Autobiography, Letters and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi (Thrale) (2nd ed.) (2 vols.) eBook

Autobiography, Letters and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi (Thrale) (2nd ed.) (2 vols.) by Hester Thrale

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Autobiography &c. *Of Mrs*. *Piozzi*

VOL. I

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION:

Life and writings of Mrs. *Piozzi*.

Dr. Johnson was hailed the colossus of Literature by a generation who measured him against men of no common mould—against Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Warburton, the Wartons, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, Gray, Goldsmith, and Burke. Any one of these may have surpassed the great lexicographer in some branch of learning or domain of genius; but as a man of letters, in the highest sense of the term, he towered

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pre-eminent, and his superiority to each of them (except Burke) in general acquirements, intellectual power, and force of expression, was hardly contested by his contemporaries. To be associated with his name has become a title of distinction in itself; and some members of his circle enjoy, and have fairly earned, a peculiar advantage in this respect. In their capacity of satellites revolving round the sun of their idolatry, they attracted and reflected his light and heat. As humble companions of their *Magnolia grandiflora*, they did more than live with it[1]; they gathered and preserved the choicest of its flowers. Thanks to them, his reputation is kept alive more by what has been saved of his conversation than by his books; and his colloquial exploits necessarily revive the memory of the friends (or victims) who elicited and recorded them.

[Footnote 1: "Je ne suis pas la rose, mais j'ai vecu pres d'elle."—*Constant*.]

If the two most conspicuous among these have hitherto gained notoriety rather than what is commonly understood by fame, a discriminating posterity is already beginning to make reparation for the wrong. Boswell's "Letters to Temple," edited by Mr. Francis, with "Boswelliana," printed for the Philobiblion Society by Mr. Milnes, led, in 1857, to a revisal of the harsh sentence passed on one whom the most formidable of his censors, Lord Macaulay, has declared to be not less decidedly the first of biographers, than Homer is the first of heroic poets, Shakspeare the first of dramatists, or Demosthenes the first of orators. The result was favourable to Boswell, although the vulnerable points of his character were still more glaringly displayed. The appeal about to be hazarded on behalf of Mrs. Piozzi, will involve little or no risk of this kind. Her ill-wishers made the most of the event which so injuriously affected her reputation at the time of its occurrence; and the marked tendency of every additional disclosure of the circumstances has been to elevate her. No candid person will read her Autobiography, or her Letters, without arriving at the conclusion that her long life was morally, if not conventionally, irreproachable; and that her talents were sufficient to confer on her writings a value and attraction of their own, apart from what they possess as illustrations of a period or a school. When the papers which form the basis of this work were laid before Lord Macaulay, he gave it as his opinion that they afforded materials for a "most interesting and durably popular volume."[1]

[Footnote 1: His letter, dated August 22, 1859, was addressed to Mr. T. Longman. The editorship of the papers was not proposed to me till after his death, and I had never any personal communication with him on the subject; although in the Edinburgh Review for July 1857, I ventured, with the same freedom which I have used in vindicating Mrs. Piozzi, to dispute the paradoxical judgment he had passed on Boswell. The materials which reached me after I had undertaken the work, and of which he was not aware, would nearly fill a volume.]

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They comprise:—

1. Autobiographical Memoirs.

2. Letters, mostly addressed to the late Sir James Fellowes.

3. Fugitive pieces of her composition, most of which have never appeared in print.

4. Manuscript notes by her on Wraxall's Memoirs, and on her own published works, namely: "Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., during the last twenty years of his life," one volume, 1786: "Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., &c.," in two volumes, 1788: "Observations and Reflections made in the course of a journey through France, Italy, and Germany," in two volumes, 1789: "Retrospection; or, Review of the most striking and important Events, Characters, Situations, and their Consequences which the last Eighteen Hundred Years have presented to the View of Mankind," in two volumes, quarto, 1801.

The "Autobiographical Memoirs," and the annotated books, were given by her to the late Sir James Fellowes, of Adbury House, Hants, M.D., F.R.S., to whom the letters were addressed. He and the late Sir John Piozzi Salusbury were her executors, and the present publication takes place in pursuance of an agreement with their personal representatives, the Rev. G.A. Salusbury, Rector of Westbury, Salop, and Captain J. Butler Fellowes.

Large and valuable additions to the original stock of materials have reached me since the announcement of the work.

The Rev. Dr. Wellesley, Principal of New Inn Hall, has kindly placed at my disposal his copy of Boswell's "Life of Johnson" (edition of 1816), plentifully sprinkled with marginal notes by Mrs. Piozzi.

The Rev. Samuel Lysons, of Hempsted Court, Gloucester, has liberally allowed me the free use of his valuable collection of books and manuscripts, including numerous letters from Mrs. Piozzi to his father and uncle, the Rev. Daniel Lysons and Mr. Samuel Lysons.

From 1776 to 1809 Mrs. Piozzi kept a copious diary and note-book, called "Thraliana." Johnson thus alludes to it in a letter of September 6th, 1777: "As you have little to do, I suppose you are pretty diligent at the 'Thraliana;' and a very curious collection posterity will find it. Do not remit the practice of writing down occurrences as they arise, of whatever kind, and be very punctual in annexing the dates. Chronology, you know, is the eye of history. Do not omit painful casualties or unpleasing passages; they make the variegation of existence; and there are many passages of which I will not promise, with AEneas, *et haec olim meminisse juvabit*." "Thraliana," which at one time she thought of burning, is now in the possession of Mr. Salusbury, who deems it of too

private and delicate a character to be submitted to strangers, but has kindly supplied me with some curious passages and much valuable information extracted from it.

I shall have many minor obligations to acknowledge as I proceed.

Unless Mrs. Piozzi's character and social position are freshly remembered, her reminiscences and literary remains will lose much of their interest and utility. It has therefore been thought advisable to recapitulate, by way of introduction, what has been ascertained from other sources concerning her; especially during her intimacy with Johnson, which lasted nearly twenty years, and exercised a marked influence on his tone of mind.

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“This year (1765),” says Boswell, “was distinguished by his (Johnson) being introduced into the family of Mr. Thrale, one of the most eminent brewers in England, and member of Parliament for the borough of Southwark.... Johnson used to give this account of the rise of Mr. Thrale’s father: ’He worked at six shillings a week for twenty years in the great brewery, which afterwards was his own. The proprietor of it had an only daughter, who was married to a nobleman. It was not fit that a peer should continue the business. On the old man’s death, therefore, the brewery was to be sold. To find a purchaser for so large a property was a difficult matter; and after some time, it was suggested that it would be advisable to treat with Thrale, a sensible, active, honest man, who had been employed in the house, and to transfer the whole to him for thirty thousand pounds, security being taken upon the property. This was accordingly settled. In eleven years Thrale paid the purchase money. He acquired a large fortune, and lived to be a member of Parliament for Southwark. But what was most remarkable was the liberality with which he used his riches. He gave his son and daughters the best education. The esteem which his good conduct procured him from the nobleman who had married his master’s daughter made him be treated with much attention; and his son, both at school and at the University of Oxford, associated with young men of the first rank. His allowance from his father, after he left college, was splendid; not less than a thousand a year. This, in a man who had risen as old Thrale did, was a very extraordinary instance of generosity. He used to say, ’If this young dog does not find so much after I am gone as he expects, let him remember that he has had a great deal in my own time.’”

What is here stated regarding Thrale’s origin, on the alleged authority of Johnson, is incorrect. The elder Thrale was the nephew of Halsey, the proprietor of the brewery whose daughter was married to a nobleman (Lord Cobham), and he naturally nourished hopes of being his uncle’s successor. In the Abbey Church of St. Albans, there is a monument to some members of the Thrale family who died between 1676 and 1704, adorned with a shield of arms and a crest on a ducal coronet. Mrs. Thrale’s marginal note on Boswell’s account of her husband’s family is curious and characteristic:

“Edmund Halsey was son to a miller at St. Albans, with whom he quarrelled, like Ralph in the ‘Maid of the Mill,’ and ran away to London with a very few shillings in his pocket. [1] He was eminently handsome, and old Child of the Anchor Brewhouse, Southwark, took him in as what we call a broomstick clerk, to sweep the yard, &c. Edmund Halsey behaved so well he was soon preferred to be a house-clerk, and then, having free access to his master’s table, married his only daughter, and succeeded to the business upon Child’s demise. Being now rich and prosperous, he turned his eyes homewards, where he learned that sister Sukey had married a hardworking man at Offley in Hertfordshire, and had many children. He sent for one of them to London (my Mr. Thrale’s father); said he would make a man of him, and did so: but made him work very hard, and treated him very roughly, Halsey being more proud than tender, and his only child, a daughter, married to Lord Cobham.

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“Old Thrale, however, as these fine writers call him,—then a young fellow, and, like his uncle, eminent for personal beauty,—made himself so useful to Mr. Halsey that the weight of the business fell entirely on him; and while Edmund was canvassing the borough and visiting the viscountess, Ralph Thrale was getting money both for himself and his principal: who, envious of his success with a wench they both liked but who preferred the young man to the old one, died, leaving him never a guinea, and he bought the brewhouse of Lord and Lady Cobham, making an excellent bargain, with the money he had saved.”

[Footnote 1: In “Thraliana” she says: “strolled to London with only 4_s._ 6_d._ in his pocket.”]

When, in the next page but one, Boswell describes Thrale as presenting the character of a plain independent English squire, she writes: “No, no! Mr. Thrale’s manners presented the character of a gay man of the town: like Millamant, in Congreve’s comedy, he abhorred the country and everything in it.”

In “Thraliana” after a corresponding statement, she adds: “He (the elder Thrale) educated his son and three daughters quite in a high style. His son he wisely connected with the Cobhams and their relations, Grenvilles, Lyttletons, and Pitts, to whom he lent money, and they lent assistance of every other kind, so that my Mr. Thrale was bred up at Stowe, and Stoke and Oxford, and every genteel place; had been abroad with Lord Westcote, whose expenses old Thrale cheerfully paid, I suppose, who was thus a kind of tutor to the young man, who had not failed to profit by these advantages, and who was, when he came down to Offley to see his father’s birthplace, a very handsome and well accomplished gentleman.”

After expatiating on the advantages of birth, and the presumption of new men in attempting to found a new system of gentility, Boswell proceeds: “Mr. Thrale had married Miss Hester Lynch Salusbury, of good Welsh extraction, a lady of lively talents, improved by education. That Johnson’s introduction into Mr. Thrale’s family, which contributed so much to the happiness of his life, was owing to her desire for his conversation, is a very probable and the general supposition; but it is not the truth. Mr. Murphy, who was intimate with Mr. Thrale, having spoken very highly of Dr. Johnson, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted of an invitation to dinner at Thrale’s, and was so much pleased with his reception both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent, till at last he became one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house at Southwark and in their villa at Streatham.”

Long before this was written, Boswell had quarrelled with Mrs. Thrale (as it is most convenient to call her till her second marriage), and he takes every opportunity of depreciating her. He might at least, however, have stated that, instead of sanctioning

the “general supposition” as to the introduction, she herself supplied the account of it which he adopts. In her “Anecdotes” she says:

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“The first time I ever saw this extraordinary man was in the year 1764, when Mr. Murphy, who had long been the friend and confidential intimate of Mr. Thrale, persuaded him to wish for Johnson’s conversation, extolling it in terms which that of no other person could have deserved, till we were only in doubt how to obtain his company, and find an excuse for the invitation. The celebrity of Mr. Woodhouse, a shoemaker, whose verses were at that time the subject of common discourse, soon afforded a pretence[1], and Mr. Murphy brought Johnson to meet him, giving me general caution not to be surprised at his figure, dress, or behaviour[1].... Mr. Johnson liked his new acquaintance so much, however, that from that time he dined with us every Thursday through the winter, and in the autumn of the next year he followed us to Brighthelmstone, whence we were gone before his arrival; so he was disappointed and enraged, and wrote us a letter expressive of anger, which we were very desirous to pacify, and to obtain his company again if possible. Mr. Murphy brought him back to us again very kindly, and from that time his visits grew more frequent, till in the year 1766 his health, which he had always complained of, grew so exceedingly bad, that he could not stir out of his room in the court he inhabited for many weeks together, I think months.”

[Footnote 1: “He (Johnson) spoke with much contempt of the notice taken of Woodhouse, the poetical shoemaker. He said that it was all vanity and childishness, and that such objects were to those who patronised them, mere mirrors of their own superiority. They had better, said he, furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems. He may make an excellent shoemaker, but can never make a good poet. A schoolboy’s exercise may be a pretty thing for a schoolboy, but it is no treat to a man.”—*Maxwell’s Collectanea*.]

The “Anecdotes” were written in Italy, where she had no means of reference. The account given in “Thraliana” has a greater air of freshness, and proves Boswell right as to the year.

“It was on the second Thursday of the month of January, 1765, that I first saw Mr. Johnson in a room. Murphy, whose intimacy with Mr. Thrale had been of many years’ standing, was one day dining with us at our house in Southwark, and was zealous that we should be acquainted with Johnson, of whose moral and literary character he spoke in the most exalted terms; and so whetted our desire of seeing him soon that we were only disputing *how* he should be invited, *when* he should be invited, and what should be the pretence. At last it was resolved that one Woodhouse, a shoemaker, who had written some verses, and been asked to some tables, should likewise be asked to ours, and made a temptation to Mr. Johnson to meet him: accordingly he came, and Mr. Murphy at four o’clock brought Mr. Johnson to dinner. We liked each other so well that the next Thursday was appointed for the same company to meet, exclusive of the shoemaker, and since then Johnson has remained till this day our constant acquaintance, visitor, companion, and friend.”

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In the “Anecdotes” she goes on to say that when she and her husband called on Johnson one morning in Johnson’s Court, Fleet Street, he gave way to such an uncontrolled burst of despair regarding the world to come, that Mr. Thrale tried to stop his mouth by placing one hand before it, and desired her to prevail on him to quit his close habitation for a period and come with them to Streatham. He complied, and took up his abode with them from before Midsummer till after Michaelmas in that year. During the next sixteen years a room in each of their houses was set apart for him.

The principal difficulty at first was to induce him to live peaceably with her mother, who took a strong dislike to him, and constantly led the conversation to topics which he detested, such as foreign news and politics. He revenged himself by writing to the newspapers accounts of events which never happened, for the sole purpose of mystifying her; and probably not a few of his mischievous fictions have passed current for history. They made up their differences before her death, and a Latin epitaph of the most eulogistic order from his pen is inscribed upon her tomb.

It had been well for Mrs. Thrale and her guests if there had existed no more serious objection to Johnson as an inmate. At the commencement of the acquaintance, he was fifty-six; an age when habits are ordinarily fixed: and many of his were of a kind which it required no common temper and tact to tolerate or control. They had been formed at a period when he was frequently subjected to the worst extremities of humiliating poverty and want. He describes Savage, without money to pay for a night’s lodging in a cellar, walking about the streets till he was weary, and sleeping in summer upon a bulk or in winter amongst the ashes of a glass-house. He was Savage’s associate on several occasions of the sort. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that, one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James’s Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed; but in high spirits, and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and “resolved they would stand by their country.” Whilst at college he threw away the shoes left at his door to replace the worn-out pair in which he appeared daily. His clothes were in so tattered a state whilst he was writing for the “Gentleman’s Magazine” that, instead of taking his seat at Cave’s table, he sate behind a screen and had his victuals sent to him.

Talking of the symptoms of Christopher Smart’s madness, he said, “Another charge was that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it.”

His deficiency in this respect seems to have made a lasting impression on his hostess. Referring to a couplet in “The Vanity of Human Wishes":—

> “Through all his veins the fever of renown
> *Spreads* from the strong contagion of the gown,”

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"he had desired me (says Boswell) to change *spreads* into *burns.* I thought this alteration not only cured the fault, but was more poetical, as it might carry an allusion to the shirt by which Hercules was inflamed." She has written in the margin: "Every fever burns I believe; but Bozzy could think only on Nessus' dirty shirt, or Dr. Johnson's." In another marginal note she disclaims that attention to the Doctor's costume for which Boswell gives her credit, when, after relating how he had been called into a shop by Johnson to assist in the choice of a pair of silver buckles, he adds: "Probably this alteration in dress had been suggested by Mrs. Thrale, by associating with whom his external appearance was much improved." She writes: "it was suggested by Mr. Thrale, not by his wife."

In general his wigs were very shabby, and their foreparts were burned away by the near approach of the candle, which his short-sightedness rendered necessary in reading. At Streatham, Mr. Thrale's valet had always a better wig ready, with which he met Johnson at the parlour door when dinner was announced, and as he went up stairs to bed, the same man followed him with another.

One of his applications to Cave for a trifling advance of money is signed *Impransus* (Dinnerless); and he told Boswell that he could fast two days without inconvenience, and had never been hungry but once. What he meant by hungry is not easy to explain, for his every day manner of eating was that of a half-famished man. When at table, he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks were riveted to his plate, till he had satisfied his appetite; which was indulged with such in-* tenseness, that the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. Until he left off drinking fermented liquors altogether, he acted on the maxim "claret for boys, port for men, brandy for heroes." He preferred the strongest because he said it did its work (*i.e.* intoxicate) the soonest. He used to pour capillaire into his port wine, and melted butter into his chocolate. His favourite dishes are accurately enumerated by Peter Pindar:

Madame Piozzi (loquitur).

"Dear Doctor Johnson loved a leg of pork,
And hearty on it would his grinders work:
He lik'd to eat it so much over done,
That *one* might shake the flesh from off the bone.
A veal pye too, with sugar crammed and plums,
Was wondrous grateful to the Doctor's gums.
Though us'd from morn to night on fruit to stuff,
He vow'd his belly never had enough."

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Mr. Thackeray relates in his “Irish Sketches” that on his asking for currant jelly for his venison at a public dinner, the waiter replied, “It’s all gone, your honour, but there’s some capital lobster sauce left.” This would have suited Johnson equally well, or better: he was so fond of lobster sauce that he would call for the sauce-boat and pour the whole of its remaining contents over his plum pudding. A clergyman who once travelled with him relates, “The coach halted as usual for dinner, which seemed to be a deeply interesting business to Johnson, who vehemently attacked a dish of stewed carp, using his fingers only in feeding himself.” At the dinner when he passed his celebrated sentence on the leg of mutton—“That it was as bad as bad could be: ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-dressed”—the ladies, his fellow-passengers, observed his loss or equanimity with wonder.

Two of Mrs. Thrale’s marginal notes on Boswell refer to her illustrious friend’s mode of eating. On his reported remark, that “a dog will take a small bit of meat as readily as a large, when both are before him,” she adds, “which Johnson would never have done.” When Boswell, describing the dinner with Wilkes at Davies’, says, “No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate,” she strikes in with—-“What was gustful rather: what was strong that he could taste it, what was tender that he could chew it.”

When Boswell describes him as occupied for a considerable time in reading the “Memoirs of Fontenelle,” leaning and swinging upon the low gate into the court (at Streatham) without his hat, her note is: “I wonder how he liked the story of the asparagus,”—an obvious hint at his selfish habits of indulgence at table.

With all this he affected great nicety of palate, and did not like being asked to a plain dinner. “It was a good dinner enough,” he would remark, “but it was not a dinner to ask a man to.” He was so displeased with the performances of a nobleman’s French cook, that he exclaimed with vehemence, “I’d throw such a rascal into the river;” and in reference to one of his Edinburgh hosts he said, “As for Maclaurin’s imitation of a made dish, it was a wretched attempt.”

His voice was loud, and his gesticulations, voluntary or involuntary, singularly uncouth. He had superstitious fancies about crossing thresholds or squares in the carpet with the right or left leg foremost, and when he did not appear at dinner might be found vainly endeavouring to pass a particular spot in the anteroom. He loved late hours, or more properly (say Mrs. Thrale) hated early ones. Nothing was more terrifying to him than the idea of going to bed, which he never would call going to rest, or suffer another to call it so. “I lie down that my acquaintance may sleep; but I lie down to endure oppressive misery, and soon rise again to pass the night in anxiety and pain.” When people could be induced to sit

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up with him, they were often amply compensated by his rich flow of mind; but the resulting sacrifice of health and comfort in an establishment where this sitting up became habitual, was inevitably great.[1] Instead of being grateful, he always maintained that no one forbore his own gratification for the purpose of pleasing another, and "if one did sit up, it was probably to amuse oneself." Boswell excuses his wife for not coinciding in his enthusiasm, by admitting that his illustrious friend's irregular hours and uncouth habits, such as turning the candles with their ends downwards when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, could not but be displeasing to a lady. He was generally last at breakfast, but one morning happened to be first and waited some time alone; when afterwards twitted by Mrs. Thrale with irregularity, he replied, "Madam, I do not like to come down to vacuity."

[Footnote 1: Dr. Burney states that in 1765 "he very frequently met Johnson at Streatham, where they had many long conversations, after sitting up as long as the fire and candles lasted, and much longer than the patience of the servants subsisted."]

