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MACAULAY'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE

The life of Johnson is well worth studying, not only because of its author, but also because of its subject. Johnson stands out in literary history as interesting in himself, but doubly interesting when his position and his influence on the great men who were his associates is taken into account. The romance of their intermingling lives has been so clearly depicted by Macaulay that an editor's task is not so much to elucidate the meaning by explanations as to illustrate the text by examples. Of necessity, therefore, many quotations have been introduced, for it would be the most heinous of literary sins not to allow Johnson to speak for himself, especially in those cases where Boswell enables us to hear his very words. One result expected from this plan of treatment is that the student will be infected with a real love for literature, and will be stimulated to learn more about this great writer to whose book this work is the briefest of introductions.

The chronological table will, it is hoped, also prove useful; not because Macaulay is deficient or inaccurate in dates, but because the career of Johnson may be the more readily grasped and compared when the facts and dates are brought together in tabular form.

J. D.

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, on the 25th of October, 1800. He was the eldest child of a family of nine. As his name would suggest, he was of Scottish descent, his grandfather and great-grandfather having been clergymen of the Presbyterian Church in the Western Highlands. His father, Zachary, was an ardent advocate of the freedom of the slave, and a leading member of that small circle of Evangelical Churchmen which, under the name of "the Clapham sect", became widely known for the piety and philanthropy of its members. His mother, Selina Mills, was of a Quaker family, and had been educated by the sisters of Hannah More, whose school provided the best education available for young ladies at the end of the 18th century.

At a very early age he showed marvellous precocity, and a memory so extraordinary as to mark him out at once as a prodigy. When still a mere child he was an omnivorous reader and a facile writer. He was educated in private schools, till, at the age of eighteen, he became a student of Trinity College, Cambridge. At the university he continued to give his attention, as he had done at school, entirely to the study of literature. He showed a decided distaste for mathematics, the prevailing study at Cambridge, and failed so completely to attain proficiency in this subject that he seriously endangered his chances of the highest university distinctions. His brilliant career in classics, however, made up for other deficiencies, and in 1824 he was elected Fellow

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of his college, thus securing an income of £300 for seven years.

Macaulay had not confined himself to classics during his university career. He had read largely in the literature of modern European nations, especially Italian. He had also acquired a familiarity with English writers which was very uncommon at that time with university students. He found a field for the cultivation of his own literary powers in the Union Debating Society, of which he was the most distinguished member of his time. He there discovered his own gifts as a rhetorician of rare power, and the discovery helped to stamp his writings at the very outset with their peculiar quality—that of argumentative oratory. It is to such a university training—developing, as it did, the literary and rhetorical powers of Macaulay to the stunting of all the other sides of his nature—that we are to attribute most of the excellences and defects that afterwards marked him as a writer.

Macaulay adopted the profession of law, but literature proved more attractive to him. A few contributions to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine* in 1823 and 1824 were sufficient to complete his apprenticeship to the literary art. In his first article in the *Edinburgh Review*, in August, 1825—the 'Essay on Milton'—he appeared as a finished master of the art of expression. "The effect on the author's reputation", says his biographer, Sir George Trevelyan, "was instantaneous. Like Lord Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. The beauties of the work were such as all men could recognize, and its very faults pleased. . . . The family breakfast-table in Bloomsbury was covered with cards of invitation to dinner from every quarter of London, and his father groaned in spirit over the conviction that thenceforward the law would be less to him than ever. . . . But the compliment that of all others came most nearly home—the only commendation of his literary talent which even in the innermost domestic circle he was ever known to repeat—was the sentence with which Jeffrey acknowledged the receipt of his manuscript: 'The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style'."

He now became a frequent contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, and it was by his articles on Mill in that magazine that he attracted the attention of Lord Lansdowne. By the Whig peer's influence he entered Parliament in 1830 as member for the pocket borough of Calne, and his first speech on the Reform Bill in 1831 at once placed him in the foremost rank as an orator. His share in securing the victory of the Whigs, and in passing the Reform Bill in 1832, was acknowledged by his appointment in that year to the office of Secretary to the Board of Control. His fame as a parliamentary orator continued to increase, till in 1834 he was appointed president of a law commission for India, and legal member of the Supreme Council of India. Though the inducement to accept these offices was mainly a pecuniary one—that he might from his salary of £10,000 a year restore the fortunes of the family shattered by the disasters of his father,—he discharged his duties with the utmost efficiency and with exceptional success. The Penal Code prepared by him, and the Code of Criminal Procedure he drafted, have been pronounced by the highest legal authorities as sufficient in themselves to establish his fame as a jurist and to make his name memorable in the history of India.

On his return to England in 1838, with a fortune sufficient for his simple requirements, he wrote more essays for the *Edinburgh Review* (even in India he had written two), began his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and re-entered Parliament in 1839, now as member for Edinburgh. As Secretary-at-War he joined the Whig ministry of Lord Melbourne, already tottering to its fall, and did all that one man could do to stave off the ruin that befell the Whigs in 1841. He returned to office in 1846 as Paymaster-general, but losing his seat for Edinburgh in 1847, he practically ended his political life in that year. Though re-elected for Edinburgh in 1852 on the initiative, and by the efforts, of the electors themselves, he never again took a prominent part in politics, and finally terminated his political career by resigning his seat in 1856.

Since his return from India, and especially since his release from office in 1841, Macaulay had been gravitating more and

more to a purely literary life. He published his *Lays of Ancient Rome* in 1842, and the qualities of simplicity, energy, directness, and force which marked them, secured their immediate and wide popularity. Many of his best essays were also contributed by him at this time to the *Edinburgh Review*, notably those on Temple, Clive, Hastings, Addison, and Chatham. But he ceased to contribute in 1844, as he wished to concentrate his energies on a work which he had begun in March, 1839—"the *History of England*, from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living". The first two volumes of this, his master-piece, appeared in 1848, and were received with a favour that recalled the popularity of Byron's poems and Scott's novels. In less than four months 13,000 copies had been sold. It was the greatest of the long series of Macaulay's successes. A like triumph followed on the publication of the second two volumes in 1855. His literary eminence was fittingly recognized. He was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University in 1848, and he received innumerable honours from learned bodies at home and abroad. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage as Baron Macaulay of Rothley. The short period of life that remained he spent in the continuation of his *History*, but he did not live long enough to carry it down beyond 1700. He died suddenly on the 28th of December, 1859, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. He had noted in his diary on his fifty-first birthday: "I have had a happy life. I do not know that any one, whom I have seen close, has had a happier." These words will be readily endorsed by every reader of his Life, and most, if not all, will be inclined to add that his good fortune was not beyond his deserts.

The Lives of Johnson and of Goldsmith¹ were originally contributed by Macaulay to the eighth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Written without fee or reward at a time when failing health compelled him to refuse many

¹ It is an advantage to discuss these two of the *Lives* together for purposes of comparison.

requests for review articles, and to husband his strength for the gigantic task of the *History of England*, they were appreciated by the proprietor of the *Encyclopædia* at their true value as "those literary gems which could not have been purchased with money". Though an *Encyclopædia* is a most unlikely place to look for "literary gems", the expression is not too strong for those perfect models of brief biography which are reprinted in this volume. "Compact in form, crisp and nervous in style, these little essays", says Sir G. Trevelyan, "are everything which an article in an encyclopædia should be. The reader, as he travels softly and swiftly along, congratulates himself on having lighted upon what he regards as a most fascinating literary memoir; but the student, on a closer examination, discovers that every fact, and date, and circumstance is distinctly and faithfully recorded in its due chronological sequence. . . . The life of Johnson is indeed a model of that which its eminent subject pronounced to be the essential qualification of a biographer—the art of writing trifles with dignity."

So fastidious a critic as Matthew Arnold, who pours contempt on Macaulay's earliest efforts, has nothing but praise for the latest offspring of his literary genius. "The Life of Johnson is a work which shows Macaulay at his very best; a work written when his style was matured, and when his resources were in all their fulness. The subject, too, was one which he knew thoroughly, and for which he felt cordial sympathy."¹ Acting on his belief in the excellence of the biography, Matthew Arnold prefixed it to his edition of the *Six Chief Lives from Johnson's Lives of the Poets* as a piece of writing which even he, master of English prose and consummate critic though he was, could not hope to surpass.

¹ Professor Jebb's remarks on the Biographies are also eulogistic; he places them "on a higher level than any but the very best of the Essays". They "are mature and careful pieces of work, quieter and more restrained in style than the Essays, but hardly less attractive. They show Macaulay as a master of artistic condensation. Taking into account their merits, both of matter and of form, we should be safe in affirming that, as a writer of short biographies, Macaulay has not been surpassed, if he has been equalled, by any English writer."—*Macaulay*, pp. 43, 44.

If justification for this course had been necessary, he would have found it ready to his hand in the words of praise which Macaulay himself applied to Goldsmith: "His compilations are widely distinguished from the compilations of ordinary book-makers. He was a great, perhaps an unequalled master of the arts of selection and condensation. . . . In general, nothing is less attractive than an epitome; but the epitomes of Goldsmith, even when most concise, are always amusing; and to read them is considered by intelligent children, not as a task, but as a pleasure."

To realize more perfectly how well Macaulay has performed his task, we have only to compare these lives with the best of those by Johnson—the acknowledged master, if not the originator, of literary biography. For a comparison of these two literary giants in their favourite subject, the most interesting material would of course be supplied by the lives of Milton and Addison, since they have been written by both on almost the same scale. But the method of each writer is so invariable that a comparison with any one of Johnson's *Lives* will bring out the strong and the weak points of Macaulay's biographies.

In the matter of proportion and artistic arrangement, Macaulay is decidedly superior. While Johnson is apt to clog his narrative with copious extracts from antiquated criticism, or with diffuse disquisitions on trifling points, Macaulay allows nothing to divert him from his main subject, and regulates the space allotted to each incident by its relative importance to the whole story. In the picturesque grouping of his material Macaulay is certainly hard to beat.

With regard to tone or mental attitude, there is not so much difference between Macaulay and Johnson as one would at first suppose. Macaulay makes so much of Johnson's limitations and prejudices that it is something of a shock to us to find the critic falling a victim to the very vices he has himself so briskly denounced. But the truth is, that though the Whig writer has a very different set of prejudices from those of the Tory, each clings to his own with equal tenacity, and suffers his judgment to be obscured

by them to almost the same extent. If Johnson erred about Milton and Gray, Macaulay went as far astray about Boswell and Horace Walpole. If we see Macaulay at his best when writing of those with whom he was in political sympathy—Milton and Addison—we also find Johnson at his best when handling such congenial themes as the lives of the Tory poets, Dryden and Pope. Both are fine specimens of the typical English critic—Philistine to the very core, dogmatic in tone, narrow in range, yet of great power within their narrow limits. Johnson's criticism of *Lycidas*, proverbial though it has become for prosaic dulness in the presence of poetic genius, has its counterpart in Macaulay's rigid application of plain matter-of-fact to such avowed fictions as *Rasselas* and the *Deserted Village*. Criticism of this sort comes dangerously near to that wooden literalness of interpretation which Charles Lamb assigned as the cause of his antipathy to Scotsmen in general. It is the criticism of common sense rather than the criticism of the literary artist. As in Carlyle, it is more concerned with the thought than with the expression. More stress is laid on a fallacy in argument or a discrepancy in history than on beauty of diction or felicity of treatment. The *Deserted Village* is certainly faulty as a text-book on Economics, and *Rasselas* is by no means a trustworthy description of modern Abyssinia; but only a perverse critic would look for such information in dreams of fancy "hung sweetly in an ideal air".

In the all-important matter of trustworthiness, while both stand high in their reverence for truth, Macaulay is certainly more distinguished for painstaking detail and conscientious accuracy. Johnson, with constitutional indolence and characteristic honesty, professed a dislike for the drudgery of detail: in the *Life of Dryden* he airily dismisses the idea of exactness with the sentence, "To adjust the minute events of literary history is tedious and troublesome". The many mistakes as to facts and dates, even in the most carefully finished Lives, supply ample proof that Johnson acted on this easy-going principle. With Macaulay, on the other hand, no fact was so trifling as to escape his attention, and no

reference so obscure as to elude his research. What Johnson took for a sneer by Addison at Steele was traced by Macaulay to an incident in the representation of a forgotten play, with the result that a dark stain was thereby removed from Addison's name. It may be questioned, however, if Macaulay's indefatigable industry about details has resulted in a more truthful picture than Johnson's more careless impressionist touches. For it is possible to have every particular true in itself, and yet, by putting forward some one too prominently, to convey an entirely false impression of the whole. Many of Macaulay's most vivid pictures, on closer inspection, reveal exaggeration of picturesque details for the purpose of effect. Thus, the striking account of Johnson's life at college has been elaborated out of very simple and humdrum material. The long paragraph on the rupture of Mrs. Thrale and Johnson is, in spite of its brilliancy, a master-piece of misrepresentation. But the crowning example of Macaulay's sacrifice of truth to effect is his account of Boswell. True, he does not go the length of the paradox he broached in the Essay on Johnson: "If he had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer". For a repetition of such an extravagance the answer of Carlyle had been too emphatic: "Neither James Boswell's good book, nor any other good thing, in any time or in any place, was, is, or can be performed by any man in virtue of his *badness*, but always and solely in spite thereof". But, though the paradox is not expressed directly in words, practically the same position is taken up by Macaulay. He mentions not a single good quality as belonging to Boswell; on the contrary, he piles up a goodly heap of vices and defects: "he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous", "he could not reason", "he had no wit, no humour, no eloquence", "he was a slave and an idolater", "he was a wine-bibber, and little better than an habitual sot". And yet, after this catalogue of faults Boswell gets the credit of being the author of "the most interesting biographical work in the world", a work "read beyond the Mississippi and under the Southern Cross, and likely to be read as long as the English

exists either as a living or as a dead language". A singular effect to proceed from so trivial a cause! However gratifying to the taste for antithesis and paradox such a description of Boswell may be, it is clearly inadequate to solve the mystery of Boswell's brilliant success as an author. Carlyle, as usual, finds the secret in some moral quality,—“the celestial spark of goodness, of light, and Reverence for Wisdom”. But the literary charm of the book reveals rare intellectual qualities as well. There are many examples of “acuteness, gaiety of conversation, and civility of manners”—qualities which, as Johnson declared, made him an excellent travelling companion. There is a dramatic instinct exemplified by the frequent use of direct speech; an artistic faculty displayed in the selection of striking facts and strong situations; and a gift of lucid, easy, realistic style which alone would account for Johnson's surviving in this biography, while his own “wondrous buckram” productions are forgotten. The suppression of all these obvious excellences in Boswell, and the exaggeration of his undeniable foibles, illustrate one of the most pronounced weaknesses in Macaulay's writings.

A more serious defect than exaggeration is the objectiveness of Macaulay's descriptions. Powerful though he be in painting external features, he has little insight into the real man. The picture of Johnson that dwells in our memory after reading Macaulay's essay or biography is not so much that of the brave, pious, kind-hearted, melancholy “old struggler”, as that of “the old philosopher . . . in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans”. How different is Carlyle's handling of the same subject! There, as Mr. Garnett has truly said, we have a picture of Johnson as he appeared to his Maker, while Macaulay has given us a picture of him as he appeared to his fellow-men. Macaulay tells what Johnson said, what he did, how he looked, and leaves his state of mind, or feeling to be inferred from these outward manifestations. Carlyle,

on the other hand, proceeds from within, giving a vivid picture of the thoughts and sensations, while he leaves their external expression to the reader's imagination. The difference is well brought out in the picture each has drawn of Johnson's early days. Macaulay describes Johnson as "ransacking his father's shelves", "devouring hundreds of pages", "treating the academical authorities with disrespect", "harranguing a circle of lads", and "acting as the ringleader in every mutiny". Carlyle, with precisely the same materials, draws a picture of Johnson "with his great greedy heart and unspeakable chaos of thoughts; stalking mournful on this earth, eagerly devouring what spiritual thing he could come at".

Another illustration of this weakness is supplied by Macaulay's way of criticising books. In his literary judgments there is none of that keen analytic power and penetrating insight which we find in Coleridge, De Quincey, Lamb, Hazlitt, and Matthew Arnold. He was aware of his own weakness in this respect. In a letter to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* (26th June, 1838) he says: "I am not successful in analysing the effect of works of genius. . . . I have never written a page of criticism on poetry or the fine arts which I would not burn if I had the power. Hazlitt used to say of himself, 'I am nothing if not critical'. The case with me is directly the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination; but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. . . . Such books as Lessing's *Laocoon*, such passages as the criticism on Hamlet in *Wilhelm Meister*, fill me with wonder and despair" The judgments pronounced on the works of Goldsmith and Johnson would, of themselves, be sufficient to justify this diffidence of his critical powers. Not only are there instances, as *Rasselas* and the *Deserted Village*, where the stand-point is hopelessly wrong: in no case is there any adequate analysis of the effect produced by a book on the reader, or of the methods adopted by the writer for securing his effects. Macaulay never succeeds in bringing criticism within the domain of psychology, and it is just here that he

compares most unfavourably with Dr. Johnson. His habitual reticence about religion and his ill-concealed aversion to philosophy betray a very different type of intellect from that of the sturdy moralist who was sincerely, almost ostentatiously, religious, and who delighted to give his speculative genius the rein in discussions on questions of morals and metaphysics. In Macaulay's writings there is no sense of the Infinite overarching this tiny speck of Earth, while in Johnson's works (as in Carlyle's) the pessimistic refrain is ever heard, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity". Macaulay consequently seldom touches the deepest feelings of human nature, and one might think him lacking in sensitiveness but for the many indubitable instances of it revealed in his biography, as well as in a sentence here and there in his own writings.¹

The essentially commonplace and mundane cast of Macaulay's mind led him to neglect certain features of Johnson's character, with the result that the portrait he has drawn, striking though it be, is not an absolutely faithful likeness. The religious and emotional aspects of Johnson's nature are left in the background, though they form the most prominent characteristics of that singular personality. The tenderness of Johnson for the weak and suffering, his dutifulness and affection as a son and as a husband, his gallantry and devotion to ladies of an intellectual turn, his hearty enjoyment of the good things of life, his vein of broad humour and sprightly joviality—all combine to make Johnson a more attractive, if not a more admirable, figure than Macaulay represents him to be.

Goldsmith's nature, which lacked the strong lines of Johnson's, presented still greater difficulties to a biographer whose manner is above all things robust and emphatic. A personality so winning, a genius so delicate, a style so refined as Goldsmith's have been the despair of critics. Even De Quincey, unrivalled for subtlety of analysis, could only write vaguely of "Goldsmith's exquisite truth of household

¹ *E.g.*, on p. 20, about Johnson's loss of his wife: "She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by 800,000 human beings, he was alone".

pathos and of humour, with happy graces of style, plastic as the air or the surface of a lake to the pure impulses of nature". The indefinable charm of Goldsmith's writings, so elusive yet so unmistakable, could not yield up its secret to one, like Macaulay, as indifferent to niceties of style as to subtleties of thought. Yet in Goldsmith's works everything else is trifling compared with his style. Here emphatically is the saying true, "The style is the man". We are indeed apt to forget some of Goldsmith's egregious failures in criticism, such as that on Hamlet's soliloquy, so impressed are we with Johnson's memorable pronouncement on Goldsmith, "He touched nothing that he did not adorn". But, on the whole, Goldsmith stands alone for truth, naturalness, smoothness, and felicity of expression. A style so perfect in ease, simplicity, delicacy, and spontaneity was the natural outcome of a bright, genial, buoyant, sweet-natured disposition. His humour, so rich and exuberant, is particularly noticeable for its unaffected and "inevitable" manner. It is the very antithesis of that strained and artificial humour of more recent date which is so graphically typified by the attitude assumed in a fit of boyish zeal by one of its leading exponents:¹ "I would stand on my head in the bed, my feet against the wall, and then cry excitedly, 'Are you laughing, mother?'" Not such was the humour of Goldsmith. The delicacy of treatment in his essays, the witching simplicity of his novel, the exquisite melody and pleasing pensiveness of his poems, the frolicsome wit and extravagant fun of his plays—these varied manifestations of his humour and genius have all the one unmistakable quality of being genuine, natural, and unaffected. Where the style is so unique it may be disappointing to readers to find Macaulay dwelling so little on the subject. Yet the little he does say² is certainly true and to the point. If he has failed to bring out adequately the beauty of Goldsmith's style, it should be remembered that nobody has ever entirely succeeded in the attempt.

Macaulay's lack of analytic power, while undeniable, is not

¹ Mr. J. M. Barrie in *Margaret Ogilvy*.

² Pages 52, 58, 59.

so much felt in these biographies, where criticism is relegated to a subordinate place. It is indeed curious to observe how eager Macaulay is, in all his essays, to escape from literary criticism to historical narrative or political argument. Thus, in the article on Milton, in whom the politician is as nothing compared with the poet, one-half of the essay—and that the abler half—is devoted to a discussion of the politics of Milton's time. In the article on Horace Walpole a similar division is noticeable, the more brilliant half of the essay consisting in a criticism of the statesmen of George II's reign. How true Macaulay's instinct was in this is conclusively shown by a comparison of this *Life of Johnson*, where criticism is subordinate to narrative, with the review of Boswell's *Johnson*, where narrative is subordinate to criticism. In the earlier production there is much that is lively, bizarre, crude; everything is stated brusquely, emphatically, and decisively. In the more mature work, with less brilliancy there is more sanity: what has been lost in emphasis has been gained in truth. To appreciate the advance, one has only to compare the essay and the biography on such points as the description of Johnson's style, or the judgment on Johnson's criticisms.¹ The difference in Macaulay's manner

¹ In regard to Johnson's style compare Macaulay's account on page 40 with the extract from the essay quoted in the note. For the change in Macaulay's estimate of Johnson's criticisms, compare pages 27 and 40 with the following passages from the essay. "The judgments which Johnson passed on books were, in his own time, regarded with superstitious veneration, and, in our time, are generally treated with indiscriminate contempt. They are the judgments of a strong but enslaved understanding. The mind of the critic was hedged round by an uninterrupted fence of prejudices and superstitions . . . How it chanced that a man who reasoned on his premises so ably, should assume his premises so foolishly is one of the great mysteries of human nature. The same inconsistency may be observed in the schoolmen of the Middle Ages. . . . It is the same with some eminent lawyers. . . . Johnson decided literary questions like a lawyer, not like a legislator. . . . His whole code of criticism rested on pure assumption, for which he sometimes quoted a precedent or an authority, but rarely troubled to give a reason drawn from the nature of things. . . . He was undoubtedly an excellent judge of compositions fashioned on his own principles. But when a deeper philosophy was required, when he undertook to pronounce judgment on the works of those great minds which 'yield homage only to eternal laws', his failure was ignominious. He criticised Pope's *Epitaphs* excellently. But his observations on Shakespeare's *Plays* and Milton's *Poems* seem to us for

has been happily expressed by Dr. Birkbeck Hill: "In the Essay we seem to look upon the picture of a Tory painted by a Whig. In the Life we have the picture of one great man drawn by another great man."

Macaulay was fortunate in another circumstance in these biographies. The outward history of Goldsmith and Johnson was so picturesque that even in the hands of a commonplace writer the story must read like a romance. Had the subject been Shakespeare or Wordsworth, Shelley or Browning—where the interest is not one of striking incident, but one of spiritual and intellectual development—the result would probably have been a failure. But in the case of Johnson, where the man is of more importance than the writings, and in the case of Goldsmith, where the romantic adventures and amusing experiences are so numerous, Macaulay had for his graphic pen the very best of material. No subject could have been suggested on which he could have written with more knowledge or with more sympathy. He had made the eighteenth century peculiarly his own, and the two outstanding literary figures in the third quarter of that century were Goldsmith and Johnson. He indeed regretted that Goldsmith had not included a sketch of Johnson in *Retaliation*,¹ and that Johnson had not included a biography of Goldsmith in the *Lives of the Poets*; but the omission has in both cases been remedied, as far as that is possible, by Macaulay's own brief sketches.

Much is to be gained by a study of these two lives together; the character and genius of both men will be thereby brought out all the more distinctly. Close friends

the most part as wretched as if they had been written by Rymer himself, whom we take to have been the worst critic that ever lived."

¹ For the portrait of Johnson, in a very happy imitation of Goldsmith's manner, the reader is referred to Mr. Austin Dobson's "A Postscript to 'Retaliation'", in his *Collected Poems*, pp. 313-315. Here is a specimen:

"Yes! the outside was rugged. But test him within,
You found he had nought of the bear but the skin;
And for bottom and base to his *anfractuosity*,
A fund of fine feeling, good taste, generosity.
He was true to his conscience, his King, and his duty;
He hated the *Whigs*, and he soften'd to Beauty."

for thirteen years¹, they had been subjected to the same experiences of life, yet how different did they prove in character, in disposition, and in genius! In the misfortunes of their childhood, in the hardships of early manhood, in expectation often baffled and hope long deferred, they resembled each other in a wonderful degree. Disfigured by disease—the one by scrofula, the other by small-pox,—they started life handicapped. The college career of both was irregular—in the one case through poverty, in the other through thoughtlessness—and the learning of both was miscellaneous, but at the same time fragmentary. The long period of service in Grub Street endured by both would of itself have established a strong fellow-feeling between them; if Johnson could boast of having avenged the poor author's wrongs on Osborne the bookseller by knocking him down with a folio, Goldsmith too could tell of the caning of the publisher Evans, and the Homeric struggle that ensued. Yet, even in circumstances so similar, they had, from their earliest years, revealed marked differences. Goldsmith was the butt of his school-fellows and the despair of his teachers; Johnson was the best pupil of the dame's school, to which he went (in Carlyle's phrase) on "the tyrant's saddle"—mounted on the back of a school-fellow. Goldsmith suffered at Trinity College because of his convivial habits, Johnson at Pembroke College from the humiliations to which his poverty exposed him. Each bore the hardships of his early years in characteristic fashion: Goldsmith with the lightheartedness and buoyancy of the Irishman, Johnson with the

¹ It is usually assumed that Goldsmith's acquaintance with Johnson dates from 31st May, 1761, when Johnson dined with Goldsmith, and defended the spruceness of his dress for the occasion by saying, "Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice, and I am desirous this night to show him a better example" But all this surely presupposes some previous acquaintance with Goldsmith, and it is highly improbable that two such brothers of the pen should have been in London five years before making each other's acquaintance. Johnson also referred, in one of his conversations (see note on page 38, line 10), to a time when Goldsmith and he brought out books at the same time, and were given the chance of criticising each other. The only time they published books simultaneously was in the spring of 1759, when *Rasselas* appeared in April, and the *Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning* appeared about the end of March, or beginning of April.

stolidity and defiance of the Englishman. Goldsmith never lost his "knack at hoping" and still less his facility in borrowing; Johnson, amid ever-deepening gloom and melancholy, became the more stern and dogged in his resolute independence. Goldsmith, with inexhaustible good-humour, breasted the waves of misfortune; Johnson, with indomitable courage, ploughed his way through them. The sunny, mercurial disposition of the one was a complete contrast to the fits of gloom and hypochondria of the other. The experience of life only mellowed Goldsmith into a richer and more sympathetic nature, while it hardened Johnson's naturally tender disposition into a rough and overbearing manner that has often been mistaken for callousness and brutality. Goldsmith's adventures in foreign countries had broadened his sympathies into a cosmopolitanism that led him to criticise England from the stand-point of a foreigner; Johnson narrowed down more and more into an insular John Bull, quoting with infinite gusto the dictum of a like-minded friend, "All foreigners are fools!" But if Goldsmith showed the more comprehensive sympathy, Johnson had the deeper feeling. Goldsmith had in his nature, and in his style, which was the natural expression of his nature, the winning grace, the subtle charm, the insinuating beauty of woman; Johnson had the rugged strength, the virile force, the robust assertiveness of man. Goldsmith concentrated argument into an apt simile or telling metaphor; Johnson convinced by the slow process of a pitiless logic from which there was no appeal. The final word on Goldsmith was spoken by Johnson, "Let not his frailties be remembered, he was a great man"; the final word on Johnson was spoken by Macaulay in the closing words of this biography, "He was both a great and a good man".

