thus far met from
“ those whose prisoner I am, makes me thankful
“ to the Almighty, that, though he has thought

“ fit to visit me (on my birth-night) with affliction,
“ yet (such is his great goodness !) my affliction is
“ not without alleviating circumstances. I murmur
“ not ; but am all resignation to the divine will.
“ As to the world, I hope that I shall be endued
“ by Heaven with that presence of mind, that serene
“ dignity in misfortune, that constitutes the
“ character of a true nobleman ; a dignity far
“ beyond that of coronets ; a nobility arising from
“ the just principles of philosophy, refined and
“ exalted by those of christianity.”—

He continued five days at the officer's, in hopes that he should be able to procure bail, and avoid the necessity of going to prison. The state in which he passed his time, and the treatment which he received, are very justly expressed by him in a letter which he wrote to a friend : “ The whole day,” says he, “ has been employed in various peoples' filling my head with their foolish chimerical systems, which has obliged me coolly (as far as nature will admit) to digest, and accommodate myself to, every different person's way of thinking ; hurried from one wild system to another, till it has quite made a chaos of my imagination, and nothing done—promised—disappointed—ordered to send, every hour, from one part of the town to the other.”—

When his friends, who had hitherto caressed and applauded, found that to give bail and pay the debt was the same, they all refused to preserve him from a prison at the expence of eight pounds ; and therefore, after having been for some time at the officer's house, “ at an immense expence,”

as he observes in his letter, he was at length removed to Newgate.⁹⁴

This expence he was enabled to support by the generosity of Mr. Nash⁹⁵ at Bath, who, upon receiving from him an account of his condition, immediately sent him five guineas, and promised to promote his subscription at Bath with all his interest.

By his removal to Newgate, he obtained at least a freedom from suspense, and rest from the disturbing vicissitudes of hope and disappointment; he now found that his friends were only companions, who were willing to share his gaiety, but not to partake of his misfortunes; and therefore he no longer expected any assistance from them.

It must however be observed of one gentleman, that he offered to release him by paying the debt; but that Mr. Savage would not consent, I suppose because he thought he had before been too burthensome to him.

He was offered by some of his friends, that a collection should be made for his enlargement; but he "treated the proposal," and declared,⁹⁶ "he should again treat it, with disdain. As to writing any mendicant letters, he had too high a spirit, and determined only to write to some ministers of state, to try to regain his pension."

He continued to complain⁹⁷ of those that had

⁹⁴ That is, the Prison of Bristol.

⁹⁵ Beau Nash, the fashionable hero of Bath society, who died in 1761.

⁹⁶ In a letter after his confinement.—JOHNSON.

⁹⁷ Letter, January 15.—JOHNSON.

sent him into the country, and objected to them, that he had "lost the profits of his play, which "had been finished three years;" and in another letter declares his resolution to publish a pamphlet, that the world might know how "he had "been used."

This pamphlet was never written; for he in a very short time recovered his usual tranquillity, and cheerfully applied himself to more inoffensive studies. He indeed steadily declared, that he was promised a yearly allowance of fifty pounds, and never received half the sum; but he seemed to resign himself to that as well as to other misfortunes, and lose the remembrance of it in his amusements and employments.

The cheerfulness with which he bore his confinement, appears from the following letter, which he wrote, January the 30th,⁹⁸ to one of his friends in London:

"I now write to you from my confinement in
 "Newgate, where I have been ever since Monday
 "last was se'nnight, and where I enjoy myself with
 "much more tranquillity than I have known for up-
 "wards of a twelvemonth past; having a room en-
 "tirely to myself, and pursuing the amusement of
 "my poetical studies, uninterrupted, and agreeable
 "to my mind. I thank the Almighty, I am now
 "all collected in myself; and, though my person is
 "in confinement, my mind can expatiate on ample
 "and useful subjects with all the freedom im-
 "aginable. I am now more conversant with the
 "Nine than ever; and if, instead of a Newgate-

“bird, I may be allowed to be a bird of the
“Muses, I assure you Sir, I sing very freely in
“my cage; sometimes indeed in the plaintive
“notes of the nightingale; but, at others, in the
“cheerful strains of the lark.”—

In another letter he observes, that he ranges from one subject to another, without confining himself to any particular task, and that he was employed one week upon one attempt, and the next upon another.