He was subject to dreadful fits of depression, caused or accompanied by compunction for venial or fancied sins, by the fear of death or madness—(the only things he did fear), and by ingrained ineradicable disease. When Boswell speaks of his "striving against evil," "Ay," she writes in the margin, "and against the King's evil."

If his early familiarity with all the miseries of destitution, aggravated by disease, had increased his natural roughness and irritability, on the other hand it had helped largely to bring out his sterling virtues,—his discriminating charity, his genuine benevolence, his well-timed generosity, his large-hearted sympathy with real suffering. But he required it to be material and positive, and scoffed at mere mental or sentimental woes. "The sight of people who want food and raiment is so common in great cities, that a surly fellow like me has no compassion to spare for wounds given only to vanity or softness." He said it was enough to make a plain man sick to hear pity lavished on a family reduced by losses to exchange a fine house for a snug cottage; and when condolence was demanded for a lady of rank in mourning for a baby, he contrasted her with a washerwoman with half-a-dozen children dependent on her daily labour for their daily bread.[1]

[Footnote 1: "It's weel wi' you gentles that can sit in the house wi' handkerchers at your een when ye lose a friend; but the like o' us maun to our wark again, if our hearts were beating as hard as any hammer."—*The Antiquary*. For this very reason the "gentles" commonly suffer most.]

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Lord Macaulay thus portrays the objects of Johnson's hospitality as soon as he had got a house to cover them. "It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment he had placed 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 Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Mrs. Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor called Levet, who bled and dosed coalheavers and hackney coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this menagerie."[1]

[Footnote 1: Miscellaneous Writings, vol. i. p. 293.]

Mrs. Williams was the daughter of a physician, and of a good Welsh family, who did not leave her dependent on Johnson. She is termed by Madame D'Arblay a very pretty poet, and was treated with uniform respect by him.[1] All the authorities for the account of Levet were collected by Hawkins[2]: from these it appears that his patients were "chiefly of the lowest class of tradesmen," and that, although he took all that was offered him by way of fee, including meat and drink, he demanded nothing from the poor, nor was known in any instance to have enforced the payment of even what was justly his due. Hawkins adds that he (Levet) had acted for many years in the capacity of surgeon and apothecary to Johnson under the direction of Dr. Lawrence.

[Footnote 1: Miss Cornelia Knight, in her "Autobiography," warmly vindicates her respectability, and refers to a memoir, by Lady Knight, in the "European Magazine" for Oct. 1799.]

[Footnote 2: Life of Johnson, p. 396-400.]

"When fainting Nature called for aid,
And hovering death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
The power of Art without the show;

No summons mocked by chill delay, *No petty gains disdained by pride,* The modest wants of every day The toil of every day supplied."

Johnson's verses, compared with Lord Macaulay's prose, strikingly shew how the same subject can be degraded or elevated by the mode of treatment; and how easily the historian or biographer, who expands his authorities by picturesque details, may brighten or darken characters at will.

To complete the picture of Johnson's interior, it should be added that the inmates of his house were quarrelling from, morning to night with one another, with his negro servant, or with himself. In one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale, he says, "Williams hates everybody: Levet hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams: Desmoulins hates them both: Poll (Miss Carmichael) loves none of them." In a conversation at Streatham, reported by Madame D'Arblay, the *menagerie* was thus humorously described:—

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"*Mrs. Thrale*.—Mr. Levet, I suppose, Sir, has the office of keeping the hospital in health? for he is an apothecary.

"*Dr. J*.—Levet, Madam, is a brutal fellow, but I have a good regard for him; for his brutality is in his manners, not his mind.

"*Mr. Thrale*.—But how do you get your dinners drest?

"*Dr. J*.—Why De Mullin has the chief management of the kitchen; but our roasting is not magnificent, for we have no jack.

"*Mr. T*.—No jack? Why how do they manage without?

"*Dr. J*.—Small joints, I believe, they manage with a string, and larger are done at the tavern. I have some thoughts (with a profound gravity) of buying a jack, because I think a jack is some credit to a house.

"*Mr. T*.—Well, but you will have a spit, too?

"*Dr. J*.—No, Sir, no; that would be superfluous; for we shall never use it; and if a jack is seen, a spit will be presumed!

"*Mrs. T*.—But pray, Sir, who is the Poll you talk of? She that you used to abet in her quarrels with Mrs. Williams, and call out,' At her again, Poll! Never flinch, Poll!'

"*Dr. J*.—Why I took to Poll very well at first, but she won't do upon a nearer examination.

"*Mrs. T*.—How came she among you, Sir?

"*Dr. J*.—Why I don't rightly remember, but we could spare her very well from us. 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."

The effect of an unbroken residence with such inmates, on a man of irritable temper subject to morbid melancholy, may be guessed; and the merit of the Thrales in rescuing him from it, and in soothing down his asperities, can hardly be over-estimated. Lord Macaulay says, they were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to every other in London; and suggests that even the peculiarities which seem to unfit him for civilised society, including his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, and the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his food, increased the interest which his new associates took in him. His hostess does not appear to have viewed them in that light, and she was able to command the best company of the intellectual order without the aid of a "lion," or a bear. If his conversation attracted many, it drove away many, and silenced more. He accounted for

the little attention paid him by the great, by saying that “great lords and great ladies do not like to have their mouths stopped,” as if this was peculiar to them as a class. “My leddie,” remarks Cuddie in “Old Mortality,” “canna weel bide to be contradicted, as I ken neabody likes, if they could help themselves.”

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Johnson was in the zenith of his fame when literature, politics, and fashion began to blend together again by hardly perceptible shades, like the colours in shot-silk, as they had partially done in the Augustan age of Queen Anne. One marked sign was the formation of the Literary Club (The Club, as it still claims to be called), which brought together Fox, Burke, Gibbon, Johnson, Goldsmith, Garrick, Reynolds, and Beauclerc, besides blackballing a bishop (the Bishop of Chester), and a lord-chancellor (Camden). [1] Yet it is curious to observe within how narrow a circle of good houses the Doctor's engagements were restricted. Reynolds, Paoli, Beauclerc, Allan Ramsay, Hoole, Dilly, Strahan, Lord Lucan, Langton, Garrick, and the Club formed his main reliance as regards dinners; and we find Boswell recording with manifest symptoms of exultation in 1781: "I dined with him at a bishop's where were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Berenger, and some more company. He had dined the day before at another bishop's." His reverence for the episcopal bench well merited some return on their part. Mr. Seward saw him presented to the Archbishop of York, and described his bow to an Archbishop as such a studied elaboration of homage, such an extension of limb, such a flexion of body, as have seldom or ever been equalled. The lay nobility were not equally grateful, although his deference for the peerage was extreme. Except in Scotland or on his travels, he is seldom found dining with a nobleman.

[Footnote 1: Canning was blackballed the first time he was proposed. He was elected in 1798, Mr. Windham being his proposer, and Dr. Burney his seconder.]

It is therefore hardly an exaggeration to say that he owed more social enjoyment to the Thrales than to all the rest of his acquaintance put together. Holland House alone, and in its best days, would convey to persons living in our time an adequate conception of the Streatham circle, when it comprised Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, Goldsmith, Boswell, Murphy, Dr. Burney and his daughter, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Crewe, Lord Loughborough, Dunning (afterwards Lord Ashburton), Lord Mulgrave, Lord Westcote, Sir Lucas and Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Pepys, Major Holroyd afterwards Lord Sheffield, the Bishop of London and Mrs. Porteous, the Bishop of Peterborough and Mrs. Hinchcliffe, Miss Gregory, Miss Streatfield, &c. As at Holland House, the chief scene of warm colloquial contest or quiet interchange of mind was the library, a large and handsome room, which the pencil of Reynolds gradually enriched with portraits of all the principal persons who had conversed or studied in it. To supply any deficiencies on the shelves, a hundred pounds, Madame D'Arblay states, was placed at Johnson's disposal to expend in books; and we may take it for granted that any new publication suggested by him was ordered at once. But a bookish couple, surrounded by a literary set, were surely not exclusively dependent on him for this description

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of help, nor laid under any extraordinary obligation by reason of it. Whilst the “Lives of the Poets” was in progress, Dr. Johnson “would frequently produce one of the proof sheets to embellish the breakfast table, which was always in the library, and was certainly the most sprightly and agreeable meeting of the day.” ... “These proof sheets Mrs. Thrale was permitted to read aloud, and the discussions to which they led were in the highest degree entertaining."[1]

[Footnote 1: “Memoirs of Dr. Burney,” &c., by his daughter, Madame D’Arblay. In three volumes, 1832. Vol. ii. p. 173-178.]

It was mainly owing to his domestication with the Thrales that he began to frequent drawing-rooms at an age when the arm-chair at home or at the club has an irresistible charm for most men of sedentary pursuits. It must be admitted that the evening parties in which he was seen, afforded a chance of something better than the “unidead chatter of girls,” with an undue fondness for which he reproached Langton; for the *Blue Stocking* clubs had just come into fashion,—so called from a casual allusion to the blue stockings of an *habitue*, Mr. Stillingfleet.[1] Their founders were Mrs. Vesey and Mrs. Montagu; but according to Madame D’Arblay, “more bland and more gleeful than that of either of them, was the personal celebrity of Mrs. Thrale. Mrs. Vesey, indeed, gentle and diffident, dreamed not of any competition, but Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale had long been set up as rival candidates for colloquial eminence, and each of them thought the other alone worthy to be her peer. Openly therefore when they met, they combated for precedence of admiration, with placid though high-strained intellectual exertion on the one side, and an exuberant pleasantry or classical allusion or quotation on the other; without the smallest malice in either.”

[Footnote 1: The first of these was then (about 1768) in the meridian of its lustre, but had been instituted many years previously at Bath, It owed its name to an apology made by Mr. Stillingfleet in declining to accept an invitation to a literary meeting at Mrs. Vesey’s, from not being, he said, in the habit of displaying a proper equipment for an evening assembly. “Pho, pho,” said she, “don’t mind dress. Come in your blue stockings.” With which words, humorously repeating them as he entered the apartment of the chosen coterie, Mr. Stillingfleet claimed permission for entering according to order. And these words, ever after, were fixed, in playful stigma, upon Mrs. Vesey’s associations. *(Madame D’Arblay.)* Boswell also traces the term to Stillingfleet’s blue stockings; and Hannah More’s “Bas-Bleu” gave it a permanent place in literature.]

A different account of the origin of Bluestocking parties was given by Lady Crewe to a lady who has allowed me to copy her note of the conversation, made at the time (1816):

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“Lady Crewe told me that her mother (Mrs. Greville), the Duchess of Portland, and Mrs. Montagu were the first who began the conversation parties in imitation of the noted ones, *temp.* Madame de Sevigne’, at Rue St. Honore. Madame de Polignac, one of the first guests, came in blue silk stockings, then the newest fashion in Paris. Mrs. Greville and all the lady members of Mrs. Montagu’s *club*, adopted the *mode*. A foreign gentleman, after spending an evening at Mrs. Montagu’s *soiree*, wrote to tell a friend of the charming intellectual party, who had one rule; ’they wear blue stockings as a distinction.’”

Wraxall, who makes the same comparison, remarks: “Mrs. Thrale always appeared to me to possess at least as much information, a mind as cultivated, and more brilliancy of intellect than Mrs. Montagu, but she did not descend among men from such an eminence, and she talked much more, as well as more unguardedly, on every subject. She was the provider and conductress of Johnson, who lived almost constantly under her roof, or more properly under that of Mr. Thrale, both in Town and at Streatham. He did not, however, spare her more than other women in his attacks if she courted and provoked his animadversions.”

Although he seldom appeared to greater advantage than when under the combined spell of feminine influence and rank, his demeanour varied with his mood. On Miss Monkton’s (afterwards Countess of Cork) insisting, one evening, that Sterne’s writings were very pathetic, Johnson bluntly denied it. “I am sure,” she rejoined, “they have affected me.” “Why,” said Johnson, smiling and rolling himself about, “that is because, dearest, you’re a dunce.” When she some time afterwards mentioned this to him, he said, with equal truth and politeness, “Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it.”

He did not come off so well on another occasion, when the presence of women he respected might be expected to operate as a cheek. Talking, at Mrs. Garrick’s, of a very respectable author, he told us, says Boswell, “a curious circumstance in his life, which was that he had married a printer’s devil. *Reynolds*. ’A printer’s devil, Sir! why, I thought a printer’s devil was a creature with a black face and in rags.’ *Johnson*. ’Yes, Sir. But I suppose he had her face washed, and put clean clothes on her.’ Then, looking very serious, and very earnest. ’And she did not disgrace him;—the woman had a bottom of good sense.’ The word *bottom* thus introduced was so ludicrous when contrasted with his gravity, that most of us could not forbear tittering and laughing; though I recollect that the Bishop of Killaloe kept his countenance with perfect steadiness, while Miss Hannah More slily hid her face behind a lady’s back who sat on the same settee with her. His pride could not bear that any expression of his should excite ridicule, when he did not intend it: he therefore resolved to assume and exercise

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despotic power, glanced sternly around, and called out in a strong tone, 'Where's the merriment?' Then collecting himself, and looking awful, to make us feel how he could impose restraint, and as it were searching his mind for a still more ludicrous word, he slowly pronounced, 'I say the *woman* was *fundamentally* sensible;' as if he had said, Hear this now, and laugh if you dare. We all sat composed as at a funeral."

This resembles the influence exercised by the "great commoner" over the House of Commons. An instance being mentioned of his throwing an adversary into irretrievable confusion by an arrogant expression of contempt, the late Mr. Charles Butler asked the relator, an eye-witness, whether the House did not laugh at the ridiculous figure of the poor member. "No, Sir," was the reply, "we were too much awed to laugh."

It was a marked feature in Johnson's character that he was fond of female society; so fond, indeed, that on coming to London he was obliged to be on his guard against the temptations to which it exposed him. He left off attending the Green Room, telling Grarrick, "I'll come no more behind your scenes, Davy; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

The proneness of his imagination to wander in this forbidden field is unwittingly betrayed by his remarking at Sky, in support of the doctrine that animal substances are less cleanly than vegetable: "I have *often* thought that, if I kept a seraglio, the ladies should all wear linen gowns, or cotton, I mean stuffs made of vegetable substances. I would have no silks: you cannot tell when it is clean: it will be very nasty before it is perceived to be so; linen detects its own dirtiness." His virtue thawed instead of becoming more rigid in the North. "This evening," records Boswell of their visit to an Hebridean chief, "one of our married ladies, a lively pretty little woman, good-humouredly sat down upon Dr. Johnson's knee, and being encouraged by some of the company, put her hands round his neck and kissed him. 'Do it again,' said he, 'and let us see who will tire first.' He kept her on his knee some time whilst he and she drank tea."

The Rev. Dr. Maxwell relates in his "Collectanea," that "Two young women from Staffordshire visited him when I was present, to consult him on the subject of Methodism, to which they were inclined. 'Come,' said he, 'you pretty fools, dine with Maxwell and me at the Mitre, and we will talk over that subject:' which they did, and after dinner he took one of them upon his knee, and fondled her for half an hour together." [1]

[Footnote 1: "Amongst his singularities, his love of conversing with the prostitutes he met in the streets, was not the least. He has been known to carry some of these unfortunate creatures into a tavern, for the sake of striving to awaken in them a proper sense of their condition. I remember, he said, once asking one of them for what purpose she supposed her Maker had bestowed on her so much beauty. Her answer

was, ’To please the gentlemen, to be sure; for what other purpose could it be given me?” *(Johnsoniana.)* He once carried one, fainting from exhaustion, home on his back.]

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Women almost always like men who like women; or as the phenomenon is explained by Pope—

> "Lust, through some certain strainers well refined, Is gentle love,
> and charms all womankind."

Johnson, despite of his unwieldy figure, scarred features and uncouth gestures, was a favourite with the fair, and talked of affairs of the heart as things of which he was entitled to speak from personal experience as confidently as of any other moral or social topics. He told Mrs. Thrale, without the smallest consciousness of presumption or what Mr. Square would term the unfitness of things, of his and Lord Lyttleton's having contended for Miss Boothby's preference with an emulation that occasioned hearty disgust and ended in lasting animosity. "You may see," he added, when the Lives of the Poets were printed, "that dear Boothby is at my heart still. She would delight in that fellow Lyttleton's company though, all that I could do, and I cannot forgive even his memory the preference given by a mind like hers." [1]

[Footnote 1: In point of personal advantages the man of rank and fashion and the scholar were nearly on a par.

> "But who is this astride the pony,
> So long, so lean, so lank, so bony?
> Dat be de great orator, Littletony."]

Mr. Croker surmises that "Molly Aston," not "dear Boothby," must have been the object of this rivalry[1]; and the surmise is strengthened by Johnson's calling Molly the loveliest creature he ever saw; adding (to Mrs. Thrale), "My wife was a little jealous, and happening one day when walking in the country to meet a fortune-hunting gipsy, Mrs. Johnson made the wench look at my hand, but soon repented of her curiosity,'for,' says the gipsy, 'your heart is divided between a Betty and a Molly: Betty loves you best, but you take most delight in Molly's company.' When I turned about to laugh, I saw my wife was crying. Pretty charmer, she had no reason." This pretty charmer was in her forty-eighth year when he married her, he being then twenty-seven. He told Beauclerc that it was a love match on both sides; and Garrick used to draw ludicrous pictures of their mutual fondness, which he heightened by representing her as short, fat, tawdrily dressed, and highly rouged.

[Footnote 1: See "Croker's Boswell," p. 672, and Malone's note in the prior edition.]

On the question whether "Molly Aston" or "dear Boothby" was the cause of his dislike of Lyttleton, one of Mrs. Piozzi's marginal notes is decisive. "Mrs. Thrale (says Boswell) suggests that he was offended by Molly Aston's preference of his lordship to him." She retorts: "I never said so. I believe Lord Lyttleton and Molly Aston were not acquainted.

No, no: it was Miss Boothby whose preference he professed to have been jealous of, and so I said in the ‘Anecdotes.’”

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One of Rochefoucauld's maxims is: "Young women who do not wish to appear *coquette*, and men of advanced years who do not wish to appear ridiculous, should never speak of love as of a thing in which they might take part." Mrs. Thrale relates an amusing instance of Johnson's adroitness in escaping from the dilemma: "As we had been saying one day that no subject failed of receiving dignity from the manner in which Mr. Johnson treated it, a lady at my house said, she would make him talk about love; and took her measures accordingly, deriding the novels of the day because they treated about love. 'It is not,' replied our philosopher, 'because they treat, as you call it, about love, but because they treat of nothing, that they are despicable: we must not ridicule a passion which he who never felt, never was happy, and he who laughs at, never deserves to feel—a passion which has caused the change of empires, and the loss of worlds—a passion which has inspired heroism and subdued avarice.' He thought he had already said too much. 'A passion, in short,' added he, with an altered tone, 'that consumes me away for my pretty Fanny here, and she 'is very cruel,' speaking of another lady (Miss Burney) in the room."

As the high-flown language which he occasionally employed in addressing or discussing women, has originated a theory that the basis or essence of his character was romance, it may be as well to contrast what he said in soberer moods on love. He remarked to Dr. Maxwell, that "its violence and ill-effects were much exaggerated; for who knows any real sufferings on that head, more than from the exorbitancy of any other passion?" On Boswell asking him whether he did not suppose that there are fifty women in the world with any of whom a man may be as happy as with any one woman in particular, he replied, "Ay, Sir, fifty thousand. I believe marriages would in general be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the lord-chancellor upon a due consideration of the characters and circumstances without the parties having any choice in the matter." On another occasion he observed that sensible men rarely married for love.

These peculiarities throw light on more questions than one relating to Johnson's prolonged intimacy and alleged quarrel with Mrs. Thrale. His gallantry, and the flattering air of deferential tenderness which he threw into his commerce with his female favourites, may have had little less to do with his domestication at Streatham than his celebrity, his learning, or his wit. The most submissive wife will manage to dislodge an inmate who is displeasing to her, "Aye, a marriage, man," said Bucklaw to his led captain, "but wherefore droops thy mighty spirit? The board will have a corner, and the corner will have a trencher, and the trencher will have a glass beside it; and the board end shall be filled, and the trencher and the glass shall be replenished for thee, if all the petticoats in Lothian had sworn the contrary." "So says many an honest fellow," said Craigenfelt, "and some of my special friends; but curse me if I know the reason, the women could never bear me, and always contrived to trundle me out before the honey-moon was over."[1]

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[Footnote 1: Bride of Lammermoor.]

It was all very well for Johnson to tell Boswell, “I know no man who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he holds up a finger, he is obeyed.” The sage never acted on the theory, and instead of treating the wife as a cipher, lost no opportunity of paying court to her, though in a manner quite compatible with his own lofty spirit of independence and self-respect. Thus, attention having been called to some Italian verses by Baretti, he converted them into an elegant compliment to her by an improvised paraphrase:

“Viva! viva la padrona!
Tutta bella, e tutta buona,
La padrona e un angiolella
Tutta buona e tutta bella;
Tutta bella e tutta buona;
Viva! viva la padrona!”