MACAULAY'S STYLE

Macaulay's style is marked by certain characteristics so striking in themselves that they at once betray the writer. His mannerisms are to be found in his earliest productions,

notably in that one which suddenly lifted him into fame—the essay on Milton. A style so fresh and clear, so lively and impressive, astonished and captivated Jeffrey, veteran critic though he was. The compliment paid by the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* was deserved as thoroughly as it was appreciated by the youthful contributor: “The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style”. Yet, though the essay was received with a chorus of applause, Macaulay, in the collected edition of his Essays, had so much improved in literary taste that he condemned some of the very qualities which had contributed to its popularity. “The criticism on Milton,” he wrote, “which contains scarcely a paragraph such as his matured judgment approves, still remains overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful ornament.” The style that commended itself to his “matured judgment” cannot be better illustrated than by the Lives of Johnson and Goldsmith. “Macaulay’s belief about himself as a writer”, says his biographer, “was that he improved to the last; and the question of the superiority of his later over his earlier manner may securely be staked upon a comparison between the article on Johnson in the *Edinburgh Review* and the article on Johnson in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.” If the reader of the latter misses the fire and brilliancy, the incisive phrase and sweeping assertion, which carried everything before them in the earlier work, he will find by way of compensation a maturer judgment, a riper taste, a more judicial mood, and a more comprehensive sympathy. Though the lavish ornament and exaggerated rhetoric of the earlier manner disappear, the essentials of the style remain, all the more admirable when seen in their unadorned simplicity.

The popularity of Macaulay’s style is proved, not only by the enormous circulation of his works, but also by the numberless attempts at imitation which it provoked. It is not too much to say that his style has become the model for all journalists and expositors—for all who want to command the ready attention of a wide and popular audience on everyday topics. The faults and disadvantages of the style are glaring enough, but if the popular verdict be decisive in such

a matter—as, surely, it ought to be—there is no style more deserving of the student's careful attention and assiduous imitation. We must study other writers for the highest qualities of prose style: Dryden, for masculine energy and impetuous directness; Addison, for refinement, delicacy, and humour; Burke, for unequalled splendour of imagery: De Quincey draws out all the music and the melody of words; Lamb has concentrated in himself all the quaintness and drollery that lurk in our older writers like Fuller and Browne; Carlyle has given us the supreme example of Titanic energy and undisciplined force. But no writer in the whole range of English literature will give us a style with more *serviceable* qualities than Macaulay. Not one person in a thousand will ever need to write with any other qualities of style than Clearness and Vividness, and the great master for these homely and despised, but essential and rare, excellences is Macaulay.

That Clearness, or Intelligibility, is a necessary quality of style is readily admitted by everyone. Whatever is written is presumably intended to be read. The reader's task, therefore, should be made easy, by the selecting of such words, and the arranging of them in such constructions, as will make the writer's meaning intelligible at a glance. "Economize the reader's attention": that is Herbert Spencer's summary of the rules of composition. Just as the style of handwriting most deserving to be cultivated is that which is the most legible, so the style of composition to be aimed at should be, above all things, absolutely clear and intelligible. "The first rule of all writing—that rule to which every other is subordinate—is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and precisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers. All considerations about the purity and dignity of style ought to bend to this consideration."¹ But the writer's task is only half done when he has put his subject-matter into the most suitable form; he must use every device to stimulate the mind of his reader, so that every point will be eagerly grasped and easily retained. The Vigour and

¹ Macaulay to Macvey Napier, 18th April, 1842.

Animation of the style must bring the reader into the closest possible contact with the mind of the writer who has already come half-way by the clear arrangement of his thought.

An analysis of the devices used by Macaulay to attain to his matchless combination of Clearness and Force forms the best training in Composition that can be given to anyone. The student should especially note the following points: the kind and number of the words Macaulay uses; the length and arrangement of his sentence; the structure and sequence of his paragraphs; and his use of the Figures of Speech.

In his choice of words Macaulay is not hampered by a predilection like Johnson's for words of Latin origin, or like Freeman's for words derived from the Anglo-Saxon. He chooses always the most serviceable word—that which most clearly and forcibly expresses his meaning. He does not need to go outside the English language for a word to express all that he has to say; he neither borrows from foreign languages nor coins new words in his own. He may use a homely expression—as in the essay on Milton, 'fee-faw-fum'—rather than have his point missed, but he has a healthy detestation of slang. If he must use a doubtful word, he guards himself by some saving phrase, as in the essay on Walpole—"passages which, *in our school-days*, we used to call *skip*"; in the essay on Pitt—"what is *in our day* vulgarly called *humbug*"; and in the Life of Johnson (p. 21)—"the Dictionary was, *to use the modern phrase*, *puffed*". He always selected the most telling word, because with his extraordinary memory he could draw upon an inexhaustible vocabulary. The wealth of his vocabulary did not make him wasteful of his words. He was profuse in his illustrations, not diffuse in his language. It is really poverty of language that causes the lavish waste of words. If the one right word is missed, the meaning is perforce expressed by a circumlocution. One secret of Macaulay's animation is to be found in the precision and conciseness of his language.

It is in the length and arrangement of the sentence that we find the most striking characteristic of Macaulay's style. His short, emphatic sentence has become proverbial. The

long sentence rarely occurs, and when it does, it is as a set-off to a series of short, staccato sentences that have gone before or are to follow immediately. Even in a long sentence, the construction is never involved, much less heterogeneous. Its length is due to the piling on of phrases of the same sort, rather than to the addition of clauses of diverse rank. The examiner who wishes to find a difficult passage in grammatical analysis can range no poorer hunting-ground than Macaulay's essays. Sentence after sentence is 'simple'; the 'complex', when found, presents no difficulty, even to a beginner.

These Lives, being devoted to narrative and description almost to the entire exclusion of argument contain many examples of the short sentence. How very effective this simple device is can be seen from the description of Johnson's eccentricities,¹ from the story of Goldsmith's early struggles, or the narrative of his closing years. It will be observed that as the description gathers in interest, or the narrative grows in excitement, Macaulay's sentences shorten till they seem to come from a breathless and all-absorbed narrator. Just as Livy in similar circumstances drops off from his usual full-flowing period to the disconnected loose clauses of the historic infinitive, so Macaulay no sooner touches excitement-point than he goes off into his series of abrupt, startling, emphatic sentences.

The arrangement of Macaulay's sentence especially conduces to vividness and force. His style is emphatically 'pointed': he delights in balance, antithesis, epigram. Not only is word set off against word, and phrase against phrase, but clause is balanced against clause and sentence against sentence. The first half of the sentence frequently suggests what the second half is to be. The reader's task is thus made easy, when the mind can anticipate, as in Pope's heroic couplet, what is to be said in the latter half of the sentence. This balanced arrangement naturally leads to pointed contrasts in the two halves of the sentence, and in extreme cases to epigrams. By a juxtaposition of opposites the greatest prominence is given to each element in the contrast, and the

¹p. 5.

reader's attention is thereby instantaneously seized. The following examples of these peculiarities may be noted in the text :—

“Who dressed like a scarecrow, and ate like a cormorant” (p. 16).

“Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public” (p. 8).

“Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper” (p. 17).

It will be observed that, contrary to the usual practice of English writers, Macaulay is not afraid to repeat the same word or phrase. This he does, not merely from his dislike to the weak and ambiguous substitute of pronouns, but to make the contrast all the more striking and emphatic. Indeed, repetition of words and phrases is so common with him as almost to become a mannerism. The device, though commonly associated with antithesis, is not confined to it, *e.g.* :

“The wanderer landed at Dover, without a shilling, without a friend, and without a calling ”

In the arrangement of the paragraph, Macaulay's art is easily seen. In the opening sentence he often states with emphasis what the subject is to be. If, for the sake of variety and in order to arouse attention, he has started away from the subject, he does not keep us long in suspense as to what his main point is. If the paragraph is descriptive, the sentences fall into an ascending series, till at last we have a flowing period, in which epithet is piled upon epithet and phrase rolls after phrase, so that we are overwhelmed in the full tide of his eloquence. If the paragraph is argumentative, after maintaining his point—too often with unnecessary iteration and superfluous illustration—he clenches it with one of his curt, emphatic sentences, that never seem so dogmatic or final as when they appear at the close of a paragraph. The

judge has given his decision. The last word on the question has been spoken.

The sequence of his paragraphs should be carefully studied. Not only does he confine himself rigidly in each paragraph to one particular point, but one paragraph follows another in the most strictly logical order. The last sentence in one usually supplies the point of departure in the next. To bring out his linking of paragraphs the student should write a *précis* of each one: only by so doing can he fully appreciate the strictness with which Macaulay has adhered to the logical sequence of the different parts of his subject.

Figures of speech are used by Macaulay freely, and they are introduced always with the same object—to add to the clearness and vividness of his pictures and his arguments. What he has said of Dante's similes is true of his own: "They are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself". A good example of this will be found in the comparison of two classes of minds to two classes of rivers (p. 59). The figures he uses most frequently are the Simile, the Metaphor, Metonymy, and Antithesis. The last two have given rise to some of Macaulay's most marked mannerisms. Antithesis is the commoner in the argumentative essays; Metonymy in the more purely historical. It has been already pointed out how the balanced arrangement of Macaulay's sentence naturally lends itself to Antithesis, and a few out of many illustrations have been given from these *Lives*. The examples of Metonymy are likewise numerous. The objective cast of Macaulay's mind led him to prefer the concrete to the abstract, the particular to the general, with the result that he attained to a pictorial realism which has never been surpassed. Thus he paints to the life the needy author who

"was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe in a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog" (p. 8).

Equally realistic is the picture of the

"old quack-doctor, who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper" (p. 34).

The parallel instance, though not strictly a figure of speech, may be included in the same class as a device for saving intellectual labour. Macaulay's fondness for this device arose from his command over an inexhaustible stock of illustrations gathered from the most various sources. His difficulty seems to have been to stop pouring them out one after another. "He goes on blackening the chimney", says Leslie Stephen, "with a persistency which somehow amuses us because he puts so much heart into his work." The plethora of parallel instances may be excused, however, on the ground that Macaulay, like the orator, used many illustrations, so that any reader who failed to grasp one of them might have a chance of getting hold of another. And anyone who understood them all would, by the reiteration, have the clearest and most vivid impression of what Macaulay intended to convey. His pictorial and concrete style succeeded. For the first time young ladies preferred a book of history to a novel, and for the first time a body of working men recorded a vote of thanks to an historian for writing a history which they could understand.

The faults of Macaulay's style have often been pointed out. The abruptness and jerkiness of his short sentences, though impressive and even pleasing at first, become painful from the monotony of repetition.¹ Another evil effect is, that all statements, principal and subordinate alike, are put forward with equal and unrelieved emphasis. Though each by itself gains in clearness by the device, there is a loss in the total

¹ Professor Jebb excuses the device as "a trait of oratory. Take the speeches of almost any great orator, and you will find a similar, though perhaps less abundant, use of short sentences, in alternation with long periods. Such short sentences are not merely pauses for breath; they are not merely deliberate efforts to vary the rhythm and arrest the ear: they are dictated, if one may say so, by the oratorical instinct; such alternations of the long and the short sentence correspond with a certain surging and subsidence of thought and feeling in the orator's mind"—*Macaulay*, p. 47.

effect of the paragraph. The attempt to be emphatic leads also to exaggeration—"a stimulant that stimulates till it loses its power". The perpetually-recurring antithesis, and the constant glitter of epigram, become monotonous and even irritating when we discover that what is thereby gained in emphasis is lost in truth. The brilliancy of the style is of the hard, metallic sort, absolutely incompatible with the finer qualities of elasticity and flexibility. The superabundance of illustration, however, is what the unfriendly critic and the mocking parodist have turned to best account in their attempt at ridiculing Macaulay's style.

But while his faults stand out "gross as a mountain, open, palpable", after all deductions have been made there remain sufficient excellences in his style to make it worthy of careful study. Professor Saintsbury's opinion on the point will carry conviction with it: "Fatiguing as his 'snip-snap' sometimes is, yet anyone who speaks of Macaulay's style with contempt seems to me to proclaim himself fatally and finally as a mere 'one-eyed' man in literary appreciation". A similar judgment has been given by Mr. Frederic Harrison in a recent criticism of Macaulay. He says: "The style, with all its defects, has had a solid success and has done great things. By clothing his historical judgments and his critical reflections in these cutting and sonorous periods, he has forced them on the attention of a vast body of readers wherever English is read at all, and on millions who have neither time nor attainments for any regular studies of their own. How many men has Macaulay succeeded in reaching, to whom all other history and criticism is a closed book, or a book in an unknown tongue! If he were a sciolist or a wrong-headed fanatic, this would be a serious evil. But, as he is substantially right in his judgments, brimful of saving common-sense and generous feeling, and profoundly well read in his own periods and his favourite literature, Macaulay has conferred most memorable services on the readers of English throughout the world. He stands between philosophic historians and the public very much as journals and periodicals stand between the masses and great libraries. Macaulay is a glorified jour-

nalist and reviewer, who brings the matured results of scholars to the man in the street in a form that he can remember and enjoy, when he could not make use of a merely learned book. He performs the office of the ballad-maker or storyteller in an age before books were known or were common. And it is largely due to his influence that the best journals and periodicals of our day are written in a style so clear, so direct, so resonant. We need not imitate his mannerism; we may all learn to be outspoken, lucid, and brisk.”¹ The most recent of Macaulay’s critics, Professor Jebb, has expressed an opinion equally favourable. “It is the style of a born orator. There is in it a sustained vivacity and rapidity which at once declare this. Macaulay imparts to written speech much of the impetus and the swing of oratory. This is by no means the same thing as to write rhetorically. . . . When his style is at its best and highest, we can recognize in it the quality which Cicero ascribes to eloquence: ‘It is with eloquence as with flame—movement excites it, matter feeds it, and it brightens as it burns’. . . . As an orator must be judged by a completed utterance, so Macaulay must be judged by large integral units of his composition, such as whole chapters or essays. Both the critics and the imitators of his style have frequently failed to perceive this. . . . It is easy to imitate Macaulay’s excessive fondness for antithesis; his love of glowing colours and strong contrasts; his insensibility to the charm and the value of graduated tones and neutral tints. His manner is often, as he said, very near to a bad one; but it escapes from being such, and attains to excellence, by dint of just those things which an ordinary imitator cannot reach; viz. by a true and fine artistic sense for large effects; by an indwelling poetical fire and fancy; by a complete and classical mastery of our language: by an astonishing wealth and felicity of illustration; and, if we consider the movement of his style through entire pieces, by the spirit, the *afflatus*, of a born orator.”² Thus the unqualified depreciation and unsparing contempt in which a former

¹ *Early Victorian Literature*, pp. 85, 86

² *Macaulay: a Lecture* (1900), pp. 45-53.

generation of critics indulged, in their reviews of Macaulay's style, are now giving way to a more impartial judgment and to a more generous acknowledgment of its undoubted merits.

THE LIFE OF JOHNSON

(*The numbers refer to the pages*)

Parentage, education, and start in life.

Home influences (1), Oxford experiences (3), forced to leave Oxford (4); infirmities of body and mind (4); life in Lichfield and vicinity (6), marriage with Mrs. Porter (7), 'Academy' at Edial (7); goes to London (7); an author's prospects there (8), effect of the hardships on Johnson's habits and character (9); a Parliamentary reporter—Johnson's politics (10), *London* (13); Johnson's friends—Savage (14); *Life of Savage* (15).

Growing fame.

The *English Dictionary* (15); Johnson and Chesterfield (15); *Vanity of Human Wishes* (16); Johnson and Garrick—Irene (17), Periodical essays—the *Rambler* (18), death of Johnson's wife (20); *Letter to Chesterfield* and *Preface to the Dictionary* (21), the Dictionary (22), review of Jenyns' *Origin of Evil* (23), the *Idler* (23); death of his mother (23), *Rasselas* (23), the pension (26); the Cock Lane Ghost (27); *Edition of Shakespeare* (27), colloquial talents (29); Boswell (31), the Thrales (31), the *Journey to the Hebrides* (32).

Closing years.

Taxation no Tyranny (38); *Lives of the Poets* (40); Johnson's style (40); the *Lives*, their popularity, &c (41); breach with Mrs. Thrale (42); the end (44); Johnson and his works (45).

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

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| <p>1709. Born at Lichfield (18th September).</p> <p>1716. At Lichfield Grammar-school.</p> <p>1725. At Stotbridge School.</p> <p>1726-28. At home "browsing" among books.</p> <p>1728-29. Enters Pembroke College, Oxford (October); translates Pope's <i>Messiah</i> into Latin.</p> <p>1731. Death of Johnson's father.</p> <p>1732. Usher in Market-Bosworth School.</p> <p>1733. In Birmingham: translates Lobo's <i>Voyage to Abyssinia</i>.</p> <p>1734. Returns to Lichfield (February); issues proposals for an edition of Politian's Latin Poems; writes to Cave of the <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> offering to contribute.</p> <p>1735. Translation of Lobo's <i>Voyage to Abyssinia</i> published; applies for Solihull Grammar-school; marries Mrs. Porter (9th July).</p> <p>1736. Starts a boarding-school "at Edial, near Lichfield".</p> <p>1737. Goes to London with Garrick (March); returns to Lichfield (June), and completes the play of <i>Irene</i>.</p> | <p>1738. Writes for the <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i>; publishes <i>London</i>.</p> <p>1739. Fails in his application for Appleby Grammar-school.</p> <p>1740. (Boswell born in Edinburgh.)</p> <p>1741-44. Writes the Parliamentary Reports for Cave.</p> <p>1742. Prepares the Catalogue of the Harleian Library for Osborne.</p> <p>1744. Writes the <i>Life of Savage</i>.</p> <p>1745. <i>Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth</i>, with advertisement of a proposed edition of Shakespeare.</p> <p>1747. Addresses to Lord Chesterfield the Prospectus of a <i>Dictionary of the English Language</i>.</p> <p>1749. <i>The Vanity of Human Wishes</i>; <i>Irene</i> produced by Garrick; the <i>Monthly Review</i> started; the Ivy Lane Club formed.</p> <p>1750-52. <i>The Rambler</i>.</p> <p>1752. Death of Johnson's wife.</p> <p>1753. <i>The Adventurer</i> contributed to by Johnson.</p> <p>1755. <i>Letter to Lord Chesterfield</i>; <i>The English Dictionary</i> published.</p> |
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1756. Proposals for a new edition of Shakespeare.
- 1758-60. *The Idler*.
1759. Death of mother; *Rasselas* published.
1762. Gets a pension of £300.
1763. Meets Boswell, 16th May.
1764. The Literary Club founded; *History of England*; *The Traveller*; meets the Thrales.
1765. Made LL.D. by Dublin University; edition of Shakespeare published.
1767. Interview with the King.
1769. Professor of Ancient Literature, in the Royal Academy.
1770. *The False Alarm*.
1773. Tour in Scotland.
1774. Tour in Wales with the Thrales.
1775. The *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Taxation no Tyranny*; made D.C.L. of Oxford; tour in France with the Thrales.
1776. Meets Wilkes.
- 1779-81. *Lives of the Poets* published.
1781. Death of Thrale.
1784. Marriage of Mrs. Thrale with Piozzi; death of Dr. Johnson.
1785. Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*.
1786. Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*.
1791. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

SAMUEL JOHNSON, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield, and a bookseller of great note in the mid-nd counties. Michael's abilities and attain- 5
ments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there 10
was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous churchman, and, though he had qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every 15
traveller who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September, 1709. In the child, the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterwards distinguished the man were plainly discernible; great muscular strength, accompanied by much awkwardness 20
and many infirmities; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to sloth and procrastination; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. 25
His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch was a specific for this malady. In his third year

he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye; and he saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting, and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way: but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel. He read little Greek; for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry and eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist; and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library of which he now had the command, an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy of taste which is the boast of the great public schools of England he never possessed. But he was early familiar with some classical writers who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning. Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's works. The name excited

his curiosity; and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed, the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university; but a wealthy neighbour offered assistance; and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

At Oxford, Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door; but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner, panting for one-and-twenty, could have treated the academical authorities

with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendancy. In every mutiny against the discipline of the college he was the ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's Messiah into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian; but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

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

His life, during the thirty years which followed was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the university, his hereditary malady had broken forth in a singularly cruel form. He had become an incurable hypochondriac. He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his

have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons, and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner-table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down 5 and twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing-room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on 10 touching every post in the streets through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease, his senses became morbidly torpid, and his imagination morbidly active. At one time 15 he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another, he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and gave a dark 20 tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves. But he was under no temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life; but he was afraid of death; and he 25 shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of dejection; for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him, indeed, but not in a direct 30 line, or with its own pure splendour. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium; they reached him refracted, dulled, and discoloured by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul; and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him. 35

With such infirmities of body and of mind, this celebrated man was left, at two-and-twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties. At Lichfield, his birth-place
5 and his early home, he had inherited some friends and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey, a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley, registrar of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese, a man of distinguished
10 parts, learning, and knowledge of the world, did himself honour by patronizing the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighbourhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however,
15 Johnson could find no way of earning a livelihood. He became usher of a grammar-school in Leicestershire; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman; but a life of dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and
20 there earned a few guineas by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time, and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia. He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian, with notes containing a history of
25 modern Latin verse: but subscriptions did not come in, and the volume never appeared.

While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as old as himself. To
30 ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colours, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces, which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were
35 strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse

from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted; for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honour, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding-day till the lady died in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he placed an inscription extolling the charms of her person and of her manners; and, when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, "Pretty creature!"

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

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At length Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of *Irene* in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmesley.

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Never since literature became a calling in England, had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation a writer of eminent merit was sure
5 to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a member of parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state. It would
10 be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of
15 prosperity. Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing
20 of equality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author, whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular, such an author as Thomson, whose *Seasons* were in every library, such an author as Fielding, whose *Pasquin* had
25 had a greater run than any drama since *The Beggar's Opera*, was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe in a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is
30 easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, "You had
35 better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks". Nor was

the advice bad; for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet.

Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was 5 passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during this time of trial. "Harry Hervey", said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man, but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog 10 Hervey, I shall love him." At Hervey's table Johnson sometimes enjoyed feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpennyworth of meat and a pennyworth of bread, at an alehouse near Drury Lane. 15

The effect of the privations and sufferings which he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly. They now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats 20 and dirty shirts, he became a confirmed sloven. Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild 25 beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries and *à-la-mode* beefshops, was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself 30 with such violence that his veins swelled, and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy, but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily the 35

insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable, and in some sense respectable, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who
5 had taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborn, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had
10 hired to puff the Harleian Library.

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

another—but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets against the Montagues, or the Blues of the Roman circus against the Greens. In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villanies of the Whigs, and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell preach at Lichfield Cathedral, and had listened to the sermon with as much respect, and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been completed by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England; and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The pre-judices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own Tom Tempest. Charles II and James II were two of the best kings that ever reigned. Laud, a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and learning over whose tomb Art and Genius still continued to weep. Hampden deserved no more honourable name than that of “the zealot of rebellion”. Even the ship money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland and Clarendon than by the bitterest Round-heads, Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a Government, the mildest that had ever been known in the world—under a Government, which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action—he fancied that he was a slave; he assailed the ministry with obloquy which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one-tenth part of the license allowed to him

would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's tail, and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters and stock-jobbers, the excise and the army, septennial parliaments, and
5 Continental connections. He long had an aversion to the Scotch, an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement, but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what
10 manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was indeed necessary to the prosperity of the Magazine. But Johnson long afterwards owned that, though he had saved
15 appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the Opposition.

20 A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labours, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It is probable that what he had suffered during his first year in London had often reminded him of some parts of that noble
25 poem in which Juvenal had described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets which overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's Satires and Epistles had recently appeared,
30 were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common, much more
35 certainly than between Pope and Horace.

Johnson's *London* appeared without his name in May, 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem: but the sale was rapid, and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower 5 established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honour of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival 10 genius was welcomed. He made enquiries about the author of *London*. Such a man, he said, could not long be concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted himself to obtain an academical degree and the mastership of a grammar- 15 school for the poor young poet. The attempt failed; and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

It does not appear that these two men, the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was 20 coming in, ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles, one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and indexmakers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse, who, when his shirts were pledged, scrawled Latin verses 25 sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blanket; who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober; and who was at last run over by a hackney coach when he was drunk: Hoole, surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his 30 measures, used to trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sat cross-legged; and the penitent impostor, George Psalmanazar, who, after poring all day, in an humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers, indulged himself at night with literary 35

and theological conversation at an alehouse in the city. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted was Richard Savage, an earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life
5 in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribbons in Saint James's Square, and had lain with fifty pounds' weight of irons on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate. This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty.
10 His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne when-
15 ever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the Piazza of Covent Garden in warm weather, and, in cold weather, as near as he could get to
20 the furnace of a glass-house. Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxa-
25 tion, had seen the leaders of Opposition without the mask of patriotism, and had heard the Prime Minister roar with laughter and tell stories not over decent. During some months Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson; and then the friends parted, not
30 without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave. Savage went to the West of England, lived there as he had lived everywhere, and, in 1743, died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol gaol.

Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was
35 strongly excited about his extraordinary character, and

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

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

The prospectus of the Dictionary he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit, and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture, with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity; and he had since become Secretary of State. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed

doubtless in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waist-coats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts and uttered strange growls, who dressed like a scarecrow, and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron, but, after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his Dictionary by the end of 1750; but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge volumes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labour of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, an excellent imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. It is in truth not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets in which the fall of Wolsey is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus, the laurels on the door-posts, the white bull stalking towards the Capitol, the statues rolling down from their pedestals, the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcase before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned, too, that in the concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his Pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to John-

son's Charles; and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

For the copyright of the *Vanity of Human Wishes* 5 Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had, in 1741, made his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields, 10 had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane Theatre. The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet at- 15 tracted each other strongly. Nature had made them of very different clay; and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw with more envy 20 than became so great a man the villa, the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet, which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while 25 all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathized 30 with each other on so many points on which they sympathized with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that, though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained 35

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

About a year after the representation of *Irene*, he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition
20 had been brought into fashion by the success of the *Tatler*, and by the still more brilliant success of the *Spectator*. A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. The *Lay Monastery*, the *Censor*, the *Freethinker*, the *Plain Dealer*, the *Champion*, and other
25 works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-
30 sixth year after the appearance of the last number of the *Spectator* appeared the first number of the *Rambler*. From March 1750 to March 1752 this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

From the first the *Rambler* was enthusiastically admired by a few eminent men. Richardson, when only

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

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By the public the *Rambler* was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted they became popular. The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect, so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics admitted that the diction was too monotonous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humour of some

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of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson, a question which, seventy years ago, was much disputed, posterity has pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger, his chaplain and his butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb, the Vision of Mirza, the Journal of the Retired Citizen, the Everlasting Club, the Dunmow Flitch, the Loves of Hilpah and Shalum, the Visit to the Exchange, and the Visit to the Abbey, are known to everybody.

But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the Allegory of Wit and Learning, the Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret, and the sad fate of Aningait and Ajut.

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

Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed

it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the Dictionary was at length complete.

It had been generally supposed that this great work would be dedicated to the eloquent and accomplished nobleman to whom the Prospectus had been addressed. 5 He well knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous and at the same time of delicate and judicious kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the 10 *Ramblers* had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called the *World*, to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed. In two successive numbers of the *World* the Dictionary was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The 15 writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a Dictator, nay, of a Pope, over our language, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, 20 would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter written with singular energy and dignity of thought and language, 25 he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The Dictionary came forth without a dedication. In the preface the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically that 30 the ablest and most malevolent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke, never could read that passage without tears.

The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best lexicographer 35

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

The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had agreed to pay him had been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued
20 from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to spunging-houses, and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent friend Richardson. It was still necessary
25 for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as Dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his Dictionary. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakspeare by subscription; and many subscribers sent in their names,
30 and laid down their money; but he soon found the task so little to his taste that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal, which was called the *Literary Magazine*. Few of these papers have much interest; but among them
35 was the very best thing that he ever wrote, a master-

piece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of *Jenyns's Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*.

In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays, entitled the *Idler*. During two years ⁵ these essays continued to appear weekly. They were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated, while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. The *Idler* may be described as a second part of the *Rambler*, ¹⁰ somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.

While Johnson was busied with his *Idlers*, his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her; but he had ¹⁵ not failed to contribute largely, out of his small means, to her comfort. In order to defray the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A ²⁰ hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain, for the book was *Rasselas*.

The success of *Rasselas* was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish must have been grievously dis- ²⁵ appointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favourite theme, the Vanity of Human Wishes; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the Princess without a lover; and that the story ³⁰ set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. The *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* took different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of ³⁵

two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting-woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, 5 not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendour. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

About the plan of *Rasselas* little was said by the critics; 10 and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakspeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakspeare has not sinned in this way 15 more grievously than Johnson. *Rasselas* and *Imlac*, *Nekayah* and *Pekuah*, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century: for the Europe which *Imlac* describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century; and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of 20 that law of gravitation which Newton discovered, and which was not fully received even at Cambridge till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from Bruce's *Travels*. But Johnson, not content with turning filthy savages, 25 ignorant of their letters, and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to 30 Egypt. Into a land of harem, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ball-rooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is described as the indissoluble compact. 35 "A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought

together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home, and dream of each other. Such", says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such 5 improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle, and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the oracle of Delphi.