Surely the fortitude of this man deserves, at least, to be mentioned with applause; and, whatever faults may be imputed to him, the virtue of suffering well cannot be denied him. The two powers which, in the opinion of Epictetus, constituted a wise man, are those of bearing and forbearing, which cannot indeed be affirmed to have been equally possessed by Savage; and indeed the want of one obliged him very frequently to practise the other.

He was treated by Mr. Dagg, the keeper of the prison, with great humanity; was supported by him at his own table without any certainty of recompence; had a room to himself, to which he could at any time retire from all disturbance; was allowed to stand at the door of the prison, and sometimes taken out into the fields; ⁹⁹ so that he suffered fewer hardships in prison than he had

⁹⁹ “One day last week Mr. Dagge, finding me at the door, asked me to take a walk with him, which I did, beyond Baptist Mill, in Gloucestershire; where at a public-house he treated me with ale and toddy. Baptist Mill is the pleasantest walk near this city. I found the smell of the new-mown hay very sweet, and every breeze was reviving to my spirits.”—SAVAGE to Mr. Strong, Bristol, June 19, 1713.

been accustomed to undergo in the greatest part of his life.

The keeper did not confine his benevolence to a gentle execution of his office, but made some overtures to the creditor for his release, though without effect; and continued, during the whole time of his imprisonment, to treat him with the utmost tenderness and civility.

Virtue is undoubtedly most laudable in that state which makes it most difficult; and therefore the humanity of a gaoler certainly deserves this public attestation; and the man, whose heart has not been hardened by such an employment, may be justly proposed as a pattern of benevolence. If an inscription was once engraved "to the honest toll-gatherer," less honours ought not to be paid "to the tender gaoler."

Mr. Savage very frequently received visits, and sometimes presents, from his acquaintances: but they did not amount to a subsistence, for the greater part of which he was indebted to the generosity of this keeper; but these favours, however they might endear to him the particular persons from whom he received them, were very far from impressing upon his mind any advantageous ideas of the people of Bristol, and therefore he thought he could not more properly employ himself in prison, than in writing a poem called "London and Bristol delineated."¹⁰⁰

When he had brought this poem to its present state, which, without considering the chasm, is

¹⁰⁰ The author preferred this title to that of "London and Bristol compared," which, when he began the piece, he intended to prefix to it.—JOHNSON.

not perfect, he wrote to London an account of his design, and informed his friend,¹⁰¹ that he was determined to print it with his name; but enjoined him not to communicate his intention to his Bristol acquaintance. The gentleman, surprised at his resolution, endeavoured to dissuade him from publishing it, at least from prefixing his name; and declared, that he could not reconcile the injunction of secrecy with his resolution to own it at its first appearance. To this Mr. Savage returned an answer agreeable to his character in the following terms:

“I received yours this morning; and not without a little surprise at the contents. To answer a question with a question, you ask me concerning London and Bristol, Why will I add delineated? Why did Mr. Woolaston add the same word to his RELIGION OF NATURE? I suppose that it was his will and pleasure to add it in his case; and it is mine to do so in my own. You are pleased to tell me, that you understand not why secrecy is enjoined, and yet I intend to set my name to it. My answer is—I have my private reasons, which I am not obliged to explain to any one. You doubt my friend Mr. S — ¹⁰² would not approve of it—And what is it to me whether he does or not? Do you imagine that Mr. S—— is to dictate to me? If any man who calls himself my friend should assume such an air, I would spurn at his friendship with contempt. You say, I seem to think

¹⁰¹ This friend was Mr. Cave, the printer.

¹⁰² That is, Mr. Strong of the Post-office.

“so by not letting him know it—And suppose I do, what then? Perhaps I can give reasons for that disapprobation, very foreign from what you would imagine. You go on in saying, Suppose I should not put my name to it—My answer is, that I will not suppose any such thing, being determined to the contrary: neither, Sir, would I have you suppose, that I applied to you for want of another press: nor would I have you imagine, that I owe Mr. S—— obligations which I do not.”