“Long may live my lovely Hetty!
Always young and always pretty;
Always pretty, always young,
Live my lovely Hetty long!
Always young and always pretty;
Long may live my lovely Hetty!”

Her marginal note in the copy of the “Anecdotes” presented by her to Sir James Fellowes in 1816 is:—“I heard these verses sung at Mr. Thomas’s by three voices not three weeks ago.”

It was in the eighth year of their acquaintance that Johnson solaced his fatigue in the Hebrides by writing a Latin ode to her. “About fourteen years since,” wrote Sir Walter Scott, in 1829, “I landed in Sky with a party of friends, and had the curiosity to ask what was the first idea on every one’s mind at landing. All answered separately that it was this ode.” Thinking Miss Cornelia Knight’s version too diffuse, I asked Mr. Milnes for a translation or paraphrase, and he kindly complied by producing these spirited stanzas:

“Where constant mist enshrouds the rocks,
Shattered in earth’s primeval shocks,
And niggard Nature ever mocks

The labourer’s toil,I roam through clans of savage men,
Untamed by arts, untaught by pen;
Or cower within some squalid den

O’er reeking soil.Through paths that halt from stone to stone,

Amid the din of tongues unknown,
One image haunts my soul alone,

Thine, gentle Thrale!Soothes she, I ask, her spouse's care?
Does mother-love its charge prepare?
Stores she her mind with knowledge rare,

Or lively tale?Forget me not! thy faith I claim,
Holding a faith that cannot die,
That fills with thy benignant name

These shores of Sky."

"On another occasion," says Mrs. Thrale, in the "Anecdotes," "I can boast verses from Dr. Johnson. As I went into his room the morning of my birthday once and said to him, 'Nobody sends me any verses now, because I am five-and-thirty years old; and Stella was fed with them till forty-six, I remember.' My being just recovered from illness and confinement will account for the manner in which he burst out suddenly, for so he did without the least previous hesitation whatsoever, and without having entertained the smallest intention towards it half a minute before:

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"Oft in danger, yet alive,
We are come to thirty-five;
Long may better years arrive,
Better years than thirty-five.
Could philosophers contrive
Life to stop at thirty-five,
Time his hours should never drive
O'er the bounds of thirty-five.
High to soar, and deep to dive,
Nature gives at thirty-five.
Ladies, stock and tend your hive,
Trifle not at thirty-five;
For howe'er we boast and strive,
Life declines from thirty-five;
He that ever hopes to thrive
Must begin by thirty-five;
And all who wisely wish to wive
Must look on Thrale at thirty-five."

"'And now,' said he, as I was writing them down, 'you may see what it is to come for poetry to a dictionary-maker; you may observe that the rhymes run in alphabetical order exactly.' And so they do."

Byron's estimate of life at the same age, is somewhat different:

"Too old for youth—too young, at thirty-five
To herd with boys, or hoard with good threescore,
I wonder people should he left alive.
But since they are, that epoch is a bore."

Lady Aldborough, whose best witticisms unluckily lie under the same merited ban as Rochester's best verses, resolved not to pass twenty-five, and had her passport made out accordingly till her death at eighty-five. She used to boast that, whenever a foreign official objected, she never failed to silence him by the remark, that he was the first gentleman of his country who ever told a lady she was older than she said she was. Actuated probably by a similar feeling, and in the hope of securing to herself the benefit of the doubt, Mrs. Thrale omitted in the "Anecdotes" the year when these verses were addressed to her, and a sharp controversy has been raised as to the respective ages of herself and Dr. Johnson at the time. It is thus summed up by one of the combatants:

"In one place Mr. Croker says that at the commencement of the intimacy between Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, in 1765, the lady was twenty-five years old. In other places he says that Mrs. Thrale's thirty-fifth year coincided with Johnson's seventieth. Johnson was born in 1709. If, therefore, Mrs. Thrale's thirty-fifth year coincided with Johnson's

seventieth, she could have been only twenty-one years old in 1765. This is not all. Mr. Croker, in another place, assigns the year 1777 as the date of the complimentary lines which Johnson made on Mrs. Thrale's thirty-fifth birthday. If this date be correct Mrs. Thrale must have been born in 1742, and could have been only twenty-three when her acquaintance commenced. Mr. Croker, therefore, gives us three different statements as to her age. Two of the three must be incorrect. We will not decide between them."[1]

[Footnote 1: Macaulay's Essays.]

Mr. Salusbury, referring to a china bowl in his possession, says: "The slip of paper now in it is in my father's handwriting, and copied, I have heard him say, from the original slip, which was worn out by age and fingering. The exact words are, 'In this bason was baptised Hester Lynch Salusbury, 16th Jan. 1740-41 old style, at Bodville in Carnarvonshire.'"

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The incident of the verses is thus narrated in “Thraliana”: “And this year, 1777[1], when I told him that it was my birthday, and that I was then thirty-five years old, he repeated me these verses, which I wrote down from his mouth as he made them.” If she was born in 1740-41, she must have been thirty-six in 1777; and there is no perfectly satisfactory settlement of the controversy, which many will think derives its sole importance from the two chief controversialists.

[Footnote 1: In one of her Memorandum books, 1776.]

The highest authorities differ equally about her looks. “My readers,” says Boswell, “will naturally wish for some representation of the figures of this couple. Mr. Thrale was tall, well-proportioned, and stately. As for *Madam*, or *My Mistress*, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk.” “He should have added,” observes Mr. Croker, “that she was very pretty.” This was not her own opinion, nor that of her cotemporaries, although her face was attractive from animation and expression, and her personal appearance pleasing on the whole. Sometimes, when visiting the author of “Piozziana,"[1] she used to look at her little self, as she called it, and spoke drolly of what she once was, as if speaking of some one else; and one day, turning to him, she exclaimed: “No, I never was handsome: I had always too many strong points in my face for beauty.” On his expressing a doubt of this, and hinting that Dr. Johnson was certainly an admirer of her personal charms, she replied that his devotion was at least as warm towards the table and the table-cloth at Streatham.

[Footnote 1: “Piozziana; or Recollections of the late Mrs. Piozzi, with Remarks. By a Friend.” (The Rev. E. Mangin.) Moxon, 1833. These reminiscences, unluckily limited to the last eight or ten years of her life at Bath, contain much curious information, and leave a highly favourable impression of Mrs. Piozzi.]

One day when he was ill, exceedingly low-spirited, and persuaded that death was not far distant, she appeared before him in a dark-coloured gown, which his bad sight, and worse apprehensions, made him mistake for an iron-grey. “‘Why do you delight,’ said he, ’thus to thicken the gloom of misery that surrounds me? is not here sufficient accumulation of horror without anticipated mourning?’—’This is not mourning, Sir!’ said I, drawing the curtain, that the light might fall upon the silk, and show it was a purple mixed with green.—’Well, well!’ replied he, changing his voice; ’you little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?’”

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According to the author of “Piozziana,” who became acquainted with her late in life, “She was short, and though well-proportioned, broad, and deep-chested. Her hands were muscular and almost coarse, but her writing was, even in her eightieth year, exquisitely beautiful; and one day, while conversing with her on the subject of education, she observed that ’all Misses now-a-days, wrote so like each other, that it was provoking;’ adding, ’I love to see individuality of character, and abhor sameness, especially in what is feeble and flimsy.’ Then, spreading her hand, she said, ’I believe I owe what you are pleased to call my good writing, to the shape of this hand, for my uncle, Sir Robert Cotton, thought it was too manly to be employed in writing like a boarding-school girl; and so I came by my vigorous, black manuscript.’”

It was fortunate that the hand-writing compensated for the hands; and as she attached great importance to blood and race, that she did not live to read Byron’s “thoroughbred and tapering fingers,” or to be shocked by his theory that “the hand is almost the only sign of blood which aristocracy can generate.” Her Bath friend appeals to a miniature (engraved for this work) by Roche, of Bath, taken when she was in her seventy-seventh year. Like Cromwell, who told the painter that if he softened a harsh line or so much as omitted a wart, he should never be paid a sixpence,—she desired the artist to paint her face deeply rouged, which it always was[1], and to introduce a trivial deformity of the jaw, produced by a horse treading on her as she lay on the ground after a fall. In this respect she proved superior to Johnson; who, with all his love of truth, could not bear to be painted with his defects. He was displeased at being drawn holding a pen close to his eye; and on its being suggested that Reynolds had painted himself holding his ear in his hand to catch the sound, he replied: “He may paint himself as deaf as he pleases, but I will not be Blinking Sam.”

[Footnote 1: “One day I called early at her house, and as I entered her drawing-room, she passed me, saying, ’Dear Sir, I will be with you in a few minutes; but, while I think of it, I must go to my dressing-closet and paint my face, which I forgot to do this morning.’ Accordingly she soon returned, wearing the requisite quantity of bloom; which, it must be noticed, was not in the least like that of youth and beauty. I then said that I was surprised she should so far sacrifice to fashion, as to take that trouble. Her answer was that, as I might conclude, her practice of painting did not proceed from any silly compliance with Bath fashion, or any fashion; still less, if possible, from the desire of appearing younger than she was, but from this circumstance, that in early life she had worn rouge, as other young persons did in her day, as a part of dress; and after continuing the habit for some years, discovered that it had introduced a dull yellow colour into her complexion, quite unlike that of her natural skin, and that she wished to conceal the deformity.”—*Piozziana*.]

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Reynolds' portrait of Mrs. Thrale conveys a highly agreeable impression of her; and so does Hogarth's, when she sat to him for the principal figure in "The Lady's Last Stake." She was then only fourteen; and he probably idealised his model; but that he also produced a striking likeness, is obvious on comparing his picture with the professed portraits. The history of this picture (which has been engraved, at Lord Macaulay's suggestion, for this work) will be found in the Autobiography and the Letters.

Boswell's account of his first visit to Streatham gives a tolerably fair notion of the footing on which Johnson stood there, and the manner in which the interchange of mind was carried on between him and the hostess. This visit took place in October, 1769, four years after Johnson's introduction to her; and Boswell's absence from London, in which he had no fixed residence during Johnson's life, will hardly account for the neglect of his illustrious friend in not procuring him a privilege which he must have highly coveted and would doubtless have turned to good account.

"On the 6th of October I complied with this obliging invitation; and found, at an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing. Johnson, though quite at home, was yet looked up to with an awe, tempered by affection, and seemed to be equally the care of his host and hostess. I rejoiced at seeing him so happy."

"Mrs. Thrale disputed with him on the merit of Prior. He attacked him powerfully; said he wrote of love like a man who had never felt it; his love verses were college verses: and he repeated the song, 'Alexis shunn'd his fellow swains,' &c. in so ludicrous a manner, as to make us all wonder how any one could have been pleased with such fantastical stuff. Mrs. Thrale stood to her guns with great courage, in defence of amorous ditties, which Johnson despised, till he at last silenced her by saving, 'My dear lady, talk no more of this. Nonsense can be defended but by nonsense.'

"Mrs. Thrale then praised Garrick's talents for light gay poetry; and, as a specimen, repeated his song in 'Florizel and Perdita,' and dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line:—

"'I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.'

"*Johnson.*—'Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David! Smile with the simple!—what folly is that? And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich.'" Boswell adds, that he repeated this sally to Glarrick, and wondered to find his sensibility as a writer not a little irritated by it; on which Mrs. Thrale remarks, "How odd to go and tell the man!"

The independent tone she took when she deemed the Doctor unreasonable, is also proved by Boswell in his report of what took place at Streatham in reference to Lord Marchmont's offer to supply information for the Life of Pope:

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“Elated with the success of my spontaneous exertion to procure material and respectable aid to Johnson for his very favourite work, ‘the Lives of the Poets,’ I hastened down to Mr. Thrale’s, at Streatham, where he now was, that I might insure his being at home next day; and after dinner, when I thought he would receive the good news in the best humour, I announced it eagerly: ’I have been at work for you to-day, Sir. I have been with Lord Marchmont. He bade me tell you he has a great respect for you, and will call on you to-morrow at one o’clock, and communicate all he knows about Pope.’ *Johnson.* ’I shall not be in town to-morrow. I don’t care to know about Pope.’ *Mrs. Thrale* (surprised, as I was, and a little angry). ’I suppose, Sir, Mr. Boswell thought that as you are to write Pope’s Life, you would wish to know about him.’ *Johnson.* ’Wish! why yes. If it rained knowledge, I’d hold out my hand; but I would not give myself the trouble to go in quest of it.’ There was no arguing with him at the moment. Sometime afterwards he said, ’Lord Marchmont will call upon me, and then I shall call on Lord Marchmont.’ Mrs. Thrale was uneasy at this unaccountable caprice: and told me, that if I did not take care to bring about a meeting between Lord Marchmont and him, it would never take place, which would be a great pity.”

The ensuing conversation is a good sample of the freedom and variety of “talk” in which Johnson luxuriated, and shows how important a part Mrs. Thrale played in it:

“Mrs. Thrale told us, that a curious clergyman of our acquaintance (Dr. Lort is named in the margin) had discovered a licentious stanza, which Pope had originally in his ‘Universal Prayer,’ before the stanza,—

“’What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns us not to do,’ &c.

It was this:—

“’Can sins of moment claim the rod
Of everlasting fires?
And that offend great Nature’s God
Which Nature’s self inspires.”

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

“*Boswell*. ’In that stanza of Pope’s, “*rod of fires*” is certainly a bad metaphor.’ *Mrs. Thrale*. ’And “sins of *moment*” is a faulty expression; for its true import is *momentous*, which cannot be intended.’ *Johnson*. ’It must have been written “of *moments*.” Of *moment*, is *momentous*; of *moments, momentary*. I warrant you, however, Pope wrote this stanza, and some friend struck it out.’

"Talking of divorces, I asked if Othello's doctrine was not plausible:—

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

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Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale joined against this. *Johnson*. 'Ask any man if he'd wish not to know of such an injury.' *Boswell*. 'Would you tell your friend to make him unhappy?' *Johnson*. 'Perhaps, Sir, I should not: but that would be from prudence on my own account. A man would tell his father.' *Boswell*. 'Yes; because he would not have spurious children to get any share of the family inheritance.' *Mrs. Thrale*. 'Or he would tell his brother.' *Boswell*. 'Certainly his *elder* brother.... Would you tell Mr. ——?' (naming a gentleman who assuredly was not in the least danger of so miserable a disgrace, though married to a fine woman). *Johnson*. 'No, Sir: because it would do no good; he is so sluggish, he'd never go to Parliament and get through a divorce.'" *Marginal Note*: "Langton."

There is every reason to believe that her behaviour to Johnson was uniformly marked by good-breeding and delicacy. She treated him with a degree of consideration and respect which he did not always receive from other friends and admirers. A foolish rumour having got into the newspapers that he had been learning to dance of Vestris, it was agreed that Lord Charlemont should ask him if it was true, and his lordship with (it is shrewdly observed) the characteristic spirit of a general of Irish volunteers, actually put the question, which provoked a passing feeling of irritation. Opposite Boswell's account of this incident she has written, "Was he not right in hating to be so treated? and would he not have been right to have loved me better than any of them, because I never did make a Lyon of him?"

One great charm of her companionship to cultivated men was her familiarity with the learned languages, as well as with French, Italian, and Spanish. The author of "Piozziana" says: "She not only read and wrote Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, but had for sixty years constantly and ardently studied the Scriptures and the works of commentators in the original languages." She did not know Greek, and he probably over-estimated her other acquirements, which Boswell certainly underestimates when he speaks slightingly of them on the strength of Johnson's having said: "It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him (Thrale) 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 school-boy in one of the lower forms." If this were so, it is strange that Thrale should cut so poor a figure, should seem little better than a nonentity, whilst every imaginable topic was under animated discussion at his table; for Boswell was more ready to report the husband's sayings than the wife's. In a marginal note on one of the printed letters she says: "Mr. Thrale was a very merry talking man in 1760; but the distress of 1772, which affected his health, his hopes, and his whole soul, affected his temper too. Perkins called it being planet struck, and I am not sure he was ever completely the same man again." The notes of his conversation during the antecedent period are equally meagre.[1] He is described by Madame D'Arblay as taking a singular amusement in hearing, instigating, and provoking a war of words, alternating triumph and overthrow, between clever and ambitious colloquial combatants.

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[Footnote 1: “Pray, Doctor, said a gentleman to Johnson, is Mr. Thrale a man of conversation, or is he only wise and silent?’ ’Why, Sir, his conversation does not show the *minute* hand; but he generally strikes the hour very correctly.’”—*Johnsoniana*.]

No one would have expected to find her as much at home in Greek and Latin authors as a man of fair ability who had received and profited by an University education, but she could appreciate a classical allusion or quotation, and translate off-hand a Latin epigram.

“Mary Aston,” said Johnson, “was a beauty and a scholar, and a wit and a whig; and she talked all in praise of liberty; and so I made this epigram upon her. She was the loveliest creature I ever saw!

“’Liber ut esse velim, suasisti, pulchra Maria,
Ut maneam liber, pulchra Maria, vale!’

“Will it do this way in English, Sir? (said Mrs. Thrale)—

“’Persuasions to freedom fall oddly from you,
If freedom we seek, fair Maria, adieu.”

Mr. Croker’s version is:—

“’You wish me, fair Maria, to be free,
Then, fair Maria, I must fly from thee.’

Boswell also has tried his hand at it; and a correspondent of the “Gentleman’s Magazine” suggests that Johnson had in his mind an epigram on a young lady who appeared at a masquerade in Paris, habited as a Jesuit, during the height of the contention between the Jansenists and Molinists concerning free will:—

“On s’etonne ici que Calviniste
Eut pris l’habit de Moliniste,
Puisque que cette jeune beaute
Ote a chacun sa liberte,
N’est ce pas une Janseniste."[1]

[Footnote 1: “Menagiana,” vol. iii. p. 376. Edition of 1716. Equally happy were Lord Chesterfield’s lines to a young lady who appeared at a Dublin ball, with an orange breastknot:—

Mrs. Thrale took the lead even when her husband might be expected to strike in, as when Johnson was declaiming paradoxically against action in oratory: “Action can have no effect on reasonable minds. It may augment noise, but it never can enforce argument.” *Mrs. Thrale*. “What then, Sir, becomes of Demosthenes’ saying, Action,

action, action?" *Johnson*. "Demosthenes, Madam, spoke to an assembly of brutes, to a barbarous people." "The polished Athenians!" is her marginal protest, and a conclusive one.

In English literature she was rarely at fault. In

"Pretty Tory, where's the jest
To wear that riband on thy breast,
When that same breast betraying shows
The whiteness of the rebel rose?"

White was adopted by the malcontent Irish as the French emblem. Johnson's epigram may have been suggested by Propertius:

"Nullus liber erit si quis amare volet."]

reference to the flattery lavished on Garrick by Lord Mansfield and Lord Chatham, Johnson had said, "When he whom everybody else flatters, flatters me, then I am truly happy." *Mrs. Thrale*. "The sentiment is in Congreve, I think." *Johnson*. "Yes, Madam, in 'The Way of the World.'

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"'If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
The heart that others bleed for, bleed for me.'"

When Johnson is reported saying, "Those who have a style of distinguished excellence can always be distinguished," she objects: "It seems not. The lines always quoted as Dryden's, beginning,

'To die is landing on some silent shore,'

are Garth's after all." Johnson would have been still less pleased at her discovery that a line in his epitaph on Phillips,

"Till angels wake thee with a note like thine,"

was imitated from Pope's

"And saints embrace thee with a love like mine."

In one of her letters to him (June, 1782) she writes: "Meantime let us be as *merry* as reading Burton upon *Melancholy* will make us. You bid me study that book in your absence, and now, what have I found? Why, I have found, or fancied, that he has been cruelly plundered: that Milton's first idea of 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' were suggested by the verses at the beginning; that Savage's speech of Suicide in the 'Wanderer' grew up out of a passage you probably remember towards the 216th page; that Swift's tale of the woman that holds water in her mouth, to regain her husband's love by silence, had its source in the same farrago; and that there is an odd similitude between my Lord's trick upon Sly the Tinker, in Shakspeare's 'Taming of the Shrew,' and some stuff I have been reading in Burton."

It would be easy to heap proof upon proof of the value and variety of Mrs. Thrale's contributions to the colloquial treasures accumulated by Boswell and other members of the set; and Johnson's deliberate testimony to her good qualities of head and heart will far more than counterbalance any passing expressions of disapproval or reproof with her mistimed vivacity, or alleged disregard of scrupulous accuracy in narrative, may have called forth. No two people ever lived much together for a series of years without many fretful, complaining, dissatisfied, uncongenial moments,—without letting drop captious or unkind expressions, utterly at variance with their habitual feelings and their matured judgments of each other. The hasty word, the passing sarcasm, the sly hit at an acknowledged foible, should count for nothing in the estimate, when contrasted with earnest and deliberate assurances, proceeding from one who was commonly too proud to flatter, and in no mood for idle compliment when he wrote.