By such exertions as have been described, Johnson 10 supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his 15 massy and elaborate Dictionary, he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. The excise, which was a favourite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the 20 commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the Lord Privy Seal by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade". A pension he had defined as pay given to 25 a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner as a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these definitions would himself be pensioned. But that was a time of wonders. George the Third had ascended the throne; 30 and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends and conciliated many of the old enemies of his house. The city was becoming mutinous. Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening 35

to kiss hands. The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters; and Johnson was one of the
5 most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

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

One laborious task, indeed, he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakspeare; he had lived on those
20 subscriptions during some years; and he could not without disgrace omit to perform his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly exhorted him to make an effort; and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolutions, month followed
25 month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness; he determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer doze away and trifle away his time; but the spell under which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His
30 private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches.

"My indolence", he wrote on Easter Eve in 1764, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter 1765 came, and found him still
35 in the same state. "My time", he wrote, "has been

unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me." Happily for his honour, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane, and had actually gone himself with some of his friends, at one in the morning, to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill, who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity, and burning with party spirit, was looking for some man of established fame and Tory politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane Ghost in three cantos, nicknamed Johnson Pomposo, asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating. This terrible word proved effectual; and in October 1765 appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakspeare.

This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contains some good passages, is not in his best manner. The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had during many years observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is the note on the character of Polonius. Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's admirable examination of Hamlet. But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless, edition of any great classic. The reader may

turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators. Johnson had, in his Prospectus, told
5 the world that he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive is indisput-
10 able. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our literature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of Shakspeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion, that in the two folio
15 volumes of the English Dictionary there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age except Shakspeare and Ben. Even from Ben the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every
20 old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works
25 of Æschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakspeare, without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger, Ford, Decker, Webster, Marlow, Beaumont, or Fletcher. His
30 detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honoured him had little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, however, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience; and
35 he sank back into the repose from which the sting of

satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honoured by the University of Oxford with a Doctor's degree, by the Royal Academy with a professorship, and by the King with an interview, in which his Majesty most 5 graciously expressed a hope that so excellent a writer would not cease to write. In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775 Johnson published only two or three political tracts, the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked 10 as he worked on the *Life of Savage* and on *Rasselas*.

But, though his pen was now idle, his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a 15 parallel. His colloquial talents were indeed of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humour, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every 20 sentence which dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of the *Rambler*. But in his talk there were no pompous triads, and little more than a fair proportion of words in *osity* and *ation*. All was simplicity, ease, and vigour. He 25 uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice, and a justness and energy of emphasis, of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and the asthmatic gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence 30 generally ended. No did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed without 35

the alteration of a word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a
5 subject, on a fellow-passenger in a stage-coach, or on the person who sat at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends, whose abilities and knowledge enabled them, as he once
10 expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club, which gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by
15 this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk-maker and the pastry-cook. Nor shall we think
this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity.
20 Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature, Reynolds of the arts, Burke of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist of the age. Garrick brought to the meetings
25 his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits; Ben-
30 net Langton, distinguished by his skill in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life; and Topham Beauclerk, renowned for his amours, his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit. To predominate over such
35 a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society

Johnson predominated. Burke might indeed have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club. 5

Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethren, 10 and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell, a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honourable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with 15 him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humour, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead 20 language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems and imbibing the juices of stronger plants. He must have fastened himself on somebody. 25 He might have fastened himself on Wilkes, and have become the fiercest patriot in the Bill of Rights Society. He might have fastened himself on Whitefield and have become the loudest field preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on 30 Johnson. The pair might seem ill-matched. For Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country. To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of Boswell must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. John- 35

son hated to be questioned; and Boswell was eternally catechising him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?"

5 Johnson was a water-drinker; and Boswell was a wine-bibber, and indeed little better than a habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion in which

10 he said things which the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master: the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two

15 friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practised in the Parliament House in Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits his chief business was to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the

20 conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto notebooks with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work

25 in the world.

Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important indeed to his fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale, one of the most

30 opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit, was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert young women, who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do

35 or say what they may, are always agreeable. In 1765

the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson; and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to any other 5 in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society, his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his 10 fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity, increased the interest which his new associates took in him. For these things were the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and with adversity. In a vulgar hack writer such oddities 15 would have excited only disgust. But in a man of genius, learning, and virtue their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark, and a still more pleasant apartment at the villa of his friends on Streatham 20 Common. A large part of every year he passed in those abodes, abodes which must have seemed magnificent and luxurious indeed, when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his 25 Abyssinian tale called "the endearing elegance of female friendship". Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him, and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased 30 in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanting to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection 35

of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry, which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of Buck and Maccaroni. It should seem that a full half of Johnson's life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the family sometimes to Bath, and sometimes to Brighton, once to Wales, and once to Paris. But he had at the same time a house
10 in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces and begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner,
15 a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinach, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed
20 an old lady named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins, whose family he had known many years before in Stafford-
25 shire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack-doctor named Levett, who bled and dose^d coal-heavers and hackney
30 coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other, and with Johnson's negro servant, Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they trans-
35 ferred their hostilities from the servant to the master,

complained that a better table was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham, or to the Mitre Tavern. And yet he, who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent 5 anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who, but for his bounty, must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne 10 and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly and Levett, continued to torment him and to live upon him.

The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty-fourth year by an important 15 event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the middle ages. A wish to become intimately acquainted with a state of society 20 so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness, and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell importuned him to attempt the adven- 25 ture, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering about two months through the Celtic region, 30 sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in record- 35

ing his adventures. About the beginning of 1775, his *Journey to the Hebrides* was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature.

5 The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the

10 Scotch had at length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. * It was, of course, not to be expected that

15 an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian polity and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedgerows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East Lothian. But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most

20 enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield at their head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved to anger by a little unpalatable truth which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him whom they chose to consider as the enemy of their

25 country with libels much more dishonourable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets, five-shilling books. One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed;

30 another for being a pensioner; a third informed the world that one of the Doctor's uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson, whose *Fingal* had

35 been proved in the *Journey* to be an impudent forgery,

threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the Impostor had not been too wise to encounter it,⁵ would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, "like a hammer on the red son of the furnace".

Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into contro-¹⁰versy; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which is the more extraordinary, because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists are made. In conversation, he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at¹⁵ a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry; and, when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use of sarcasm and invective. But, when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him;²⁰ but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicol, and Hendersons did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the²⁵ reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter:

30

"Maxime. c. tu vis, cupio contendere tecum".

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of³⁵

books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose
5 works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttle-cock which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apophthegm
10 of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself.

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

ties which had produced the Dictionary and the *Rambler* were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not ⁵ because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote *Rasselas* in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He ¹⁰ never willingly read or thought or talked about affairs of state. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother-country was a question about which he ¹⁵ had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had ²⁰ tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson. Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

On Easter Eve, 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers ²⁵ in London, called upon him. Though he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley downwards, was in contemplation, and to ask him to ³⁰ furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, a task for which he was pre-eminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was unrivalled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books, and partly ³⁵

from sources which had long been closed; from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults; from the recollections of such men as
 5 Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button; Cibber, who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists; Orrery, who had been admitted to the society of Swift; and Savage, who had rendered services of no very honourable kind to Pope.
 10 The biographer therefore sat down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anecdote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The
 15 work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes, small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.

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

Savage's Life Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that Life, will turn to the other Lives will be struck by the difference
 35 of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circum-

stances he had written little and had talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in the constant habit of elaborate composition was less perceptible than formerly; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skillful critic in the *Journey to the Hebrides*, and in the *Lives of the Poets* is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader. 10

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

This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure; but even 15 those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very short prefaces, he had stipulated for 20 only two hundred guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems to have been singularly unskilful and unlucky in his literary bargains. He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time. Yet several writers of his time sold their copy- 25 rights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson received four thousand five hundred pounds for the *History of Charles V*; and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the *History of Charles V* is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the *Lives of the Poets*. 35

Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him. That inevitable event of which he never thought without horror was brought near to him; and his whole life was darkened
5 by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependents to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and,
10 in the silence of his home, he regretted even the noise of their scolding matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more; and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw from
15 the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was
20 necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband, a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, her worst offences had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness ending in
25 sunny good-humour. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia, in whom nobody but herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and per-
30 haps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion. But the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his
35 inspection. Her manner towards him changed. She

was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham; she never pressed him to return; and, if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him that he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been formed by himself. In a solemn and tender prayer he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left for ever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which, however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of diseases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an Italian fiddler; that all London was crying shame upon her; and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron, and the two pictures in *Hamlet*. He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She meanwhile fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mount Cenis, and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.

He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily

affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper which closes the series of his *Idlers* seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw
5 his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples, but for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labours which had
10 made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard; and he seems to have wished even to keep its existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the Government might be induced to increase his pension to six hundred pounds a year; but
15 this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. That winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he, courageous against pain, but timid against death, urged his surgeons
20 to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him
25 with deep emotion. Windham sat much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows and sent his own servant to watch a night by the bed. Frances Burney, whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently
30 qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded though so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient
35 and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death, and

of that which lies beyond death; and he spoke much of the mercy of God, and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died on the 13th of December, 1784. He was laid, a week later, in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been 5 the historian,—Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.

Since his death the popularity of his works—the *Lives of the Poets*, and, perhaps, the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, excepted—has greatly diminished. His Dictionary has 10 been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his *Rambler* or his *Idler* is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of *Rasselas* has grown somewhat dim. But, though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of 15 the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do. The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still 20 among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in 25 the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuositics of his intellect and of his temper serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.

NOTES

LIFE OF JOHNSON

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2. Michael Johnson (1656-1731) married Sarah Ford (1669-1759) in June 1706, and had a family of two sons, the younger of whom, Nathanael, died in 1727.

9. an oracle, &c. "He propagates learning all over this diocese; all the clergy here are his pupils, and suck all they have from him." (Letter from Lord Gower's chaplain in 1716.)

12. qualified office. In 1689 an act was passed requiring all office-holders in Church and State to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance to the new sovereigns, William and Mary. Those who refused to do so were known as *Non-jurors*. Michael Johnson was junior bailiff of Lichfield in 1718, and senior bailiff in 1725.

26. the royal touch. It was believed that the touch of an anointed king was the only remedy for scrofula, which was therefore known as 'the king's evil'. Holinshed mentions the superstition in his account of King Edward the Confessor, and Shakespeare follows him closely in *Macbeth*, iv. iii. 146-156:

"Strangely visited people,
All swoln and ulcerous, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers".

Originally an ordinary coin was used, but from the time of Charles II a special 'touch-piece' was struck. The one given to Johnson is in the British Museum. A form of prayer for the occasion was inserted in the Prayer Book in 1684, and was not cancelled till 1719. In Charles II's reign over 100,000 persons were touched for the evil. Queen Anne was the last reigning Stuart to perform the ceremony, as many as 200 being touched in one day in 1712.

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12. **every school.** Lichfield and Stourbridge. At the latter place he spent his sixteenth year, in a position resembling that of a pupil-teacher.

28. **Augustan taste,** the refinement and polish of the great Latin poets—Virgil, Horace, Ovid, &c.—who lived in the reign of Augustus. Johnson comes under Macaulay's lash, in the essay on Milton, for the same fault: "Johnson had studied the bad writers of the Middle Ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as a habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster".

29. **public schools,** the great classical schools for the sons of the wealthy, founded from the fourteenth century onwards, such as Eton, Winchester, Harrow, Shrewsbury, Rugby, Charterhouse.

33. **restorers of learning.** The phrase is Boswell's. It refers to scholars, like Petrarch in the fourteenth century, who revived the study of Latin authors after the dark ages. In the *Rambler* Johnson refers to Pontanus, "a man celebrated among the early restorers of literature", and to Politian, "a name eminent among the restorers of polite literature".

35. **Petrarch (1304-74),** best known now as the author of sonnets and canzonets in Italian in praise of Laura. But he based his own expectation of fame on his Latin poems, the most important of which is *Africa*, an epic dealing with the war of Hannibal against Rome. He was crowned Poet Laureate at Rome on Easter Sunday, 1341.

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13. **a wealthy neighbour,** probably his godfather, Dr. Samuel Swinfen, who was a member of Pembroke College. But Hawkins and Murphy state that Johnson acted as tutor to a fellow-student called Corbett.

22. **Macrobius,** a Latin grammarian of the fifth century A.D. He wrote a commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, and also the *Saturnalia Convivia*, a series of dialogues dealing with history, mythology, and criticism.

25. **about three years.** Dr. Birkbeck Hill has, in the Appendix to *Dr. Johnson, his Friends, and his Critics*, shown good reason for suspecting this to be wrong. Johnson entered college 31st October, 1728, and resided there continuously till 12th December, 1729. An entry in his diary under this last date—"S. J. Oxonio rediit"—seems to confirm the idea that

his university career terminated here. Though there are small charges in the college books against him five times in 1730, "the temporary suspension of his name and replacements of it seem to show he contemplated an earlier departure from the college". His name disappears finally from the books, 8th October, 1731.

32. Distress, &c. He said to Boswell: "Ah, sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

34. gentleman commoner, a student at Oxford University who is not dependent for support on the foundation of any college, but who maintains himself from his own private resources.

35. treated . disrespect. He went to lecture the first day of residence in college, then stayed away four days, excusing himself to his tutor by saying he had been "sliding in Christ Church meadow". In telling the story in his later years to Boswell, he attributed this nonchalance to "stark insensibility", not to "fortitude of mind".

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6. In every mutiny, &c. This is an exaggeration of Bishop Percy's remark that Johnson entertained the students with his wit, "keeping them from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline".

10. Pope's 'Messiah', which appeared originally as a number of the *Spectator* (No. 378, 14th May, 1712), being described as "a sacred eclogue, composed of several passages of Isaiah the prophet, written in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*". Johnson translated it at the suggestion of his tutor during Christmas, 1728, and "he obtained great applause from it" (Boswell).

11. Virgilian. Virgil's hexameters are unequalled for majesty and melody. Johnson falls into so gross a mistake as to write "Virgo, virgo parit", making the last syllable of "virgo" long, and, immediately after, making it short.

12. read...by Pope, who said, "The writer of this poem will leave it a question for posterity, whether his or mine be the original".

33. He said, &c. "I inherited a vile melancholy from my father, which has made me mad all my life, at least not sober" (Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, 16th September, 1773). And

on Easter Day, 1777, he wrote: "When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body and disturbances of the mind very near to madness"

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2. His grimaces, &c. The opinions of Reynolds, Boswell, Mme D'Arblay, &c., as to whether these tricks of body were voluntary or not, are discussed at length in Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, i. 144.

4. At a dinner-table...shoe. Murphy gives a story resembling this. "Sitting at table with the celebrated Mrs. Cholmondeley. he took hold of her hand in the middle of dinner, and held it close to his eye, wondering at the delicacy and whiteness, till with a smile she asked, 'Will he give it to me again when he has done with it?'" Boswell tells the story in the same way.

6. He would amaze, &c. The authority for this and the following eccentricities of Johnson will be found in Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, i. 484, 485.

17. he would...hear his mother. "Dr. Johnson said that one day at Oxford, as he was turning the key of his chamber, he heard his mother distinctly call *Sam*. She was then at Lichfield; but nothing ensued" (Boswell).

19. A deep melancholy. For an interesting essay on this, see Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Dr. Johnson and his Friends*, chap. v. "The Melancholy of Johnson and Cowper".

25. afraid of death. See note on p. 42, l. 4.

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6. Henry Hervey, "third son of the first Earl of Bristol, quitted the army and took orders. He married a sister of Sir Thomas Aston [one of Johnson's Lichfield friends], by whom he got the Aston estate, and assumed the name and arms of that family" (Boswell). See p. 9.

8. Gilbert Walmesley (1680-1751), author of many Latin verse translations. In the *Lives of the Poets* ("Edmund Smith") Johnson says of him: "I knew him very early; he was one of the first friends that literature procured me....He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy; yet he never received my notions with contempt....I honoured him and he endured me. He had mingled with the gay world without exemption from its vices or its follies, but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind....His studies had been so various that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance

with books was great, and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes in which I have not some advantage from his friendship. At this man's table I enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours, with companions such as are not often found."

16. usher of a grammar-school at Market-Bosworth. The date of this seems fixed by an entry in his journal—"Julii 16. Bosvortiam pedes petii". The year was probably 1732.

17. a humble companion, &c. It is known that he was tutor to a gentleman's son, but Macaulay no doubt refers to his residence with Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of Bosworth school, to whom "he officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain, so far, at least, as to say grace at table, but was treated with what he represented as intolérable harshness" (Boswell).

18. insupportable, &c. "After suffering for a few months such complicated misery, he relinquished a situation which all his life afterwards he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror" (Boswell).

19. He repaired to Birmingham. He resided for six months with a bookseller, Warren, proprietor of the *Birmingham Journal*, to which Johnson may have contributed. It was probably also for Warren that the translation of Lobo was undertaken, but it was published in London in 1735.

22. a Latin book. Johnson translated from (or rather, abridged) the French version of the *Voyage to Abyssinia*, by Jeronimo Lobo (1593-1678), a Portuguese Jesuit who had been a missionary in Abyssinia. For the translation he got five guineas. This book, no doubt, suggested to him *Rasselas*, the name being adopted from 'Rassela Christos' in Lobo's book.

24. Politian (1454-94), Angelo Poliziano, of Tuscany, the greatest of the Italian scholars of his time. He found a patron in Lorenzo de' Medici, and was appointed Professor of Greek and Latin in Florence in 1484. He translated many Greek books into Latin, edited Justinian's *Pandects*, and wrote many original Latin poems—*Ambra*, *Manto*, *Nutricia*, *Rusticus*, &c. He also wrote Italian works, the chief of which is *Orfeo*, the first pastoral drama in Italian.

28. Mrs. Elizabeth Porter (1689-1752). Her husband died insolvent at the end of July, 1734, leaving her with a daughter, Lucy (born in 1715), and two sons. Her maiden name was Jarvis, and it was with one of this name that Johnson had lodged in Birmingham after leaving Warren (1733). She was married to Johnson at Derby (9th July, 1735), to which place

they travelled on horseback, in the fashion of Petruchio and Katharine in the *Taming of the Shrew*, or of Gareth and Lynette in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

30 To ordinary spectators, &c. The description given is from Garrick (see p. 7). "An existing portrait", says Colonel Grant, "represents a tolerably good-looking person."

33. **Queensberrys.** Catharine, Duchess of Queensberry (c. 1700-77) was famous in the world of fashion for her beauty and eccentricity, and in the world of letters for her wit and patronage of authors. Gay, for example, was a resident in her house, and she joined him in his letters to Swift. She was also the friend of Congreve, Thomson, Pope, and Prior, the last three of whom paid compliments to her in their verses. Prior's lines on her début in society (1715) are well-known:

"Kitty, at Heart's desire
Obtained the chariot for a day
And set the world on fire".

Horace Walpole's lines in 1771 on the ever-beauteous Duchess are equally good:

"To many a Kitty, Love his car
Will for a day engage,
But Prior's Kitty, ever fair,
Obtained it for an age".

34. **Lepels.** Mary Lepel (c. 1700-68), a maid of honour at the court of George I, married in 1720 John Hervey, the Earl of Bristol's second son, who became a peer with the title Lord Hervey of Ickworth. "The perfect model of a finely-polished woman of fashion", she received literary compliments from Pope, Gay, Pulteney, Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and Voltaire. Her children were, like herself, clever but eccentric, so that it was said "the world consists of men, women, and Herveys". She is described in one of Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* (22nd October, 1750): "She has been bred all her life at courts, of which she has acquired all the easy good-breeding and politeness, without the frivolousness. She has all the reading that a woman should have, and more than any woman need have; for she understands Latin perfectly well, though she wisely conceals it." See also Dobson's *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, 3rd series.

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1. seldom...fashion. This is refuted by "a testimony from a lady", who mentions sisters and daughters of baronets Johnson met in Lichfield society (Dr. B. Hill's *Boswell*, i. 83).

Molly Aston (see note on p. 6, l. 6) was on very intimate terms with him.

4. That his admiration, &c. "Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him with much gravity, 'Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides'" (Boswell).

5. she was as poor. This is not accepted by Dr. B. Hill. Though her husband died insolvent, her settlement was secured, and, according to one authority, she brought Johnson £800.

8. The marriage...proved happier. The chief authority on his married life is Mrs. Piozzi, who, in her *Anecdotes* (pp. 146-150), writes: "I asked him if he ever disputed with his wife. 'Perpetually', said he; 'my wife had a particular reverence for cleanliness, and desired the praise of neatness in her dress and furniture, as many ladies do, till they become troublesome to their best friends, slaves to their own whims, and only sigh for the hour of sweeping their husbands out of the house as dirt and useless lumber. A clean floor is so comfortable, she would say sometimes by way of twitting, 'ill at last I told her that I thought we had had talk enough about the floor, we would now have a touch at the ceiling'... I asked him if he ever huffed his wife about his dinner. 'So often', replied he, 'that at last she called to me, and said, 'Nay, hold, Mr. Johnson, and do not make a farce of thanking God for a dinner which in a few minutes you will protest not eatable.'"

12. An inscription "formosae, cultae, ingeniosae, pia uxoris...Samuelis Johnson, qui multum amatam, diuque defletam hoc lapide contextit": (to the memory) of the beautiful, accomplished, clever, and pious wife of Samuel Johnson, who placed this stone over her, much loved and long mourned.

14. long after her decease. In his *Prayers and Meditations* there is an entry nearly every Easter Day concerning his "poor dear Tetty". For example, in 1764, "Thought on Tetty, poor dear Tetty, with my eyes full. I went to church...I recommended Tetty in a prayer by herself, and my father, mother, brother, and Bathurst in another. I did it only once, so far as it might be lawful for me." The special occasion referred to by Macaulay is when Johnson was telling Mrs. Thrale the story of his wedding—"I believe there was a tear or two—pretty dear creature!" So, too, when Johnson told the story of the gipsy declaring he loved a Molly and a Betty, he deprecated his wife's jealousy with "Pretty charmer! she had no reason" (to be jealous).

18. He took a house, &c., two miles west of Lichfield. "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen

are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages by Samuel Johnson" (Advt. in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1736).

25. Titty, or Tetty, for Betty—a contraction of Elizabeth.

26. David Garrick (1717-79) accompanied Johnson to London in 1737, and soon abandoned law for the stage. He made his début at Ipswich in 1741, and on 19th October of the same year appeared in London in Goodman's Fields Theatre in the character of Richard III. He was quickly recognized to be the greatest actor of the day, and in 1747 he became manager of Drury Lane Theatre. For the occasion Johnson wrote a prologue, which is one of the best of his poems.

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5. munificently rewarded by the government. For examples see the list given by Thackeray, in a note to his *English Humorists*, of those "who got public employment, and pretty little pickings out of the public purse". Macaulay has also given a list in his review of Croker's edition of *Boswell* (1831). "The chiefs of both the great parties... patronized literature with emulous munificence. Congreve... was rewarded for his first comedy with places which made him independent for life. . Rowe was not only Poet Laureate, but also land-surveyor of the customs in the port of London, clerk of the council to the Prince of Wales, and secretary of the Presentations to the Lord Chancellor. Hughes was secretary to the Commissions of the Peace. Ambrose Philips was judge of the Prerogative Court in Ireland. Locke was Commissioner of Appeals and of the Board of Trade. Newton was Master of the Mint. Stepney and Prior were employed in embassies of high dignity and importance. Gay, who commenced life as apprentice to a silk mercer, became a secretary of Legation at five-and-twenty. It was to a poem on the *Death of Charles II*, and to the *City and Country Mouse*, that Montague owed his introduction into public life, his earldom, his garter, and his Auditorship of the Exchequer. Swift, but for the unconquerable prejudice of the queen, would have been a bishop.... Steele was a commissioner of stamps, and a member of Parliament. . Tickell was secretary to the Lords Justices of Ireland. Addison was Secretary of State."

11. the least successful, &c. The very sum named—£40,000—was earned by Sir W. Scott between January, 1826, and January, 1828. Macaulay himself received a £20,000 cheque for a part of his *History of England*. Dickens and Tennyson made fortunes by their writings. Trollope, a less eminent writer, received at least £40,000 from the booksellers, while Tupper, the author of a worthless book, *Proverbial Philosophy*, got for himself and his bookseller £10,000 apiece.

18. Pope...acquired £5000 by his translation of the *Iliad*, and £4000 by that of the *Odyssey*. Well might he sing:

"And, thanks to Homer, I can live and thrive
Indebted to no prince or peer alive".

He was on the most intimate terms with Bolingbroke and Oxford.

23. Thomson sprang at once into fame with the publication of *Winter* (1726), and received several sinecures from the Lord Chancellor. These lapsed in 1737, and, Thomson's affairs getting into a "poetical posture", he was saved from want by a pension of £100 from the Prince of Wales, obtained through Lord Lyttelton.

24. *Pasquin*, by Henry Fielding, the novelist (1707-54), was a satirical play burlesquing an election scene. It was produced in 1736.

25. *Beggar's Opera*, by Gay, produced in 1728 by Rich, had a run of 63 nights—a record for a play up to that time. Its remarkable success led the wits to say that it had made Gay rich and Rich gay. Its popularity was due to its catching airs, and to its obvious satire on the corrupt politicians of the time.

32. One of the publishers. "Wilcox was one of my best friends", said Johnson, in spite of this disparaging advice. A loan of £5, which he gave to Johnson and Garrick, shows him in a more amiable light than Macaulay's story.

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7. Osborne, Thomas (died 1767), introduced by Pope into the *Dunciad* (ii. 167) as "contending for the prize among the booksellers. Osborne was a man entirely destitute of shame, without sense of any disgrace but that of poverty" (Johnson's *Life of Pope*). He purchased in 1742, for £13,000, the library of Harley, Earl of Oxford, which had been in formation since 1705. In the same year Johnson wrote the *Proposals for printing Bibliotheca Harleiana*, afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the Catalogue, to which he also contributed the Latin descriptions of books. It was when he was engaged in this work that he beat Osborne. "The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him'" (Boswell). The embellishments of the story are due to Mrs. Piozzi: "He was insolent and I beat him, and he was a blockhead and told of it, which I should never have done....I have beat many a fellow, but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues".

13. Cave, Edward (1691-1754), born near Rugby, became a bookseller in London, and started the *Gentleman's Magazine*

(1731) under the pseudonym of Sylvanus Urban. Johnson's letter to Cave soliciting literary work (1737) will be found in Boswell. Johnson became a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in March, 1738.

18. a large circulation. Johnson stated it to be 10,000 copies. Before the magazine had completed its ninth year, some of the earliest numbers were in the fifth edition.

19. It was not then safe, &c. In 1738 a resolution was passed by the Commons declaring it a breach of privilege to publish reports even during the recess. In 1771 the question of the right to report parliamentary debates was fought out between the press and the House of Commons, victory remaining with the former.

23. Senate of Lilliput. The names are borrowed from *Gulliver's Travels*, where Lilliput stands for England, Blefuscu for France, Flimnap for Sir R. Walpole, &c.

28. To write the speeches, &c. Johnson corrected those prepared by Guthrie from 1738 to 1741, and wrote all those published between July, 1741, and March, 1744. Guthrie had been present in the gallery of the House, and used to write the speeches from memory, but Johnson was not more than once within the House. He was supplied (says Boswell) with "notes by persons employed to attend", but "sometimes he had nothing more communicated to him than the names of the several speakers, and the part which they had taken in the debate". "As soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them; for 'he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood'. And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions which had passed for realities" (Murphy). "At the time he wrote them he had no conception he was imposing upon the world, though they were frequently written from very slender materials, and often from none at all—the mere coinage of his own imagination" (Boswell). Pitt's reply to Walpole was claimed by Johnson: "that speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter Street". For an exhaustive discussion of the whole question, see Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, vol. i, appendix A.

Page II

2. Capulets against the Montagues, the rival families in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Blues...Greens. In the chariot races at Rome colours were worn, at first merely to distinguish the drivers, but afterwards as badges of rival factions. So great was this rivalry in the Circus games that riots arose (see Juvenal's *Satires*, xi. 198). In Constantinople in the reign of Justinian

there were terrible conflicts between the Blues and the Greens, on one occasion 30,000 being slain. See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xl.