Such was his imprudence, and such his obstinate adherence to his own resolutions, however absurd. A prisoner! supported by charity! and, whatever insults he might have received during the latter part of his stay at Bristol, once caressed, esteemed, and presented with a liberal collection, he could forget on a sudden his danger and his obligations, to gratify the petulance of his wit, or the eagerness of his resentment, and publish a satire, by which he might reasonably expect that he should alienate those who then supported him, and provoke those whom he could neither resist nor escape.

This resolution, from the execution of which it is probable that only his death could have hindered him, is sufficient to shew, how much he disregarded all considerations that opposed his present passions, and how readily he hazarded all future advantages for any immediate gratifications. Whatever was his predominant inclination, neither hope nor fear hindered him from complying with it; nor had opposition any other effect than to heighten his ardour, and irritate his vehemence.

This performance was however laid aside, while he was employed in soliciting assistance from several great persons; and one interruption succeeding another, hindered him from supplying the chasm, and perhaps from retouching the other parts, which he can hardly be imagined to have finished in his own opinion; for it is very unequal, and some of the lines are rather inserted to rhyme to others, than to support or improve the sense; but the first and last parts are worked up with great spirit and elegance.

His time was spent in the prison for the most part in study, or in receiving visits; but sometimes he descended to lower amusements, and diverted himself in the kitchen with the conversation of the criminals; for it was not pleasing to him to be much without company; and though he was very capable of a judicious choice, he was often contented with the first that offered: for this he was sometimes reprov'd by his friends, who found him surrounded with felons; but the reproof was on that, as on other occasions, thrown away; he continued to gratify himself, and to set very little value on the opinion of others.

But here, as in every other scene of his life, he made use of such opportunities as occurred of benefiting those who were more miserable than himself, and was always ready to perform any office of humanity to his fellow-prisoners.

He had now ceased from corresponding with any of his subscribers except one, who yet continued to remit him the twenty pounds a year which he had promised him, and by whom it was expected that he would have been in a very short

time enlarged, because he had directed the keeper to enquire after the state of his debts.

However, he took care to enter his name according to the forms of the court, that the creditor might be obliged to make him some allowance, if he was continued a prisoner, and when on that occasion he appeared in the hall was treated with very unusual respect.

But the resentment of the city was afterwards raised by some accounts that had been spread of the satire, and he was informed that some of the merchants intended to pay the allowance which the law required, and to detain him a prisoner at their own expence. This he treated as an empty menace; and perhaps might have hastened the publication, only to shew how much he was superior to their insults, had not all his schemes been suddenly destroyed.

When he had been six months in prison, he received from one of his friends,¹⁰³ in whose kindness he had the greatest confidence, and on whose assistance he chiefly depended, a letter, that contained a charge of very atrocious ingratitude, drawn up in such terms as sudden resentment dictated. Henley,¹⁰⁴ in one of his advertisements, had mentioned *Pope's treatment of Savage*. This was supposed by Pope to be the consequence of a complaint made by Savage to Henley, and was therefore mentioned by him with much resentment. Mr. Savage returned a very solemn protestation of

¹⁰³ Mr. Pope.—JOHNSON.

¹⁰⁴ The allusion to Henley from his name to the words "much resentment" does not appear in the original *Life of Savage* (1744), nor in the first edition (1781) of *The Lives of the Poets*.

his innocence, but however appeared much disturbed at the accusation. Some days afterwards he was seized with a pain in his back and side, which, as it was not violent, was not suspected to be dangerous; but growing daily more languid and dejected, on the 25th of July he confined himself to his room, and a fever seized his spirits. The symptoms grew every day more formidable, but his condition did not enable him to procure any assistance. The last time that the keeper saw him was on July the 31st, 1743; when Savage, seeing him at his bed-side, said, with an uncommon earnestness, "I have something to say to you, Sir;" but, after a pause, moved his hand in a melancholy manner; and, finding himself unable to recollect what he was going to communicate, said, "'Tis gone!" The keeper soon after left him; and the next morning he died. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter,¹⁰⁵ at the expence of the keeper.

Such were the life and death of Richard Savage, a man equally distinguished by his virtues and vices; and at once remarkable for his weaknesses and abilities.

He was of a middle stature, of a thin habit of body, a long visage, coarse features, and melancholy aspect; of a grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien; but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners. His walk was slow, and his voice tremulous and mournful. He was easily excited to smiles, but very seldom provoked to laughter.