"Never (he writes in 1773) imagine that your letters are long; they are always too short for my curiosity. I do not know that I was ever content with a single perusal.... My

nights are grown again very uneasy and troublesome. I know not that the country will mend them; but I hope your company will mend my days. Though I cannot now expect much attention, and would not wish for more than can be spared from the poor dear lady (her mother), yet I shall see you and hear you every now and then; and to see and hear you, is always to hear wit, and to see virtue."

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He would not suffer her to be lightly spoken of in his presence, nor permit his name to be coupled jocularly with hers. "I yesterday told him," says Boswell, when they were traversing the Highlands, "I was thinking of writing a poetical letter to him, on his return from Scotland, in the style of Swift's humorous epistle in the character of Mary Gulliver to her husband, Captain Lemuel Gulliver, on his return to England from the country of the Houyhnhnms:—

"'At early morn I to the market haste,
Studious in ev'ry thing to please thy taste.
A curious *fowl* and *sparagrass* I chose;
(For I remember you were fond of those:)
Three shillings cost the first, the last seven groats;
Sullen you turn from both, and call for OATS.'

He laughed, and asked in whose name I would write it. I said in Mrs. Thrale's. He was angry. 'Sir, if you have any sense of decency or delicacy, you won't do that.' *Boswell*. 'Then let it be in Cole's, the landlord of the Mitre tavern, where we have so often sat together.' *Johnson*. 'Ay, that may do.'"

Again, at Inverary, when Johnson called for a gill of whiskey that he might know what makes a Scotchman happy, and Boswell proposed Mrs. Thrale as their toast, he would not have *her* drunk in whiskey. Peter Pindar has maliciously added to this reproof:—

"We supped most royally, were vastly frisky,
When Johnson ordered up a gill of whiskey.
Taking the glass, says I, 'Here's Mistress Thrale,'
'Drink her in *whiskey* not,' said he, 'but *ale*.'"

So far from making light of her scholarship, he frequently accepted her as a partner in translations from the Latin. The translations from Boethius, printed in the second volume of the Letters, are their joint composition.

After recapitulating Johnson's other contributions to literature in 1766, Boswell says, "'The Fountains,' a beautiful little fairy tale in prose, written with exquisite simplicity, is one of Johnson's productions; and I cannot withhold from Mrs. Thrale the praise of being the author of that admirable poem 'The Three Warnings.'" *Marginal note*: "How sorry he is!" Both the tale and the poem were written for a collection of "Miscellanies," published by Mrs. Williams in that year. The character of Floretta in "The Fountains" was intended for Mrs. Thrale, and she thus gracefully alludes to it in a letter to Johnson in Feb. 1782:

"The newspapers would spoil my few comforts that are left if they could; but you tell me that's only because I have the reputation, whether true or false, of being a *wit* forsooth; and you remember *poor Floretta*, who was teased into wishing away her spirit, her

beauty, her fortune, and at last even her life, never could bear the bitter water which was to have washed away her wit; which she resolved to keep with all its consequences."

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Her fugitive pieces, mostly in verse, thrown off from time to time at all periods of her life, are numerous; and the best of them that have been recovered will be included in these volumes. In a letter to the author of "Piozziana," she says:—"When Wilkes and Liberty were at their highest tide, I was bringing or losing children every year; and my studies were confined to my nursery; so, it came into my head one day to send an infant alphabet to the 'St. James Chronicle':—

"'A was an Alderman, factious and proud;
B was a Bellas that blustered aloud, &c.'

"In a week's time Dr. Johnson asked me if I knew who wrote it? 'Why, who did write it, Sir?' said I. 'Steevens,' was the reply. Some time after that, years for aught I know, he mentioned to me Steevens's veracity! 'No, no;' answered H.L.P., anything but that;' and told my story; showing him by incontestable proofs that it was mine. Johnson did not utter a word, and we never talked about it any more. I durst not introduce the subject; but it served to hinder S. from visiting at the house: I suppose Johnson kept him away."

It does not appear that Steevens claimed the Alphabet; which may have suggested the celebrated squib that appeared in the "New Whig Guide," and was popularly attributed to Mr. Croker. It was headed "The Political Alphabet; or, the Young Member's A B C," and begins:

"A was an Althorpe, as dull as a hog:
B was black Brougham, a surly cur dog:
C was a Cochrane, all stripped of his lace."

What widely different associations are now awakened by these names! The sting is in the tail:

"W was a Warre, 'twixt a wasp and a worm,
But X Y and Z are not found in this form,
Unless Moore, Martin, and Creevey be said
(As the last of mankind) to be X Y and Z."

Amongst Miss Reynolds' "Recollections" will be found:—"On the praises of Mrs. Thrale, he (Johnson) used to dwell with a peculiar delight, a paternal fondness, expressive of conscious exultation in being so intimately acquainted with her. One day, in speaking of her to Mr. Harris, author of 'Hermes,' and expatiating on her various perfections,—the solidity of her virtues, the brilliancy of her wit, and the strength of her understanding, &c. —he quoted some lines (a stanza, I believe, but from what author I know not[1]), with which he concluded his most eloquent eulogium, and of these I retained but the two last lines:—

’Virtues—of such a generous kind,
Pure in the last recesses of the mind.’”

[Footnote 1: Dryden’s Translation of Persius.]

The place assigned to Mrs. Thrale by the popular voice amongst the most cultivated and accomplished women of the day, is fixed by some verses printed in the “Morning Herald” of March 12th, 1782, which attracted much attention. They were commonly attributed to Mr. (afterwards Sir W.W.) Pepys, and Madame d’Arblay, who alludes to them complacently, thought them his; but he subsequently repudiated the authorship, and the editor of her Memoirs believes that they were written by Dr. Burney. They were provoked by the proneness of the Herald to indulge in complimentary allusions to ladies of the demirep genus:

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"Herald, wherefore thus proclaim
Nought of women but the *shame*?
Quit, oh, quit, at least awhile,
Perdita's too luscious smile;
Wanton Worsley, stilted Daly,
Heroines of each blackguard alley;
Better sure record in story
Such as shine their sex's glory!
Herald! haste, with me proclaim
Those of literary fame.
Hannah More's pathetic pen,
Painting high th' impassion'd scene;
Carter's piety and learning,
Little Burney's quick discerning;
Cowley's neatly pointed wit,
Healing those her satires hit;
Smiling Streatfield's iv'ry neck,
Nose, and notions—*a la Grecque!*
Let Chapone retain a place,
And the mother of her Grace[1],
Each art of conversation knowing,
High-bred, elegant Boscawen;
Thrale, in whose expressive eyes
Sits a soul above disguise,
Skill'd with-wit and sense t'impart
Feelings of a generous heart.
Lucan, Leveson, Greville, Crewe;
Fertile-minded Montagu,
Who makes each rising art her care,
'And brings her knowledge from afar!'
Whilst her tuneful tongue defends
Authors dead, and absent friends;
Bright in genius, pure in fame:—
Herald, haste, and these proclaim!"

[Footnote 1: Mrs. Boscawen was the mother of the Duchess of Beaufort and Mrs. Leveson Gower:

"All Leveson's sweetness, and all Beaufort's grace."]

These lines merit attention for the sake of the comparison they invite. An outcry has recently been raised against the laxity of modern fashion, in permitting venal beauty to receive open homage in our parks and theatres, and to be made the subject of prurient gossip by maids and matrons who should ignore its existence. But we need not look far

beneath the surface of social history to discover that the irregularity in question is only a partial revival of the practice of our grandfathers and grandmothers, much as a crinoline may be regarded as a modified reproduction of the hoop. Junius thus denounces the Duke of Grafton's indecorous devotion to Nancy Parsons: "It is not the private indulgence, but the public insult, of which I complain. The name of Miss Parsons would hardly have been known, if the First Lord of the Treasury had not led her in triumph through the Opera House, even in the presence of the Queen." Lord March (afterwards Duke of Queensberry) was a lord of the bedchamber in the decorous court of George the Third, when he wrote thus to Selwyn: "I was prevented from writing to you last Friday, by being at Newmarket with my little girl (Signora Zamperini, a noted dancer and singer). I had the whole family and Cocchi. The beauty went with me in my chaise, and the rest in the old landau."

We have had Boswell's impression of his first visit to Streatham; and Madame D'Arblay's account of hers confirms the notion that My Mistress, not My Master, was the presiding genius of the place.

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"*London, August* (1778).—I have now to write an account of the most consequential day I have spent since my birth: namely, my Streatham visit.

"Our journey to Streatham was the least pleasant part of the day, for the roads were dreadfully dusty, and I was really in the fidgets from thinking what my reception might be, and from fearing they would expect a less awkward and backward kind of person than I was sure they would find.

"Mr. Thrale's house is white, and very pleasantly situated, in a fine paddock. Mrs. Thrale was strolling about, and came to us as we got out of the chaise.

"She then received me, taking both my hands, and with mixed politeness and cordiality welcomed me to Streatham. She led me into the house, and addressed herself almost wholly for a few minutes to my father, as if to give me an assurance she did not mean to regard me as a show, or to distress or frighten me by drawing me out. Afterwards she took me up stairs, and showed me the house, and said she had very much wished to see me at Streatham, and should always think herself much obliged to Dr. Burney for his goodness in bringing me, which she looked upon as a very great favour.

"But though we were some time together, and though she was so very civil, she did not *hint* at my book, and I love her much more than ever for her delicacy in avoiding a subject which she could not but see would have greatly embarrassed me.

"When we returned to the music-room, we found Miss Thrale was with my father. Miss Thrale is a very fine girl, about fourteen years of age, but cold and reserved, though full of knowledge and intelligence.

"Soon after, Mrs. Thrale took me to the library; she talked a little while upon common topics, and then, at last, she mentioned 'Evelina.'

"I now prevailed upon Mrs. Thrale to let me amuse myself, and she went to dress. I then prowled about to choose some book, and I saw, upon the reading-table, 'Evelina.' I had just fixed upon a new translation of Cicero's 'Laelius,' when the library door was opened, and Mr. Seward entered. I instantly put away my book, because I dreaded being thought studious and affected. He offered his service to find anything for me, and then, in the same breath, ran on to speak of the book with which I had myself 'favoured the world!'

"The exact words he began with I cannot recollect, for I was actually confounded by the attack; and his abrupt manner of letting me know he was *au fait* equally astonished and provoked me. How different from the delicacy of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale!"

A high French authority has laid down that good breeding consists in rendering to all what is socially their due. This definition is imperfect. Good breeding is best displayed

by putting people at their ease; and Mrs. Thrale's manner of putting the young authoress at her ease was the perfection of delicacy and tact.

If Johnson's entrance on the stage had been premeditated, it could hardly have been more dramatically ordered.

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“When we were summoned to dinner, Mrs. Thrale made my father and me sit on each side of her. I said that I hoped I did not take Dr. Johnson’s place;—for he had not yet appeared.

“‘No,’ answered Mrs. Thrale, ’he will sit by you, which I am sure will give him great pleasure.’

“Soon after we were seated, this great man entered. I have so true a veneration for him, that the very sight of him inspires me with delight and reverence, notwithstanding the cruel infirmities to which he is subject; for he has almost perpetual convulsive movements, either of his hands, lips, feet, or knees, and sometimes of all together.

“Mrs. Thrale introduced me to him, and he took his place. We had a noble dinner, and a most elegant dessert. Dr. Johnson, in the middle of dinner, asked Mrs. Thrale what was in some little pies that were near him.

“‘Mutton,’ answered she, ’so I don’t ask you to eat any, because I know you despise it.’

“‘No, Madam, no,’ cried he: ’I despise nothing that is good of its sort; but I am too proud now to eat of it. Sitting by Miss Burney makes me very proud to-day!’

“‘Miss Burney,’ said Mrs. Thrale, laughing, ’you must take great care of your heart if Dr. Johnson attacks it; for I assure you he is not often successless.’

“‘What’s that you say, Madam?’ cried he; ’are you making mischief between the young lady and me already?’

“A little while after he drank Miss Thrale’s health and mine, and then added:

“’Tis a terrible thing that we cannot wish young ladies well, without wishing them to become old women.’”

Madame D’Arblay’s memoirs are sadly defaced by egotism, and gratified vanity may have had a good deal to do with her unqualified admiration of Mrs. Thrale; for “Evelina” (recently published) was the unceasing topic of exaggerated eulogy during the entire visit. Still so acute an observer could not be essentially wrong in an account of her reception, which is in the highest degree favourable to her newly acquired friend. Of her second visit she says:

“Our journey was charming. The kind Mrs. Thrale would give courage to the most timid. She did not ask me questions, or catechise me upon what I knew, or use any means to draw me out, but made it her business to draw herself out—that is, to start subjects, to support them herself, and take all the weight of the conversation, as if it behoved her to find me entertainment. But I am so much in love with her, that I shall be obliged to run away from the subject, or shall write of nothing else.

“When we arrived here, Mrs. Thrale showed me my room, which is an exceeding pleasant one, and then conducted me to the library, there to divert myself while she dressed.

“Miss Thrale soon joined me: and I begin to like her. Mr. Thrale was neither well nor in spirits all day. Indeed, he seems not to be a happy man, though he has every means of happiness in his power. But I think I have rarely seen a very rich man with a light heart and light spirits.”

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The concluding remark, coming from such a source, may supply an improving subject of meditation or inquiry; if found true, it may help to suppress envy and promote contentment. Thrale's state of health, however, accounts for his depression independently of his wealth, which rested on too precarious a foundation to allow of unbroken confidence and gaiety.

"At tea (continues the diarist) we all met again, and Dr. Johnson was gaily sociable. He gave a very droll account of the children of Mr. Langton—

"'Who,' he said, 'might be very good children if they were let alone; but the father is never easy when he is not making them do something which they cannot do; they must repeat a fable, or a speech, or the Hebrew alphabet; and they might as well count twenty, for what they know of the matter: however, the father says half, for he prompts every other word. But he could not have chosen a man who would have been less entertained by such means.'

"'I believe not!' cried Mrs. Thrale: 'nothing is more ridiculous than parents cramming their children's nonsense down other people's throats. I keep mine as much out of the way as I can.'

"'Yours, Madam,' answered he, 'are in nobody's way; no children can be better managed or less troublesome; but your fault is, a too great perverseness in not allowing anybody to give them anything. Why should they not have a cherry, or a gooseberry, as well as bigger children?'

"Indeed, the freedom with which Dr. Johnson condemns whatever he disapproves, is astonishing; and the strength of words he uses would, to most people, be intolerable; but Mrs. Thrale seems to have a sweetness of disposition that equals all her other excellences, and far from making a point of vindicating herself, she generally receives his admonitions with the most respectful silence."

But it must not be supposed that this was done without an effort. When Boswell speaks of Johnson's "accelerating her pulsation," she adds, "he checked it often enough, to be sure."

Another of the conversations which occurred during this visit is characteristic of all parties:

"We had been talking of colours, and of the fantastic names given to them, and why the palest lilac should be called a *soupir etouffe*.

"'Why, Madam,' said he, with wonderful readiness, 'it is called a stifled sigh because it is checked in its progress, and only half a colour.'

“I could not help expressing my amazement at his universal readiness upon all subjects, and Mrs. Thrale said to him,

“’Sir, Miss Burney wonders at your patience with such stuff; but I tell her you are used to me, for I believe I torment you with more foolish questions than anybody else dares do.’

“’No, Madam,’ said he, ’you don’t torment me;—you teaze me, indeed, sometimes.’

“’Ay, so I do, Dr. Johnson, and I wonder you bear with my nonsense.’

“’No, Madam, you never talk nonsense; you have as much sense, and more wit, than any woman I know!’

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"'Oh,' cried Mrs. Thrale, blushing, 'it is my turn to go under the table this morning, Miss Burney!'

"'And yet,' continued the Doctor, with the most comical look, 'I have known all the wits, from Mrs. Montagu down to Bet Flint!'

"'Bet Flint,' cried Mrs. Thrale; 'pray who is she?'

"'Oh, a fine character, Madam! She was habitually a slut and a drunkard, and occasionally a thief and a harlot.'

"'And, for heaven's sake, how came you to know her?'

"'Why, Madam, she figured in the literary world, too! Bet Flint wrote her own life, and called herself Cassandra, and it was in verse. So Bet brought me her verses to correct; but I gave her a half-a-crown, and she liked it as well.'

"'And pray what became of her, Sir?'

"'Why, Madam, she stole a quilt from the man of the house, and he had her taken up: but Bet Flint had a spirit not to be subdued; so when she found herself obliged to go to jail, she ordered a sedan chair, and bid her footboy walk before her. However, the boy proved refractory, for he was ashamed, though his mistress was not.'

"'And did she ever get out of jail again, Sir?'

"'Yes, Madam; when she came to her trial, the judge acquitted her. "So now," she said to me, "the quilt is my own, and now I'll make a petticoat of it."[1] Oh, I loved Bet Flint!'

"Bless me, Sir!' cried Mrs. Thrale, 'how can all these vagabonds contrive to get at *you*, of all people?'

"'Oh the dear creatures!' cried he, laughing heartily, 'I can't but be glad to see them!'"

[Footnote 1: This story is told by Boswell, roy. 8vo, edit. p. 688.]

Madame D'Arblay's notes (in her Diary) of the conversation and mode of life at Streatham are full and spirited, and exhibit Johnson in moods and situations in which he was seldom seen by Boswell. The adroitness with which he divided his attentions amongst the ladies, blending approval with instruction, and softening contradiction or reproof by gallantry, gives plausibility to his otherwise paradoxical claim to be considered a polite man.[1] He obviously knew how to set about it, and (theoretically at least) was no mean proficient in that art of pleasing which attracts

"Rather by deference than compliment,
And wins e'en by a delicate dissent."

[Footnote 1: "When the company were retired, we happened to be talking of Dr. Barnard, the provost of Eton, who died about that time; and after a long and just eulogium on his wit, his learning, and goodness of heart—'He was the only man, too,' says Mr. Johnson, quite seriously, 'that did justice to my good breeding; and you may observe that I am well-bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity. No man,' continued he, not observing the amazement of his hearers, 'no man is so cautious not to interrupt another; no man thinks it so necessary to appear attentive when others are speaking; no man so steadily refuses preference to himself, or so willingly bestows it on another, as I do; nobody holds so strongly as I do the necessity of ceremony, and the ill effects which follow the breach of it: yet people think me rude; but Barnard did me justice.'"—-*Anecdotes*. "I think myself a very polite man,"—*Boswell*. 1778.]

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Sir Henry Bulwer (in his “France”) says that Louis the Fourteenth was entitled to be called a man of genius, if only from the delicate beauty of his compliments. Mrs. Thrale awards the palm of excellence in the same path to Johnson. “Your compliments, Sir, are made seldom, but when they are made, they have an elegance unequalled; but then, when you are angry, who dares make speeches so bitter and so cruel?” “I am sure,” she adds, after a semblance of defence on his part, “I have had my share of scolding from you.” *Johnson*. “It is true, you have, but you have borne it like an angel, and you have been the better for it.” As the discussion proceeds, he accuses her of often provoking him to say severe things by unreasonable commendation; a common mode of acquiring a character for amiability at the expense of one’s intimates, who are made to appear uncharitable by being thus constantly placed on the depreciating side.

Some years prior to this period (1778) Mrs. Thrale’s mind and character had undergone a succession of the most trying ordeals, and was tempered and improved, without being hardened, by them. In allusion to what she suffered in child-bearing, she said later in life that she had nine times undergone the sentence of a convict,—confinement with hard labour. Child after child died at the age when the bereavement is most affecting to a mother. Her husband’s health kept her in a constant state of apprehension for his life, and his affairs became embarrassed to the very verge of bankruptcy. So long as they remained prosperous, he insisted on her not meddling with them in any way, and even required her to keep to her drawing-room and leave the conduct of their domestic establishment to the butler and housekeeper. But when (from circumstances detailed in the “Autobiography”) his fortune was seriously endangered, he wisely and gladly availed himself of her prudence and energy, and was saved by so doing. I have now before me a collection of autograph letters from her to Mr. Perkins, then manager and afterwards one of the proprietors of the brewery, from which it appears that she paid the most minute attention to the business, besides undertaking the superintendence of her own hereditary estate in Wales. On September 28, 1773, she writes to Mr. Perkins, who was on a commercial journey:—

“Mr. Thrale is still upon his little tour; I opened a letter from you at the counting-house this morning, and am sorry to find you have so much trouble with Grant and his affairs. How glad I shall be to hear that matter is settled at all to your satisfaction. His letter and remittance came while I was there to-day.... Careless, of the ’Blue Posts,’ has turned refractory, and applied to Hoare’s people, who have sent him in their beer. I called on him to-day, however, and by dint of an unwearied solicitation, (for I kept him at the coach side a full half-hour) I got his order for six butts more as the final trial.”

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Examples of fine ladies pressing tradesmen for their votes with compromising importunity are far from rare, but it would be difficult to find a parallel for Johnson's Hetty doing duty as a commercial traveller. She was simultaneously obliged to anticipate the electioneering exploits of the Duchess of Devonshire and Mrs. Crewe; and in after life, having occasion to pass through Southwark, she expresses her astonishment at no longer recognising a place, every hole and corner of which she had three times visited as a canvasser.