8. Sacheverell, Henry (1674-1724), the High Church hero and martyr of Queen Anne's reign. He attracted notice by two sermons he preached in 1709, one at Derby Assizes, the other at St. Paul's. He declaimed against the Revolution and the Act of Toleration, and asserted the doctrine of passive resistance. He was impeached by the Whig government, and, after a trial extending from 27th February to 23rd March, 1710, he was found guilty by the Lords and suspended from preaching for three years. But he had become the popular hero, and in 1710 the general election resulted in the complete triumph of the Tories. He was afterwards selected by this Tory House of Commons to preach the sermon on the Restoration anniversary, and was specially thanked for it. The story of Johnson's hearing him preach has been doubted, as his visit to Lichfield was in 1710, when Johnson was nine months old. Another visit has been conjectured for 1713, to save the story.

17. Tom Tempest, the type of political credulity, is described in the *Idler*, No. 10. "Tom Tempest is a steady friend to the House of Stuart. He can recount the prodigies that have appeared in the sky, and the calamities that have afflicted the nation every year from the Revolution; and is of opinion that, if the exiled family had continued to reign, there would have neither been worms in our ships, nor caterpillars in our trees. He wonders that the nation was not awakened by the hard frost to a revocation of the true king, and is hourly afraid that the whole island will be lost in the sea. He believes that nothing ill has ever happened for these forty years by chance or error; he holds that the battle of Dettingen was won by mistake, and that of Fontenoy lost by contract; that the *Victory* was sunk by a private order," &c.

18. Charles II and James II best kings. Macaulay's picture of them in the essay on Milton (§ 78) shows he could go to the opposite extreme.

19. Laud, for whom Macaulay "entertained a more unmitigated contempt than for any other character in our history", is idolized by all High Churchmen, and not least by Johnson. In the *Vanity of Human Wishes* occurs the passage referred to:

"See, when the vulgar 'scape, despis'd or aw'd,
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.
Marked out by dangerous parts, he meets the shock,
And fatal learning leads him to the block:
Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep".

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3. He hated stock-jobbers, because they supported the Revolution government, financing it, for example, in 1693 when the National Debt was begun.

4. the excise. The violence of Johnson's language against the excise, even in his Dictionary, led Croker to suspect "some cause of personal animosity". The suspicion has been justified by a letter, dated 1725, found in the records of the Excise Board, quoted in Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, i. 37: "Since the justices would not give judgment against Mr. Michael Johnson, the tanner, notwithstanding the facts were fairly against him, the Board direct that the next time he offends, you do not lay an information against him, but send an affidavit of the fact, that he may be prosecuted in the Exchequer". Johnson's father engaged in the manufacture of parchment, then an excisable commodity.

5. an aversion to the Scotch. Yet he wrote in *London* (1738):

"For who would leave, unbribed, Hibernia's land,
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?"

15. the Whig dogs, &c. The authority is Murphy in his *Life of Johnson*, p. 343.

28. Pope's...Epistles were published from 1733 to 1737. "This mode of imitation was first practised in the reign of Charles II by Oldham and Rochester. It is a kind of middle composition between translation and original design, which pleases when the thoughts are unexpectedly applicable and the parallels lucky" (Johnson in the *Life of Pope*).

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1. 'London, a Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal.' The letters to Cave in which Johnson,—“having the enclosed poem in my hands to dispose of for the benefit of the author”,—negotiated for its printing as for the poem of another, will be found at length in Boswell. “Boileau had imitated the same satire with great success, applying it to Paris.. Oldham had also imitated it, and applied it to London; . it is not a little remarkable that there is scarcely any coincidence found between the two performances, though upon the very same subject” (Boswell). The covert attacks on Walpole and political corruption helped its popularity, but it owes much of its interest to the personal note which is strong in such lines as these:

“This mournful truth is everywhere confess'd,
Slow rises worth by poverty depress'd”.

7. superior to Pope, &c. The comparison with Pope was suggested not only by the similarity of the poem to his *Imitations of Horace*, but also by the appearance of it on the same day as his satire called "1738". "England had at once its Juvenal and Horace as poetical monitors....Everybody was delighted with it, and there being no name to it, the first buzz of the literary circles was: 'here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope'" (Boswell).

11. He made enquiries, &c. Having learned "only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, 'he will soon be *déterré*'" (Boswell). Murphy varies Pope's words to 'The author, whoever he is, will not be long concealed', an adaptation of Terence's line (*Eunuchus*, ii. 3, 4): 'Ubi, ubi est, diu celari non potest'.

15. an academical degree, Master of Arts from Dublin University. The M.A. degree was required for the appointment to the head-mastership of Appleby in Leicestershire, not far from Lichfield. Pope strongly supported Johnson in his application in August, 1739. Johnson's eagerness for the degree is seen from a letter by Lord Gower to a friend of Dean Swift's: "They say he is not afraid of the strictest examination, though he is of so long a journey; and will venture it if the Dean thinks it necessary; choosing rather to die upon the road than be starved to death in translating for booksellers; which has been his only subsistence for some time past".

24. Boyse, Samuel (1708-49), son of a dissenting minister in Dublin, studied and wrote in Edinburgh for a short time, and then removed to London, where he became a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. His profligacy and an early marriage had reduced him to hack-writing—translations from French and Dutch, modern versions of Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* and *Coke's Tale*, &c. His poem of the *Deity* (1739), modelled on Pope's *Essay on Man*, was quoted by Fielding in *Tom Jones* (Intro. to Bk. vii) and referred to as a poem "published nine years ago, and long since buried in oblivion—a proof that good books no more than good men do always survive the bad". In his poverty he devised paper collars and cuffs, but (according to Cibber) sank even below this to the 'shirtless' state mentioned by Macaulay. He died in an obscure lodging in Shoe Lane of consumption, not of an accident when he was drunk.

29. Hoole, the uncle of the translator of Ariosto and Tasso, who is pilloried by Macaulay, in the essay on *Addison*, as a mechanical poet. Johnson, meeting this so-called poet, and learning that his instructor had been his uncle, a tailor, "said, 'Sir, I knew him; we called him the *metaphysical tailor*'. He

was of a club in Old Street with me and George Psalmanazar and some others; but pray, sir, was he a good tailor?' Mr. Hoole, having answered that he believed he was too mathematical, and used to draw squares and triangles on his shop-board, so that he did not excel in the cut of a coat—'I am very sorry for it,' said Johnson, 'for I would have every man to be master of his own business' " (Boswell).

33. **George Psalmanazar** (c. 1680–1763), a native of the south of France, finding an accomplice in Innes, the chaplain of a Scottish regiment, gave himself out as a native of Formosa, and a convert from the Formosan religion (1703). Coming to London, he translated the Church Catechism into 'Formosan', and in 1704 published a tissue of lies—*An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*—followed in 1707 by a *Dialogue between a Japanese and Formosan about some Points of the Religion of the Time*. Though the imposture was a glaring one, many pious people accepted him as a genuine convert, and provided for his studying at Oxford. He is referred to in an advertisement in the *Spectator* (No. 14) as "the famous Mr. Psalmanazar lately arrived from Formosa". Converted in 1728 by Law's *Serious Call*, he abandoned "the life of a lying scoundrel" for that of a penitent and a hack writer. In his *Memoirs*, published the year after his death, he professed "to undeceive the world by unravelling that whole mystery of iniquity", but there are discrepancies and inaccuracies enough in these to make them of doubtful value. Johnson respected him so much that he never contradicted him: "I should as soon have thought of contradicting a bishop".

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3. **Richard Savage** (1697–1743), reputed on doubtful evidence to be the illegitimate son of Earl Rivers and the Countess of Macclesfield. One account declares him to have been the son of a shoemaker whose wife acted as nurse to the real son of Lady Macclesfield, and that he personated this son, who died in infancy. In 1727 he stabbed a man to death in a tavern brawl, for which he was tried and condemned. By the intercession of Lord Tyrconnel, nephew of Lady Macclesfield, he was pardoned. In a poem, *The Bastard* (1728), he made a stinging attack on his reputed mother. Once he gained the Queen's prize of £50 for a birthday ode, and this sum he spent in one week's debauchery. Of his many poems the best is *The Wanderer* (1729).

5. **blue ribbons**, Knights of the Garter, the most honourable order of chivalry, to which even the highest peers of the realm aspire.

6. **Saint James's Square**, near St. James's Palace, and therefore the most fashionable quarter of London. It was in

St. James's Square that Johnson and Savage walked all night for want of a lodging, inveighing against Walpole and resolving 'that they would stand by their country'.

18. **Piazza of Covent Garden**, the covered colonnade on the north and east sides of Covent Garden, at that time noted as the haunt of pickpockets and ruffians: "they come in large bodies, armed with *couteaus*, and attack whole parties" (Shenstone).

26. **the Prime Minister**, Sir R. Walpole, of whom Savage said, "the whole range of his mind is from obscenity to politics, and from politics to obscenity".

29. **the friends parted**. "Savage left London in July, 1739, having taken leave with great tenderness of his friends, and parted from the author of this narrative with tears in his eyes" (Johnson's *Life of Savage*). The opening lines of *London* about 'injured Thales' going to 'Cambria's solitary shore' are supposed to refer to Savage.

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4. **Grub Street**, defined by Johnson in the Dictionary as "the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *Grub Street*". The name has been changed to Milton Street.

9. **a discerning critic**. Reynolds, for example, was so struck with the book that he could not lay it down before he finished it. Harte, dining with Cave, praised it, while Johnson sat behind the screen, being too shabbily dressed to sit beside Cave and his guest. In *The Champion* appeared a laudatory review concluding thus: "In a word, a more just or pleasant, a more engaging or a more improving treatise, on all the excellencies and defects of human nature, is scarce to be found in our own, or perhaps any other language".

17. **Warburton**, William (1698-1779), author of the *Divine Legation of Moses* and the *Alliance between Church and State*. His defence of the *Essay on Man* gained him the friendship of Pope, whose literary executor he became. It also got him a wealthy wife and the bishopric of Gloucester. He was a "sham giant" and a literary bully, being addressed (deservedly) by Bolingbroke as "the most impudent man living". By sheer self-assertion he attained to a sort of literary dictatorship. In the preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1747) he wrote about Shakespeare criticism: "If you except some critical notes on *Macbeth* given as a specimen of a projected edition, and written, as appears, by a man of parts and genius, the rest

are absolutely below a serious notice". Of this Johnson afterwards remarked: "He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me".

20. eminent booksellers, Dodsley, Hitch, Andrew Millar (a Scot), Messrs. Longman, and Messrs. Knapton.

24. poor men of letters, six amanuenses, of whom five were Scots.

27. Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), ambassador at the Hague (1728), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1745-46), and Secretary of State (1746-48). His literary reputation rests upon his *Letters to his Son*, though he contributed also a few papers to the *World*. As he lays more stress on manners than on morals, on "the graces" than on the virtues, he has been severely criticised by writers who attach great importance to the ethical element even in pure literature, *e.g.* Johnson, Cowper, Carlyle, and Macaulay. But he is given a very high place by French critics (*e.g.* Sainte-Beuve), who recognize in him a kindred spirit, filled with the urbanity and *bonhomie* of a man of the world, as well as with the polish and nonchalance of a man of *ton*.

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13. completed...1750. When it was pointed out to Johnson that the forty members of the French Academy had taken forty years to compile their dictionary, and that he could not expect to do his work in three years, he replied, "Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred: as three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman".

22. the fall of Wolsey.

"In full-blown dignity see Wolsey stand
Law in his voice and fortune in his hand...
At length his sovereign frowns—the train of state
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
Where'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,
His suppliants scorn him and his followers fly;
Now drops at once the pride of awful state,
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liveried army, and the menial lord."

26. laurels on the door-posts, as a sign of the popular rejoicing.

the white bull stalking towards the Capitol, to be sacrificed to the gods for the preservation of the Emperor Tiberius.

27. the statues of Sejanus, the disgraced minister of Tiberius.

32. the concluding passage.

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

Juvenal's conclusion is: "Let us leave it to the gods to judge what is fittest for us. Man is dearer to his Creator than to himself. If we must pray for special favour, let it be for a sound mind in a sound body. Let us pray for fortitude, that we may think the labours of Hercules and all his sufferings preferable to a life of luxury and the soft repose of Sardanapalus. This is a blessing within the reach of every man; this we can give ourselves. It is virtue, and virtue only, that can make us happy."

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1. Charles XII of Sweden. The brilliant beginning and the disastrous end of his career make a fine contrast.

"A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
 No dangers fright him, and no labours tire;...
 No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
 War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;
 Behold surrounding kings their powers combine,
 And one capitulate and one resign.

.

But did not Chance at length her error mend?
 Did no subverted empire mark his end?
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground?
 His fall was destined to a barren strand,
 A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
 He left the name at which the world grew pale,
 To point a moral, or adorn a tale."

2. miseries of a literary life. Here are some of them:

"Should no Disease thy torpid veins invade,
 Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
 Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
 Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee:
 Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
 And pause awhile from learning, to be wise;
 There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
 Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail."

8. his tragedy, part of which had been written before he left Lichfield in 1737. See p. 7.

20. Johnson saw, &c. No. 200 of the Rambler contains a sketch of Prospero which, according to Murphy, "was, beyond all question, occasioned by Garrick's ostentatious display of furniture and Dresden china". Prospero is a man who had begun life with the writer, and had continued friendly and helpful till "raised to wealth by a lucky project, and too much intoxicated by sudden elevation, or too little polished by thought or conversation, to enjoy his present fortune with elegance and decency." Prospero reproaches his old friend for not visiting him at his new house, but a visit reveals the truth that the invitation is due not to any "desire to communicate his happiness, but to enjoy his superiority". The visitor is kept waiting at the door, finds the staircase protected by mats from the pollution of his feet, is led into a back room where his host breakfasts when he has not great company, and is given an inferior sort of tea, while a great display is made of carpets, chairs, and Dresden china. Boswell says Garrick "never entirely forgave this pointed satire".

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2. alterations...author. "Johnson was at first very obstinate. 'Sir,' said he, 'the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of 'ossing his hands and kicking his heels.' He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes; but they were not enough" (Boswell). It was one of Garrick's suggestions, however—the strangling

of Irene before the audience,—that almost led to the damning of the play.

5. with little emotion. Boswell admits that, in spite of "noble sentiments, fine imagery, and beautiful language", it is "deficient in pathos, in that delicate power of touching the human feelings, which is the principal end of the drama".

6. monotonous declamation. Garrick's criticism was just: "When Johnson writes tragedy, declamation roars and passion sleeps; when Shakespeare wrote, he dipped his pen in his own heart".

9. He had not, &c. In the concluding passages of the *Life of Milton* Johnson depreciates blank verse: "The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer. ... 'Blank verse', said an ingenious critic, 'seems to be verse only to the eye.'" Yet he admits Thomson's *Seasons* to be "one of the works in which blank verse seems properly used", and Young's *Night Thoughts* to be "one of the few poems in which blank verse could not be changed for rhyme but with disadvantage".

11. A change ... 'Irene'. The blank verse is certainly of that primitive sort which is found even in Shakspeare's earliest plays when the escape from the fetters of rhyme was recent. The lines are nearly all end-stopt, the pause at the end of every second line being very like that in Pope's heroic couplet. As an example of these heroic couplets, with the rhyme dropped, take the passage in praise of the British constitution:

"If there be any land, as fame reports,
Where common laws restrain the prince and subject;
A happy land, where circulating power
Flows through each member of the embodied state;
Sure, not unconscious of the mighty blessing,
Her grateful sons shine bright with every virtue;
Untainted with the Lust of Innovation;
Sure, all unite to hold her league of Aule,
Unbroken as the sacred chain of nature,
That links the jarring elements in peace".

13. The poet, however, cleared, &c. The profits of his three benefit nights amounted to £195, 17s., and he received £100 for the sale of his copyright. This compares disadvantageously with Goldsmith's £500 for the *Good-Natured Man*.

21. 'Tatler' issued by Steele in the character of 'Isaac Bickerstaff', aided by Addison, from 1709 to 1711; the *Spectator* by Steele, Addison, &c., from 1711 to 1712 and in 1714.

23. 'Lay Monastery', the separate numbers of which appeared as the *Lay Monk* in 1714, the *Censor* (1717), the *Free-thinker* (1718-20), the *Plain-Dealer* (1724-25), the *Champion* (1739-40).

35. Richardson, the novelist, himself contributed one number (No. 97). He is described by Johnson in an introductory note as "an author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue".

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2. Young, Edward (1681-1765), the poet of the *Night Thoughts*, was attracted, as Boswell conjectures, by the more solemn papers, such as No. 54, 'On the death of a friend'. "I have seen some volumes of Dr. Young's copy of the *Rambler* in which he has marked the passages which he thought particularly excellent, by folding down a corner of the page....Johnson was pleased when told of the minute attention with which Young had signified his approbation of his Essays" (Boswell).

Hartley, David (1705-57), abandoned the Church for medicine because of conscientious scruples. He made a few contributions to medical literature, but his fame rests on his physiologico-psychological book *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations* (1749). This book gave a great impetus to materialistic philosophy, and constitutes its author the founder of the associational school of psychology and the intellectual progenitor of the Mills and Bain. He explained all mental processes as founded upon minute nervous vibrations.

3. Bubb Dodington (1691-1762), originally George Bubb, entered Parliament in 1715, and soon acquired the reputation of the most assiduous place-hunter of the day. He was created Baron Melcombe in 1761. He acted as the chief adviser of Frederick, Prince of Wales, from 1749 to 1751, and patronized men of letters, thereby securing compliments from Young, Fielding, Bentley, and from Thomson, who dedicated to him his *Summer*.

10. Leicester House, on the north side of Leicester Square, built for Sidney, Earl of Leicester. It was the residence of Frederick, Prince of Wales, after his quarrel with his father in 1737.

16. coldly received. Burney says "The *Rambler*s certainly were little noticed at first", and states that even in the autumn of 1751 he found in Norfolk but one man who knew of them.

22. Separate editions .. Scotch. The Scotch edition of Elphinston, "enriched with translations of the mottoes", gave

special gratification to Johnson. "It is unquestionably the most accurate and beautiful edition of this work" (Boswell).

27. **Another party, &c.** They said Johnson had used long words to compel them to buy his forthcoming Dictionary. Burke said the ladies in the *Rambler* were Johnsons in petticoats.

31. **But they did justice, &c.** For "fertility of fancy and accurate description of real life" Boswell recommends Nos. 19, 34, 82, 98, 182, 194-5, 197-8. Other good ones are No. 60, on biography; 117, on the advantages of living in a garret; 59, an account of Suspirius, the human screech-owl.

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1. **On the question, &c.** "Addison writes with the ease of a gentleman. His readers fancy that a wise and accomplished companion is talking to them, so that he insinuates his sentiments and taste into their minds by an imperceptible influence. Johnson writes like a teacher. He dictates to his readers as if from an academical chair. They attend with awe and admiration; and his precepts are impressed upon them by his commanding eloquence. Addison's style, like a light wine, pleases everybody from the first. Johnson's, like a liquor of more body, seems too strong at first, but by degrees is highly relished." Boswell thus favours Johnson's style, but he deprecates the undervaluing of "that beautiful style" which Johnson himself has praised in the most frequently quoted passage of his prose writings. As a proof of the more idiomatic character of Addison's style, it has been remarked that a *Spectator* could not be so easily translated into a foreign language as a *Rambler*.

11. **Squire Bluster**, a litigious and tyrannical landlord (No. 142): *Mrs. Busy*, a widow engrossed in farming (No. 138): *Quisquilus*, an antiquarian and curiosity collector (No. 82): *Venustulus*, a handsome but cowardly fop (Nos. 119 and 126): *The Allegory of Wit and Learning* (No. 22): *The Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret* (No. 161), the story of successive lodgers in "an upper room": *Aningait and Ajut* (Nos. 186 and 187), the Greenland lovers, noted for their constancy, who were lost at sea when each was sailing in a fishing-boat in search of the other.

22. **superfluities, &c.** Boswelli was informed by a companion of Mrs. Johnson at Hampstead "that she indulged herself in country air and nice living at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London, and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife". Johnson was dunned

in July, 1751, for payment of a debt of £2 incurred by his wife two years before.

26. the **Gunnings**, two sisters of extraordinary beauty, born in County Roscommon, Ireland. Their appearance in London in 1751 created a great sensation, and the scene on their presentation at Court was without a parallel. When they travelled in the country, people would flock in to towns on their route and wait up all night for a chance of seeing "the handsomest women alive". Maria (1733-60) married Lord Coventry in 1752, but soon died of consumption. Elizabeth (1734-90) married the Duke of Hamilton, who died in 1758; and in 1759 the Marquis of Lorne, who became Duke of Argyll in 1770.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), daughter of the Duke of Kingston, was, even in her girlhood, a toast of the Kit-cat Club. She resided for some time at Constantinople, where her husband was ambassador, and wrote from that city a series of very sprightly letters. One of her correspondents was Pope, with whom she ultimately quarrelled, and by whom she was satirized under the name of Sappho. She retorted in very vigorous lines, but her poetry is trifling in comparison with her *Letters*, which place her among the best of our writers in that department of literature.

Her opinion, &c. "Mrs. Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of the *Rambler* had come out, 'I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this'" (Boswell).

29. the '**Monthly Review**', a Whig magazine founded in May, 1749, by Griffiths, who in 1757 secured Goldsmith as a contributor. A Tory rival, *The Critical Review*, was established in 1756, and to this Johnson and Smollett contributed. The *Monthly* continued down to 1845.

The chief support, &c. In one of the last *Ramblers* (No. 203), as his wife lay dying, he wrote: "It is necessary to the completion of every good that it be timely obtained, for whatever comes at the close of life will come too late to give much delight....What we require . comes at last when we cannot communicate, and therefore cannot enjoy it." And in his letter to Chesterfield he wrote: "The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours...has been delayed...till I am solitary, and cannot impart it".

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12. the '**World**', edited by Edward Moore, author of the *Gamester*, appeared from 1753 to 1756. Its contributors were mostly members of fashionable society—Lord Chesterfield, the

Earl of Bath, Horace Walpole, &c. Walpole's statement that "the *World* is by our best writers" led Macaulay to a most unfair but brilliant onslaught on that writer's reputation as a critic.

13. In two successive numbers, November 28 and December 5, 1754.

16. It was proposed, &c. "It must be owned that our language is at present in a state of anarchy.... Good order and authority are now necessary.... We must have recourse to the old Roman expedient in times of confusion, and chuse a dictator. Upon this principle I give my vote for Mr. Johnson to fill that great and arduous post. And I hereby declare that I make a total surrender of all my rights and privileges in the English language, as a free-born British subject, to the said Mr. Johnson during the term of his dictatorship. Nay more, I will not only obey him, like an old Roman, as my dictator, but like a modern Roman, I will implicitly believe in him as my Pope, and hold him to be infallible while in the chair, but no longer."

24. In a letter, &c. This extraordinary piece of literature, in which Johnson's prose touches high-water mark, though often quoted, cannot be quoted too often.

"To the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterfield.

"FEBRUARY 7, 1755.

"My Lord,

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

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

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

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

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

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

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

"My Lord,

"Your Lordship's most humble,

"Most obedient Servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

28. the author truly declared, &c. "The *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow" (Johnson's *Preface*).

32. Horne Tooke (1736-1812), author of the *Diversions of Purley* (1786 and 1798), a melange of philological and political discussions. In politics Tooke supported Wilkes, and held views that have been later called Radical. In philology he recognized the importance of the study of Anglo-Saxon and cognate languages, and ridiculed Johnson's crude etymologies. Yet in a letter to Dunning he writes, "I could never read his *Preface* without shedding a tear".

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3. hailed with an enthusiasm, &c. There is a laudatory review of it in No. 1 of the *Edinburgh Review* (1755) from the pen of Adam Smith, who recognizes the "very extraordinary

merit" of the author. But recognition on the part of the public seems to have been slow. In a letter to Burney nearly three years after the publication of the *Dictionary*, Johnson wrote: "Your praise was welcome,...because praise has been very scarce....Yours is the only letter of good-will that I have received; though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden."

8. a leisure hour, &c. See *Leisure Moments in Gough Square; or, the Beauties and Quaint Conceits of Johnson's Dictionary*, by G. A. Stringer (1886).

10. The faults of the book. Some of the definitions show strong political prejudice; one at least shows, on Johnson's own confession, "pure ignorance"; while many words are defined in terms less intelligible than the original, e.g. "Network: anything reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections". Compared with this, the Irishman's definition is luminous: "A net is a number of holes tied together with strings".

15. Junius and Skinner. To these two etymologists Johnson acknowledged his debt in his *Preface*: "For the Teutonic etymologies I am commonly indebted to Junius and Skinner". When questioned by a friend how he was to get the etymologies, he had replied, "Why, sir, here is a shelf with Junius and Skinner and others, and there is a Welsh gentleman...who will help me with the Welsh".

Francis Junius, born at Heidelberg in 1589, died at Windsor in 1678. His *Etymologicum Anglicanum* was not published till 1743. He was trained by his brother-in-law Vossius. He was one of the first to study Gothic and the languages of Northern Europe. He published at Amsterdam, in 1655, an edition of *Cædmon*.

Stephen Skinner, M.D. (1623-67), compiled the *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae*, which was published in 1671.

22. spunging-houses, houses where debtors were confined by bailiffs for twenty-four hours after arrest, to allow the debtors' friends to obtain their release by payment of their debts. The charges there were so extortionate that they were likened to the squeezing dry of a sponge.

28. an edition of Shakspeare. See pp. 26-28.

33. the 'Literary Magazine', or *Universal Review*, which appeared from May, 1756, to 1758, was edited by Johnson for a time, but he ceased to contribute to it after the fifteenth number. His articles were political as well as literary, one of the most interesting of the former being *Memoirs of the King of Prussia*.

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2. 'Jenyns's Inquiry'. The most amusing passage is on Jenyns' suggestion, as a possible explanation of human suffering, "that as we have not only animals for food, but choose some for our diversion, the same privilege may be allowed to some beings above us, who may deceive, torment, or destroy us for the ends only of their own pleasure or utility". Johnson plays with the idea, and finally applies it to Jenyns, the author: "I cannot resist the temptation of contemplating this analogy, which I think he might have carried further....He might have shown that these hunters, whose game is man, have many sports analogous to our own. As we drown whelps and kittens, they amuse themselves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim or the walls of Prague as we encircle a cock-pit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure and knock him down with an apoplexy. Some of them, perhaps, are virtuosi, and delight in the operations of an asthma as a human philosopher in the effects of the air-pump. Many a merry bout have these frolic beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again, and all this he knows not why. ..One sport the merry malice of these beings has found means of enjoying, to which we have nothing equal or similar. They now and then catch a mortal proud of his parts, and flattered either by the submission of those who court his kindness, or the notice of those who suffer him to court theirs. A head thus prepared for the reception of false opinions and the projection of vain designs, they easily fill with idle notions, till in time they make their plaything an author: their first diversion commonly begins with an ode or an epistle, then rises perhaps to a political irony, and is at last brought to its height by a treatise of philosophy. Then begins the poor animal to entangle himself in sophisms and flounder in absurdity, to talk confidently of the scale of being, and to give solutions which himself confesses impossible to be understood."

9. The 'Idler' may be described, &c. Boswell describes it as having "less body and more spirit. It has more variety of real life, and greater facility of language." The numbers he recommends as showing "profundity of thought and labour of language" are 14, 24, 41, 43, 51, 52, 58, 89, 103.

19. he wrote a little book, &c. This is an inaccurate rendering of a sentence in Boswell. "He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions as it was written, and had never since read it over." As Mrs. Johnson died in January,

and *Rasselas* did not appear till April, the story is somewhat doubtful.

25. Miss Lydia Languish, the heroine in Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals*. The niece and ward of Mrs. Malaprop, she had a fortune of £30,000, most of which was to be forfeited if she married without her guardian's consent. The sentimentalism of her nature was such that she rebelled against a marriage with the man of her own choice if it was not led up to by an elopement. For Miss Lydia's taste in novels see *The Rivals*, act i, sc. 2.

27. a dissertation, &c. It is, like *Ecclesiastes*, a sermon on the text, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity". It is a protest against optimism, and has been called a prose version of the *Vanity of Human Wishes*. There is no plot or action sufficient to justify its being called a novel.

33. The 'Critical Review', founded in 1756, conducted by Smollett, the novelist, as a Tory rival of the *Monthly Review*.