¹⁰⁵ On August 2, 1743.

His mind was in an uncommon degree vigorous and active. His judgment was accurate, his apprehension quick, and his memory so tenacious, that he was frequently observed to know what he had learned from others in a short time, better than those by whom he was informed ; and could frequently recollect incidents, with all their combination of circumstances, which few would have regarded at the present time, but which the quickness of his apprehension impressed upon him. He had the peculiar felicity, that his attention never deserted him ; he was present to every object, and regardful of the most trifling occurrences. He had the art of escaping from his own reflections, and accommodating himself to every new scene.

To this quality is to be imputed the extent of his knowledge, compared with the small time which he spent in visible endeavours to acquire it. He mingled in cursory conversation with the same steadiness of attention as others apply to a lecture ; and, amidst the appearance of thoughtless gaiety, lost no new idea that was started, nor any hint that could be improved. He had therefore made in coffee-houses the same proficiency as others in their closets : and it is remarkable, that the writings of a man of little education and little reading have an air of learning scarcely to be found in any other performances, but which perhaps as often obscures as embellishes them.

His judgement was eminently exact both with regard to writings and to men. The knowledge of life was indeed his chief attainment ; and it is not without some satisfaction, that I can produce

the suffrage of Savage in favour of human nature, of which he never appeared to entertain such odious ideas as some, who perhaps had neither his judgement nor experience, have published, either in ostentation of their sagacity, vindication of their crimes, or gratification of their malice.

His method of life particularly qualified him for conversation, of which he knew how to practise all the graces. He was never vehement or loud, but at once modest and easy, open and respectful; his language was vivacious or elegant, and equally happy upon grave and humourous subjects. He was generally censured for not knowing when to retire; but that was not the defect of his judgement, but of his fortune; when he left his company, he was frequently to spend the remaining part of the night in the street, or at least was abandoned to gloomy reflections, which it is not strange that he delayed as long as he could; and sometimes forgot that he gave others pain to avoid it himself.

It cannot be said, that he made use of his abilities for the direction of his own conduct: an irregular and dissipated manner of life had made him the slave of every passion that happened to be excited by the presence of its object, and that slavery to his passions reciprocally produced a life irregular and dissipated. He was not master of his own motions, nor could promise any thing for the next day.

With regard to his œconomy, nothing can be added to the relation of his life. He appeared to think himself born to be supported by others, and dispensed from all necessity of providing for him-

self; he therefore never prosecuted any scheme of advantage, nor endeavoured even to secure the profits which his writings might have afforded him. His temper was, in consequence of the dominion of his passions, uncertain and capricious: he was easily engaged, and easily disgusted; but he is accused of retaining his hatred more tenaciously than his benevolence.

He was compassionate both by nature and principle, and always ready to perform offices of humanity; but when he was provoked (and very small offences were sufficient to provoke him), he would prosecute his revenge with the utmost acrimony till his passion had subsided.

His friendship was therefore of little value; for though he was zealous in the support or vindication of those whom he loved, yet it was always dangerous to trust him, because he considered himself as discharged by the first quarrel from all ties of honour or gratitude; and would betray those secrets which, in the warmth of confidence, had been imparted to him. This practice drew upon him an universal accusation of ingratitude: nor can it be denied that he was very ready to set himself free from the load of an obligation; for he could not bear to conceive himself in a state of dependence, his pride being equally powerful with his other passions, and appearing in the form of insolence at one time, and of vanity at another. Vanity, the most innocent species of pride, was most frequently predominant: He could not easily leave off, when he had once begun to mention himself or his works; nor ever read his verses without stealing his eyes from the page, to discover, in the

faces of his audience, how they were affected with any favourite passage.

A kinder name than that of vanity ought to be given to the delicacy with which he was always careful to separate his own merit from every other man's, and to reject that praise to which he had no claim. He did not forget, in mentioning his performances, to mark every line that had been suggested or amended; and was so accurate, as to relate that he owed three words in *The Wanderer* to the advice of his friends.

His veracity was questioned, but with little reason; his accounts, though not indeed always the same, were generally consistent. When he loved any man, he suppressed all his faults; and, when he had been offended by him, concealed all his virtues: but his characters were generally true, so far as he proceeded; though it cannot be denied, that his partiality might have sometimes the effect of falsehood.