After the death of Mr. Thrale, a friend of Mr. H. Thornton canvassed the borough on behalf of that gentleman. He waited on Mrs. Thrale, who promised her support. She concluded her obliging expressions by saying:—"I wish your friend success, and I think he will have it: he may probably come in for two parliaments, but if he tries for a third, were he an angel from heaven, the people of Southwark would cry, 'Not *this* man, but Barabbas.'"[1]

[Footnote 1: Miss Laetitia Matilda Hawkins vouches for this story.—"Memoir, &c." vol. i. p.66, note, where she adds:—"I have heard it said, that into whatever company she (Mrs. T.) fell, she could be the most agreeable person in it."]

On one of her canvassing expeditions, Johnson accompanied her, and a rough fellow, a hatter by trade, seeing the moralist's hat in a state of decay, seized it suddenly with one hand, and clapping him on the back with the other, cried out, "Ah, Master Johnson, this is no time to be thinking about hats." "No, no, Sir," replied the Doctor, "hats are of no use now, as you say, except to throw up in the air and huzzah with;" accompanying his words with the true election halloo.

Thrale had serious thoughts of repaying Johnson's electioneering aid in kind, by bringing him into Parliament. Sir John Hawkins says that Thrale had two meetings with the minister (Lord North), who at first seemed inclined to find Johnson a seat, but eventually discountenanced the project. Lord Stowell told Mr. Croker that Lord North did not feel quite sure that Johnson's support might not sometimes prove rather an incumbrance than a help. "His lordship perhaps thought, and not unreasonably, that, like the elephant in the battle, he was quite as likely to trample down his friends as his foes." Flood doubted whether Johnson, being long used to sententious brevity and the short flights of conversation, would have succeeded in the expanded kind of argument required in public speaking. Burke's opinion was, that if he had come early into Parliament, he would have been the greatest speaker ever known in it. Upon being told this by Reynolds, he exclaimed, "I should like to try my hand now." On Boswell's adding that he wished he *had*, Mrs. Thrale writes: "Boswell had leisure for curiosity: Ministers had not. Boswell would have been equally amused by his failure as by his success; but to Lord North there would have been no joke at all in the experiment ending untowardly."

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He was equally ready with advice and encouragement during the difficulties connected with the brewery. He was not of opinion with Aristotle and Parson Adams, that trade is below a philosopher[1]; and he eagerly buried himself in computing the cost of the malt and the possible profits on the ale. In October 1772, he writes from Lichfield:

[Footnote 1: "Trade, answered Adams, is below a philosopher, as Aristotle proves in his first chapter of 'Politics,' and unnatural, as it is managed now."—*Joseph Andrews*.]

"Do not suffer little things to disturb you. The brew-house must be the scene of action, and the subject of speculation. The first consequence of our late trouble ought to be, an endeavour to brew at a cheaper rate; an endeavour not violent and transient, but steady and continual, prosecuted with total contempt of censure or wonder, and animated by resolution not to stop while more can be done. Unless this can be done, nothing can help us; and if this be done, we shall not want help. Surely there is something to be saved; there is to be saved whatever is the difference between vigilance and neglect, between parsimony and profusion. The price of malt has risen again. It is now two pounds eight shillings the quarter. Ale is sold in the public-houses at sixpence a quart, a price which I never heard of before."

In November of the same year, from Ashbourne:

"DEAR MADAM,—So many days and never a letter!—*Fugere fides, pietasque pudorque*. This is Turkish usage. And I have been hoping and hoping. But you are so glad to have me out of your mind.[1]

"I think you were quite right in your advice about the thousand pounds, for the payment could not have been delayed long; and a short delay would have lessened credit, without advancing interest. But in great matters you are hardly ever mistaken."

[Footnote 1: This tone of playful reproach, when adopted by Johnson at a later period, has been cited as a proof of actual ill-treatment.]

In May 17, 1773:

"Why should Mr. T—— suppose, that what I took the liberty of suggesting was concerted with you? He does not know how much I revolve his affairs, and how honestly I desire his prosperity. I hope he has let the hint take some hold of his mind."

In the copy of the printed letters presented by Mrs. Thrale to Sir James Fellowes, the blank is filled up with the name of Thrale, and the passage is thus annotated in her handwriting:

"Concerning his (Thrale's) connection with quack chemists, quacks of all sorts; jumping up in the night to go to Marlbro' Street from Southwark, after some advertising mountebank, at hazard of his life," In "Thraliana":

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“18_th July_, 1778.—Mr. Thrale overbrewed himself last winter and made an artificial scarcity of money in the family which has extremely lowered his spirits. Mr. Johnson endeavoured last night, and so did I, to make him promise that he would never more brew a larger quantity of beer in one winter than 80,000 barrels[1], but my Master, mad with the noble ambition of emulating Whitbread and Calvert, two fellows that he despises,—could scarcely be prevailed on to promise even *this*, that he will not brew more than four score thousand barrels a year for five years to come. He did promise that much, however; and so Johnson bade me write it down in the ’Thraliana’;—and so the wings of Speculation are clipped a little—very fain would I have pinioned her, but I had not strength to perform the operation.”

[Footnote 1: “If he got but 2_s._ 6_d._ by each barrel, 80,000 half crowns are L10,000; and what more would mortal man desire than an income of ten thousand a year—five to spend, and five to lay up?”]

That Johnson’s advice was neither thrown away nor undervalued, may be inferred from an incident related by Boswell. Mr. Perkins had hung up in the counting-house a fine proof of the mezzotinto of Dr. Johnson by Doughty; and when Mrs. Thrale asked him, somewhat flippantly, “Why do you put him up in the counting-house?” Mr. Perkins answered, “Because, Madam, I wish to have one wise man there.” “Sir,” said Johnson, “I thank you. It is a very handsome compliment, and I believe you speak sincerely.”

He was in the habit of paying the most minute attention to every branch of domestic economy, and his suggestions are invariably marked by shrewdness and good sense. Thus when Mrs. Thrale was giving evening parties, he told her that though few people might be hungry after a late dinner, she should always have a good supply of cakes and sweetmeats on a side table, and that some cold meat and a bottle of wine would often be found acceptable. Notwithstanding the imperfection of his eyesight, and his own slovenliness, he was a critical observer of dress and demeanour, and found fault without ceremony or compunction when any of his canons of taste or propriety were infringed. Several amusing examples are enumerated by Mrs. Thrale:

“I commended a young lady for her beauty and pretty behaviour one day, however, to whom I thought no objections could have been made. ‘I saw her,’ said Dr. Johnson, ’take a pair of scissors in her left hand though; and for all her father is now become a nobleman, and as you say excessively rich, I should, were I a youth of quality ten years hence, hesitate between a girl so neglected, and a *negro*.’

“It was indeed astonishing how he *could* remark such minuteness with a sight so miserably imperfect; but no accidental position of a riband escaped him, so nice was his observation, and so rigorous his demands of propriety. When I went with him to Litchfield, and came downstairs to breakfast at the inn, my dress did not please him, and he made me alter it entirely before he would stir a step with us about the town, saying most satirical things concerning the appearance I made in a riding-habit; and

adding, ''Tis very strange that such eyes as yours cannot discern propriety of dress: if I had a sight only half as good, I think I should see to the centre.'

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“Another lady, whose accomplishments he never denied, came to our house one day covered with diamonds, feathers, &c., and he did not seem inclined to chat with her as usual. I asked him why? when the company was gone. ’Why, her head looked so like that of a woman who shows puppets,’ said he, ’and her voice so confirmed the fancy, that I could not bear her to-day; when she wears a large cap, I can talk to her.’

“When the ladies wore lace trimmings to their clothes, he expressed his contempt of the reigning fashion in these terms: ’A Brussels trimming is like bread-sauce,’ said he, ’it takes away the glow of colour from the gown, and gives you nothing instead of it; but sauce was invented to heighten the flavour of our food, and trimming is an ornament to the manteau, or it is nothing. Learn,’ said he, ’that there is propriety or impropriety in every thing how slight soever, and get at the general principles of dress and of behaviour; if you then transgress them, you will at least know that they are not observed.’”

Madame D’Arblay confirms this account. He had just been finding fault with a bandeau worn by Lady Lade, a very large woman, standing six feet high without her shoes:

“*Dr. J.*—The truth is, women, take them in general, have no idea of grace. Fashion is all they think of. I don’t mean Mrs. Thrale and Miss Burney, when I talk of women!—they are goddesses!—and therefore I except them.

“*Mrs. Thrale.*—Lady Lade never wore the bandeau, and said she never would, because it is unbecoming.

“*Dr. J. (laughing.)*—Did not she? then is Lady Lade a charming woman, and I have yet hopes of entering into engagements with her!

“*Mrs. T.*—Well, as to that I can’t say; but to be sure, the only similitude I have yet discovered in you, is in size: there you agree mighty well.

“*Dr. J.*—Why, if anybody could have worn the bandeau, it must have been Lady Lade; for there is enough of her to carry it off; but you are too little for anything ridiculous; that which seems nothing upon a Patagonian, will become very conspicuous upon a Lilliputian, and of you there is so little in all, that one single absurdity would swallow up half of you.”

Matrimony was one of his favourite subjects, and he was fond of laying down and refining on the duties of the married state, with the amount of happiness and comfort to be found in it. But once when he was musing over the fire in the drawing-room at Streatham, a young gentleman called to him suddenly, “Mr. Johnson, would you advise me to marry?” “I would advise no man to marry, Sir,” replied the Doctor in a very angry tone, “who is not likely to propagate understanding;” and so left the room. “Our companion,” adds Mrs. Thrale, in the “Anecdotes,” “looked confounded, and I believe

had scarce recovered the consciousness of his own existence, when Johnson came back, and, drawing his chair among us, with altered looks and a softened voice, joined in the general chat, insensibly led the conversation to the subject of marriage, where he laid himself out in a dissertation so useful, so elegant, so founded on the true knowledge of human life, and so adorned with beauty of sentiment, that no one ever recollected the offence, except to rejoice in its consequences."

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The young gentleman was Mr. Thrale's nephew, Sir John Lade; who was proposed, half in earnest, whilst still a minor, by the Doctor as a fitting mate for the author of "Evelina." He married a woman of the town, became a celebrated member of the Four-in-Hand Club, and contrived to waste the whole of a fine fortune before he died.

In "Thraliana" she says:—"Lady Lade consulted him about her son, Sir John. 'Endeavour, Madam,' said he, 'to procure him knowledge; for really ignorance to a rich man is like fat to a sick sheep, it only serves to call the rooks about him.' On the same occasion it was that he observed how a mind unfurnished with subjects and materials for thinking can keep up no dignity at all in solitude. 'It is,' says he, 'in the state of a mill without grist.'"

The attractions of Streatham must have been very strong, to induce Johnson to pass so much of his time away from "the busy hum of men" in Fleet Street, and "the full tide of human existence" at Charing Cross. He often found fault with Mrs. Thrale for living so much in the country, "feeding the chickens till she starved her understanding." Walking in a wood when it rained, she tells us, "was the only rural image he pleased his fancy with; for he would say, after one has gathered the apples in an orchard, one wishes them well baked, and removed to a London eating-house for enjoyment." This is almost as bad as the foreigner, who complained that there was no ripe fruit in England but the roasted apples. Amongst other modes of passing time in the country, Johnson once or twice tried hunting and, mounted on an old horse of Mr. Thrale's, acquitted himself to the surprise of the "field," one of whom delighted him by exclaiming, "Why Johnson rides as well, for ought I see, as the most illiterate fellow in England." But a trial or two satisfied him—

"He thought at heart like courtly Chesterfield,
Who after a long chase o'er hills, dales, fields,
And what not, though he rode beyond all price,
Ask'd next day,'If men ever hunted twice?'"

It is very strange, and very melancholy, was his reflection, that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them. The mode of locomotion in which he delighted was the vehicular. As he was driving rapidly in a postchaise with Boswell, he exclaimed, "Life has not many things better than this." On their way from Dr. Taylor's to Derby in 1777, he said, "If I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a postchaise with a pretty woman, but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation."

Mr. Croker attributes his enjoyment to the novelty of the pleasure; his poverty having in early life prevented him from travelling post. But a better reason is given by Mrs. Thrale:

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“I asked him why he doated on a coach so? and received for answer, that in the first place, the company were shut in with him *there*; and could not escape, as out of a room; in the next place, he heard all that was said in a carriage, where it was my turn to be deaf; and very impatient was he at my occasional difficulty of hearing. On this account he wished to travel all over the world: for the very act of going forward was delightful to him, and he gave himself no concern about accidents, which he said never happened; nor did the running-away of the horses at the edge of a precipice between Vernon and St. Denys in France convince him to the contrary: ’for nothing came of it,’ he said, ’except that Mr. Thrale leaped out of the carriage into a chalk-pit, and then came up again, looking as *white*!’ When the truth was, all their lives were saved by the greatest providence ever exerted in favour of three human creatures: and the part Mr. Thrale took from desperation was the likeliest thing in the world to produce broken limbs and death.”

The drawbacks on his gratification and on that of his fellow travellers were his physical defects, and his utter insensibility to the beauty of nature, as well as to the fine arts, in so far as they were addressed to the senses of sight and hearing. “He delighted,” says Mrs. Thrale, “no more in music than painting; he was almost as deaf as he was blind; travelling with Dr. Johnson was, for these reasons, tiresome enough. Mr. Thrale loved prospects, and was mortified that his friend could not enjoy the sight of those different dispositions of wood and water, hill and valley, that travelling through England and France affords a man. But when he wished to point them out to his companion: ’Never heed such nonsense,’ would be the reply: ’a blade of grass is always a blade of grass, whether in one country or another: let us, if we *do* talk, talk about something; men and women are my subjects of inquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind.”

It is no small deduction from our admiration of Johnson, and no trifling enhancement of his friends’ kindness in tolerating his eccentricities, that he seldom made allowance for his own palpable and undeniable deficiencies. As well might a blind man deny the existence of colours, as a purblind man assert that there was no charm in a prospect, or in a Claude or Titian, because he could see none. Once, by way of pleasing Reynolds, he pretended to lament that the great painter’s genius was not exerted on stuff more durable than canvas, and suggested copper. Sir Joshua urged the difficulty of procuring plates large enough for historical subjects. “What foppish obstacles are these!” exclaimed Johnson. “Here is Thrale has a thousand ton of copper: you may paint it all round if you will, I suppose; it will serve him to brew in afterwards. Will it not, Sir?” (to Thrale, who sate by.)

He always “civilised” to Dr. Burney, who has supplied the following anecdote:

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“After having talked slightingly of music, he was observed to listen very attentively while Miss Thrale played on the harpsichord; and with eagerness he called to her, ’Why don’t you dash away like Burney?’ Dr. Burney upon this said to him, ’I believe, Sir, we shall make a musician of you at last.’ Johnson with candid complacency replied, ‘Sir, I shall be glad to have a new sense given to me.’”

In 1774, the Thrales made a tour in Wales, mainly for the purpose of revisiting her birthplace and estates. They were accompanied by Johnson, who kept a diary of the expedition, beginning July 5th and ending September 24th. It was preserved by his negro servant, and Boswell had no suspicion of its existence, for he says, “I do not find that he kept any journal or notes of what he saw there.” The diary was first published by Mr. Duppa in 1816; and some manuscript notes by Mrs. Thrale which reached that gentleman too late for insertion, have been added in Mr. Murray’s recent edition of the Life. The first entry is:

“*Tuesday, July 5*.—We left Streatham 11 A.M. Price of four horses two shillings a mile. Barnet 1.40 P.M. On the road I read ’Tully’s Epistles.’ At night at Dunstable.” At Chester, he records:—“We walked round the walls, which are complete, and contain one mile, three quarters, and one hundred and one yards.” Mrs. Thrale’s comment is, “Of those ill-fated walls Dr. Johnson might have learned the extent from any one. He has since put me fairly out of countenance by saying, ’I have known *my mistress* fifteen years, and never saw her fairly out of humour but on Chester wall.’ It was because he would keep Miss Thrale beyond her hour of going to bed to walk on the wall, where from the want of light, I apprehended some accident to her, perhaps to him.”

He thus describes Mrs. Thrale’s family mansion:

“*Saturday, July 30.*—We went to Bach y Graig, where we found an old house, built 1567, in an uncommon and incommodious form—My mistress chatted about tiring, but I prevailed on her to go to the top—The floors have been stolen: the windows are stopped—The house was less than I seemed to expect—The River Clwyd is a brook with a bridge of one arch, about one third of a mile—The woods have many trees, generally young; but some which seem to decay—They have been lopped—The house never had a garden—The addition of another story would make an useful house, but it cannot be great.”

On the 4th August, they visited Rhuddlan Castle and Bodryddan[1], of which he says:—

[Footnote 1: Now the property of Mr. Shipley Conway, the great-grandson of Johnson’s acquaintance, the Bishop of St. Asaph, and representative, through females, of Sir John Conway or Conwy, to whom Rhuddlan Castle, with its domain, was granted by Edward the First.]

“Stapylton’s house is pretty: there are pleasing shades about it, with a constant spring that supplies a cold bath. We then went out to see a cascade. I trudged unwillingly, and was not sorry to find it dry. The water was, however, turned on, and produced a very striking cataract."[1]

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[Footnote 1: Bowles, the poet, on the unexpected arrival of a party to see his grounds, was overheard giving a hurried order to set the fountain playing and carry the hermit his beard.]

Mrs. Piozzi remarks on this passage: "He teased Mrs. Cotton about her dry cascade till she was ready to cry."

Mrs. Cotton, *nee* Stapylton, married the eldest son of Sir Lynch Cotton, and was the mother of Field-Marshal Viscount Combermere. She said that Johnson, despite of his rudeness, was at times delightful, having a manner peculiar to himself in relating anecdotes that could not fail to attract both old and young. Her impression was that Mrs. Thrale was very vexatious in wishing to engross all his attention, which annoyed him much. This, I fancy, is no uncommon impression, when we ourselves are anxious to attract notice.

The range of hills bordering the valley or delta of the Clwyd, is very fine. On their being pointed out to him by his host, he exclaimed: "Hills, do you call them?—mere mole-hills to the Alps or to those in Scotland." On being told that Sir Richard Clough had formed a plan for making the river navigable to Rhyddlan, he broke out into a loud fit of laughter, and shouted—"why, Sir, I could clear any part of it by a leap." He probably had seen neither the hills nor the river, which might easily be made navigable.

On two occasions, Johnson incidentally imputes a want of liberality to Mrs. Thrale, which the general tenor of her conduct belies:

"*August 2.*—We went to Dymerchion Church, where the old clerk acknowledged his mistress. It is the parish church of Bach y Graig; a mean fabric; Mr. Salusbury (Mrs. Thrale's father) was buried in it.... The old clerk had great appearance of joy, and foolishly said that he was now willing to die. He had only a crown given him by my mistress."

"*August 4.*—Mrs. Thrale lost her purse. She expressed so much uneasiness that I concluded the sum to be very great; but when I heard of only seven guineas, I was glad to find she had so much sensibility of money."

Johnson might have remarked, that the annoyance we experience from a loss is seldom entirely regulated by the pecuniary value of the thing lost.

On the way to Holywell he sets down: "Talk with mistress about flattery;" on which she notes: "He said I flattered the people to whose houses we went: I was saucy and said I was obliged to be civil for two, meaning himself and me.[1] He replied nobody would thank me for compliments they did not understand. At Gwanynog (Mr. Middleton's), however, *he* was flattered, and was happy of course."

[Footnote 1: Madame D'Arblay reports Mrs. Thrale saying to Johnson at Streatham, in September, 1778: "I remember, Sir, when we were travelling in Wales, how you called me to account for my civility to the people; 'Madam,' you said, 'let me have no more of this idle commendation of nothing. Why is it, that whatever you see, and whoever you see, you are to be so indiscriminately lavish of praise?' 'Why I'll tell you, Sir,' said I, 'when I am with you, and Mr. Thrale, and Queeny, I am obliged to be civil for four!'"]

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The other entries referring to the Thrales are:

"*August* 22.—We went to visit Bodville, the place where Mrs. Thrale was born, and the churches called Tydweilliog and Llangwinodyl, which she holds by impropriation."

"*August* 24.—We went to see Bodville. Mrs. Thrale remembered the rooms, and wandered over them, with recollections of her childhood. This species of pleasure is always melancholy.... Mr. Thrale purposes to beautify the churches, and, if he prospers, will probably restore the tithes. Mrs. Thrale visited a house where she had been used to drink milk, which was left, with an estate of 200_l._ a year, by one Lloyd, to a married woman who lived with him."

"*August* 26.—*Note*. Queeny's goats, 149, I think."