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2. a waiting-woman, &c. Pekuah, who had been carried off by Arabs, describes her experiences in chapters xxxviii and xxxix. Speaking of the women in a harem she says: "They do not want that unaffecting and ignoble beauty which may subsist without sprightliness or sublimity, without energy of thought or dignity of virtue".

6. weighty meaning...splendour. As an example, here is a passage which may have suggested Blanco White's famous Sonnet on Night. "The state of a mind, oppressed with a sudden calamity," said Imlac, "is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new-created earth, who, when the first night came upon them, supposed that day would never return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they can be dispelled; yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease."

23. Bruce's 'Travels'. James Bruce (1730-94) travelled in Abyssinia from 1769 to 1771. This Scottish traveller was the first to reach the source of the Blue Nile (November, 1770). His stories, such as that of the slicing of steaks from live cows, were discredited, but modern travellers have confirmed most of them. His *Travels* appeared in 1790.

28. Mrs. L^orrax, Charlotte Ramsay (1725-1804), produced several comedies, for one of which, *The Sister* (1769), Goldsmith wrote the epilogue. Fielding, in his last book, referred to her as "the inimitable author of the *Female Quixote*"—a novel published in 1752, of which Johnson wrote the Dedication

and also a review in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Her *Shakespeare Illustrated* (1753-54) was also believed to have been revised by Johnson.

28. Mrs. Sheridan, née Chamberlaine (1724-66), authoress of a novel, *Memoirs of Miss Sydney Biddulph*, from which her son, R. B. Sheridan, borrowed in his *School for Scandal* the incident of Sir Oliver's presenting himself in disguise. "She was a most agreeable companion to an intellectual man—sensible, ingenious, unassuming, yet communicative." Boswell laments Johnson's rupture with Sheridan about the latter's pension, because it deprived him "of one of his most agreeable resources for amusement in his lonely evenings". Her novel deals with the mystery of evil: "we do not always suffer by our crimes; we are not always protected by our innocence". Johnson said to the authoress: "I know not, Madam, that you have a right, upon moral principles, to make your readers suffer so much".

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6-8. the poet...Delphi. In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (ii. 2. 166), Hector is made to speak of those "whom Aristotle thought unfit to hear moral philosophy", Aristotle being of the fourth century B.C., and Hector, the hero of Troy, of at latest the ninth century B.C. In the *Winter's Tale* (v. 2. 106), "that rare Italian master, Julio Romano"—a great painter of the sixteenth century, the assistant and pupil of Raphael,—is referred to, although the king is represented in the same play (ii. 1. 183) as sending "to sacred Delphos, to Apollo's temple" to consult the oracle.

14. His Jacobite prejudices, &c. "The first Whig was the Devil." "Whiggism is a negation of all principle."

17. bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. "Whig: The name of a faction." It has been shown that this is merely a translation from a Latin dictionary which had been published in 1703: "Whig: Homo fanaticus, factiosus. Whiggism: Enthusiasmus, Perduellio."

18. The excise. "Excise. A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid." The Commissioners of Excise submitted a case for the opinion of the Attorney-General, then Murray (afterwards Lord Mansfield). He reported: "I am of opinion that it is a libel. But under all the circumstances, I should think it better to give him an opportunity of altering his definition; and, in case he do not, to threaten him with an information." That personal as well as political reasons contributed to this strong feeling, has been shown in the note on p. 12, l. 4.

23. the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Gower. "You know, sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant 'one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter', I added, *Sometimes we say a GOWER*. Thus it went to the press; but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out." Dr. B. Hill's *Boswell*, i. 296.

25. pension: "An allowance made to anyone without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country."

26. pensioner. "One who is supported by an allowance paid at the will of another; a dependant."

33. The city of London proper, which had been a Whig or anti-royalist stronghold since Puritan days.

Oxford, "the home of lost causes and impossible loyalties". So recently as 1754 a copy of treasonable verses had been found in Oxford market-place, and a reward of £200 offered in the Gazette for the discovery of the author. The case of Dr. King, Principal of St. Mary Hall, was typical. He was said to have been presented to the Pretender, who secretly visited England in 1750; he certainly made a strong Jacobite speech in 1754, the significant word 'Redeat' being loudly cheered and thrice repeated; but in 1760 he was presented to George III by Lord Shelburne.

34. Cavendishes, a leading Whig family, whose rise dates from the sixteenth century. The Earl of Devonshire was one of the Whigs who signed the invitation to William of Orange in 1688.

Bentincks. One of William III's Dutch favourites, Bentinck, was created Duke of Portland.

35. Somersets. The Duke of Somerset was descended from Protector Somerset of Edward VI's reign. The 'Proud Duke', who died in 1748, had served under Charles II, William III, and Anne. His successor was also a Tory, but he derived his importance solely from the historic family he represented, the Seymours, originally from St. Maur in Normandy. Macaulay uses the name, in the essay on Addison, for the aristocracy: "France had no Somersets and Shrewsburies to keep down her Addisons and Priors".

Wyndhams. Sir William Wyndham (1687-1740) was the leader of the Hanoverian Tories. He was the son-in-law of the 'Proud Duke' of Somerset, and a very intimate friend of the Jacobite leader, Lord Bolingbroke. His son became a Whig soon after 1741, and, under the title of Lord Egremont, succeeded Pitt as Secretary of State in 1761. He held office till his death in 1763.

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3. **Bute wished, &c.** Boswell states that Wedderburn, afterwards Lord Loughborough, first broached the subject to Bute. "The pension was granted to Johnson solely as the reward of his literary merit." "He (Johnson) told Sir Joshua that Lord Bute said to him expressly, 'It is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done'."

19. his promised edition of **Shakspeare**. In 1745 he had published a pamphlet, *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, and the advertisement of this pamphlet ran: "to which is affixed proposals for a new edition of Shakspeare". The proposals, however, did not appear till 1756, when he undertook that the edition should be published before Christmas, 1757. At this date he promised to publish in March, 1758; in March he wrote that it would be published before summer, and that he had printed many of the plays. Churchill's *Ghost* came out in the spring of 1762, and by July of that year Johnson was again promising the Shakespeare "soon". It was in October, 1765, that it at last appeared.

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6. **a ghost. Cock Lane**. A drunken parish clerk set his daughter to play the part of ghost out of revenge against a man who had sued him for debt. The ghost charged this man with poisoning his sister-in-law, and demanded his punishment. Boswell defends Johnson from the charge of being "weakly credulous upon that subject", and claims credit to him for having "examined the matter with a jealous attention", and having been "one of those by whom the imposture was detected". The account of the investigation by a distinguished party on 1st February, 1762, was written by Johnson and published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The paper is given at length in Dr. B. Hill's *Boswell*, i. 407- note.

14. **Churchill, Charles (1731-64)**, the school-fellow of Warren Hastings, Cowper, Lloyd, &c. After a disreputable career as a curate, he became famous as the author of the *Rosciad* (1761), a satire on players. He followed up this success by political satires marked by the greatest vigour, which, however, has failed to save them from the common fate of subjects possessing an ephemeral interest. *The Prophecy of Famine* (1763), a satire on the Scotch, is the best of these. Churchill became an intimate friend of Wilkes, and rendered the popular hero great service by his bold attacks on the leading Tories.

18. **in three cantos**. The first and second parts of the *Ghost* appeared in the spring of 1762; the third in the autumn of the same year; the fourth in 1763.

18. nicknamed Johnson Pomposo. The satire on Johnson begins:

" Pomposo, insolent and loud,
Vain idol of a scribbling crowd,
Whose very name inspires an awe,
Whose ev'ry word is Sense and Law".

asked, &c.

" He for subscribers baits his hook,
And takes their cash, but where's the book?
No matter where—wise fear, we know,
Forbids the robbing of a foe;
But what, to serve our private ends,
Forbids the *cheating* of our friends?"

—*The Ghost*, Book III, ll. 801-6.

26. The preface .good passages, such as the defence of Shakspeare's disregard of the 'unities', and of his introducing comic scenes into tragedy.

31. the character of Polonius. "Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining into dotage. His mode of oratory is truly represented as designed to ridicule the practice of those times, of prefaces that made no introduction, and of method that embarrassed rather than explained. This part of his character is accidental, the rest is natural. Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, and knows not that it has become weak. Such a man excels in general principles, but fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and ignorant in foresight. While he depends upon his memory, and can draw from his repositories of knowledge, he utters weighty sentences and gives useful counsel; but as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to sudden dereliction of his faculties, he loses the order of his ideas, and entangles himself in his own thoughts, till he recovers the leading principle, and falls again into his former train. This idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius."

32. Wilhelm Meister's. Hamlet. Macaulay's admiration of Goethe's criticism in *Wilhelm Meister* was of long standing. Writing to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1838 he remarked: "Such passages as the criticism on Hamlet in *Wilhelm Meister* fill me with wonder and despair."

34. a more worthless edition. A less unfavourable opinion is expressed by the editors of the Cambridge edition. "Not only Johnson's constitutional indolence and esultory habits,

but also the deficiency of his eyesight incapacitated him for the task of minute collation. Nevertheless, he did consult the older copies, and has the merit of restoring some readings which had escaped Theobald. He had not systematically studied the literature and language of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; he did not always appreciate the naturalness, simplicity, and humour of his author; but his preface and notes are distinguished by clearness of thought and diction, and by masterly common-sense." Professor Dowden is of the same opinion: "As a conjectural emender he was not happy. . His Preface is an admirable piece of criticism, robust and common-sense, though not illuminated by imagination, or very profound in its philosophical views.... Some of Johnson's censures are just, but it is evident that from his eighteenth century standpoint he never quite comprehended the spirit of Elizabethan poetry."

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15-17. not a single passage.. Ben. Not only is this true, but the quotations from Ben Jonson are restricted almost entirely to his tragedy of *Catiline*. There are few quotations from Elizabethan poets of any sort: Chapman and Donne, who are quoted, supplied quotations from non-dramatic writings.

20-22. But it never seems undertaken. This is not quite accurate. In the *Proposals for Printing the Works of Shakespeare* (1756) Johnson says: "Emendatory criticism is always hazardous, nor can it be allowed to any man who is not particularly versed in the writings of that age. With regard to obsolete or peculiar diction the editor may perhaps claim some degree of confidence, having had more motives to consider the whole extent of our language than any other man from its first formation. He hopes that by comparing the works of Shakespeare with those of *writers who lived at the same time*, immediately preceded, or immediately followed him, he shall be able to ascertain his ambiguities, disentangle his intricacies, and recover the meaning of words now lost in the darkness of antiquity." It must be admitted, however, that Johnson's performance is not equal to his expectations.

30. Those who most loved, &c. "What he did as a commentator has no small share of merit, though his researches were not so ample, and his investigations so acute as they might have been" (Boswell).

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2. He was honoured, &c. Johnson, who had received the degree of M.A. in 1755 from Oxford, was made D.C.L. in 1775.

He had already (1765) received the degree of LL.D. from Dublin University. The now familiar title of *Doctor Johnson* was not much in favour with Johnson himself.

5. by the King with an interview. This took place in February, 1767, in the king's library at Buckingham House. The King asked "if he meant to give the world any more of his compositions?" Johnson answered, "that he thought he had written enough". "And I should think so too," replied the King, "if you had not written so well."

9. two or three political tracts. See note on p. 38. One of these, the *False Alarm*, was written at Mrs. Thrale's house between eight o'clock on Wednesday night and twelve o'clock on the following Thursday night.

23. pompous triads, phrases arranged in sets of three with the words exactly balanced. For example, in the *Life of Milton* Johnson writes: "Every man that has ever undertaken to instruct others can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires

to recall vagrant inattention,	}
to stimulate sluggish indifference,	
and to rectify absurd misapprehension".	

24. 'osity' and 'ation'.

"Long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*."

—Hookham Frere's *The Monks and the Giants*, canto i, line 6.

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11. a club. See note on *Goldsmith*, p. 53, l. 6.

23. Gibbon joined the Club in 1774, two years before the publication of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Jones, Sir William (1746–94), published a *Persian Grammar* in 1772 and *Commentaries on Asiatic Poetry* in 1774, and thereby acquired distinction as an Oriental scholar. In 1783 he was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, and in 1784 became the first president of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He was the first to point out the close connection of Latin and Greek with Sanskrit. He was the Max Müller of his day. "He is said to have known thirteen languages thoroughly, and twenty-eight fairly well. But by posterity he is remembered as the pioneer of Sanskrit learning" (Dict. Nat. Biog.).

29. Bennet Langton (1737–1801), of Langton, near Spilsby, Lincolnshire, came of an ancient family to which belonged Cardinal Langton of Magna Charta fame. He was so

delighted with the *Rambler* that he came to London to be introduced to the author. His first interview with Johnson was a shock to him, as he did not expect to find the moralist of his favourite paper coming down from his bedroom about noon, "a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him". Langton went to Trinity College, Oxford, and there became acquainted with Beauclerk, whom he introduced to Johnson when visiting Oxford in 1754. His reputation as a scholar was recognized by the honorary professorship of Ancient Literature, in which he succeeded Johnson at the Royal Academy. He was, like his friend, a Tory High Churchman; and his strong moral bias was recognized by Johnson: "his mind is as exalted as his stature".

32. **Topham Beauclerk** (1739-80), a grandson of the first Duke of St. Albans, the son of Charles II and Nell Gwyn. His descent from, and resemblance to, Charles II "contributed, in Johnson's imagination, to throw a lustre upon his other qualities; and in a short time the moral, pious Johnson and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk were companions. 'What a coalition!' said Garrick, when he heard of this. 'I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round-house'" (Boswell). But nothing worse resulted from this "coalition" than the well-known escapade when Johnson, being awakened about three in the morning by Langton and Beauclerk, and asked to join in a ramble, gaily said, "What! is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you", and joined in their frolic till Langton deserted them for breakfast with "a set of wretched un-idea'd girls". Beauclerk, the rake and aristocrat, took more liberties than anyone with Johnson; e.g. he told him on getting his pension "to purge and live cleanly". He sometimes roused Johnson by his biting satire: "You never open your mouth", said Johnson, "but with intention to give pain; and you have often given me pain, not from the power of what you said, but from seeing your intention". It was to him also that Johnson's sayings were directed: "Thy love of folly and thy scorn of fools": "Thy body is all vice and thy mind all virtue". Beauclerk's wittiest saying was the retort he made on hearing Boswell praise someone as a man of good principles: "Then he does not wear them out in practice".

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12. **James Boswell** (1740-95), connected on his mother's side with the house of Mar, and son of a judge in the Court of Session, whose courtesy title was Lord Auchinleck from the ancestral estate in Ayrshire. He studied at Edinburgh and Glasgow, and was called to the Scottish bar in 1766. He had

already developed a passion for literature, and had published a correspondence with a fellow-student. On 16th May, 1763, he had his first interview with Dr. Johnson, the description of which is one of the most dramatic parts of his great work. In 1768 he published his *Tour in Corsica*, with an account of his friend Paoli, "the Garibaldi of the eighteenth century". He married in 1769, became a member of the Club in 1773, and carried off Johnson on the famous Tour to the Hebrides. His account of this romantic adventure, published in 1785, compares favourably with Johnson's, published in 1775. His hero-worship of Johnson, which had never flagged for over twenty years, resulted in the finest biography in the language (1791). The loss of his hero left him a prey to drunkenness and dissolute pleasure.

21. **a slave and an idolater.** This is the faculty of hero-worship which Carlyle singles out for praise in his more appreciative analysis of Boswell's character.

22. **His mind...creepers.** "'Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?' asked someone, when Boswell had worked his way into incessant companionship. 'He is not a cur,' replied Goldsmith, 'you are too severe; he is only a bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of sticking'" (Washington Irving's *Life of Goldsmith*).

26. **Wilkes, John (1727-97),** acquired notoriety by his attack on the king in No. 45 of the *North Briton* in 1763. In the excitement of the struggle that ensued Wilkes found a strong supporter in the satirist, Churchill. In 1768-69 rioting was renewed on his being excluded from Parliament, though elected four times over for Middlesex, and being declared ineligible for a seat in Parliament. A *Society for supporting the Bill of Rights* was formed in his support, and in 1782 the unconstitutional resolutions of the Commons were rescinded.

28. **Whitefield, George (1714-70),** one of the founders of Methodism, particularly distinguished as an itinerant open-air preacher. He quarrelled with John Wesley in 1741, whose sermon on Free Grace did not seem to him sufficiently Calvinistic. This rupture gave rise to the two main divisions of the Methodists—Wesleyan and Calvinistic. "Whitefield's unrivalled effects as a preacher were due to his great power of realizing his subject, and to his histrionic genius aided by a fascinating voice of great compass, and audible at immense distances" (Dict. Nat. Biog.). Franklin gives an amusing instance of his power as a preacher. The hard-headed American had decided to give nothing to a collection, but as the sermon proceeded he was won over to decide first to give his copper coins, then his silver, and finally "to empty his pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all".

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5. Johnson was a water-drinker. This question has been exhaustively investigated by Dr. B. Hill in *Boswell*, i. 103, note 3. He comes to the conclusion that Johnson was, roughly speaking, an abstainer from 1736 to 1757, and from about 1765 to his death. This tallies with Johnson's own account: "Early in life I drank wine; for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal. I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again." On a visit to University College, Oxford, in 1759, he drank "three bottles of port without being the worse for it". On a visit to Devonshire with Reynolds, in 1762, he "drank three bottles of wine, which affected his speech so much that he was unable to articulate a hard word. He attempted it three times, but failed; yet at last accomplished it, and then said: 'Well, Sir Joshua, I think it is now time to go to bed'" (Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*). Dr. B. Hill doubts this story, but admits that it receives some corroboration from a remark of Johnson's (24th April, 1779): "I used to slink home when I had drunk too much". His private diary—*Prayers and Meditations*—is full of resolutions "to drink less strong liquors"; and when Hannah More urged him to take a little wine, he replied, "I can't drink a *little*, child; therefore I never touch it". But if at times he was in practice an abstainer, he was never a teetotaler in theory. "I hope you persevere in drinking. My opinion is that I have drunk too little, and therefore have the gout" (Letter to Dr. Taylor, 23rd June, 1776).

8-11. the great man resented. Boswell once defended the pertinacity of his questioning with "Why, sir, you are so good that I venture to trouble you"; on which Johnson growled, "Sir, my being so good is no reason why you should be so ill". Another time Boswell received "a horrible shock". Talking about the necessity of getting Langton out of his London house because of its ruinous extravagance, Boswell suggested, as an effectual means, that his friends should quarrel with him: "Nay, sir," said Johnson, "we'll send *you* to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will." Soon after, Boswell asked Johnson why he had said "so harsh a thing". "Because, sir, you made me angry about the Americans." "But why did you not take your revenge directly?" "Because, sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has his weapons." The greatest knock-down blow Boswell received was when Johnson exclaimed: "You have but two topics, sir, yourself and me. I am sick of both."

11. Every quarrel was soon made up. Boswell's placability was beautifully illustrated by himself when Reynolds remarked about Johnson tossing him. "I don't care how often

or how high he tosses me when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground; but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present." Of this comparison Johnson said: "It is one of the happiest I have ever heard".

29. **Henry Thrale**, son of a working-man who laboured for twenty years at six shillings a week in the Southwark brewery, of which he ultimately became the proprietor. This story, which Boswell professed to have from Johnson himself, loses much of its romance in Mrs. Piozzi's account. She points out that 'old Thrale' was the nephew of the proprietor of the brewery, whose only child was a daughter married to Lord Cobham, and that Thrale naturally succeeded his uncle in the business. His son received a good education at Oxford University, and associated on equal terms with young men of the best families. Johnson's friend was M.P. for Southwark from 1768 to 1780. In 1763 he married Miss Hesther Lynch Salusbury, of good Welsh extraction, a lady of lively talents, improved by education" (Boswell). The date of his introduction to Johnson is disputed: it may have been in 1764, and had certainly begun in 1765. "Mrs. Thrale was enchanted with Johnson's conversation, for its own sake, and had also a very allowable vanity in appearing to be honoured with the attention of so celebrated a man" (Boswell). See also pp. 42, 43.

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4. **They were flattered**, &c. Hayward, in his Memoir of Mrs. Piozzi, objects to this statement, and points out that very few houses like Thrale's were open to Johnson. The aristocratic world in which Chesterfield and Horace Walpole moved was certainly closed against Johnson.

25. **the astronomer**, &c. *Rasselas*, chap. xlv. The astronomer had become insane, fancying that he controlled the heavenly bodies, and he regretted he had "purchased knowledge at the expense of all the common comforts of life; I have missed the endearing elegance of female friendship".

30. **When he was diseased**. Mrs. Thrale nursed him through a severe illness in 1766.

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4. **Buck**, the term applied in the latter part of the eighteenth century to the 'young bloods' of the day. It had reference to their lively, spirited ways; but later the word was applied rather to one dressed with extreme elegance, as frequently in Thackeray's novels. If not quite obsolete, the word has been largely superseded by later slang.

4. **Maccaroni**, the popular name in London for a fop, especially between 1770 and 1775. The origin of the name is given in the *Spectator*, No. 47: "those circumforaneous wits whom every nation calls by the name of that dish of meat which it loves best—in Holland they are termed Pickled Herrings; in France, Jean Pottages; in Italy, Macaronies; and in Great Britain, Jack Puddings— a set of merry drolls whom the common people of all countries admire". Another explanation is that the word was taken by Teophilo Folengo of the sixteenth century as the title of a poem, which, being full of small witticisms, resembled macaroni in being light and pleasant, but destitute of real nourishment. The word was applied by Boswell in a bantering way to Dr. Johnson: "You are a delicate Londoner; you are a macaroni; you can't ride" (*Tour to the Hebrides*, p. 84).

7. **He accompanied the family to Bath in 1776; to Brighton in 1765, 1769, 1776, 1777, 1780, 1782; to Wales in 1774; to Paris in 1775.**

10. **one of the...courts**, Johnson's Court. Later he removed to Bolt Court, where he died.

14. **a plain dinner, &c.** The *menu* given is that of the Easter Sunday dinner, 1773, when Boswell was a guest. Foote had jocularly suggested that the negro servant would make black broth.

20. **Williams, Anna**, daughter of a Welsh physician, who imagined he had discovered the means of ascertaining the longitude. She became totally blind through the failure of an operation for cataract. Before she came under Johnson's roof, "he every night drank tea with her before he went home, however late it might be, and she always sat up for him....Dr. Goldsmith, being a privileged man, went with him this night, strutting away, and calling to me with an air of superiority, 'I go to Miss Williams'. I confess I then envied him this mighty privilege, of which he seemed so proud; but it was not long before I obtained the same mark of distinction" (Boswell). In 1777 Johnson wrote to Boswell of her: "Age and sickness and pride have made her so peevish that I was forced to bribe the maid to stay with her by a secret stipulation of half a crown a week over her wages". She died in September, 1783.

23. **Mrs. Desmoulins**, daughter of Dr. Swinfen (see note on p. 3). Johnson allowed her a weekly pension of ten shillings.

28. **Polly**, "she that you used to abet in her quarrels with Mrs. Williams, and call out 'At her again, Poll! never flinch, Poll!'" Mme D'Arblay further pictures the lady in Johnson's words: "Poll is a stupid slut. I had some hopes of her at

first, but when I talked to her tightly and closely, I could make nothing of her; she was wiggle-waggle, and I could never persuade her to be categorical."

29. Levett began life as a waiter in Paris, but attracting the notice of some surgeons, he received some medical instruction at their expense. He became known to Johnson about 1746, who valued him more highly than all the College of Physicians. As he would take his fees in gin, Johnson said of him: "he was the only man who ever became intoxicated through motives of prudence". He regularly attended Johnson at breakfast, "filling out tea for himself and his patron alternately, no conversation passing between them" (Hawkins). "He was of a strange grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manner" (Boswell). How Johnson loved him may be seen from the beautiful verses he wrote at Levett's death in 1782.

34. negro servant, Frank Barber, born in Jamaica, and brought to England in 1750 by Col. Bathurst, father of Johnson's friend, Dr. Bathurst, "the good hater". He was in Johnson's service from 1752 to 1784, except on two occasions when he ran away.

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3. Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street, "where he loved to sit up late". Boswell complacently describes the "pleasing elevation of mind" he felt, in spending an evening with him there, where they "had a good supper and port wine".

16. an account of the Hebrides, Martin's *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, a book published in 1703, formed one of the stock of Johnson's father.

24. love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, an adaptation of Horace's "fumum et opes strepitumque Romae" (*Odes*, III. 29).

27. Johnson crossed the Highland line, *i.e.* when on 30th August he left Inverness for the West. It was here that the "equitation", as Boswell called that part of the tour on horseback, began. Johnson had arrived in Edinburgh on 14th August, and under the guidance of Boswell had travelled north by Kinghorn, Cupar, St. Andrews, Leuchars, Dundee, Arbroath, Montrose, Laurencekirk, Aberdeen, Slains Castle, Cullen, Elgin, and Cawdor.

29. After wandering, &c. The route was by Fort Augustus, Glenelg, Skye, and Raasay (2nd Sept.-3rd Oct.), Coll, Tobermory, Ulva, Iona (20th Oct.), Oban, Inveraray, Loch Lomond to Glasgow (28th Oct.), Auchinleck (2nd-8th Nov.), Edinburgh (9th Nov.).

32. small shaggy ponies, *e.g.* in Coll (4th Oct.), when Johnson was mounted on a 'Shelty' and Boswell roughly said, "I wish, sir, the Club saw you in this attitude".

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2. 'Journey to the Hebrides.' Boswell's book is, *Tour to the Hebrides*; Johnson's is, *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*.

7. the style. The description of Iona is the best example of it. "We were now treading that illustrious Island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!"

15. Oxonian Tory ... Presbyterian polity. Johnson entered no Presbyterian place of worship, not even to hear his friend, Principal Robertson, preach. "I will not give a sanction, by my presence, to a Presbyterian assembly."

17. the bareness, &c. The want of trees in Scotland suggested many a joke to Johnson, the best being when he lost his oak stick in Mull, and Boswell tried to reassure him that it would be restored. "No, no, my friend; it is not to be expected that any man in Mull, who has got it, will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a *piece of timber* here!"

20. Lord Mansfield, William Murray (1705-93), called to the English bar in 1730, became Solicitor-General in 1742, Attorney-General in 1754, Lord Chief-Justice in 1756, and Earl of Mansfield in 1776.

34. Macpherson, James (1736-96), a schoolmaster, published in 1760 what professed to be *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands*. Encouraged by the popularity of this book, he issued, in 1762, *Fingal*, an epic in six books, and, in 1763, *Temora*, an epic in eight books, both attributed to Ossian, a Celtic poet of the third century A.D. A violent controversy at once arose as to the authenticity of these so-called poems of Ossian. Being published at the very time when Bute's Ministry

had made the Scotch extremely unpopular in London, they were attacked by many English writers as forgeries, and especially by Johnson. He demanded that the original poems should be produced of which these were professedly translations. He declared that Macpherson had inserted names that circulated in popular stories, and might have translated some wandering ballads, but with these he had blended his own compositions. This is the view generally held now, in accordance with the investigations carried through by the Highland Society in 1805. The poems, remarkable for their weird melancholy and "mountain monotones", had an extraordinary influence on Continental writers, and were translated into many languages. They have an important place in the Romantic movement through their effect on such typical writers as Herder, Byron, and Chateaubriand. They were greatly admired by Napoleon, who could think of no higher epithet in praise of a poem than that it was *ossianique*.

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2. reiterated the charge. "Mr. James Macpherson,—I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.—Sam. Johnson."

23. Kenricks. William Kenrick (c. 1725–79) was engaged by Dr. Griffiths in 1759 to take the place of Goldsmith on the *Monthly Review*, and one of his first contributions was a severe criticism on Goldsmith's *Inquiry*. "Not without a certain coarse smartness" (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*), he translated Rousseau's *Héloïse* and *Émile* with such success that he was honoured by St. Andrews University with the degree of LL.D. A devoted admirer of Shakespeare, he resented the carelessness of Johnson as editor, and published, in 1765, *A Review of Dr. Johnson's new Edition of Shakespeare; in which the Ignorance or Inattention of that Editor is Exposed, and the Poet defended from the Persecution of his Commentators*. A reply by an Oxford student, Barclay, to this pamphlet displeased Johnson, who wished to ignore all attacks. Kenrick, who was a voluminous writer, announced another pamphlet on Johnson which was

never published, *A Ramble through the Idler's Dictionary, in which are picked up several thousand Etymological, Orthographical, and Lexicographical Blunders*. Another attack in 1768 in *An Epistle to James Boswell* would have provoked a reply by Boswell had not Johnson prevented it. A journalistic Ishmaelite, he was described by a contemporary as

"Dreaming of genius which he never had,
Halt wit, half fool, half critic and half mad".