In cases indifferent, he was zealous for virtue, truth, and justice: he knew very well the necessity of goodness to the present and future happiness of mankind; nor is there perhaps any writer, who has less endeavoured to please by flattering the appetites, or perverting the judgement.

As an author, therefore, and he now ceases to influence mankind in any other character, if one piece which he had resolved to suppress be excepted, he has very little to fear from the strictest moral or religious censure. And though he may not be altogether secure against the objections of the critic, it must however be acknowledged, that his works are the productions of a genius truly

poetical; and, what many writers who have been more lavishly applauded cannot boast, that they have an original air, which has no resemblance of any foregoing work, that the versification and sentiments have a cast peculiar to themselves, which no man can imitate with success, because what was nature in Savage, would in another be affectation. It must be confessed, that his descriptions are striking, his images animated, his fictions justly imagined, and his allegories artfully pursued; that his diction is elevated, though sometimes forced, and his numbers sonorous and majestic, though frequently sluggish and encumbered. Of his style, the general fault is harshness, and its general excellence is dignity; of his sentiments, the prevailing beauty is sublimity, and uniformity the prevailing defect.

For his life, or for his writings, none, who candidly consider his fortune, will think an apology either necessary or difficult. If he was not always sufficiently instructed in his subject, his knowledge was at least greater than could have been attained by others in the same state. If his works were sometimes unfinished, accuracy cannot reasonably be exacted from a man oppressed with want, which he has no hope of relieving but by a speedy publication. The insolence and resentment of which he is accused were not easily to be avoided by a great mind, irritated by perpetual hardships, and constrained hourly to return the spurns of contempt, and repress the insolence of prosperity; and vanity may surely readily be pardoned in him, to whom life afforded no other

comforts than barren praises, and the consciousness of deserving them.

Those are no proper judges of his conduct, who have slumbered away their time on the down of plenty; nor will any wise man presume to say, "Had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived or written better than Savage."

This relation will not be wholly without its use, if those, who languish under any part of his sufferings, shall be enabled to fortify their patience, by reflecting that they feel only those afflictions from which the abilities of Savage did not exempt him; or those, who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, shall be reminded, that nothing will supply the want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.



APPENDIX



APPENDIX.

TO NOTE 71 IN THE *Life of Savage*.

The following is the text of *The Volunteer Laureat*.

THE VOLUNTEER LAUREAT—No. 1

A Poem on the Queen's Birth-Day, 1731-2

Humbly addressed to her MAJESTY, by Richard Savage,
Esq.

Twice twenty tedious moons have roll'd away
Since Hope, kind flatt'rer ! tun'd my pensive lay,
Whisp'ring that you, who rais'd me from despair,
Meant, by your smiles, to make life worth my care ;
With pitying hand an orphan's tears to screen,
And o'er the motherless extend the Queen.
'T will be—the prophet guides the poet's strain !
Grief never touch'd a heart like yours in vain :
Heav'n gave you power, because you love to bless,
And pity, when you feel it, is redress.

Two fathers join'd to rob my claim of one
My mother too thought fit to have no son !
The senate next, whose aid the helpless own,
Forgot my infant wrongs, and mine alone !
Yet parents pitiless, nor peers unkind,
Nor titles lost, nor woes mysterious join'd,

Strip me of Hope—by Heav'n thus lowly laid,
To find a *Pharaoh's* daughter in the shade.

You cannot hear unmov'd, when wrongs implore ;
Your heart is woman, though your mind be more ;
Kind, like the Pow'r who gave you to our pray'rs,
You would not lengthen life to sharpen cares:
They who a barren leave to live bestow,
Snatch but from Death to sacrifice to Woe.
Hated by her from whom my life I drew,
Whence should I hope, if not from heav'n and you ?
Nor dare I groan beneath affliction's rod,
My Queen, my Mother ; and my Father, God.

The pitying Muses saw me wit pursue,
A *Bastard Son*, alas ! On that side too
Did not your eyes exalt the poet's fire,
And what the Muse denies, the Queen inspire ?
While rising thus your heavenly soul to view,
I learn, how angels think, by copying you.