Without Mr. Duppa's aid this last entry would be a puzzle for commentators. His note is:

"Mr. Thrale was near-sighted, and could not see the goats browsing on Snowdon, and he promised his daughter, who was a child of ten years old, a penny for every goat she would show him, and Dr. Johnson kept the account; so that it appears her father was in debt to her one hundred and forty-nine pence. *Queeny* was an epithet, which had its origin in the nursery, by which (in allusion to *Queen* Esther) Miss Thrale (whose name was Esther) was always distinguished by Johnson." She was named, after her mother, Hester, not Esther.

On September 13, Johnson sets down: "We came, to Lord Sandys', at Ombersley, where we were treated with great civility." It was here, as he told Mrs. Thrale, that for the only time in his life he had as much wall fruit as he liked; yet she says that he was in the habit of eating six or seven peaches before breakfast during the fruit season at Streatham. Swift was also fond of fruit: "observing (says Scott) that a gentleman in whose garden he walked with some friends, seemed to have no intention to request them to eat any, the Dean remarked that it was a saying of his dear grandmother:

"'Always pull a peach
When it is within your reach;'

and helping himself accordingly, his example was followed by the whole company." Thomson, the author of the "Castle of Indolence," was once seen lounging round Lord Burlington's garden, with his hands in his waistcoat pockets, biting off the sunny sides of the peaches.

Johnson's dislike to the Lyttletons was not abated by his visit to Hagley, of which he says, "We made haste away from a place where all were offended." Mrs. Thrale's explanation is: "Mrs. Lyttelton, *ci-devant* Caroline Bristow, forced me to play at whist

against my liking, and her husband took away Johnson's candle that he wanted to read by at the other end of the room. Those, I trust, were the offences."

He was not in much better humour at Combermere Abbey, the seat of her relative, Sir Lynch Cotton, which is beautifully situated on one of the finest lakes in England. He commends the place grudgingly, passes a harsh judgment on Lady Cotton, and is traditionally recorded to have made answer to the baronet who inquired what he thought of a neighbouring peer (Lord Kilmorey): "A dull, commonplace sort of man, just like you and your brother."

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In a letter to Levet, dated Lleweny, in Denbighshire, August 16, 1774, printed by Boswell, is this sentence: "Wales, so far as I have yet seen of it, is a very beautiful and rich country, all enclosed and planted." Her marginal note is: "Yet to please Mr. Thrale, he feigned abhorrence of it."

I am indebted to an intelligent and accurate in-formant for a curious incident of the Welsh tour:

"Dr. Johnson was taken by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale to dine at Maesnynan, with my relation, Mr. Lloyd, who, with his pretty young daughter (motherless), received them at the door. All came out of the carriage except the great lexicographer, who was crouching in what my uncle jokingly called the Poets' Corner, deeply interested evidently with the book he was reading. A wink from Mrs. Thrale, and a touch of her hand, silenced the host. She bade the coachman not move, and desired the people in the house to let Mr. Johnson read on till dinner was on the table, when she would go and whistle him to it. She always had a whistle hung at her girdle, and this she used, when in Wales, to summon him and her daughters[1], when in or out of doors. Mr. Lloyd and all the visitors went to see the effect of the whistle, and found him reading intently with one foot on the step of the carriage, where he had been (a looker-on said) five minutes."

[Footnote 1:

"He cast off his friends as a huntsman his pack,
For he knew when he pleas'd he could whistle them back."]

"This scene is well told by Miss Burney, in her 'Camilla'[1] *ex relatione* Mrs. Williams (Lady Cotton's sister, who was present) and Beata Lloyd, whose brother, Colonel Thomas Lloyd, of the Guards, was the Brummell of his day, celebrated for his manly beauty and accomplishments. I heard Lord Crewe say that Colonel Lloyd's horse, and his graceful manner of mounting him, used to attract members of both Houses (he among them) to *turn out* to see him mount guard; and the Princesses were forbidden, when driving out, to go so often that way and at that time."

[Footnote 1: Book viii. chap, iv., Dr. Orkborne is described standing on the staircase of an inn absorbed in the composition of a paragraph whilst the party are at dinner.]

Their impressions of one another as travelling companions were sufficiently favourable to induce the party (with the addition of Baretti) to make a short tour in France in the autumn of the year following, 1775, during part of which Johnson kept a diary in the same laconic and elliptical style. The only allusion to either of his friends is:

"We went to Sansterre, a brewer. He brews with about as much malt as Mr. Thrale, and sells his beer at the same price, though he pays no duty for malt, and little more than half as much for beer. Beer is sold retail at sixpence a bottle."

In a letter to Levet, dated Paris, Oct. 22, 1775, he says:

“We went to see the king and queen at dinner, and the queen was so impressed by Miss, that she sent one of the gentlemen to inquire who she was. I find all true that you have ever told me at Paris. Mr. Thrale is very liberal, and keeps us two coaches, and a very fine table; but I think our cookery very bad. Mrs. Thrale got into a convent of English nuns, and I talked with her through the grate, and I am very kindly used by the English Benedictine friars.”

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A striking instance of Johnson's occasional impracticability occurred during this journey:

"When we were at Rouen together," says Mrs. Thrale, "he took a great fancy to the Abbe Kofiette, with whom he conversed about the destruction of the order of Jesuits, and condemned it loudly, as a blow to the general power of the church, and likely to be followed with many and dangerous innovations, which might at length become fatal to religion itself, and shake even the foundation of Christianity. The gentleman seemed to wonder and delight in his conversation: the talk was all in Latin, which both spoke fluently, and Mr. Johnson pronounced a long eulogium upon Milton with so much ardour, eloquence, and ingenuity, that the abbe rose from his seat and embraced him. My husband seeing them apparently so charmed with the company of each other, politely invited the abbe to England, intending to oblige his friend; who, instead of thanking, reprimanded him severely before the man, for such a sudden burst of tenderness towards a person he could know nothing at all of; and thus put a sudden finish to all his own and Mr. Thrale's entertainment from the company of the Abbe Roffette."

In a letter dated May 9, 1780, also, Mrs. Thrale alludes to more than one disagreement in France:

"When did I ever plague you about contour, and grace, and expression? I have dreaded them all three since that hapless day at Compiegne, when you teased me so, and Mr. Thrale made what I hoped would have proved a lasting peace; but French ground is unfavourable to fidelity perhaps, and so now you begin again: after having taken five years' breath, you might have done more than this. Say another word, and I will bring up afresh the history of your exploits at St. Denys and how cross you were for nothing —but some how or other, our travels never make any part either of our conversation or correspondence."

Joseph Baretti, who now formed one of the family, is so mixed up with their history that some account of him becomes indispensable. He was a Piedmontese, whose position in his native country was not of a kind to tempt him to remain in it, when Lord Charlemont, to whom he had been useful in Italy, proposed his coming to England. His own story was that he had lost at play the little property he had inherited from his father, an architect. The education given him by his parents was limited to Latin; he taught himself English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. His talents, acquirements, and strength of mind must have been considerable, for they soon earned him the esteem and friendship of the most eminent members of the Johnsonian circle, in despite of his arrogance. He came to England in 1753; is kindly mentioned in one of Johnson's letters in 1754; and when he was in Italy in 1761, his illustrious friend's letters to him are marked by a tone of affectionate interest. Ceremony and tenderness are oddly blended in the conclusion of one of them:

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“May you, my Baretti, be very happy at Milan, or some other place nearer to, Sir, your most affectionate humble servant, SAMUEL JOHNSON.”

Johnson remarked of Baretti in 1768: “I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind. He has not indeed many hooks, but with what hooks he has, he grapples very forcibly.” Cornelia Knight was “disgusted by his satirical madness of manner,” although admitting him to be a man of great learning and information. Madame D’Arblay was more struck by his rudeness and violence than by his intellectual vigour. “Thraliana” confirms Johnson’s estimate of Baretti’s capacity:

“Will. Burke was tart upon Mr. Baretti for being too dogmatical in his talk about politics. ‘You have,’ says he, ’no business to be investigating the characters of Lord Falkland or Mr. Hampden. You cannot judge of their merits, they are no countrymen of yours.’ ‘True,’ replied Baretti, ’and you should learn by the same rule to speak very cautiously about Brutus and Mark Antony; they are my countrymen, and I must have their characters tenderly treated by foreigners.’

“Baretti could not endure to be called, or scarcely thought, a foreigner, and indeed it did not often occur to his company that he was one; for his accent was wonderfully proper, and his language always copious, always nervous, always full of various allusions, flowing too with a rapidity worthy of admiration, and far beyond the power of nineteen in twenty natives. He had also a knowledge of the solemn language and the gay, could be sublime with Johnson, or blackguard with the groom; could dispute, could rally, could quibble, in our language. Baretti has, besides, some skill in music, with a bass voice, very agreeable, besides a falsetto which he can manage so as to mimic any singer he hears. I would also trust his knowledge of painting a long way. These accomplishments, with his extensive power over every modern language, make him a most pleasing companion while he is in good humour; and his lofty consciousness of his own superiority, which made him tenacious of every position, and drew him into a thousand distresses, did not, I must own, ever disgust me, till he began to exercise it against myself, and resolve to reign in our house by fairly defying the mistress of it. Pride, however, though shocking enough, is never despicable, but vanity, which he possessed too, in an eminent degree, will sometimes make a man near sixty ridiculous.

“France displayed all Mr. Baretti’s useful powers—he bustled for us, he catered for us, he took care of the child, he secured an apartment for the maid, he provided for our safety, our amusement, our repose; without him the pleasure of that journey would never have balanced the pain. And great was his disgust, to be sure, when he caught us, as he often did, ridiculing French manners, French sentiments, &c. I think he half cryed to Mrs. Payne, the

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landlady at Dover, on our return, because we laughed at French cookery, and French accommodations. Oh, how he would court the maids at the inns abroad, abuse the men perhaps! and that with a facility not to be exceeded, as they all confessed, by any of the natives. But so he could in Spain, I find, and so 'tis plain he could here. I will give one instance of his skill in our low street language. Walking in a field near Chelsea, he met a fellow, who, suspecting him from dress and manner to be a foreigner, said sneeringly, 'Come, Sir, will you show me the way to France?' 'No, Sir,' says Baretti, instantly, 'but I will show you the way to Tyburn.' Such, however, was his ignorance in a certain line, that he once asked Johnson for information who it was composed the Pater Noster, and I heard him tell Evans[1] the story of Dives and Lazarus as the subject of a poem he once had composed in the Milanese dialect, expecting great credit for his powers of invention. Evans owned to me that he thought the man drunk, whereas poor Baretti was, both in eating and drinking, a model of temperance. Had he guessed Evans's thoughts, the parson's gown would scarcely have saved him a knouting from the ferocious Italian."

[Footnote 1: Evans was a clergyman and rector of Southwark.]

On Oct. 20, 1769, Baretti was tried at the Old Bailey on a charge of murder, for killing with a pocket knife one of three men who, with a woman of the town, hustled him in the Haymarket.[1] He was acquitted, and the event is principally memorable for the appearance of Johnson, Burke, Grarrick, and Beauclerc as witnesses to character. The substance of Johnson's evidence is thus given in the "Gentleman's Magazine":

[Footnote 1: In his defence, he said:—"I hope it will be seen that my knife was neither a weapon of offence or defence. I wear it to carve fruit and sweetmeats, and not to kill my fellow creatures. It is a general custom in France not to put knives on the table, so that even ladies wear them in their pockets for general use."]

"*Dr. J*.—I believe I began to be acquainted with Mr. Baretti about the year 1753 or 1754. I have been intimate with him. He is a man of literature, a very studious man, a man of great diligence. He gets his living by study. I have no reason to think he was ever disordered with liquor in his life. A man that I never knew to be otherwise than peaceable, and a man that I take to be rather timorous.—*Q*. Was he addicted to pick up women in the streets?—*Dr. J. I* never knew that he was.—*Q*. How is he as to eyesight? —*Dr. J.* He does not see me now, nor do I see him. I do not believe he could be capable of assaulting any body in the street, without great provocation."

It would seem that Johnson's sensibility, such as it was, was not very severely taxed.

"*Boswell*.—But suppose now, Sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged?

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"*Johnson*.——I should do what I could to bail him; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer.

"*Boswell*.—Would you eat your dinner that day, Sir?

"*Johnson*.—Yes, Sir, and eat it as if he were eating it with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life to-morrow. Friends have risen up for him on every side, yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind."

Steevens relates that one evening previous to the trial a consultation of Baretti's friends was held at the house of Mr. Cox, the solicitor. Johnson and Burke were present, and differed as to some point of the defence. On Steevens observing to Johnson that the question had been agitated with rather too much warmth, "It may be so," replied the sage, "for Burke and I should have been of one opinion if we had had no audience." This is coming very near to—

"Would rather that the man should die
Than his prediction prove a lie."

Two anecdotes of Baretti during his imprisonment are preserved in "Thraliana":

"When Johnson and Burke went to see Baretti in Newgate, they had small comfort to give him, and bid him not hope too strongly. 'Why what can *he* fear,' says Baretti, placing himself between 'em, 'that holds two such hands as I do?'

"An Italian came one day to Baretti, when he was in Newgate for murder, to desire a letter of recommendation for the teaching of his scholars, when he (Baretti) should be hanged. 'You rascal,' replies Baretti, in a rage, 'if I were not *in my own apartment*, I would kick you down stairs directly,'"

The year after his acquittal Baretti published "Travels through Spain, Portugal, and France;" thus mentioned by Johnson in a Letter to Mrs, Thrale, dated Lichfield, July 20, 1770:

"That Baretti's book would please you all, I made no doubt. I know not whether the world has ever seen such travels before. Those whose lot it is to ramble can seldom write, and those who know how to write can seldom ramble." The rate of pay showed that the world was aware of the value of the acquisition. He gained *500l.* by this book. His "Frusta Letteraria," published some time before in Italy, had also attracted much attention, and, according to Johnson, he was the first who ever received money for copyright in Italy,

In a biographical notice of Baretti which appeared in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, 1789, written by Dr. Vincent, Dean of Westminster, it is stated that it was not

distress which compelled him to accept Mr. Thrale's hospitality, but that he was overpersuaded by Johnson, contrary to his own inclination, to undertake the instruction of the Misses Thrale in Italian. "He was either nine or eleven years almost entirely in that family," says the Dean, "though he still rented a lodging

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in town, during which period he expended his own *500l.*, and received nothing in return for his instruction, but the participation of a good table, and *150l.* by way of presents. Instead of his letters to Mrs. Piozzi in the 'European Magazine,' had he told this plain unvarnished tale, he would have convicted that lady of avarice and ingratitude, without incurring the danger of a reply, or exposing his memory to be insulted by her advocates."

He was less than three years in the family. As he had a pension of *80l.* a year, besides the interest of his *500l.*, he did not want money. If he had been allowed to want it, the charge of avarice would lie at Mr., not Mrs., Thrale's door; and his memory was exposed to no insult beyond the stigma which (as we shall presently see) his conduct and language necessarily fixed upon it. All his literary friends did not entertain the same high opinion of him. An unpublished letter from Dr. Warton to his brother contains the following passage:

"He (Huggins, the translator of Ariosto) abuses Baretti infernally, and says that he one day lent Baretti a gold watch, and could never get it afterwards; that after many excuses Baretti, skulked, and then got Johnson to write to Mr. Huggins a suppliant letter; that this letter stopped Huggins awhile, while Baretti got a protection from the Sardinian ambassador; and that, at last, with great difficulty, the watch was got from a pawnbroker to whom Baretti had sold it."

This extract is copied from a valuable contribution to the literary annals of the eighteenth century, for which we are indebted to the colonial press.[1] It is the diary of an Irish clergyman, containing strong internal evidence of authenticity, although nothing more is known of it than that the manuscript was discovered behind an old press in one of the offices of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. That such a person saw a good deal of Johnson in 1775, is proved by Boswell, whose accuracy is frequently confirmed in return. In one marginal note Mrs. Thrale says: "He was a fine showy talking man. Johnson liked him of all things in a year or two." In another: "Dr. Campbell was a very tall handsome man, and, speaking of some other *High*-bernian, used this expression: 'Indeed now, and upon my honour, Sir, I am but a Twitter to him.'"[2]

[Footnote 1: Diary of a Visit to England in 1775. By an Irishman (the Rev. Doctor Thomas Campbell, author of "A Philosophical Survey of the South of Ireland.") And other Papers by the same hand. With Notes by Samuel Raymond, M.A., Prothonotary of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. Sydney. Waugh and Cox. 1854.]

[Footnote 2: He is similarly described in the "Letters," vol. i. p. 329.]

Several of his entries throw light on the Thrale establishment:

"*14th.*—This day I called at Mr. Thrale's, where I was received with all respect by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. She is a very learned lady, and joins to the charms of her own sex, the manly understanding of ours. The immensity of the brewery astonished me."

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"*16th.*—Dined with Mr. Thrale along with Dr. Johnson, and Baretti. Baretti is a plain sensible man, who seems to know the world well. He talked to me of the invitation given him by the College of Dublin, but said it (100_l._ a year and rooms) was not worth his acceptance; and if it had been, he said, in point of profit, still he would not have accepted it, for that now he could not live out of London. He had returned a few years ago to his own country, but he could not enjoy it; and he was obliged to return to London, to those connexions he had been making for near thirty years past. He told me he had several families with whom, both in town and country, he could go at any time and spend a month: he is at this time on these terms at Mr. Thrale's, and he knows how to keep his ground. Talking as we were at tea of the magnitude of the beer vessels, he said there was one thing in Mr. Thrale's house still more extraordinary;—meaning his wife. She gulped the pill very prettily,—so much for Baretti!

"Johnson, you are the very man Lord Chesterfield describes: a Hottentot indeed, and though your abilities are respectable, you never can be respected yourself! He has the aspect of an idiot, without the faintest ray of sense gleaming from any one feature—with the most awkward garb, and unpowdered grey wig, on one side only of his head—he is for ever dancing the devil's jig, and sometimes he makes the most driveling effort to whistle some thought in his absent paroxysms."

"*25th.*—Dined at Mr. Thrale's where there were ten or more gentlemen, and but one lady besides Mrs. Thrale. The dinner was excellent: first course, soups at head and foot, removed by fish and a saddle of mutton; second course, a fowl they call galena at head, and a capon larger than some of our Irish turkeys, at foot; third course, four different sorts of ices, pine-apple, grape, raspberry, and a fourth; in each remove there were I think fourteen dishes. The two first courses were served in massy plate. I sat beside Baretti, which was to me the richest part of the entertainment. He and Mr. and Mrs. Thrale joined in expressing to me Dr. Johnson's concern that he could not give me the meeting that day, but desired that I should go and see him."

"*April 1st.*—Dined at Mr. Thrale's, whom in proof of the magnitude of London, I cannot help remarking, no coachman, and this is the third I have called, could find without inquiry. But of this by the way. There was Murphy, Boswell, and Baretti: the two last, as I learned just before I entered, are mortal foes, so much so that Murphy and Mrs. Thrale agreed that Boswell expressed a desire that Baretti should be hanged upon that unfortunate affair of his killing, &c. Upon this hint, I went, and without any sagacity, it was easily discernible, for upon Baretti's entering Boswell did not rise, and upon Baretti's descry of Boswell he grinned a perturbed glance. Politeness however smooths the most hostile brows, and theirs were smoothed. Johnson was the subject, both before and after dinner, for it was the boast of all but myself, that under that roof were the Doctor's fast friends. His *bon-mots* were retailed in such plenty, that they, like a surfeit, could not lie upon my memory."

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“N.B. The ‘Tour to the Western Isles’ was written an twenty days, and the ‘Patriot’ in three; ‘Taxation no Tyranny,’ within a week: and not one of them would have yet seen the light, had it not been for Mrs. Thrale and Baretti, who stirred him up by laying wagers.”

“*April 8th.*—Dined with Thrale, where Dr. Johnson was, and Boswell (and Baretti as usual). The Doctor was not in as good spirits as he was at Dilly’s. He had supped the night before with Lady ——, Miss Jeffries, one of the maids of honour, Sir Joshua Reynolds, &c., at Mrs. Abington’s. He said Sir C. Thompson, and some others who were there, spoke like people who had seen good company, and so did Mrs. Abington herself, who could not have seen good company.”

Boswell’s note, alluding to the same topic, is:

“On Saturday, April 8, I dined with him at Mr. Thrale’s, where we met the Irish Dr. Campbell. Johnson had supped the night before at Mrs. Abington’s with some fashionable people whom he named; and he seemed much pleased with having made one in so elegant a circle. Nor did he omit to pique his *mistress* a little with jealousy of her housewifery; for he said, with a smile, ’Mrs. Abington’s jelly, my dear lady, was better than yours.’”

The next year is chiefly memorable for the separation from Baretti, thus mentioned in “Thraliana”:

“Baretti had a comical aversion to Mrs. Macaulay, and his aversions are numerous and strong. If I had not once written his character in verse,[1] I would now write it in prose, for few people know him better: he was—*Dieu me pardonne*, as the French say—my inmate for very near three years; and though I really liked the man once for his talents, and at last was weary of him for the use he made of them, I never altered my sentiments concerning him; for his character is easily seen, and his soul above disguise, haughty and insolent, and breathing defiance against all mankind; while his powers of mind exceed most people’s, and his powers of purse are so slight that they leave him dependent on all. Baretti is for ever in the state of a stream dammed up: if he could once get loose, he would bear down all before him.