23. Campbells. Archibald Campbell, a purser on a man-of-war who "all his life dabbled in books". In the course of a four months' voyage he read Johnson's *Ramblers*, the heavy style of which provoked him to an attack in 1767 in *Lexiphanes, a Dialogue, imitated from Lucian and suited to the present Times; being an attempt to restore the English Tongue to its ancient Purity, and to correct, as well as expose, the affected Style, hard Words, and absurd Phraseology of ... our English Lexiphanes, the Rambler*. The Lucianesque "idicule consisted in applying Johnson's 'words of large meaning' to insignificant matters, as if one should put the armour of Goliath upon a dwarf" (Boswell). In his Preface, Campbell describes his book as an attempt "to hunt down this great unlick'd Cub", and as such it was keenly resented by Johnson's friends. Hawkins, who at first attributed the anonymous pamphlet to Kenrick, described the author as one who, "as well for the malignancy of his heart as his terrific countenance was called 'horrid Campbell'."

MacNicol. Donald MacNicol (1735-1802), parish minister of the island of Lismore in Argyleshire, published, in 1779, *Remarks on Dr. Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides*. "At last there came out a scurrilous volume, larger than Johnson's own, filled with malignant abuse, under a name, real or fictitious, of some low man in an obscure corner of Scotland, though supposed to be the work of another Scotchman [Macpherson?] who has found means to make himself well known both in Scotland and England. The effect which it had on Johnson was to produce this pleasant observation... 'This fellow must be a blockhead. They don't know how to go about their abuse. Who will read a five-shilling book against me? No, sir, if they had wit, they should have kept pelting me with pamphlets'" (Boswell).

Hendersons. Andrew Henderson, a bookseller and miscellaneous writer, published, in 1775, *A Letter to Dr. Samuel Johnson on his Journey to the Western Isles*, and *A Second Letter to Dr. Samuel Johnson, in which his wicked and opprobrious Invectives are shown*. The style may be judged from the epithets he applies to Johnson, "a viper", "freight with venom and malignity".

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10. Bentley, Richard (1662-1742), the greatest classical scholar produced by England, famous as the editor of Horace, Terence, Homer, &c., and author of the brilliant controversial work on the Epistles of Phalaris. His "fine apophthegm" is found in Monk's *Life of Bentley*: "It is a maxim with me that no man was ever written out of reputation but by himself". The different forms into which this idea has been cast have been collected in a note by Dr. B. Hill, in the *Boswell*, ii. 62. The chief passage in Boswell illustrating Johnson's contempt of critics is in the *Tour to the Hebrides*, 1st October, 1773: "He said he was angry at a boy of Oxford who wrote in his defence against Kenrick, because it was doing him hurt to answer Kenrick. He remarked that attacks on authors did them much service. 'A man who tells me my play is very bad, is less my enemy than he who lets it die in silence. A man whose business it is to be talked of, is much helped by being attacked ... When Goldsmith and I published, each of us something, at the same time [1759?] we were given to understand that we might review each other. Goldsmith was for accepting the offer. I said, No: set reviewers at defiance. It was said to old Bentley, upon the attacks against him, 'Why they'll write you down'. 'No, sir,' he replied, 'depend upon it, no man was ever written down but by himself.' He observed to me afterwards that the advantages authors derived from attacks were chiefly in subjects of taste, where you cannot confute, as so much may be said on either side."

22. written two or three tracts. The *False Alarm* in 1770 contrasts most unfavourably with Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* of the same year. It was intended to support the Government in the matter of the Middlesex election, and to show that the *alarm* felt for the constitution because of the exclusion of Wilkes was *false* and groundless. The best passage is that describing how a petition is got up. The pamphlet on the *Falkland Islands* (1771) arose from a dispute between Britain and Spain as to the possession of those islands. It is an eloquent dissuasive from war. *The Patriot* (1774) was also an attempt to support the Government against Wilkes and other so-called *patriots*.

26. Almon, John (1737-1805), bookseller and journalist, issued from his shop in Piccadilly many pamphlets attacking the Government of George III. He was, from 1761 to 1797, one of the most intimate friends of John Wilkes. He was fined in 1770 for republishing Junius's *Letter to the King*. He started the *Parliamentary Register* in 1774, thus anticipating *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* of a later time.

26. Stockdale (c. 1750-1854), employed first as a porter in Almon's service, set up for himself when Almon retired in 1781. He published in 1788 a defence of Warren Hastings, which led to his trial for libel. He was defended brilliantly and successfully by Erskine, and this led up to the passing of the Libel Act of 1792.

27. 'Taxation No Tyranny' came out in 1775 as an "Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress". "I could not perceive in it that ability of argument, or that felicity of expression for which he was, upon other occasions, so eminent. Positive assertion, sarcastical severity, and extravagant ridicule, which he himself reprobated as a test of truth, were united in this rhapsody" (Boswell).

35. The general opinion, &c. Hawkins is the authority. "He sunk into indolence, till his faculties seemed to be impaired;...long intervals of mental absence interrupted his conversation, and it was difficult to engage his attention to any subject. His friends concluded that his lamp was emitting its last rays, but the lapse of a short time gave them ample proofs to the contrary."

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13. political history was distasteful to him. He once remarked angrily he never wished to hear of the Punic Wars again. In *Rasselas* he wrote unconcernedly of "a king who has the care of only a few millions to whom he cannot do much good or harm".

21. Wilson, Richard (1714-82), born in Montgomeryshire, spent many years in Italy (1749-56) in the pursuit of his art. His picture, *Niobe*, which he exhibited in London in 1760, established his reputation. He became the leading landscape-painter of the day. He was appointed Librarian to the Royal Academy in 1776.

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5. the wits of Button, Addison's circle, which met at Button's coffee-house in Covent Garden. Button had been Addison's butler.

6. Cibber, Colley (1671-1757), actor and dramatist. He adapted many plays from Molière and Corneille, Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden, Shakespeare, Vanbrugh, &c. He mangled *King John* so terribly that it had to be withdrawn; "King John in silence modestly expires" (Pope's *Dunciad*). His adaptation of *Richard III* was, however, so successful that it continued to be the stage version of the play to 1821. His *Non-juror*, a free rendering of Molière's *Tartuffe*, was also a success. He completed Vanbrugh's play, *The Provoked*

Husband. Some of his original plays succeeded, e.g. *Love's Last Shift*, *The Careless Husband*. He became Poet Laureate in 1730, and wrote the *Apology for his Life* (1740), now considered the most interesting of his works.

7. Orrery, Earl of (1707-62), author of *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (1751). Though he had had the advantage of personal intimacy with Swift from 1731, his book was wanting in appreciation of that great writer.

8. Savage rendered service to Pope by communicating to him details of the private life of the minor writers he satirized in the *Dunciad*. In return for this, Pope contributed half of Savage's yearly allowance (£50) from 1739.

19. are. The plural verb may be justified, as the *Lives* came out at different times; but the singular is more correct now, the work being thought of as a collective unit.

21. The remarks on life profound, e.g. in the *Life of Dryden*: "He seldom lives frugally who lives by chance"; "that book is good in vain which the reader throws away". In the *Life of Pope*: "No man sympathizes with the sorrows of vanity"; "most hearts are pure while temptation is away"; "he that runs against Time has an antagonist not subject to casualties". In the *Life of Milton*: "He that changes his party by his humour is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest"; "paradox easily gains attention"; "he thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion".

22. The criticisms are often excellent. A favourable example is that on the so-called metaphysical poets in the *Life of Cowley*. The criticisms on Dryden, Pope, and Addison are all admirable.

34. the difference of style. Macaulay's recognition of this difference marks a decided advance on the dogmatic denunciation of Johnsonese in the essay on Croker's Boswell. "All his books are written in a learned language, in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse, in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love. A mannerism which does not sit easy on the mannerist, which has been adopted on principle, and which can be sustained only by constant effort is always offensive. And such is the mannerism of Johnson."

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17. Malone, Edmond (1741-1812), born in Dublin, was famous chiefly as editor of Shakespeare (1790). The materials he had collected for another edition were worked up by Boswell's younger son. This edition, known as *Boswell's Malone*

or the 3rd *Variorum Shakespeare*, is one of the finest editions of the great dramatist. Boswell entrusted to him an edition of his *Life of Johnson* as one who was "Johnsonianissimus", and a member of the famous Literary Club. It is in one of Malone's editions of the *Life* that this note appears: "Johnson's moderation in demanding so small a sum is extraordinary. Had he asked 1000 or even 1500 guineas, the booksellers, who knew the value of his name, would doubtless have readily given it. They have probably got 5000 guineas by this work in the course of twenty-five years."

29, 30. several writers ask. For example, Hawkesworth, his imitator in the *Adventurer*, received £6000 for his revision of the *Voyages to the South Seas* of Cook, &c.

31. Robertson, William (1721-93); a son of the manse, and himself a minister at Gladsmuir, in East Lothian, he became one of the most famous historians of the day. His literary reputation was so great that in 1762 he was made Principal of Edinburgh University. His chief works are: *History of Scotland during the Reigns of Mary and James VI* (1753), *History of the Emperor Charles V* (1769), and a *History of America* (1777). His *Charles V*, though now superseded, was in its day a great achievement; "the *Introduction* forming a descriptive estimate of the dark ages was one of the first successful attempts in England at historical generalization on the basis of large accumulations of fact" (Seccombe).

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The account on this and the following page of Mrs. Thrale's rupture with Johnson is inaccurate in many particulars, and is coloured throughout by a strong partiality in favour of the latter. The case for Mrs. Thrale has been admirably put by Hayward. He shows that the eclipse of her popularity was but temporary, that she was not *déclassée* either in Italy or in England, and that the friends she lost were merely those of Thrale's circle. Her defiance of convention in marrying an artiste of that class described by Lord Byron, *à propos* of Catalani, as "arousing vagabonds", was rewarded by a happier married life than she had known with the wealthy brewer. The correspondence of Johnson with Mrs. Thrale concerning the marriage is entirely to the credit of the latter. She defended her choice in language that Johnson, the once needy man of letters, might have recognized to be just and noble: "The birth of my second husband is not meaner than that of my first; his sentiments are not meaner; his profession is not meaner; and his superiority in what he professes acknowledged by all mankind". Her friendship with Johnson was not gradually withdrawn under the influence of "this

egrading passion": it continued down to the month of her marriage, when it was abruptly terminated by a harsh letter which reflects little honour on Johnson's charity or good sense. Her conduct is represented as darkening the last years of Johnson's life, and even as hastening his end. But "the few and evil days which still remained to him", after quitting Streatham House, were not spent "in the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street"; they were spent in visits to his friends in the country, and not infrequently to Mrs. Thrale at Brighton and elsewhere. "The reader will not fail to admire the rhetorical skill with which the banishment from Streatham, the gloomy and desolate home, the marriage with the Italian idler, the painful and melancholy death, and the merry Christmas, have been grouped together with the view of giving picturesqueness, impressive unity, and damnatory vigour to the sketch" (Hayward's *Memoir*, p. 131).

4. his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. 'No rational man could die without apprehension', he said; and he used often to quote Claudio's speech in *Measure for Measure*, "Ay, but to die, to go we know not where". "He said he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him" (Dr. B. Hill's *Boswell*, iii. 153).

9. dropped off, Levett in January, 1782; Mrs. Williams in September, 1783.

20. she was restrained by her husband. "As a false notion has prevailed that Mr. Thrale was inferior, and in some degree insignificant compared with Mrs. Thrale, it may be proper to give a true state of the case from the authority of Johnson himself in his own words. 'I know no man who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he but holds up a finger, he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning. He is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms'" (Boswell). In a letter to Mrs. Thrale, Johnson describes her husband as "the pillar of the house".

26. an opulent widow. The brewery was sold to Barclay and Perkins for £135,000.

28. a music-master, Signor Piozzi. He is described by Rogers as "a very handsome, gentlemanly, and amiable person" (*Table-Talk*, p. 45). Miss Seward, writing in 1787, described him in similar terms.

29. Her pride, &c. "Poor Thrale! I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage. She is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over; and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget, or pity" (Johnson's Letter to Hawkins).

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6. He read, for the last time, &c. This account of Johnson's farewell to Streatham suggests that it was also the farewell to Mrs. Thrale. But Johnson corresponded with her so late as February, 1784, and stayed with her at Brighton in 1782, and in her London house in 1783. The fact is, Streatham House was let at this time to Lord Shelburne. Johnson's reading of Paul's farewell (*Acts*, xx. 17-38) was merely his "parting use of the library". Another farewell, when Mrs. Thrale was going to Bath, has been wrongly described by Hawkins as "a formal taking of leave", and may have been in Macaulay's mind in this description. "1783, April 5. I took leave of Mrs. Thrale. I was much moved. I had some expostulations with her. She said that she was likewise affected. I commended the Thrales with great good-will to God" (Johnson's Diary in Hawkins' *Life*, p. 553).

8. In a solemn and tender prayer. "Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when thou givest, and when thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me. To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

10. with emotions...frame. This seems an exaggeration of a story from Mme D'Arblay about Johnson driving into London with Mrs. Thrale. "His look was stern, though dejected, but when his eye, which, however short-sighted, was quick to mental perception, saw how ill at ease she appeared, all sternness subsided into an undisguised expression of the strongest emotion, while, with a shaking hand and pointing finger, he directed her looks to the mansion from which they were driving, and...tremulously exclaimed, 'That house...is lost to me...for ever'."

17. his intellectual faculties. His speech alone was affected. He composed some Latin verses during the night of his seizure "to try the integrity of my faculties".

22. had married on 25th July, 1784.

25. Ephesian matron, a widow who was supposed to be inconsolable and to be dying of grief and hunger in her husband's tomb, but who there succumbed to the blandishments of a soldier, to save whom she allowed her husband's corpse to be nailed to a cross. The story is in the *Satyricon* (chaps. cxi

and cxii) of Petronius Arbiter, a writer of Nero's time. It had long been a popular tale in the East. It circulated in the Middle Ages in the *Seven Wise Masters*. It has been introduced by Jeremy Taylor into his *Holy Dying* (chap. 'On Contingencies of Death'). It is referred to in the *Spectator* (No. 11) as "the pleasant aggravations of the frailty of the Ephesian lady". It is also introduced into Cibber's stage version of *Richard III*, act ii, sc. 1.

26. the two pictures in 'Hamlet', iii. 4, 53-67:

"Look here upon this picture, and on this,—

The counterfeit presentment of two brothers", &c.

26. He vehemently said, &c. Johnson, about three weeks before his death, met Fanny Burney, and told her he had, the day before, seen Miss Thrale. "I then said, 'Do you ever, sir, hear from her mother?' 'No,' cried he, 'nor write to her. I drive her quite from my mind. If I meet with one of her letters I burn it instantly. I have burnt all I can find. I never speak of her, and I desire never to speak of her more. I drive her, as I said, wholly from my mind'" (Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, ii. 328). A letter of Mrs. Piozzi's about the same time (7th December, 1784) shows her in a frame of mind more becoming the Christian and the philosopher: "Do not neglect Dr. Johnson; you will never see any other mortal so wise or so good. I keep his picture in my chamber, and his works on my chimney."

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1. The feeling, &c. "There are few things not purely evil of which we can say without some emotion of uneasiness, 'This is the last'. Those who never could agree together shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart. This secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done anything for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more are past there are less remaining.

"It is very happily and kindly provided that in every life there are certain pauses and interruptions, which force consideration upon the careless, and seriousness upon the light; points of time where one course of action ends and another begins; and by vicissitudes of fortune or alteration of employment, by change of place or loss of friendship, we are forced to say of something, 'This is the last'."

11. **this board**, greater than "he himself, in his carelessness concerning worldly matters, knew it to be" (Boswell).

12. **Some of his friends**. Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds applied to the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, without Johnson's knowledge, but Pitt is supposed to have been the cause of the refusal.

24. **Burke...emotion**. When Burke, in his last visit to Johnson, expressed a fear that the presence of so many friends in the room might be oppressive to him, "'No, sir (said Johnson), it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me'. Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, 'My dear sir, you have always been too good to me'. Immediately afterwards he went away" (Boswell).

25. **Windham**, William (1750-1810), a leading Whig politician, who adhered to Burke on the break-up of the Whig party in 1791. He became Secretary at War under Pitt in 1794, and resigned on the fall of the ministry in 1801. He acted as one of the managers of the impeachment of Hastings, and in Macaulay's famous description of that scene he is characterized as "the finest gentleman of the age...the ingenious, the chivalrous, the high-souled Windham". He was a member of the Literary Club, and it is from his diary that many of the particulars about Johnson's last days are drawn. "Mr. Windham having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, 'That will do—all that a pillow can do'" (Boswell).

27. **Frances Burney**, Madame D'Arblay (1752-1840), daughter of Dr. Burney, the musician, who had been one of Johnson's friends. She published her first novel, *Evelina*, in January, 1778, and in August of the same year, when staying at Streatham, was honoured with much of Johnson's society. She published other novels—*Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796)—the latter, though bringing her 3000 guineas, proving a literary failure. Macaulay has given a sketch of her life in his essay on Madame D'Arblay.

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5. **among the eminent men in Poet's Corner**. Macaulay himself was buried there.

28. **anfractuosities**, peculiarities (Lat. *anfractus*, a bending; from *ambi*, around, and *frango*, I break). "Among the anfractuosities of the human mind there is a superstitious reluctance to sit for a picture" (Johnson in Boswell's *Life*).

MACAULAY'S LIFE OF GOLDSMITH

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PREFACE

Macaulay's *Life of Goldsmith* is admirably adapted for a place among the English classics studied at school and college. It is a very favourable specimen of that exceptionally popular author's work, having been written, as Matthew Arnold says, "when his style was matured, and when his resources were in all their fulness".

The *Life* is well worth study, not only because of its author, but also because of its subject. Goldsmith stands out in literary history, and is interesting both in himself and in his literary associations.

The chronological table will, it is hoped, prove useful; not because Macaulay is deficient or inaccurate in dates, but because the career of Goldsmith may be the more readily grasped when the facts and dates are brought together in tabular form.

The latest results of research have been incorporated in the notes, and acknowledgment of these has been made in due place, both in justice to the original contributor and in order to enable the student to exercise an independent judgment. The discovery with regard to Goldsmith's sale of the *Vicar of Wakefield* is the most important.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1728. Born at Pallas (10th November).</p> <p>1730. At Lissoy.</p> <p>1734. At the village school of "Paddy" Byrne.</p> <p>1739. At Athlone School.</p> <p>1741. At Edgeworthstown School.</p> <p>1744. Enters Trinity College, Dublin (11th June).</p> <p>1749. Takes the degree of B.A.</p> <p>1749-52. Living in the country.</p> <p>1752. At Edinburgh University.</p> <p>1754. At Leyden University.</p> <p>1755. Travels through Europe.</p> <p>1756. Lands at Dover (1st February).</p> <p>1757. Contributor to the <i>Monthly Review</i>.</p> <p>1759. <i>Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe</i> (April). <i>The Bee</i>.</p> | <p>1760. <i>Chinese Letters</i> contributed to the <i>Public Ledger</i>.</p> <p>1762. <i>Citizen of the World; Life of Beau Nash</i>.</p> <p>1764. <i>The Traveller</i>.</p> <p>1765. <i>Essays</i>.</p> <p>1766. <i>The Vicar of Wakefield</i>.</p> <p>1768. <i>The Good-natured Man</i>.</p> <p>1769. <i>History of Rome</i>. Professor of Ancient History in the Royal Academy.</p> <p>1770. <i>The Deserted Village</i>.</p> <p>1771. <i>History of England. Haunch of Venison</i> written.</p> <p>1773. <i>She Stoops to Conquer; History of Greece</i>.</p> <p>1774. Death. <i>Retaliation; History of Animated Nature</i>.</p> |
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OLIVER GOLDSMITH

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, one of the most pleasing English writers of the eighteenth century, was of a Protestant and Saxon family which had been long settled in Ireland, and which had, like most other Protestant and
5 Saxon families, been, in troubled times, harassed and put in fear by the native population. His father, Charles Goldsmith, studied in the reign of Queen Anne at the diocesan school of Elphin, became attached to the daughter of the schoolmaster, married her, took orders,
10 and settled at a place called Pallas in the county of Longford. There he with difficulty supported his wife and children on what he could earn, partly as a curate and partly as a farmer.

At Pallas Oliver Goldsmith was born in November,
15 1728. That spot was then, for all practical purposes, almost as remote from the busy and splendid capital in which his later years were passed, as any clearing in Upper Canada or any sheep-walk in Australasia now is. Even at this day those enthusiasts who venture to make
20 a pilgrimage to the birthplace of the poet are forced to perform the latter part of their journey on foot. The hamlet lies far from any high road, on a dreary plain which, in wet weather, is often a lake. The lanes would break any jaunting-car to pieces; and there are ruts and
25 sloughs through which the most strongly built wheels cannot be dragged.

While Oliver was still a child, his father was presented to a living worth about £200 a year, in the county of Westmeath. The family accordingly quitted their cottage in the wilderness for a spacious house on a frequented road, near the village of Lissoy. Here the boy was 5 taught his letters by a maid-servant, and was sent in his seventh year to a village school kept by an old quarter-master on half-pay, who professed to teach nothing but reading, writing, and arithmetic, but who had an inexhaustible fund of stories about ghosts, banshees 10 and fairies, about the great Rapparee chiefs, Baldearg O'Donnell and galloping Hogan, and about the exploits of Peterborough and Stanhope, the surprise of Monjuich, and the glorious disaster of Brihuega. This man must have been of the Protestant religion; but he was of the 15 aboriginal race, and not only spoke the Irish language, but could pour forth unpremeditated Irish verses. Oliver early became, and through life continued to be, a passionate admirer of the Irish music, and especially of the compositions of Carolan, some of the last notes of whose harp 20 he heard. It ought to be added that Oliver, though by birth one of the Englishry, and though connected by numerous ties with the Established Church, never showed the least sign of that contemptuous antipathy with which, in his days, the ruling minority in Ireland too generally 25 regarded the subject majority. So far indeed was he from sharing in the opinions and feelings of the caste to which he belonged, that he conceived an aversion to the Glorious and Immortal Memory, and, even when George the Third was on the throne, maintained that nothing 30 but the restoration of the banished dynasty could save the country.

From the humble academy kept by the old soldier Goldsmith was removed in his ninth year. He went to several grammar-schools, and acquired some knowledge 35

of the ancient languages. His life at this time seems to have been far from happy. He had, as appears from the admirable portrait of him at Knowle, features harsh even to ugliness. The small-pox had set its mark on him with
5 more than usual severity. His stature was small, and his limbs ill put together. Among boys little tenderness is shown to personal defects; and the ridicule excited by poor Oliver's appearance was heightened by a peculiar simplicity and a disposition to blunder which he retained
10 to the last. He became the common butt of boys and masters, was pointed at as a fright in the playground, and flogged as a dunce in the school-room. When he had risen to eminence, those who had once derided him ransacked their memory for the events of his early years,
15 and recited repartees and couplets which had dropped from him, and which, though little noticed at the time, were supposed, a quarter of a century later, to indicate the powers which produced the *Vicar of Wakefield* and the *Deserted Village*.

20 In his seventeenth year Oliver went up to Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar. The sizars paid nothing for food and tuition, and very little for lodging; but they had to perform some menial services from which they have long been relieved. They swept the court: they carried
25 up the dinner to the fellows' table, and changed the plates and poured out the ale of the rulers of the society. Goldsmith was quartered, not alone, in a garret, on the window of which 'his name, scrawled by himself, is still read with interest. From such garrets many men of less
30 parts than his have made their way to the woolsack or to the episcopal bench. But Goldsmith, while he suffered all the humiliations, threw away all the advantages, of his situation. He neglected the studies of the place, stood low at the examinations, was turned down to the bottom
35 of his class for playing the buffoon in the lecture-room,

was severely reprimanded for pumping on a constable, and was caned by a brutal tutor for giving a ball in the attic story of the college to some gay youths and damsels from the city.

While Oliver was leading at Dublin a life divided 5 between squalid distress and squalid dissipation, his father died, leaving a mere pittance. The youth obtained his bachelor's degree, and left the university. During some time the humble dwelling to which his widowed mother had retired was his home. He was now 10 in his twenty-first year; it was necessary that he should do something; and his education seemed to have fitted him to do nothing but to dress himself in gaudy colours, of which he was as fond as a magpie, to take a hand at cards, to sing Irish airs, to play the flute, to angle in 15 summer, and to tell ghost stories by the fire in winter. He tried five or six professions in turn without success. He applied for ordination; but, as he applied in scarlet clothes, he was speedily turned out of the episcopal palacé. He then became tutor in an opulent family, 20 but soon quitted his situation in consequence of a dispute about play. Then he determined to emigrate to America. His relations, with much satisfaction, saw him set out for Cork on a good horse, with thirty pounds in his pocket. But in six weeks he came back on a miser- 25 able hack, without a penny, and informed his mother that the ship in which he had taken his passage, having got a fair wind while he was at a part, of pleasure, had sailed without him. Then he resolved to study the law. A generous kinsman advanced fifty pounds. With this 30 sum Goldsmith went to Dublin, was enticed into a gaming-house, and lost every shilling. He then thought of medicine. A small purse was made up; and in his twenty-fourth year he was sent to Edinburgh. At Edinburgh he passed eighteen months in nominal attendance 35

on lectures, and picked up some superficial information about chemistry and natural history. Thence he went to Leyden, still pretending to study physic. He left that celebrated university, the third university at which he had
5 resided, in his twenty-seventh year, without a degree, with the merest smattering of medical knowledge, and with no property but his clothes and his flute. His flute, however, proved a useful friend. He rambled on foot through Flanders, France, and Switzerland, playing tunes which
10 everywhere set the peasantry dancing, and which often procured for him a supper and a bed. He wandered as far as Italy. His musical performances, indeed, were not to the taste of the Italians; but he contrived to live on the alms which he obtained at the gates of convents. It
15 should, however, be observed that the stories which he told about this part of his life ought to be received with great caution; for strict veracity was never one of his virtues; and a man who is ordinarily inaccurate in narration is likely to be more than ordinarily inaccurate when
20 he talks about his own travels. Goldsmith, indeed, was so regardless of truth as to assert in print that he was present at a most interesting conversation between Voltaire and Fontenelle, and that this conversation took place at Paris. Now it is certain that Voltaire never was within
25 a hundred leagues of Paris during the whole time which Goldsmith passed on the Continent.

In 1756 the wanderer landed at Dover, without a shilling, without a friend, and without a calling. He had, indeed, if his own unsupported evidence may be
30 trusted, obtained from the University of Padua a doctor's degree; but this dignity proved utterly useless to him. In England his flute was not in request: there were no convents; and he was forced to have recourse to a series of desperate expedients. He turned strolling player; but
35 his face and figure were ill suited to the boards even of

the humblest theatre. He pounded drugs and ran about London with phials for charitable chemists. He joined a swarm of beggars, which made its nest in Axe Yard. He was for a time usher of a school, and felt the miseries and humiliations of this situation so keenly that he thought it a promotion to be permitted to earn his bread as a bookseller's hack; but he soon found the new yoke more galling than the old one, and was glad to become an usher again. He obtained a medical appointment in the service of the East India Company; but the appointment was speedily revoked. Why it was revoked we are not told. The subject was one on which he never liked to talk. It is probable that he was incompetent to perform the duties of the place. Then he presented himself at Surgeons' Hall for examination, as mate to a naval hospital. Even to so humble a post he was found unequal. By this time the schoolmaster whom he had served for a morsel of food and the third part of a bed was no more. Nothing remained but to return to the lowest drudgery of literature. Goldsmith took a garret in a miserable court, to which he had to climb from the brink of Fleet Ditch by a dizzy ladder of flagstones called Breakneck Steps. The court and the ascent have long disappeared; but old Londoners will remember both. Here, at thirty, the unlucky adventurer sat down to toil like a galley-slave.