Great Princess ! 't is decreed—once ev'ry year
I march uncall'd your Laureat Volunteer ;
Thus shall your poet his low genius raise,
And charm the world with truths too vast for praise.
Nor need I dwell on glories all your own,
Since surer means to tempt your smiles are known ;
Your poet shall allot your Lord his part,
And paint him in his noblest throne, your heart.

Is there a greatness that adorns him best,
A rising wish that ripens in his breast ?
Has he fore-meant some distant age to bless,
Disarm oppression, or expel distress ?
Plans he some scheme to reconcile mankind,
People the seas, and busy every wind ?
Would he, by pity, the deceiv'd reclaim,
And smile contending factions into shame ?
Would his example lend his laws a weight,
And breathe his own soft morals o'er his state ?
The Muse shall find it all, shall make it seem,
And teach the world his praise, to charm his Queen.

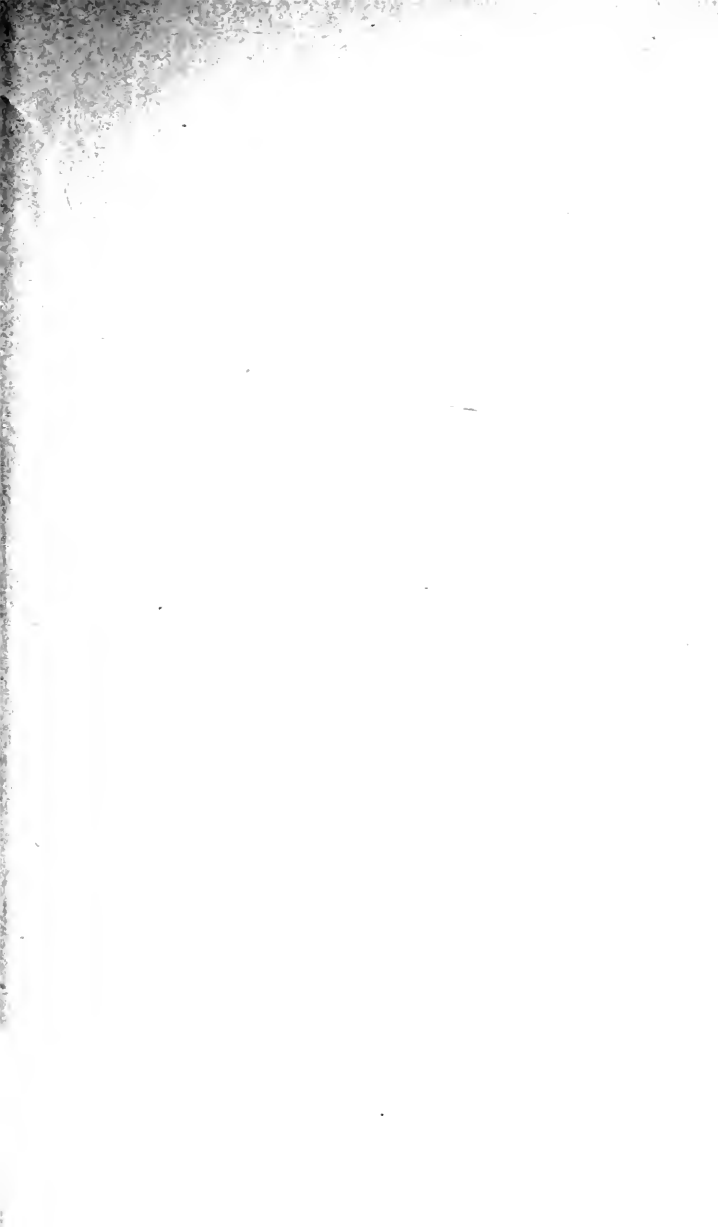
Such be the annual truths my verse imparts,
Nor frown, fair *fav'rite* of a people's hearts !
Happy, if plac'd, perchance, beneath your eye,
My Muse unpension'd might her pinions try

Fearless to fail, while you indulge her flame,
And bid me proudly boast your Laureat's name.
Renobled thus by wreaths my Queen bestows,
I lose all memory of wrongs and woes.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

23





PR
553
J7
1896
v.4

Johnson, Samuel, 1709-1784
Lives of the poets. v.4

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

NOT WANTED IN RBSC