“Every soul that visited at our house while he was master of it, went away abhorring it; and Mrs. Montagu, grieved to see my meekness so imposed upon, had thoughts of writing me on the subject an anonymous letter, advising me to break with him. Seward, who tried at last to reconcile us, confessed his wonder that we had lived together so long. Johnson used to oppose and battle him, but never with his own consent: the moment he was cool, he would always condemn himself for exerting his superiority over a man who was his friend, a foreigner, and poor: yet I have been told by Mrs. Montagu that he attributed his loss of our family to Johnson: ungrateful and ridiculous! if it had

not been for his mediation, I would not so long have borne trampling on, as I did for the last two years of our acquaintance.

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“Not a servant, not a child, did he leave me any authority over; if I would attempt to correct or dismiss them, there was instant appeal to Mr. Baretti, who was sure always to be against me in every dispute. With Mr. Thrale I was ever cautious of contending, conscious that a misunderstanding there could never answer, as I have no friend or relation in the world to protect me from the rough treatment of a husband, should he chuse to exert his prerogatives; but when I saw Baretti openly urging Mr. Thrale to cut down some little fruit trees my mother had planted and I had begged might stand, I confess I did take an aversion to the creature, and secretly resolved his stay should not be prolonged by my intreaties whenever his greatness chose to take huff and be gone. As to my eldest daughter, his behaviour was most ungenerous; he was perpetually spurring her to independence, telling her she had more sense and would have a better fortune than her mother, whose admonitions she ought therefore to despise; that she ought to write and receive her own letters *now*, and not submit to an authority I could not keep up if she once had the spirit to challenge it; that, if I died in a lying-in which happened while he lived here, he hoped Mr. Thrale would marry Miss Whitbred, who would be a pretty companion for Hester, and not tyrannical and overbearing like me. Was I not fortunate to see myself once quit of a man like this? who thought his dignity was concerned to set me at defiance, and who was incessantly telling lies to my prejudice in the ears of my husband and children? When he walked out of the house on the 6th day of July, 1776, I wrote down what follows in my table book.

“*6 July, 1776.*—This day is made remarkable by the departure of Mr. Baretti, who has, since October, 1773, been our almost constant inmate, companion, and, I vainly hoped, our friend. On the 11th of November, 1773, Mr. Thrale let him have *50l.* and at our return from France *50l.* more, besides his clothes and pocket money: in return to all this, he instructed our eldest daughter—or thought he did—and puffed her about the town for a wit, a genius, a linguist, &c. At the beginning of the year 1776, we purposed visiting Italy under his conduct, but were prevented by an unforeseen and heavy calamity: that Baretti, however, might not be disappointed of money as well as of pleasure, Mr. Thrale presented him with 100 guineas, which at first calmed his wrath a little, but did not, perhaps, make amends for his vexation; this I am the more willing to believe, as Dr. Johnson not being angry too, seemed to grieve him no little, after all our preparations made.

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“Now Johnson’s virtue was engaged; and he, I doubt not, made it a point of conscience not to increase the distresses of a family already oppressed with affliction. Baretti, however, from this time grew sullen and captious; he went on as usual notwithstanding, making Streatham his home, carrying on business there, when he thought he had any to do, and teaching his pupil at by-times when he chose so to employ himself; for he always took his choice of hours, and would often spitefully fix on such as were particularly disagreeable to me, whom he has now not liked a long while, if ever he did. He professed, however, a violent attachment to our eldest daughter; said if *she* had died instead of her poor brother, he should have destroyed himself, with many as wild expressions of fondness. Within these few days, when my back was turned, he would often be telling her that he would go away and stay a month, with other threats of the same nature; and she, not being of a caressing or obliging disposition, never, I suppose, soothed his anger or requested his stay.

“Of all this, however, I can know nothing but from *her*, who is very reserved, and whose kindness I cannot so confide in as to be sure she would tell me all that passed between them; and her attachment is probably greater to him than me, whom he has always endeavoured to lessen as much as possible, both in her eyes and—what was worse—-her father’s, by telling him how my parts had been over-praised by Johnson, and over-rated by the world; that my daughter’s skill in languages, even at the age of fourteen, would vastly exceed mine, and such other idle stuff; which Mr. Thrale had very little care about, but which Hetty doubtless thought of great importance. Be this as it may, no angry words ever passed between him and me, except perhaps now and then a little spar or so when company was by, in the way of raillery merely.

“Yesterday, when Sir Joshua and Fitzmaurice dined here, I addressed myself to him with great particularity of attention, begging his company for Saturday, as I expected ladies, and said he must come and flirt with them, &c. My daughter in the meantime kept on telling me that Mr. Baretti was grown very old and very cross, would not look at her exercises, but said he would leave this house soon, for it was no better than Pandaemonium. Accordingly, the next day he packed up his cloke-bag, which he had not done for three years, and sent it to town; and while we were wondering what he would say about it at breakfast, he was walking to London himself, without taking leave of any one person, except it may be the girl, who owns they had much talk, in the course of which he expressed great aversion to me and even to her, who, he said, he once thought well of.

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“Now whether she had ever told the man things that I might have said of him in his absence, by way of provoking him to go, and so rid herself of his tuition; whether he was puffed up with the last 100 guineas and longed to be spending it *all’ Italiano;* whether he thought Mr. Thrale would call him back, and he should be better established here than ever; or whether he really was idiot enough to be angry at my threatening to whip Susan and Sophy for going out of bounds, although *he* had given them leave, for Hetty said that was the first offence he took huff at, I never now shall know, for he never expressed himself as an offended man to me, except one day when he was not shaved at the proper hour forsooth, and then I would not quarrel with him, because nobody was by, and I knew him be so vile a lyar that I durst not trust his tongue with a dispute. He is gone, however, loaded with little presents from me, and with a large share too of my good opinion, though I most sincerely rejoice in his departure, and hope we shall never meet more but by chance.

“Since our quarrel I had occasion to talk of him with Tom Davies, who spoke with horror of his ferocious temper; ‘and yet,’ says I, ’there is great sensibility about Baretti: I have seen tears often stand in his eyes.’ ‘Indeed,’ replies Davies, ’I should like to have seen that sight vastly, when—even butchers weep.’”

[Footnote 1: In “The Streatham Portraits.” (See Vol. II.)]

His intractable character appears from his own account of the rupture:

“When Madam took it into her head to give herself airs, and treat me with some coldness and superciliousness, I did not hesitate to set down at breakfast my dish of tea not half drank, go for my hat and stick that lay in the corner of the room, turn my back to the house *insalutato hospite*, and walk away to London without uttering a syllable, fully resolved never to see her again, as was the case during no less than four years; nor had she and I ever met again as friends if she and her husband had not chanced upon me after that lapse of time at the house of a gentleman near Beckenham, and coaxed me into a reconciliation, which, as almost all reconciliations prove, was not very sincere on her side or mine; so that there was a total end of it on Mr. Thrale’s demise, which happened about three years after."[1]

[Footnote 1: The European Magazine, 1788.]

The monotony of a constant residence at Streatham was varied by trips to Bath or Brighton; and it was so much a matter of course for Johnson to make one of the party, that when (1776), not expecting him so soon back from a journey with Boswell, the Thrale family and Baretti started for Bath without him, Boswell is disposed to treat their departure without the lexicographer as a slight:

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“This was not showing the attention which might have been expected to the ‘guide, philosopher, and friend;’ the *Imlac* who had hastened from the country to console a distressed mother, who he understood was very anxious for his return. They had, I found, without ceremony, proceeded on their journey. I was glad to understand from him that it was still resolved that his tour to Italy with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale should take place, of which he had entertained some doubt, on account of the loss which they had suffered; and his doubts afterwards appeared to be well founded. He observed, indeed, very justly, that ’their loss was an additional reason for their going abroad; and if it had not been fixed that he should have been one of the party, he would force them out; but he would not advise them unless his advice was asked, lest they might suspect that he recommended what he wished on his own account.’ I was not pleased that his intimacy with Mr. Thrale’s family, though it no doubt contributed much to his comfort and enjoyment, was not without some degree of restraint[1]: not, as has been grossly suggested[2], that it was required of him as a task to talk for the entertainment of them and their company; but that he was not quite at his ease: which, however, might partly be owing to his own honest pride—that dignity of mind which is always jealous of appearing too compliant.”

[Footnote 1: (*Marginal note*). “What restraint can he mean? Johnson kept every one else under restraint.”]

[Footnote 2: (*Marginal note.*) “I do not believe it ever was suggested.”]

In his first letter of condolence on Mr. Thrale’s death, Johnson speaks of her having enjoyed happiness in marriage, “to a degree of which, without personal knowledge, I should have thought the description fabulous.” The “Autobiography” and “Thraliana” tell a widely different tale. The mortification of not finding herself appreciated by her husband was poignantly increased, during the last years of his life, by finding another offensively preferred to her. He was so fascinated by one of her fair friends, as to lose sight altogether of what was due to appearances or to the feelings of his wife.

A full account of the lady in question is given in the “Thraliana”:

“*Miss Streatfield*.—I have since heard that Dr. Collier picked up a more useful friend, a Mrs. Streatfield, a widow, high in fortune and rather eminent both for the beauties of person and mind; her children, I find, he has been educating; and her eldest daughter is just now coming out into the world with a great character for elegance and literature.—-*20 November, 1776.*”

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"*19 May, 1778.*—The person who wrote the title of this book at the top of the page, on the other side—left hand—in the black letter, was the identical Miss Sophia Streatfield, mentioned in 'Thraliana,' as pupil to poor dear Doctor Collier, after he and I had parted. By the chance meeting of some of the currents which keep this ocean of human life from stagnating, this lady and myself were driven together nine months ago at Brighthelmstone: we soon grew intimate from having often heard of each other, and I have now the honour and happiness of calling her my friend. Her face is eminently pretty; her carriage elegant; her heart affectionate, and her mind cultivated. There is above all this an attractive sweetness in her manner, which claims and promises to repay one's confidence, and which drew from me the secret of my keeping a 'Thraliana,' &c. &c. &c."

"*Jan. 1779.*—Mr. Thrale is fallen in love, really and seriously, with Sophy Streatfield; but there is no wonder in that; she is very pretty, very gentle, soft, and insinuating; hangs about him, dances round him, cries when she parts from him, squeezes his hand slyly, and with her sweet eyes full of tears looks so fondly in his face[1]—and all for love of me as she pretends; that I can hardly, sometimes, help laughing in her face. A man must not be a *man* but an *it*, to resist such artillery. Marriott said very well,

"'Man flatt'ring man, not always can prevail,
But woman flatt'ring man, can never fail.'

"Murphy did not use, I think, to have a good opinion of me, but he seems to have changed his mind this Christmas, and to believe better of me. I am glad on't to be sure: the suffrage of such a man is well worth having: he sees Thrale's love of the fair S.S. I suppose: approves my silent and patient endurance of what I could not prevent by more rough and sincere behaviour."

[Footnote 1:

"And Merlin look'd and half believed her true, So tender was her voice, so fair her face, So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears, Like sunlight on the plain, behind a shower." *Idylls of The King.—Vivien.*]

"20 *January*, 1780.—Sophy Streatfield is come to town: she is in the 'Morning Post' too, I see (to be in the 'Morning Post' is no good thing). She has won Wedderburne's heart from his wife, I believe, and few married women will bear *that* patiently if I do; they will some of them wound her reputation, so that I question whether it can recover. Lady Erskine made many odd inquiries about her to me yesterday, and winked and looked wise at her sister. The dear S.S. must be a little on her guard; nothing is so spiteful as a woman robbed of a heart she thinks she has a claim upon. She will not lose *that* with temper, which she has taken perhaps no pains at all to preserve: and I do not observe with any pleasure, I fear, that my husband prefers Miss Streatfield to

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me, though I must acknowledge her younger, handsomer, and a better scholar. Of her chastity, however, I never had a doubt: she was bred by Dr. Collier in the strictest principles of piety and virtue; she not only knows she will be always chaste, but she knows why she will be so.[1] Mr. Thrale is now by dint of disease quite out of the question, so I am a disinterested spectator; but her coquetry is very dangerous indeed, and I wish she were married that there might be an end on't. Mr. Thrale loves her, however, sick or well, better by a thousand degrees than he does me or any one else, and even now desires nothing on earth half so much as the sight of his Sophia.

"'E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries!
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires!'

"The Saturday before Mr. Thrale was taken ill, Saturday, 19th February—he was struck Monday, 21st February—we had a large party to tea, cards, and supper; Miss Streatfield was one, and as Mr. Thrale sate by her, he pressed her hand to his heart (as she told me herself), and said 'Sophy, we shall not enjoy this long, and to-night I will not be cheated of my only comfort.' Poor soul! how shockingly tender! On the first Fryday that he spoke after his stupor, she came to see him, and as she sate by the bedside pitying him, 'Oh,' says he, 'who would not suffer even all that I have endured to be pitied by you!' This I heard myself."

[Footnote 1:

"Besides, her inborn virtue fortify,
They are most firmly good, who best know why."]

"Here is Sophy Streatfield again, handsomer than ever, and flushed with new conquests; the Bishop of Chester feels her power, I am sure; she showed me a letter from him that was as tender and had all the tokens upon it as strong as ever I remember to have seen 'em; I repeated to her out of Pope's Homer—'Very well, Sophy,' says I:

"'Range undisturb'd among the hostile crew,
But touch not Hinchliffe[1], Hinchliffe is my due.'

Miss Streatfield (says my master) could have quoted these lines in the Greek; his saying so piqued me, and piqued me because it was true. I wish I understood Greek! Mr. Thrale's preference of her to me never vexed me so much as my consciousness—or fear at least—that he has reason for his preference. She has ten times my beauty, and five times my scholarship: wit and knowledge has she none."

[Footnote 1: For Hector. Hinchliffe was Bishop of Peterborough.]

"*May*, 1781.—Sophy Streatfield is an incomprehensible girl; here has she been telling me such tender passages of what passed between her and Mr. Thrale, that she half frights me somehow, at the same time declaring her attachment to Vyse yet her willingness to marry Lord Loughborough. Good God! what an uncommon girl! and handsome almost to perfection, I think: delicate in her manners, soft in her voice, and strict in her principles: I never saw such a character, she is wholly out of my reach; and I can only say that the man who runs mad for Sophy Streatfield has no reason to be ashamed of his passion; few people, however, seem disposed to take her for life—-everybody's admiration, as Mrs. Byron says, and nobody's choice.

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"*Streatham, January 1st*, 1782.—Sophy Streatfield has begun the new year nicely with a new conquest. Poor dear Doctor Burney! *he* is now the reigning favourite, and she spares neither pains nor caresses to turn that good man's head, much to the vexation of his family; particularly my Fanny, who is naturally provoked to see sport made of her father in his last stage of life by a young coquet, whose sole employment in this world seems to have been winning men's hearts on purpose to fling them away. How she contrives to keep bishops, and brewers, and doctors, and directors of the East India Company, all in chains so, and almost all at the same time, would amaze a wiser person than me; I can only say let us mark the end! Hester will perhaps see her out and pronounce, like Solon, on her wisdom and conduct."

As this lady has excited great interest, and was much with the Thrales, I will add what I have been able to ascertain concerning her. She is frequently mentioned in Madame D'Arblay's Diary:

"*Streatham, Sept*. 1778.—To be sure she (Mrs. Thrale) saw it was not totally disagreeable to me; though I was really astounded when she hinted at my becoming a rival to Miss Streatfield in the Doctor's good graces.

"'I had a long letter,' she said, 'from Sophy Streatfield t'other day, and she sent Dr. Johnson her elegant edition of the 'Classics;' but when he had read the letter, he said 'she is a sweet creature, and I love her much; but my little Burney writes a better letter.' Now,' continued she, 'that is just what I wished him to say of you both.'"

"*Streatham, Sept*. 1779.—Mr. Seward, you know, told me that she had tears at command, and I begin to think so too, for when Mrs. Thrale, who had previously told me I should see her cry, began coaxing her to stay, and saying, 'If you go, I shall know you don't love me so well as Lady Gresham,'—she did cry, not loud indeed, nor much, but the tears came into her eyes, and rolled down her fine cheeks.

"'Come hither, Miss Burney,' cried Mrs. Thrale; 'come and see Miss Streatfield cry!'

"I thought it a mere *badinage*. I went to them, but when I saw real tears, I was shocked, and saying, 'No, I won't look at her,' ran away frightened, lest she should think I laughed at her, which Mrs. Thrale did so openly, that, as I told her, had she served me so, I should have been affronted with her ever after.

"Miss Streatfield, however, whether from a sweetness not to be ruffled, or from not perceiving there was any room for taking offence, gently wiped her eyes, and was perfectly composed!"

"*Streatham, June*, 1779.—Seward, said Mrs. Thrale, had affronted Johnson, and then Johnson affronted Seward, and then the S.S. cried.

"*Sir Philip* (*Clerke*).—Well, I have heard so much of these tears, that I would give the universe to have a sight of them.

"*Mrs. Thrale*.—Well, she shall cry again, if you like it.

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"*S.S.*.—No, pray, Mrs. Thrale.

"*Sir Philip*.—Oh, pray do! pray let me see a little of it.

"*Mrs. Thrale*.—Yes, do cry a little Sophy [in a wheedling voice], pray do! Consider, now, you are going to-day, and it's very hard if you won't cry a little: indeed, S.S., you ought to cry.

"Now for the wonder of wonders. When Mrs. Thrale, in a coaxing voice, suited to a nurse soothing a baby, had run on for some time,—while all the rest of us, in laughter, joined in the request,—two crystal tears came into the soft eyes of the S.S., and rolled gently down her cheeks! Such a sight I never saw before, nor could I have believed. She offered not to conceal or dissipate them: on the contrary, she really contrived to have them seen by everybody. She looked, indeed, uncommonly handsome; for her pretty face was not, like Chloe's, blubbered; it was smooth and elegant, and neither her features nor complexion were at all ruffled; nay, indeed, she was smiling all the time.

"'Look, look!' cried Mrs. Thrale; 'see if the tears are not come already.'

"Loud and rude bursts of laughter broke from us all at once. How, indeed, could they be restrained?"

"*Streatham, Sunday, June* 13, 1779.—After church we all strolled round the grounds, and the topic of our discourse was Miss Streatfield. Mrs. Thrale asserted that she had a power of captivation that was irresistible; that her beauty, joined to her softness, her caressing manners, her tearful eyes, and alluring looks, would insinuate her into the heart of any man she thought worth attacking.

"Sir Philip declared himself of a totally different opinion, and quoted Dr. Johnson against her, who had told him that, taking away her Greek, she was as ignorant as a butterfly.

"Mr. Seward declared her Greek was all against her with him, for that, instead of reading Pope, Swift, or the Spectator—books from which she might derive useful knowledge and improvement—it had led her to devote all her reading time to the first eight books of Homer.

"'But,' said Mrs. Thrale, 'her Greek, you must own, has made all her celebrity;—you would have heard no more of her than of any other pretty girl, but for that.'

"'What I object to,' said Sir Philip, 'is her avowed preference for this parson. Surely it is very indelicate in any lady to let all the world know with whom she is in love!"

"'The parson,' said the severe Mr. Seward, 'I suppose, spoke first,—or she would as soon have been in love with you, or with me!'

“You will easily believe I gave him no pleasant look.”

The parson was the Rev. Dr. Vyse, Rector of Lambeth. He had made an imprudent marriage early in life, and was separated from his wife, of whom he hoped to get rid either by divorce or by her death, as she was reported to be in bad health. Under these circumstances, he had entered into a conditional engagement with the fair S.S.; but eventually threw her over, either in despair at his wife’s longevity or from caprice. On the mention of his name by Boswell, Mrs. Piozzi writes opposite: “whose connection with Sophia Streatfield was afterwards so much talked about, and I suppose never understood: certainly not at all by H.L.P.” To return to the D’Arblay Diary:

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"*Streatham, June* 14, 1781.—We had my dear father and Sophy Streatfield, who, as usual, was beautiful, caressing, amiable, sweet, and—fatiguing."

"*Streatham, Aug*. 1781.—Some time after Sophy Streatfield was talked of,—Oh, with how much impertinence! as if she was at the service of any man who would make proposals to her! Yet Mr. Seward spoke of her with praise and tenderness all the time, as if, though firmly of this opinion, he was warmly her admirer. From such admirers and such admiration Heaven guard me! Mr. Crutchley said but little; but that little was bitter enough.

"'However,' said Mr. Seward, 'after all that can be said, there is nobody whose manners are more engaging, nobody more amiable than the little Sophy; and she is certainly very pretty; I must own I have always been afraid to trust myself with her.'

"Here Mr. Crutchley looked very sneeringly.

"'Nay, 'squire,' cried Mr. Seward, 'she is very dangerous, I can tell you; and if she had you at a fair trial, she would make an impression that would soften-even your hard heart.'