In the succeeding six years he sent to the press some things which have survived and many which have perished. He produced articles for reviews, magazines, and newspapers; children's books which, bound in gilt paper and adorned with hideous woodcuts, appeared in the window of the once far-famed shop at the corner of Saint Paul's Churchyard; *An Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning in Europe*, which, though of little or no value, is still reprinted among his works; a *Life of Beau Nash*, which is not reprinted, though it well deserves to be so; a super-

ficial and incorrect, but very readable, *History of England*, in a series of letters purporting to be addressed by a nobleman to his son; and some very lively and amusing *Sketches of London Society*, in a series of letters purporting
5 to be addressed by a Chinese traveller to his friends. All these works were anonymous; but some of them were well known to be Goldsmith's; and he gradually rose in the estimation of the booksellers for whom he drudged. He was, indeed, emphatically a popular writer. For ac-
10 curate research or grave disquisition he was not well qualified by nature or by education. He knew nothing accurately: his reading had been desultory; nor had he meditated deeply on what he had read. He had seen much of the world; but he had noticed and retained
15 little more of what he had seen than some grotesque incidents and characters which had happened to strike his fancy. But, though his mind was very scantily stored with materials, he used what materials he had in such a way as to produce a wonderful effect. There have been
20 many greater writers; but perhaps no writer was ever more uniformly agreeable. His style was always pure and easy, and, on proper occasions, pointed and energetic. His narratives were always amusing, his descriptions always picturesque, his humour rich and joyous, yet not
25 without an occasional tinge of amiable sadness. About everything that he wrote, serious or sportive, there was a certain natural grace and decorum, hardly to be expected from a man a great part of whose life had been passed among thieves and beggars, street-walkers and
30 merry-andrews, in those squalid dens which are the reproach of great capitals.

As his name gradually became known, the circle of his acquaintance widened. He was introduced to Johnson, who was then considered as the first of living English
35 writers; to Reynolds, the first of English painters; and

to Burke, who had not yet entered parliament, but had distinguished himself greatly by his writings and by the eloquence of his conversation. With these eminent men Goldsmith became intimate. In 1763 he was one of the nine original members of that celebrated fraternity which has sometimes been called the Literary Club, but which has always disclaimed that epithet, and still glories in the simple name of The Club.

By this time Goldsmith had quitted his miserable dwelling at the top of Breakneck Steps, and had taken chambers in the more civilized region of the Inns of Court. But he was still often reduced to pitiable shifts. Towards the close of 1764 his rent was so long in arrear that his landlady one morning called in the help of a sheriff's officer. The debtor, in great perplexity, despatched a messenger to Johnson; and Johnson, always friendly, though often surly, sent back the messenger with a guinea, and promised to follow speedily. He came, and found that Goldsmith had changed the guinea, and was railing at the landlady over a bottle of Madeira. Johnson put the cork into the bottle, and entreated his friend to consider calmly how money was to be procured. Goldsmith said that he had a novel ready for the press. Johnson glanced at the manuscript, saw that there were good things in it, took it to a bookseller, sold it for £60, and soon returned with the money. The rent was paid, and the sheriff's officer withdrew. According to one story, Goldsmith gave his landlady a sharp reprimand for her treatment of him; according to another, he insisted on her joining him in a bowl of punch. Both stories are probably true. The novel which was thus ushered into the world was the *Vicar of Wakefield*.

But, before the *Vicar of Wakefield* appeared in print, came the great crisis of Goldsmith's literary life. In Christmas week, 1764, he published a poem, entitled the

Traveller. It was the first work to which he had put his name, and it at once raised him to the rank of a legitimate English classic. The opinion of the most skilful critics was, that nothing finer had appeared in verse since the 5 fourth book of the *Dunciad*. In one respect the *Traveller* differs from all Goldsmith's other writings. In general his designs were bad, and his execution good. In the *Traveller*, the execution though deserving of much praise, is far inferior to the design. No philosophical poem, 10 ancient or modern, has a plan so noble, and at the same time so simple. An English wanderer, seated on a crag among the Alps, near the point where three great countries meet, looks down on the boundless prospect, reviews his long pilgrimage, recalls the varieties of scenery, of 15 climate, of government, of religion, of national character, which he has observed, and comes to the conclusion, just or unjust, that our happiness depends little on political institutions, and much on the temper and regulation of our own minds.

20 While the fourth edition of the *Traveller* was on the counters of the booksellers, the *Vicar of Wakefield* appeared, and rapidly obtained a popularity which has lasted down to our own time, and which is likely to last as long as our language. The fable is indeed one of the worst 25 that ever was constructed. It wants, not merely that probability which ought to be found in a tale of common English life, but that consistency which ought to be found even in the w'idest fiction about witches, giants, and fairies. But the earlier chapters have all the sweetness 30 of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy. Moses and his spectacles, the vicar and his monogamy, the sharper and his cosmogony, the squire proving from Aristotle that relatives are related, Olivia preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying 35 the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday,

the great ladies with their scandal about Sir Tomkyn's amours and Dr. Burdock's verses, and Mr. Burchell with his "Fudge", have caused as much harmless mirth as has ever been caused by matter packed into so small a number of pages. The latter part of the tale is unworthy of the beginning. As we approach the catastrophe, the absurdities lie thicker and thicker, and the gleams of pleasantry become rarer and rarer.

The success which had attended Goldsmith as a novelist emboldened him to try his fortune as a dramatist. He wrote the *Good-natured Man*, a piece which had a worse fate than it deserved. Garrick refused to produce it at Drury Lane. It was acted at Covent Garden in 1768, but was coldly received. The author, however, cleared by his benefit nights, and by the sale of the copy-right, no less than £500, five times as much as he had made by the *Traveller* and the *Vicar of Wakefield* together. The plot of the *Good-natured Man* is, like almost all Goldsmith's plots, very ill constructed. But some passages are exquisitely ludicrous; much more ludicrous, indeed, than suited the taste of the town at that time. A canting, mawkish play, entitled *False Delicacy* had just had an immense run. Sentimentality was all the mode. During some years, more tears were shed at comedies than at tragedies, and a pleasantry which moved the audience to anything more than a grave smile was reprobated as low. It is not strange, therefore, that the very best scene in the *Good-natured Man*, that in which Miss Richland finds her lover attended by the bailiff and the bailiff's follower in full court dresses, should have been mercilessly hissed, and should have been omitted after the first night.

In 1770 appeared the *Deserted Village*. In mere diction and versification this celebrated poem is fully equal, perhaps superior, to the *Traveller*: and it is generally

preferred to the *Traveller* by that large class of readers who think, with Bayes in the *Rehearsal*, that the only use of a plan is to bring in fine things. More discerning judges, however, while they admire the beauty of the
5 details, are shocked by one unpardonable fault which pervades the whole. The fault we mean is not that theory about wealth and luxury which has so often been censured by political economists. The theory is indeed false: but the poem, considered merely as a poem, is not
10 necessarily the worse on that account. The finest poem in the Latin language, indeed the finest didactic poem in any language, was written in defence of the silliest and meanest of all systems of natural and moral philosophy. A poet may easily be pardoned for reasoning ill; but he
15 cannot be pardoned for describing ill, for observing the world in which he lives so carelessly that his portraits bear no resemblance to the originals, for exhibiting as copies from real life monstrous combinations of things which never were and never could be found together.
20 What would be thought of a painter who should mix August and January in one landscape, who should introduce a frozen river into a harvest scene? Would it be a sufficient defence of such a picture to say that every part was exquisitely coloured, that the green hedges, the apple-
25 trees loaded with fruit, the wagons reeling under the yellow sheaves, and the sun-burned reapers wiping their foreheads, were very fine, and that the ice and the boys sliding were also very fine? To such a picture the *Deserted Village* bears a great resemblance. It is made
30 up of incongruous parts. The village in its happy days is a true English village. The village in its decay is an Irish village. The felicity and the misery which Goldsmith has brought close together belong to two different countries, and to two different stages in the progress of
35 society. He had assuredly never seen in his native island

such a rural paradise, such a seat of plenty, content, and tranquillity, as his "Auburn". He had assuredly never seen in England all the inhabitants of such a paradise turned out of their homes in one day and forced to emigrate in a body to America. The hamlet he had probably seen in Kent; the ejectment he had probably seen in Munster: but, by joining the two, he has produced something, which never was and never will be seen in any part of the world.

In 1773 Goldsmith tried his chance at Covent Garden with a second play, *She Stoops to Conquer*. The manager was, not without great difficulty, induced to bring this piece out. The sentimental comedy still reigned; and Goldsmith's comedies were not sentimental. The *Good-natured Man* had been too funny to succeed; yet the mirth of the *Good-natured Man* was sober when compared with the rich drollery of *She Stoops to Conquer*, which is, in truth, an incomparable farce in five acts. On this occasion, however, genius triumphed. Pit, boxes, and galleries, were in a constant roar of laughter. If any bigoted admirer of Kelly and Cumberland ventured to hiss or groan, he was speedily silenced by a general cry of "turn him out", or "throw him over". Two generations have since confirmed the verdict which was pronounced on that night.

While Goldsmith was writing the *Deserted Village* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, he was employed on works of a very different kind, works from which he derived little reputation but much profit. He compiled for the use of schools a *History of Rome*, by which he made £300, a *History of England*, by which he made £600, a *History of Greece*, for which he received £250, a *Natural History*, for which the booksellers covenanted to pay him 800 guineas. These works he produced without any elaborate research, by merely selecting, abridging, and translating

into his own clear, pure, and flowing language what he found in books well known to the world, but too bulky or too dry for boys and girls. He committed some strange blunders; for he knew nothing with accuracy. 5 Thus in his *History of England*, he tells us that Naseby is in Yorkshire; nor did he correct this mistake when the book was reprinted. He was very nearly hoaxed into putting into the *History of Greece* an account of a battle between Alexander the Great and Montezuma. In his 10 *Animated Nature* he relates, with faith and with perfect gravity, all the most absurd lies which he could find in books of travels about gigantic Patagonians, monkeys that preach sermons, nightingales that repeat long conversations. "If he can tell a horse from a cow," said 15 Johnson, "that is the extent of his knowledge of zoology." How little Goldsmith was qualified to write about the physical sciences is sufficiently proved by two anecdotes. He on one occasion denied that the sun is longer in the northern than in the southern signs. It was 20 vain to cite the authority of Maupertuis. "Maupertuis!" he cried, "I understand those matters better than Maupertuis." On another occasion he, in defiance of the evidence of his own senses, maintained obstinately, and even angrily, that he chewed his dinner by moving his 25 upper jaw.

Yet, ignorant as Goldsmith was, few writers have done more to make the first steps in the laborious road to knowledge easy and pleasant. His compilations are widely distinguished from the compilations of ordinary 30 book-makers. He was a great, perhaps an unequalled, master of the arts of selection and condensation. In these respects his histories of Rome and of England, and still more his own abridgments of these histories, well deserve to be studied. In general nothing is less attractive 35 than an epitome: but the epitomes of Goldsmith,

even when most concise, are always amusing ; and to read them is considered by intelligent children, not as a task, but as a pleasure.

Goldsmith might now be considered as a prosperous man. He had the means of living in comfort, and even in what to one who had so often slept in barns and on bulks must have been luxury. His fame was great and was constantly rising. He lived in what was intellectually far the best society of the kingdom, in a society in which no talent or accomplishment was wanting, and in which the art of conversation was cultivated with splendid success. There probably were never four talkers more admirable in four different ways than Johnson, Burke, Beauclerk, and Garrick ; and Goldsmith was on terms of intimacy with all the four. He aspired to share in their colloquial renown : but never was ambition more unfortunate. It may seem strange that a man who wrote with so much perspicuity, vivacity, and grace, should have been, whenever he took a part in conversation, an empty, noisy, blundering rattle. But on this point the evidence is overwhelming. So extraordinary was the contrast between Goldsmith's published works and the silly things which he said, that Horace Walpole described him as an inspired idiot. "Noll", said Garrick, "wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll." Chamier declared that it was a hard exercise of faith to believe that so foolish a chatterer could have really written the *Traveller*. Even Boswell could say, with contemptuous compassion, that he liked very well to hear honest Goldsmith run on. "Yes, sir," said Johnson, "but he should not like to hear himself." Minds differ as rivers differ. There are transparent and sparkling rivers from which it is delightful to drink as they flow : to such rivers the minds of such men as Burke and Johnson may be compared. But there are rivers of which the water when first drawn is turbid and

noisome, but becomes pellucid as crystal, and delicious to the taste, if it be suffered to stand till it has deposited a sediment; and such a river is a type of the mind of Goldsmith. His first thoughts on every subject were
5 confused even to absurdity; but they required only a little time to work themselves clear. When he wrote they had that time; and therefore his readers pronounced him a man of genius: but when he talked he talked nonsense, and made himself the laughing-stock of his hearers.
10 He was painfully sensible of his inferiority in conversation; he felt every failure keenly; yet he had not sufficient judgment and self-command to hold his tongue. His animal spirits and vanity were always impelling him to try to do the one thing which he could not do. After
15 every attempt he felt that he had exposed himself, and writhed with shame and vexation; yet the next moment he began again.

His associates seem to have regarded him with kindness, which, in spite of their admiration of his writings,
20 was not unmixed with contempt. In truth, there was in his character much to love, but very little to respect. His heart was soft even to weakness: he was so generous that he quite forgot to be just; he forgave injuries so readily that he might be said to invite them; and was so
25 liberal to beggars that he had nothing left for his tailor and his butcher. He was vain, sensual, frivolous, profuse, improvident. One vice of a darker shade was imputed to him, envy. But there is not the least reason to believe that this bad passion, though it sometimes
30 made him wince and utter fretful exclamations, ever impelled him to injure by wicked arts the reputation of any of his rivals. The truth probably is, that he was not more envious, but merely less prudent, than his neighbours. His heart was on his lips. All those small
35 jealousies, which are but too common among men of

letters, but which a man of letters who is also a man of the world does his best to conceal, Goldsmith avowed with the simplicity of a child. When he was envious, instead of affecting indifference, instead of damning with faint praise, instead of doing injuries slyly and in the dark, he told everybody that he was envious. "Do not, pray, do not talk of Johnson in such terms," he said to Boswell; "you harrow up my very soul." George Steevens and Cumberland were men far too cunning to say such a thing. They would have echoed the praises of the man whom they envied, and then have sent to the newspapers anonymous libels upon him. Both what was good and what was bad in Goldsmith's character was to his associates a perfect security that he would never commit such villainy. He was neither ill-natured enough, nor long-headed enough, to be guilty of any malicious act which required contrivance and disguise.

Goldsmith has sometimes been represented as a man of genius, cruelly treated by the world, and doomed to struggle with difficulties which at last broke his heart. But no representation can be more remote from the truth. He did, indeed, go through much sharp misery before he had done anything considerable in literature. But, after his name had appeared on the title-page of the *Traveller*, he had none but himself to blame for his distresses. His average income, during the last seven years of his life, certainly exceeded £400 a year: and £400 a year ranked, among the incomes of that day, at least as high as £800 a year would rank at present. A single man living in the Temple with £400 a year might then be called opulent. Not one in ten of the young gentlemen of good families who were studying the law there had so much. But all the wealth which Lord Clive had brought from Bengal, and Sir Lawrence Dundas from Germany, joined together would not have sufficed for

Goldsmith. He spent twice as much as he had. He wore fine clothes, gave dinners of several courses, paid court to venal beauties. He had also, it should be remembered, to the honour of his heart, though not of his head, a guinea, or five, or ten, according to the state of his purse, ready for any tale of distress, true or false. But it was not in dress or feasting, in promiscuous amours or promiscuous charities that his chief expense lay. He had been from boyhood a gambler, and at once the most sanguine and the most unskilful of gamblers. For a time he put off the day of inevitable ruin by temporary expedients. He obtained advances from booksellers by promising to execute works which he never began. But at length this source of supply failed. He owed more than £2000; and he saw no hope of extrication from his embarrassments. His spirits and health gave way. He was attacked by a nervous fever, which he thought himself competent to treat. It would have been happy for him if his medical skill had been appreciated as justly by himself as by others. Notwithstanding the degree which he pretended to have received at Padua, he could procure no patients. "I do not practise," he once said; "I make it a rule to prescribe only for my friends." "Pray, dear doctor," said Beauclerk, "alter your rule; and prescribe only for your enemies." Goldsmith now, in spite of this excellent advice, prescribed for himself. The remedy aggravated the malady. The sick man was induced to call in real physicians; and they at one time imagined that they had cured the disease. Still his weakness and restlessness continued. He could get no sleep. He could take no food. "You are worse," said one of his medical attendants, "than you should be from the degree of fever which you have. Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," were the last recorded words of Oliver Goldsmith. He died on the third of April,

1774, in his forty-sixth year. He was laid in the churchyard of the Temple; but the spot was not marked by any inscription, and is now forgotten. The coffin was followed by Burke and Reynolds. Both these great men were sincere mourners. Burke, when he heard of Goldsmith's death, had burst into a flood of tears. Reynolds had been so much moved by the news that he had flung aside his brush and palette for the day.

A short time after Goldsmith's death, a little poem appeared, which will, as long as our language lasts, associate the names of his two illustrious friends with his own. It has already been mentioned that he sometimes felt keenly the sarcasm which his wild blundering talk brought upon him. He was, not long before his last illness, provoked into retaliating. He wisely betook himself to his pen; and at that weapon he proved himself a match for all his assailants together. Within a small compass he drew with a singularly easy and vigorous pencil the characters of nine or ten of his intimate associates. Though this little work did not receive his last touches, it must always be regarded as a masterpiece. It is impossible, however, not to wish that four or five likenesses which have no interest for posterity were wanting to that noble gallery, and that their places were supplied by sketches of Johnson and Gibbon, as happy and vivid as the sketches of Burke and Garrick.

Some of Goldsmith's friends and admirers honoured him with a cenotaph in Westminster Abbey. Nollekens was the sculptor; and Johnson wrote the inscription. It is much to be lamented that Johnson did not leave to posterity a more durable and a more valuable memorial of his friend. A life of Goldsmith would have been an inestimable addition to the Lives of the Poets. No man appreciated Goldsmith's writings more justly than Johnson: no man was better acquainted with Goldsmith's

character and habits; and no man was more competent to delineate with truth and spirit the peculiarities of a mind in which great powers were found in company with great weaknesses. But the list of poets to whose
5 works Johnson was requested by the booksellers to furnish prefaces ended with Lyttelton, who died in 1773. The line seems to have been drawn expressly for the purpose of excluding the person whose portrait would have most fitly closed the series. Goldsmith, however, has
10 been fortunate in his biographers. Within a few years his life has been written by Mr. Prior, by Mr. Washington Irving, and by Mr. Forster. The diligence of Mr. Prior deserves great praise; the style of Mr. Washington Irving is always pleasing; but the highest place must, in justice,
15 be assigned to the eminently interesting work of Mr. Forster.

LIFE OF GOLDSMITH

Page 2

3. **Saxon.** The word has long been used by Irish patriots to express their antipathy to those of English descent living in Ireland. Hence Macaulay adopts the word here to convey the fact that Goldsmith, like Swift, was not of Celtic but of English blood, though born in Ireland.

11. **with difficulty supported, &c.** He "starved along for several years on a small country curacy and the assistance of his wife's friends. His whole income, eked out by the produce of some fields which he farmed, and of some occasional duties performed for his wife's uncle, the rector of an adjoining parish, did not exceed forty pounds" (Washington Irving's *Life of Oliver Goldsmith*).

14. **Pallas, or Pallasmore,** in the parish of Forney. The house in which Goldsmith was born is described by Irving as "an old, half-rustic mansion, that stood on a rising ground in a rough, lonely part of the country, overlooking a low tract occasionally flooded by the river Inny".

18. **Upper Canada,** the old name for the province of Ontario, which, when Macaulay wrote this biography in 1856, was the Far West of Canada.

sheep-walk in Australasia. Sheep-farming was the chief occupation of settlers in Australia till the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851, and even yet it remains an important source of their wealth.

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2. **a living, &c.,** the rectory of Kilkenny West, of which the previous incumbent was his wife's uncle. Here also he conjoined farming with preaching, holding a farm of seventy acres near Lissoy. This village is generally asserted to be the original of "sweet Auburn", and the farmhouse-parsonage is thought to have suggested the picture of the Vicar of Wakefield's home.

6. a maid-servant, a village dame, Elizabeth Delap, who declared he was one of the dullest boys she ever had.

7. quarter-master, an officer, usually promoted from the ranks, who superintends the issue of food and clothing to the soldiers. Goldsmith's teacher, Thomas (commonly called "Paddy") Byrne, had attained to this rank in a regiment serving in Spain in the war of the Spanish Succession. He is supposed to be the original of the schoolmaster in the *Deserted Village*.

10. banshees, fairies (Cael. *bean*, woman; *sith*, fairy). They were believed by the Celts both of Ireland and Scotland to sing a mournful ditty under the windows of a house where one was about to die.

11. Rapparee (Irish, *rapaire*), a rough, noisy freebooter.

13. Peterborough, Charles Morcunt, Earl of Peterborough,—"the most extraordinary character of that age", "the last of the knights-errant",—commander of the English troops in Spain against the French from 1705 to 1707. His surprise of Monjuich, a fort commanding Barcelona, is one of the most striking romances of war. The exploit, along with the rest of Peterborough's meteoric career, is graphically described by Macaulay in the essay on Mahon's *War of the Succession in Spain*.

Stanhope, commander of the Allies against the French in Spain in 1710. In his retreat from Madrid towards Aragon he was surrounded at Brihuega by the Duke of Vendôme and cut off from the main army. After a desperate resistance he was forced to surrender.

14. glorious disaster. The oxymoron is justifiable, because the surrender was cast into the shade by the heroic struggle which preceded it. "The English kept up a terrible fire till their powder was spent. They then fought desperately with the bayonet against overwhelming odds. They burned the houses which the assailants had taken. But all was to no purpose. The British general saw that resistance could produce only a useless carnage. He concluded a capitulation; and his gallant little army became prisoners of war on honourable terms" (Macaulay's essay on the *War of the Succession in Spain*).

20. Carolan, Turlogh (c. 1670–1738), an itinerant blind minstrel, born at Newtown near Nobber in Westmeath. He forms the subject of one of Goldsmith's minor essays. Goldsmith was taken by Byrne to see him at Athlone.

22. Englishry. The word, like "Saxon", is used to mark off those of English, from those of Celtic, birth in Ireland.

23. **numerous ties, &c.** His elder brother Henry and his uncle Contarine were clergymen in the Established Church. His father, his great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather had also been clergymen, and two of these had married clergymen's daughters.

25. **ruling minority**, commonly known as the "Ascendancy". Catholics and Presbyterians alike were debarred from office by intolerant laws. The grievance was partly removed by the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, and completely by the disestablishment of the Episcopal Church in Ireland in 1869.

29. **the Glorious and Immortal Memory**, *i.e.* of William III, who was hailed by the Protestants of Ireland as a deliverer. The Orange toast in memory of William is in the phrase given by Macaulay.

30. **nothing but country**. In a conversation reported by Boswell, Goldsmith is represented as catching at the expression "happy rebellions", and saying "we have no such phrase". "But have you not the thing?" retorted the Corsican general, Paoli. "Yes," replied Goldsmith, "all our *happy revolutions*. They have hurt our constitution, and *will* hurt it, till we mend it by another *happy revolution*."

35. **several grammar-schools**, Elphin in Roscommon, Athlone and Edgeworthstown. Though indolent and careless, he acquired the reputation of delighting in the Latin poets and historians—in Ovid and Horace, in Livy and Tacitus.

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3. **portrait of him at Knowle**, in Kent, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who at first intended to keep it for himself, but sold it to the Duke of Dorset.

9. **a disposition to blunder**. On his way home from school, about the age of sixteen, he made the ludicrous mistake of supposing a gentleman's house an inn, from which resulted "the mistakes of a night" forming afterwards the groundwork of his play, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Twice he had a misadventure at the Duke of Northumberland's house: the first time he mistook the valet for the duke, and the second time he dropped into Northumberland's house, mistaking it for a neighbouring one, Lord Clare's, whom he intended to visit. The first night he was in Edinburgh he forgot the name of his landlady and the street where he had taken lodgings. For practical jokes played off on him, the best are those of Pilkington and the white mice; the *honest* coachman and the guinea; Glover's introducing him to a tea-party where both were absolute strangers.

21. **sizar.** The word was used at Cambridge and Dublin Universities, the corresponding term at Oxford being 'servitor'. The name arose from a 'size' or allowance of provisions being granted to the sizar, while his duties were to serve out 'sizes' (*assize*, from Latin *assidere*).

24. **long been relieved.** "About fifty years since [*i.e.* about 1800], on a Trinity Sunday, a number of persons were assembled to witness the college ceremonies; and as a sizer was carrying up a dish of meat to the fellows' table, a burly citizen in the crowd made some sneering observation on the servility of his office. Stung to the quick, the high-spirited youth instantly flung the dish and its contents at the head of the sneerer. The sizer was sharply reprimanded for this outbreak of wounded pride, but the degrading task was from that day forward very properly consigned to menial hands" (*Irving's Life of Goldsmith*).

28. **on the window, &c.** The glass was enclosed in a frame and deposited in the MS. room of the College Library, where it is still to be seen.

30. **the woolsack,** the seat of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords. It was originally a wool-sack covered with red cloth, and was intended to remind the peers of the importance of the wool-producing industry for England.

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1. **pumping on a constable.** A students' riot originated in an attempt to rescue one of their number from a bailiff. As there was no pump handy for treating the bailiff in orthodox student fashion, a ducking in a cistern had to suffice. For this offence four students were expelled, while other four, among whom was Goldsmith, were publicly admonished.

2. **a brutal tutor,** Rev. Theaker Wilder, "a man of violent and capricious temper, and of diametrically opposite tastes" to those of Goldsmith. The occasion of the festivity which moved his ire was Goldsmith winning a college prize of thirty shillings. "He forthwith gave a supper and dance at his chamber to a number of young persons of both sexes from the city, in direct violation of college rules. The unwonted sound of the fiddle reached the ears of the implacable Wilder. He rushed to the scene of the unhallowed festivity, inflicted corporal punishment on the 'father of the feast', and turned his astonished guests neck and heels out of doors" (*W. Irving*). Wilder was afterwards killed in a drunken brawl.

9. **the humble dwelling at Ballymahon.** But he was also occasionally at a brother-in-law's at Lissoy, and at his brother Henry's at Pallas.

13. to dress...magpie. One of his accounts to Filby is £8, 2s. 7d. for a coat "Tyrian bloom satin grain and garter blue silk breeches". The accounts with his tailor have been accidentally preserved, and may be found in Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*.

22. a dispute about play. He charged one of the family with cheating at cards.

26. informed his mother, &c. "If Uncle Contarine and the mother at Ballymahon believed his stories, they must have been a very simple pair; as it was a very simple rogue indeed who cheated them" (Thackeray).

30. A generous kinsman, Rev. Thomas Contarine, who had married the sister of Goldsmith's father. He had been a class-fellow of Bishop Berkeley's at Trinity College, and held the living of Carrick-on-Shannon.

33. A small purse was made up. Dean Goldsmith of Cloyne, a distant relative, gave the advice and "added to it, we trust, his blessing, but no money; that was furnished from the scantier purses of Goldsmith's brother, his sister, and his ever-ready uncle, Contarine" (Irving).

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4. that celebrated university. The fame of Leyden University was the pretext put forward by Goldsmith to his uncle Contarine for going there. "The great Albinus is still alive there, and 'twill be proper to go, though only to have it said that we have studied in so famous a university."

9. playing tunes, &c. The experiences of George Primrose in the *Vicar of Wakefield* are supposed to be those of Oliver Goldsmith. "I had some knowledge of music with a tolerable voice, and now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of bare subsistence. I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as are poor enough to be very merry; for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards nightfall, I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day." Similarly in the *Traveller* he writes of France:

"How often have I led thy sportive choir
With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire!
And haply, though my harsh touch faltering still,
But mock'd all tune, and marr'd the dancer's skill;
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
And dance, forgetful of the noontide hour.

Alike all ages. Dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze,
And the gay grandsire, skill'd in gestic lore,
Has frisk'd beneath the burthen of threescore."

22. **conversation between Voltaire and Fontenelle.** Voltaire had quitted Paris in 1750, and did not return to it till 1778. He had recently purchased a residence, "Les Délices", at Geneva, and to this place Mr. Forster transfers conjecturally the scene of Goldsmith's story. The change, however, leads to an equal difficulty—that of supposing Fontenelle and Diderot at Geneva. In spite of the discrepancies in the story, Mr. Austin Dobson thinks it quite possible that Goldsmith saw and heard Voltaire.

32. **In England, &c.** The sentence is adapted from Irving. "His flute and his philosophy were no longer of any avail; the English boors cared nothing for music; there were no convents."

34. **He turned strolling player.** There is no authority for this but a description he gave in the *British Magazine* of the vicissitudes of a strolling player, and the theatrical attempts of George Primrose, who is *assumed* to stand for Oliver Goldsmith.

Page II

2. **He joined... Axe Yard.** The authority for this is merely Goldsmith himself, who in his prosperous days once amused the company at Sir Joshua Reynolds' house by dating an anecdote about the time when he "lived among the beggars of Axe Lane".

4. **miseries and humiliations.** The record of them is given in Goldsmith's inimitable way in a passage of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, where George Primrose is examined as to his qualifications for being an usher. "Can you dress the boys' hair?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you lie three in a bed?" "No." "Then you will never do for a school. Have you a good stomach?" "Yes." "Then you will be, no means do for a school. I have been an usher in a boarding-school myself, and may I die of an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be under-turnkey in Newgate. I was up early and late; I was browbeaten by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys." Similarly, in the *Bee*, No VI, Goldsmith writes of the usher: "He is generally the laughing-stock of the whole school. Every trick is played upon him; the oddity of his manner, his dress, or his language is a fund of eternal ridicule: the master himself now and then cannot avoid

joining in the laugh; and the poor wretch, eternally resenting this ill usage, lives in a state of war with all the family."

7. **a bookseller's hack.** The tradition is that he became reader and corrector of the press to Richardson, the novelist and bookseller.

8. **an usher again.** He was interim teacher for Dr. Milner, whose son he had become acquainted with at Edinburgh, and who kept a classical school at Peckham in Surrey. "As vicegerent over the academy" he succeeded better than in his former teaching experience, becoming a general favourite with the boys by his easy, indulgent good-nature. "He mingled in their sports, told them droll stories, played on the flute for their amusement, and spent his money in treating them to sweetmeats and other school-boy dainties" (Irving).

9. **He obtained a medical appointment** through Dr. Milner, who had influence with a Director. The same gentleman was the means of introducing him to Griffiths, the proprietor of the *Monthly Review*.

16. **found unequal.** The record in the college books in December, 1758, runs: "James Bernard, mate to an hospital. Oliver Goldsmith found not qualified for ditto."

20. **a miserable court,** Green Arbour Court, extending from the Old Bailey to Sea-coal Lane. In Black's graphic phrase, it was "in a wilderness of slums". A contemporary print of the court may be seen in the *European Magazine* for January, 1803 (partially reproduced in Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*).

22. **a dizzy ladder of flagstones,** more prosaically, a steep flight of stone stairs.

29. **children's books.** One commonly attributed to Goldsmith is *Goody Two Shoes*.

31. **the once far-famed shop** of John Newbery, "the friend of children", as he is admiringly styled by Macaulay in the essay on Milton. There is also a complimentary reference to him in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, chapter 18: "the philanthropic bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, who has written so many little books for children; he called himself their friend, but he was the friend of all mankind". This publisher is of far more importance in Goldsmith's life than biographers used to think, and the sketch of his career by Mr. Charles Welsh—*A Bookseller of the Last Century*—has not only cleared up many obscurities, but has put a different complexion on some of the incidents in Goldsmith's career. For example, see note on p. 13, l. 13.

Newbery, a farmer's son, born in Berkshire in 1713, came up to London in 1744, and made a specialty of publishing story-books for children. He is credited with the authorship of two well-known books of this class—*Giles Gingerbread* and the *Travels of Tommy Trip*. Besides being the employer of Goldsmith for several years, he was on familiar terms with Dr. Johnson and Smollett. In 1758 he started the *Universal Chronicle* or *Weekly Gazette*, in which the *Idler* first appeared. In 1760 he began the *Public Ledger*, in which appeared the *Chinese Letters* from Goldsmith's pen, afterwards altered to the well-known series of essays—*The Citizen of the World*. He died in 1767.

32. "An Inquiry", &c. Though the title is too ambitious, the book is not so worthless as Macaulay thinks. Mr. Gosse characterizes it as a "presumptuous, but very bright and daring little treatise in criticism". The charm of the style and the novelty of its views justified its popularity. One passage, in which the personal note is strong, is an appeal for better treatment to that much-abused individual, the author. "Let us treat him with proper consideration, as a child of the public, not a rent-charge on the community. And, indeed, a *child* of the public he is in all respects; for while so well able to direct others, how incapable is he frequently found of guiding himself!" (Chapter x).

34. "Life of Beau Nash", Richard Nash (1674-1762), "the beau of three generations", long famous as Master of the Ceremonies at the public assemblies at Bath. He had coquetted in his youth with the military and legal professions, but gave himself up to gambling and good society. His character was neatly hit off in an epigram by Chesterfield, when a full-length picture of him was placed between the busts of Newton and Pope in the pump-room at Bath:

"The picture placed the busts between
Gives satire its full strength;
Wisdom and Wit are little seen,
But Folly at full length".

His *Life* has been reprinted in the Globe edition of Goldsmith's works.

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1. "History of England." Its popularity was greatly helped by its supposed authorship, Chesterfield, Lyttelton, and Orrery being variously given as the author. Parts of it were incorporated in the longer work on the same subject mentioned on p. 17, l. 31.

4. "Sketches of London Society", otherwise the "Chinese

Letters", afterwards republished as the *Citizen of the World*. "Beau Tibbs" and the "Man in Black" are the best character-sketches.

34. the first of living English writers. Johnson had up to 1759 written *London* (1738), *Life of Savage* (1744), *Vanity of Human Wishes* and *Irene* (1749), the *Rambler* (1750-52), the *English Dictionary* (1755), the *Idler* (1758-60), *Rasselas* (1759).

35. Reynolds, Sir Joshua (1723-92), studied art at Rome from 1749 to 1752, and by 1760 had become the most famous painter of the day. He was elected the first President of the Royal Academy (1768), and the year after was honoured with a knighthood. In 1784 he was made painter to the king, and completed his greatest portrait, that of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse. He excelled in portrait-painting. His friendship with Goldsmith is commemorated in the dedication of the *Deserted Village*, and in one of the best character-sketches in *Retaliation*.

Page 13

1. **Burke .. conversation.** Burke entered Parliament in January, 1766. Born in 1729, he had by 1764 written a parody of Bolingbroke,—*The Vindication of Natural Society* (1756),—*The Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), and the *Annual Register* from 1759 onwards. Of his conversation Dr. Johnson, the best possible judge, said, "That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now it would kill me." Again, "Burke is an extraordinary man. His stream of mind is perpetual."

6. the **Literary Club** was formed in 1764 on the suggestion of Reynolds, round whose table had for a long time met the wits and scholars of the day. The idea was eagerly taken up by Johnson, who suggested as a model a club he had himself formed some time before in Ivy Lane. As in that defunct club, the number of members was restricted to nine, viz. Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Dr. Nugent, Langton, Beauclerk, Chamier, Hawkins, and Goldsmith. They met on Monday evenings at the Turk's Head in Gerard Street, Soho, for social enjoyment. The club exists still, one of the most famous of literary societies. The number was restricted in 1780 to forty. Garrick and Boswell joined in 1773, Gibbon and Fox in 1774, Adam Smith in 1775, Sheridan and Windham in 1778. Of the prime ministers since 1820, several (Liverpool, Canning, Russell, Aberdeen, Gladstone, Salisbury, Rosebery, Balfour) have been members. Of literary men it has included Scott, Hallam, Grote, Milman, Macaulay, Sydney Smith, Tennyson, Froude, Huxley, Lord Acton, Lord Dufferin, W. E. H. Lecky, Professor Jebb, Sir Alfred Lyall, &c. (See article on the "Dining Societies of London", in *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1898.)

10. **had taken ... Court.** Goldsmith removed from Green Arbour Court to Wine-Office Court, Fleet Street, about the middle or end of 1760, and stayed there for about two years. From 1765 to his death he had rooms in the Temple, residing till 1768 with the butler of the society. The Temple is described by Irving as "that classic region rendered famous by the *Spectator* and other essayists [e.g. Lamb], as the abode of gay wits and thoughtful men of letters; which, with its retired courts and embowered gardens, in the very heart of a noisy metropolis, is, to the quiet-seeking student and author, an oasis freshening with verdure in the midst of a desert".

13. **Towards the close, &c.** This incident—one of the most picturesque and familiar in literary history—has, after the lapse of a century, had doubt cast upon it by Mr. Welsh in his book on Newbery. The accounts of Collins, the printer of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, remain, and have been inspected by Mr. Welsh and also by Mr. Austin Dobson, both of whom assert that there is an entry in the following terms: "*Vicar of Wakefield*, 2 vols. 12mo. 3rd. B. Collins, Salisbury, bought of Dr. Goldsmith, the author, October 28, 1762. 21l." Corroborative evidence of the sale is found in Collins's accounts of later years, which show that of the three proprietors of the novel he was still one. Cooke, an intimate of Goldsmith's who contributed a notice of him to the *European Magazine* of 1793, relates that Newbery advanced twenty guineas on the novel—a sum which tallies exactly with that received from Collins. Cooke's story was overlooked by biographers because it was, in many particulars, in hopeless contradiction with the accepted story of the Johnson tradition. Boswell professed to give a report "authentically" from Johnson's "own exact narration"—a mode of expression which points to the incident taking place before his introduction to Johnson (i.e. 1763). Mrs. Piozzi, Hawkins, and Cumberland amplified the Johnson version of the story, the last adding the picturesque detail that Goldsmith's only chance of escape, before Johnson appeared, was to close "with a very staggering proposal on her [the landlady's] part, and take his creditor to wife, whose charms were very far from alluring, while her demands were extremely urgent". Mr. Austin Dobson tries to reconcile the two versions, and does not find them more contradictory than the two stories of which Macaulay in this paragraph says, "Both stories are probably true". The only objection to the new version is that it lengthens still further the period between the first sale and the publication of the novel. The difficulty may be overcome by supposing that Goldsmith was dilatory in the writing of it. Internal evidence shows references to passing events in 1762, and certain gaps in the finished novel are supposed to reveal a work completed under pressure. In the first edition, some of

the pages are short of the proper number of lines, others are blank, and the spaces between the paragraphs are unnecessarily long. For a discussion of the whole question, see the *Athenæum*, December, 1885, pp. 836-37.

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2. a legitimate English classic, a standard author entitled on his own merits to a place among the best writers.

4. since the fourth book of the "Dunciad", Pope's last great work, which appeared in 1742. The opinion quoted was Dr. Johnson's. But many place higher Gray's *Elegy* (1751), and on the same level, Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749).

11. An English wanderer, &c. This is a fine example of Macaulay's full-flowing sentence, and at the same time a concise summary of the *Traveller*.

12. three great countries, Italy, Switzerland, and France.

16. the conclusion ... minds. The four lines thus paraphrased were contributed by Dr. Johnson:

"How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find."

22. rapidly obtained a popularity. The first edition appeared in March, the second in May, the third in August, 1766, the fourth in 1770, the fifth in 1774, the sixth in 1779. For a full history of later editions see that by Mr. Austin Dobson (1885).

24. fable, plot (Lat. *fabula*, a story).

27. consistency...fairies. Shakespeare's *Midsummer-Night's Dream* and Pope's *Rape of the Lock* are fine illustrations of adherence to this rule.

31. Moses, &c. The incidents referred to will be found in the following chapters respectively: xii ii, xiv, vii, vii, ix and xi, xi.

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6. the absurdities lie thicker. Goldsmith himself was aware of them and ingeniously tried to excuse them: "Nor can I go on without a reflection on those accidental meetings, which, though they happen every day, seldom excite our surprise but upon some extraordinary occasion. To what a fortuitous concurrence do we not owe every pleasure and convenience of our lives!" This defence did not satisfy a brother-

novelist, the late William Black. "The plot is full of wild improbabilities—in fact, the expedients by which all the members of the family are brought together and made happy at the same time, are nothing short of desperate....It is very probable that when Goldsmith began the story he had no very definite plot concocted, and that it was only when the much-persecuted Vicar had to be restored to happiness, that he found the entanglements surrounding him, and had to make frantic efforts to break through them."

12. **Garrick...Lane.** Garrick had taken offence at certain passages in the *Inquiry into Polite Learning* which cast reflections on actors and managers. He had refused to vote for Goldsmith when applying for the secretaryship of the Royal Society. He was induced by Reynolds to receive Goldsmith and his play, but so much delay took place in putting it on the boards that a quarrel ensued which it taxed both Burke and Reynolds to settle.

14. **coldly received.** The only hits were the characters of Croaker and Lofty. It had a run of ten nights, on three of which the profits went to the author. These profits were about £400, and £100 more was obtained from the sale of the play in book form.

16. **five times, &c.** The original fee of £21 for the *Traveller* paid in 1764 was supplemented by another of the same amount in 1766.

22. **"False Delicacy",** by Kelly (see note on p. 17, l. 21).

23. **Sentimentality was all the mode.** The sentimental or genteel comedy was "the English equivalent for the *comédie sérieuse* or *larmoyante*, which, initiated in France by La Chaussée, had recently been most happily exemplified in that country by Sedaine's *Le philosophe sans le savoir*. According to Diderot, this school had for its object not so much the satire of vice as the glorification of virtue" (Mr. Austin Dobson). In one of his essays (No. xxii) Goldsmith argued out the question, "Which deserves the preference,—the weeping sentimental comedy so much in fashion at present, or the laughing and even low comedy which seems to have been last exhibited by Vanbrugh and Cibber?" He contends that "as tragedy displays the calamities of the great, so comedy should excite our laughter by ridiculously exhibiting the follies of the lower part of mankind....Yet, under the name of sentimental comedy, the virtues of private life are exhibited rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses rather than the faults of mankind make our interest in the piece....In these plays almost all the characters are good, and exceedingly generous; they are lavish enough of their tin money on the stage; and though they want

humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught, not only to pardon, but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended, and the comedy aims at touching our passions without the power of being truly pathetic." To the objection that "if mankind find delight in weeping at comedy, it would be cruel to abridge them in that or any other innocent pleasure", he answers by asking the question "whether the true comedy would not amuse us more". He concludes with an appeal to the public: "It depends upon the audience whether they will actually drive those poor merry creatures from the stage, or sit at a play as gloomy as at the tabernacle".

27. *low*. The word was commonly used by Goldsmith as opposed to 'genteel'. In the *Polite Learning* (chap. ix) he says: "By the power of one single monosyllable our critics have almost got the victory over humour amongst us. Does the poet paint the absurdities of the vulgar? then he is *low*. Does he exaggerate the features of folly to render it more thoroughly ridiculous? he is then very *low*". The victory such critics gained by compelling the omission of the bailiff scene was avenged in Goldsmith's next play by the criticism being put in the mouth of Tony Lumpkin's alehouse companions:

"*First Fellow*. The squire has got spunk in him.

Second Fellow. I loves to hear him sing, bekeays he never gives us nothing that 's low,

Third Fellow. O d— anything that 's low, I cannot bear it.

Fourth Fellow. The genteel thing is the genteel thing any time; if so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly."

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2. **Bayes**, the chief character in the *Rehearsal*, a burlesque play by Buckingham and others satirizing Dryden, the poet-laureate, or wearer of the *bays*. In Act iii, Sc. 1, Bayes expresses astonishment at a critic's objection: "Plot stand still! why, what is the plot good for, but to bring in fine things?"

7. **theory about wealth and luxury**. The theory was held by Dr. Johnson and many others of the eighteenth century. It is briefly expressed in the couplet:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay".

10. **The finest poem...philosophy**. The poem by Lucretius on the Nature of Things (*De Rerum Natura*) is an attempt at explaining the mystery of the world, and fully deserves the

praise given it by Macaulay. But his depreciation of the Epicurean system embodied in it is quite unjustifiable, the atomic theory of the origin of the world being regarded by men like Tyndall as a wonderful anticipation of nineteenth-century discoveries.

29. It is made up of incongruous parts. It was acutely observed by the late William Black that "this criticism is ingenious and plausible, but unsound, for it overlooks one of the radical facts of human nature—the magnifying delight of the mind in what is long remembered and remote... The grown-up Goldsmith had not to go to any Kentish village for a model; the familiar scenes of his youth, regarded with all the wistfulness and longing of an exile, became glorified enough" (*Life of Goldsmith*, p. 8). Professor Dowden has still more happily disposed of Macaulay's excessively matter-of-fact criticism: "Perhaps Auburn bordered on Shakspeare's Forest of Arden, and the doctrine concerning agricultural and commercial prosperity were suited to that neighbourhood. It would be pleasant to hear Jaques and Touchstone discuss them, taking opposite sides."

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4. forced to emigrate. The story goes that Lieutenant-General Napier, returning from Spain with a large fortune, purchased the lands about Lissoy and ejected many of the tenants in order to have a demesne after the English fashion. As ejectments were becoming common among the Celtic population both in Scotland and Ireland, it is probable that Goldsmith had in his mind stories of Irish emigration to America, but he explicitly states in the Dedication that he was describing scenes he had himself witnessed in England. Referring to depopulation he says: "I have taken all possible pains in my country excursions for these four or five years past to be certain of what I allege". And in the poem itself he harks back to the time "ere *England's* griefs began".

12. The manager, Colman, expected it to be a failure, and his prejudice against it led many of the actors to throw up their parts.

19. Pit...laughter. The scene was summed up in an epigram:

"At Dr. Goldsmith's merry play
All the spectators laugh, they say.
The assertion, Sir, I must deny,
For Cumberland and Kelly cry."

21. Kelly, Hugh (1739-77), author of the sentimental comedy, *False Delicacy* (1768). Though this play threw him

into sharp rivalry with Goldsmith, whose *Good-Natured Man* was eclipsed by it, he was generally his fellow-Irishman's boon companion in the Wednesday Club, and appeared as a mourner at his funeral. He was a "stay-maker turned rhymster, who was imitating Churchill's *Rosciad* in a poem called *Thespis*". Johnson spoke of him as a man who had written more than he had read, and bluntly told him when apologizing lest his visit had been troublesome, "Not in the least, sir; I had forgotten you were in the room".

21. Cumberland, Richard (1732-1811), author of several successful comedies of the sentimental school, the best of which are *The West Indian* and *The Brothers*. His *Memoirs* are of more interest to the modern reader. His foibles were hit off by Sheridan in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary in the *Critic*. An ironically flattering portrait of him was drawn by Goldsmith in *Retaliation*:

"The Terence of England, the mender of hearts;
A flattering painter who made it his care
To draw men as they ought to be, not as they are".

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7. He was very nearly hoaxed, &c. Gibbon happened to call when Goldsmith was writing the *History of Greece*, and, being as good as a reference library, he was asked by the indolent writer for "the name of that Indian king who gave Alexander the Great so much trouble". Gibbon replied in fun, "Montezuma", and as the name was being put on paper, he pretended to recollect himself, and gave the correct name, "Porus".

12. gigantic Patagonians. Commodore Byron's party had recently brought home stories of Patagonians nine feet high, which most people laughed at as "travellers' tales". But Goldsmith, in a passage in his *Animated Nature* (ii. 261, afterwards suppressed), declared his belief in these accounts on the strength of a conversation he had had with the carpenter of the commodore's ship—"a sensible, understanding man, and I believe extremely faithful".

monkeys that preach sermons. He quotes from Margrave, in *Animated Nature*, iv. 212-13: "Every day, both morning and evening, the Ouarines assemble in the woods to receive instructions. When all come together, one among the number takes the highest place on a tree, and makes a signal with his hand to the rest to sit round, in order to hearken. As soon as he sees them placed he begins his discourse....When this has done, he makes a sign with the hand for the rest to reply; and at that instant they raise

their voices together until by another signal they are enjoined silence."

13. **nightingales ... conversations.** The story was from Gesner, who told of how two nightingales were heard repeating what they had overheard of a conversation between a drunken tapster and his wife, and also of a conversation between two travellers about an impending war against the Protestants (*Animated Nature*, v. 293-95).

19. **denied...signs.** The story rests on very doubtful evidence. It is attributed to his enemy, Kenrick, who in a coffee-house declaimed against Goldsmith "how he had on some occasion maintained that the sun was not eight days or so more in the northern than in the southern signs" (Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*, ii. 253).

20. **Maupertuis** (1698-1759), a French scientist, noted especially as a mathematician and astronomer. His chief work as a scientist was his superintendence of the expedition to Lapland (1736-37) for the purpose of measuring a degree of longitude. He was appointed by Frederick the Great to be President of the Berlin Academy (1740), and quarrelled with Voltaire, who also had been invited to Berlin. The latter satirized him in the amusing *Diatrise du Docteur Akakia*. For an account of the quarrel, see Macaulay's essay on Frederick the Great.

22. **On another occasion, &c.** The story is given by Cooke (*European Magazine*, xxiv. 261). A similar story appears in the *Animated Nature* about an Edinburgh professor who "was very subject to have his jaw dislocated" when he yawned or opened his mouth wide.

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7. **bulks.** "Bulk: a part of a building jutting out; a stall in front of a shop." *Balk*, or beam, is the same word.

10. **no talent...was wanting.** The best illustration of this will be found when Boswell threw out the suggestion that if the Club were brought to St. Andrews, the university there might be supplied with professors from the Club members alone. For Dr. Johnson's distribution of the offices, see *Tour to the Hebrides*.

12. **four talkers.** Their characters are well hit off by Mr. Austin Dobson: "the trained dialectics and inexhaustible memory of Johnson, the mental affluence and brilliant rhetoric of Burke, the easy *savoir vivre* of Beauclerc, the wit and mercurial alertness of Garrick".

24. **an inspired idiot.** The authority for this is Davies in his *Life of Garrick*, ii. 152.

25. **Chamier, Anthony (1725-80)**, of Huguenot descent, acquired a fortune as a stock-broker, and became a clerk in the War Office in 1764, ultimately rising to be Under-Secretary of State in 1775. In the imaginary college to be constituted by members of the Club he was to be the Professor of Commercial Politics. He was M.P. for Tamworth from 1778 to his death. He had a country house at Streatham, and thus frequently met Johnson. Reynolds, too, treated him as a very intimate friend.

Chamier's doubt about Goldsmith's authorship of the *Traveller* was not based on a contempt for his conversational powers. It was due to an incident recorded by Boswell. Chamier asked Goldsmith what he meant by 'slow' in the first line of the *Traveller*. Goldsmith gave the ordinary meaning of the word, but Johnson interposed with another interpretation which Goldsmith at once accepted. "Chamier believed then", said Johnson, "that I had written the line as much as if he had seen me write it."

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8. **he talked nonsense.** This is far too sweeping a statement. In the 'wit-combats' at the Turk's Head, Goldsmith sometimes scored. Some of the wittiest sayings of the time are his: e.g. of Burke, "he winds into his subject like a serpent"; of Johnson, "he has nothing of the bear but the skin"; "he would make the little fishes talk like whales"; "if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end". Boswell rebuked him for exalting Johnson too much—"he was for making a monarchy of what should be a republic". The saucy school-boy witticism which Goldsmith fired off at Johnson is well-known: "How many of these would reach to the moon?" he asked about the rumps and kidneys at supper. Johnson gave it up. "Why, sir, one, if it were long enough!"

18. **His associates...kindness.** Johnson wrote of him to Boswell as "poor dear Dr. Goldsmith"; Reynolds likewise always spoke kindly of him. Boswell and Hawkins, on the other hand, assumed a tone of patronage or contempt. Davies, the bookseller, in his biography of Garrick, described him as "such a compound of absurdity, envy, and malice, contrasted with the opposite virtues of kindness, generosity, and benevolence, that he might be said to consist of two distinct souls, and influenced by the agency of a good and a bad spirit".

27. **One vice...envy.** Macaulay's account is evidently suggested by a conversation reported by Boswell. "Talking of Goldsmith, Johnson said he was very envious. I defended him by observing that he owned it frankly on all occasions. 'Sir, you are enforcing the charge. He had so much envy

that he could not conceal it. He was so full of it that he overflowed. He talked of it, to be sure, often enough. Now, sir, what a man avows, he is not ashamed to think, though many a man thinks what he is ashamed to avow." Percy of the *Reliques* urges the apology made use of by Macaulay. "Whatever appeared of this kind was a mere momentary sensation, which he knew not how like other men to conceal. It was never the result of principle, or the suggestion of reflection; it never embittered his heart, or influenced his conduct."

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4. **damning with faint praise**, the well-known sarcasm on Addison ('Atticus') by Pope in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

8. **George Steevens** (1736-1800), commentator on Shakespeare. In 1766 he reprinted twenty of Shakespeare's plays from the original quartos; he assisted Johnson in the revised edition of Shakespeare (1773), and brought out an edition of his own in 1793. "He was a man of industry, learning, and acute intellect; somewhat wanting in reverence, in modesty, and perhaps in that literary honesty which goes with freedom from vanity" (Dowden's *Introduction to Shakspeare*).

33. **Lord Clive had brought from Bengal**. Clive remitted by the Dutch East India Company £180,000, and by the English East India Company £40,000. He also brought home many very valuable jewels, and drew from his jaghire £30,000 a year. Malcolm estimates his income on his return from Bengal in 1760 at not less than £40,000 a year. See Macaulay's essay on Clive, § 104.

34. **Sir Lawrence Dundas**, sprung from the Fingask branch of the great Scottish family of Dundas, grandfather of the first Earl of Zetland. He made a large fortune by an unscrupulous use of his opportunities as commissary-general and contractor to the army (1748-59), and was created in 1762 a baronet of Great Britain.

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12. **He obtained advances, &c.** This is greatly exaggerated, if not absolutely untrue.

22. **"I do not practise", &c.** Contrary to his wont, Macaulay has not improved the story in the telling. Goldsmith had quarrelled with an apothecary about the quantity of medicine to be prescribed to a lady, and the lady siding with the apothecary, Goldsmith went away in a passion. Meeting Beauclerk he said, "I am determined henceforth to leave off prescribing for friends". "Do so, my dear doctor," was the reply; "whenever you undertake to kill, let it be only your enemies."

27. **The remedy.** James's powder, a nostrum much believed in then, and sold by Goldsmith's friend, Newbery.

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9. **a little poem.** *Retaliation*, which "closed his accounts with the Club, and balanced all his previous deficiencies". Once when he was late for the Club dinner, his associates amused themselves in writing epitaphs on him, that by Garrick especially annoying him:

"Here lies poet Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll".

28. **cenotaph**, from Greek *kenos*, empty; *taphos*, a tomb. The memorial was a bust in profile in a medallion over the south door in Poet's Corner. A full-length statue by Foley was erected in front of Dublin University in 1864.

Nollekens (1737-1823), born in London, studied at Rome from 1760 to 1770, and in 1772 was elected to the Royal Academy. He excelled in modelling busts, and has left fine specimens of his art in the busts of Johnson, Garrick, Sterne, Fox, Pitt.

29. **Johnson wrote the inscription** in Latin, in spite of the famous round-robin protest of the Club in favour of English. In it occurs the happy description of Goldsmith as a writer: "Qui nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit"—who left untouched scarcely any kind of writing, and left unadorned none that he touched.

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6. **Lyttelton**, Lord (1709-73), author of *Dialogues of the Dead* and a *History of Henry II.* He was praised by Pope, but was ridiculed by such opposite types of character as Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and Johnson. His best lines are those in which he describes the poet Thomson as one who wrote

"Not one immoral, one corrupted thought,
One line which, dying, he could wish to blot".

11. **Prior** (1790-1869), born at Lisburn, became a surgeon in the navy, and had many exciting experiences during the French war. In 1824 he wrote the *Life of Burke*, which remains still the best summary of the political career of his great countryman. His *Life of Goldsmith* (1837) is a storehouse of facts from which all later biographers have been content to borrow.

11. **Washington Irving** (1783-1859), "the American Goldsmith", a native of New York, the son of parents hailing, the one from Orkney, the other from Falmouth. He first attracted notice by his *History of New York by Diedrich Knickerbocker* (1809). He travelled in Europe from 1804 to 1806, and again from 1815 to 1832, and resided in Spain from 1841 to 1846 as U. S. minister there. On the collapse of the firm in which he was a partner (1818) he devoted himself entirely to literature, and in 1819 published the *Sketch-book* containing the well-known tales of *Rip van Winkle* and *Sleepy Hollow*. A similar series of short sketches, *Bracebridge Hall*, appeared in 1822. His *Life of Columbus* (1828) was a great success. He wrote many books dealing with Spain, such as *The Alhambra*, *The Conquest of Granada*, which were only moderately successful. His *Life of Goldsmith* (1849) he admits to be based on "the indefatigable Prior" and "the elegant and discursive Mr. Forster".

12. **Mr. Forster** (1812-76), born at Newcastle, and educated for the bar, turned to literature and journalism, acting for a time as editor of the *Daily News* and the *Examiner*. His chief works consist of biographies—Landor, Dickens, Goldsmith—and of historical sketches relating to the Commonwealth period, such as *Statesmen of the Commonwealth*, *Arrest of the Five Members*. When he brought out his *Life of Goldsmith* in 1848, he was accused by Prior, not without some reason, of wholesale plagiarism, and an acrimonious controversy ensued. His book is not so readable or artistic as Irving's; it is over-loaded with digressions and irrelevant disquisitions.

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