"'No need of any further trial,' said he, laughing, 'for she has done that already; and so soft was the impression that it absolutely all dissolved!—melted quite away, and not a trace of it left!'

"Mr. Seward then proposed that she should marry Sir John Miller, who has just lost his wife; and very gravely said, he had a great mind to set out for Tunbridge, and carry her with him to Bath, and so make the match without delay!

"'But surely,' said Mrs. Thrale, 'if you fail, you will think yourself bound in honour to marry her yourself?'

"'Why, that's the thing,' said he; 'no, I can't take the little Sophy myself; I should have too many rivals; rivals; no, that won't do.'

"How abominably conceited and *sure* these pretty gentlemen are! However, Mr. Crutchley here made a speech that half won my heart.

"'I wish,' said he, 'Miss Streatfield was here at this moment to cuff you, Seward!'

"'Cuff me,' cried he. 'What, the little Sophy!—and why?'

"'For disposing of her so freely. I think a man deserves to be cuffed for saying *any* lady will marry him.'

"I seconded this speech with much approbation."

"*London, Jan.* 1783.—Before they went came Miss Streatfield, looking pale, but very elegant and pretty. She was in high spirits, and I hope has some reason. She made, at least, speeches that provoked such surmises. When the Jacksons went,—

"'That,' said I, 'is the celebrated Jackson of Exeter; I dare say you would like him if you knew him.'

"'I dare say I should,' cried she, simpering; 'for he has the two requisites for me,—he is tall and thin.'

"To be sure, this did not at all call for raillery! Dr. Vyse has always been distinguished by these two epithets. I said, however, nothing, as my mother was present; but she would not let my looks pass unnoticed.

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"'Oh!' cried she, 'how wicked you look!—No need of seeing Mrs. Siddons for expression!—However, you know how much that is my taste,—tall and thin!—but you don't know how *apropos* it is just now!'"

Nine years after the last entry, we find:

"*May* 25, 1792.—We now met Mrs. Porteous; and who should be with her but the poor pretty S.S., whom so long I had not seen, and who has now lately been finally given up by her long-sought and very injurious lover, Dr. Vyse?

"She is sadly faded, and looked disturbed and unhappy but still beautiful, though no longer blooming; and still affectionate, though absent and evidently absorbed. We had a little chat together about the Thrales. In mentioning our former intimacy with them, 'Ah, those,' she cried, 'were happy times!' and her eyes glistened. Poor thing! hers has been a lamentable story!—Imprudence and vanity have rarely been mixed with so much sweetness, and good-humour, and candour, and followed with more reproach and ill success. We agreed to renew acquaintance next winter; at present she will be little more in town."

In a letter to Madame D'Arblay, Oct. 20, 1820, Mrs. Piozzi says: "Fell, the bookseller in Bond Street, told me a fortnight or three weeks ago, that Miss Streatfield lives where she did in his neighbourhood, Clifford Street, S.S. still." On the 18th January, 1821: "'The once charming S.S. had inquired for me of Nornaville and Fell, the Old Bond Street book-sellers, so I thought she meditated writing, but was deceived."

The story she told the author of "Piozziana," in proof of Johnson's want of firmness, clearly refers to this lady:

"I had remarked to her that Johnson's readiness to condemn any moral deviation in others was, in a man so entirely before the public as he was, nearly a proof of his own spotless purity of conduct. She said, 'Yes, Johnson was, on the whole, a rigid moralist; but he could be ductile, I may say, servile; and I will give you an instance. We had a large dinner-party at our house; Johnson sat on one side of me, and Burke on the other; and in the company there was a young female (Mrs. Piozzi named her), to whom I, in my peevishness, thought Mr. Thrale superfluously attentive, to the neglect of me and others; especially of myself, then near my confinement, and dismally low-spirited; notwithstanding which, Mr. T. very unceremoniously begged of me to change place with Sophy ——, who was threatened with a sore throat, and might be injured by sitting near the door. I had scarcely swallowed a spoonful of soup when this occurred, and was so overset by the coarseness of the proposal, that I burst into tears, said something petulant—that perhaps ere long, the lady might be at the head of Mr. T.'s table, without displacing the mistress of the house, &c., and so left the apartment. I retired to the drawing-room, and for an hour or two contended with my vexation, as I best could, when

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Johnson and Burke came up. On seeing them, I resolved to give a *jobation* to both, but fixed on Johnson for my charge, and asked him if he had noticed what passed, what I had suffered, and whether allowing for the state of my nerves, I was much to blame? He answered, "Why, possibly not; your feelings were outraged." I said, "Yes, greatly so; and I cannot help remarking with what blandness and composure you *witnessed* the outrage. Had this transaction been told of others, your anger would have known no bounds; but, towards a man who gives good dinners &c., you were meekness itself!" Johnson coloured, and Burke, I thought, looked foolish; but I had not a word of answer from either.'"

The only excuse for Mr. Thrale is to be found in his mental and bodily condition at the time, which made it impossible for Johnson or Burke to interfere without a downright quarrel with him, nor without making matters worse. This, however, is not the only instance in which Johnson witnessed Thrale's laxity of morals without reproving it. Opposite the passage in which Boswell reports Johnson as palliating infidelity in a husband by the remark, that the man imposes no bastards on his wife, she writes: "Sometimes he does. Johnson knew a man who did, and the lady took very tender care of them."

Madame D'Arblay was not uniformly such a source of comfort to her as that lady supposed. The entries in "Thraliana" relating to her show this:

"*August,* 1779.—Fanny Burney has been a long time from me; I was glad to see her again; yet she makes me miserable too in many respects, so restlessly and apparently anxious, lest I should give myself airs of patronage or load her with the shackles of dependance. I live with her always in a degree of pain that precludes friendship—dare not ask her to buy me a ribbon—dare not desire her to touch the bell, lest she should think herself injured—lest she should forsooth appear in the character of Miss Neville, and I in that of the widow Bromley. See Murphy's 'Know Your Own Mind.'"

"Fanny Burney has kept her room here in my house seven days, with a fever or something that she called a fever; I gave her every medicine and every slop with my own hand; took away her dirty cups, spoons, &c.; moved her tables: in short, was doctor, and nurse and maid—for I did not like the servants should have additional trouble lest they should hate her for it. And now,—with the true gratitude of a wit, she tells me that the world thinks the better of me for my civilities to her. It does? does it?"

"Miss Burney was much admired at Bath (1780); the puppy-men said, 'She had such a drooping air and such a timid intelligence;' or, 'a timid air,' I think it was,' and a drooping intelligence;' never sure was such a collection of pedantry and affectation as rilled Bath when we were on that spot. How everything else and everybody set off my gallant bishop. 'Quantum lenta solent inter viburna Cupressi.' Of all the people I ever heard

read verse in my whole life, the best, the most perfect reader, is the Bishop of Peterboro' (Hinchcliffe.)"[1]

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[Footnote 1: In a marginal note on Boswell, she says: "The people (in 1783) did read shamefully. Yet Mr. Lee, the poet, many years before Johnson was born, read so gracefully, the players would not accept his tragedies till they had heard them from other lips: his own (they said) sweetened all which proceeded from them." Speaker Onslow equally was celebrated for his manner of reading.]

"*July 1st*, 1780.—Mrs. Byron, who really loves me, was disgusted at Miss Burney's carriage to me, who have been such a friend and benefactress to her: not an article of dress, not a ticket for public places, not a thing in the world that she could not command from me: yet always insolent, always pining for home, always preferring the mode of life in St. Martin's Street to all I could do for her. She is a saucy-spirited little puss to be sure, but I love her dearly for all that; and I fancy she has a real regard for me, if she did not think it beneath the dignity of a wit, or of what she values more—the dignity of Dr. Burnett's daughter—to indulge it. Such dignity! the Lady Louisa of Leicester Square![1] In good time!"

[Footnote 1: Alluding to a character in "Evelina."]

"1781.—What a blockhead Dr. Burney is to be always sending for his daughter home so! what a monkey! is she not better and happier with me than she can be anywhere else? Johnson is enraged at the silliness of their family conduct, and Mrs. Byron disgusted; I confess myself provoked excessively, but I love the girl so dearly—and the Doctor, too, for that matter, only that he has such odd notions of superiority in his own house, and will have his children under his feet forsooth, rather than let 'em live in peace, plenty, and comfort anywhere from home. If I did not provide Fanny with every wearable—every wishable, indeed,—it would not vex me to be served so; but to see the impossibility of compensating for the pleasures of St. Martin's Street, makes one at once merry and mortified.

"Dr. Burney did not like his daughter should learn Latin even of Johnson, who offered to teach her for friendship, because then she would have been as wise as himself forsooth, and Latin was too masculine for Misses. A narrow-souled goose-cap the man must be at last, agreeable and amiable all the while too, beyond almost any other human creature. Well, mortal man is but a paltry animal! the best of us have such drawbacks both upon virtue, wisdom, and knowledge."

In what his daughter calls a doggrel list of his friends and his feats, Dr. Burney has thus mentioned the Thrales:

"1776.—This year's acquaintance began with the Thrales, Where I met with great talents 'mongst females and males, But the best thing it gave me from that time to this, Was the freedom it gave me to sound the abyss, At my ease and my leisure, of Johnson's great mind, Where new treasures unnumber'd I constantly find."

Highly to her credit, Mrs. Thrale did not omit any part of her own duties to her husband because he forgot his. In March, 1780, she writes to Johnson:

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“I am willing to show myself in Southwark, or in any place, for my master’s pleasure or advantage; but have no present conviction that to be re-elected would be advantageous, so shattered a state as his nerves are in just now.—Do not you, however, fancy for a moment, that I shrink from fatigue—or desire to escape from doing my duty;—spiting one’s antagonist is a reason that never ought to operate, and never does operate with me: I care nothing about a rival candidate’s innuendos, I care only about my husband’s health and fame; and if we find that he earnestly wishes to be once more member for the Borough—he *shall* be member, if anything done or suffered by me will help make him so.”

In the May following she writes: “Meanwhile, Heaven send this Southwark election safe, for a disappointment would half kill my husband, and there is no comfort in tiring every friend to death in such a manner and losing the town at last.”

This was an agitating month. In “Thraliana “:

“*20th May*, 1780.—I got back to Bath again and staid there till the riots[1] drove us all away the first week in June: we made a dawdling journey, cross country, to Brighthelmstone, where all was likely to be at peace: the letters we found there, however, shewed us how near we were to ruin here in the Borough: where nothing but the astonishing presence of mind shewed by Perkins in amusing the mob with meat and drink and huzzas, till Sir Philip Jennings Clerke could get the troops and pack up the counting-house bills, bonds, &c. and carry them, which he did, to Chelsea College for safety,—could have saved us from actual undoing. The villains *had* broke in, and our brewhouse would have blazed in ten minutes, when a property of L150,000 would have been utterly lost, and its once flourishing possessors quite undone.

“Let me stop here to give God thanks for so very undeserved, so apparent, an interposition of Providence in our favour.

“I left Mr. Thrale at Brighthelmstone and came to town again to see what was left to be done: we have now got arms and mean to defend ourselves by force if further violence is intended. Sir Philip comes every day at some hour or another—good creature, how kind he is! and how much I ought to love him! God knows I am not in this case wanting to my duty. I have presented Perkins, with my Master’s permission, with two hundred guineas, and a silver urn for his lady, with his own cypher on it and this motto—Mollis responsio, Iram avertit.”

[Footnote 1: The Lord George Gordon Riots.]

In the spring of 1781, “I found,” says Boswell, “on visiting Mr. Thrale that he was now very ill, and had removed, I suppose by the solicitation of Mrs. Thrale, to a house in Grosvenor Square.” She has written opposite: “Spiteful again! He went by direction of his physicians where they could easiest attend to him.”

The removal to Grosvenor Square is thus mentioned in “Thraliana”:

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"*Monday, January 29th*, 1781.—So now we are to spend this winter in Grosvenor Square; my master has taken a ready-furnished lodging-house there, and we go in to-morrow. He frighted me cruelly a while ago; he would have Lady Shelburne's house, one of the finest in London; he would buy, he would build, he would give twenty to thirty guineas a week for a house. Oh Lord, thought I, the people will sure enough throw stones at me now when they see a dying man go to such mad expenses, and all, as they will naturally think, to please a wife wild with the love of expense. This was the very thing I endeavoured to avoid by canvassing the borough for him, in hopes of being through that means tyed to the brewhouse where I always hated to live till now, that I conclude his constitution lost, and that the world will say *I* tempt him in his weak state of body and mind to take a fine house for me at the flashy end of the town." "He however, dear creature, is as absolute, ay, and ten times more so, than ever, since he suspects his head to be suspected, and to Grosvenor Square we are going, and I cannot be sorry, for it will doubtless be comfortable enough to see one's friends commodiously, and I have long wished to quit *Harrow Corner*, to be sure; how could one help it? though I did

"'Call round my casks each object of desire'

all last winter: but it was a heavy drag too, and what signifies resolving *never* to be pleased? I will make myself comfortable in my new habitation, and be thankful to God and my husband."

On February 7, 1781, she writes to Madame D'Arblay:

"Yesterday I had a conversazione. Mrs. Montagu was brilliant in diamonds, solid in judgment, critical in talk. Sophy smiled, Piozzi sung, Pepys panted with admiration, Johnson was good humoured, Lord John Clinton attentive, Dr. Bowdler lame, and my master not asleep. Mrs. Ord looked elegant, Lady Rothes dainty, Mrs. Davenant dapper, and Sir Philip's curls were all blown about by the wind. Mrs. Byron rejoices that her Admiral and I agree so well; the way to his heart is connoisseurship it seems, and for a background and contorno, who comes up to Mrs. Thrale, you know."

In "Thraliana":

"*Sunday, March 18th*, 1781.—Well! Now I have experienced the delights of a London winter, spent in the bosom of flattery, gayety, and Grosvenor Square; 'tis a poor thing, however, and leaves a void in the mind, but I have had my compting-house duties to attend, my sick master to watch, my little children to look after, and how much good have I done in any way? Not a scrap as I can see; the pecuniary affairs have gone on perversely: how should they chuse [an omission here] when the sole proprietor is incapable of giving orders, yet not so far incapable as to be set aside! Distress, fraud, folly, meet me at every turn, and I am not able to fight against them all, though endued with an iron constitution, which shakes not by sleepless nights or days severely fretted.

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“Mr. Thrale talks now of going to Spa and Italy again; how shall we drag him thither? A man who cannot keep awake four hours at a stroke &c. Well! this will indeed be a tryal of one’s patience; and who must go with us on this expedition? Mr. Johnson!—he will indeed be the only happy person of the party; he values nothing *under* heaven but his own mind, which is a spark *from* heaven, and that will be invigorated by the addition of new ideas. If Mr. Thrale dies on the road, Johnson will console himself by learning how it is to travel with a corpse: and, after all, such reasoning is the true philosophy—one’s heart is a mere incumbrance—would I could leave mine behind. The children shall go to their sisters at Kensington, Mrs. Cumyns may take care of them all. God grant us a happy meeting some *where* and some *time*!

“Baretti should attend, I think; there is no man who has so much of every language, and can manage so well with Johnson, is so tidy on the road, so active top to obtain good accommodations. He is the man in the world, I think, whom I most abhor, and who *hates* and *professes* to *hate me* the most; but what does that signifie? He will be careful of Mr. Thrale and Hester whom he *does* love—and he won’t strangle *me*, I suppose. Somebody we *must* have. Croza would court our daughter, and Piozzi could not talk to Johnson, nor, I suppose, do one any good but sing to one,—and how should we *sing songs in a strange land*? Baretti must be the man, and I will beg it of him as a favour. Oh, the triumph he will have! and the lyes he will tell!” Thrale’s death is thus described in “Thraliana”:

“On the Sunday, the 1st of April, I went to hear the Bishop of Peterborough preach at May Fair Chapel, and though the sermon had nothing in it particularly pathetic, I could not keep my tears within my eyes. I spent the evening, however, at Lady Rothes’, and was cheerful. Found Sir John Lade, Johnson, and Boswell, with Mr. Thrale, at my return to the Square. On Monday morning Mr. Evans came to breakfast; Sir Philip and Dr. Johnson to dinner—so did Baretti. Mr. Thrale eat voraciously—so voraciously that, encouraged by Jebb and Pepys, who had charged me to do so, I checked him rather severely, and Mr. Johnson added these remarkable words: “Sir, after the denunciation of your physicians this morning, such eating is little better than suicide.” He did not, however, desist, and Sir Philip said, he eat apparently in defiance of control, and that it was better for us to say nothing to him. Johnson observed that he thought so too; and that he spoke more from a sense of duty than a hope of success. Baretti and these two spent the evening with me, and I was enumerating the people who were to meet the Indian ambassadors on the Wednesday. I had been to Negri’s and bespoke an elegant entertainment.

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“On the next day, Tuesday the 3rd, Mrs. Hinchliffe called on me in the morning to go see Webber’s drawings of the South Sea rareties. We met the Smelts, the Ords, and numberless *blues* there, and displayed our pedantry at our pleasure. Going and coming, however, I quite teazed Mrs. Hinchliffe with my low-spirited terrors about Mr. Thrale, who had not all this while one symptom worse than he had had for months; though the physicians this Tuesday morning agreed that a continuation of such dinners as he had lately made would soon dispatch a life so precarious and uncertain. When I came home to dress, Piozzi, who was in the next room teaching Hester to sing, began lamenting that he was engaged to Mrs. Locke on the following evening, when I had such a world of company to meet these fine Orientals; he had, however, engaged Roncaglia and Sacchini to begin with, and would make a point of coming himself at nine o’clock if possible. I gave him the money I had collected for his benefit—35_l_. I remember it was—a banker’s note—and burst out o’ crying, and said, I was sure I should not go to it. The man was shocked, and wondered what I meant. Nay, says I, ’tis mere lowness of spirits, for Mr. Thrale is very well now, and is gone out in his carriage to spit cards, as I call’d it—sputar le carte. Just then came a letter from Dr. Pepys, insisting to speak with me in the afternoon, and though there was nothing very particular in the letter considering our intimacy, I burst out o’ crying again, and threw myself into an agony, saying, I was sure Mr. Thrale would dye.

“Miss Owen came to dinner, and Mr. Thrale came home so well! and in such spirits! he had invited more people to my concert, or conversazione, or musical party, of the next day, and was delighted to think what a show we should make. He eat, however, more than enormously. Six things the day before, and eight on this day, with strong beer in such quantities! the very servants were frighted, and when Pepys came in the evening he said this could not last—either there must be *legal*[1] restraint or certain death. Dear Mrs. Byron spent the evening with me, and Mr. Crutchley came from Sunning-hill to be ready for the morrow’s flash. Johnson was at the Bishop of Chester’s. I went down in the course of the afternoon to see after my master as usual, and found him not asleep, but sitting with his legs up—*because*, as he express’d it. I kissed him, and said how good he was to be so careful of himself. He enquired who was above, but had no disposition to come up stairs. Miss Owen and Mrs. Byron now took their leave. The Dr. had been gone about twenty minutes when Hester went down to see her papa, and found him on the floor. What’s the meaning of this? says she, in an agony. I chuse it, replies Mr. Thrale firmly; I lie so o’ purpose. She ran, however, to call his valet, who was gone out—happy to leave him so particularly *well*, as he thought. When my servant went instead, Mr. Thrale bid him begone,

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in a firm tone, and added that he was very well and chose to lie so. By this time, however, Mr. Crutchley was run down at Hetty's intreaty, and had sent to fetch Pepys back. He was got but into Upper Brook Street, and found his friend in a most violent fit of the apoplexy, from which he only recovered to relapse into another, every one growing weaker as his strength grew less, till six o'clock on Wednesday morning, 4th April, 1781, when he died. Sir Richard Jebb, who was fetched at the beginning of the distress, seeing death certain, quitted the house without even prescribing. Pepys did all that could be done, and Johnson, who was sent for at eleven o'clock, never left him, for while breath remained he still hoped. I ventured in once, and saw them cutting his clothes off to bleed him, but I saw no more."

[Footnote 1: (*Note* by Mrs. T.). "I rejected all propositions of the sort, and said, as he had got the money, he had the best right to throw it away.... I should always prefer my husband, to my children: let him do his *own* way."]

We learn from Madame D'Arblay's Journal, that, towards the end of March, 1781, Mr. Thrale had resolved on going abroad with his wife, and that Johnson was to accompany them, but a subsequent entry states that the doctors condemned the plan; and "therefore," she adds, "it is settled that a great meeting of his friends is to take place before he actually prepares for the journey, and they are to encircle him in a body, and endeavour, by representations and entreaties, 'to prevail with him to give it up; and I have little doubt myself but, amongst us, we shall be able to succeed." This is one of the oddest schemes ever projected by a set of learned and accomplished gentlemen and ladies for the benefit of a hypochondriac patient. Its execution was prevented by his death. A hurried note from Mrs. Thrale announcing the event, beginning, "Write to me, pray for me," is endorsed by Madame D'Arblay: "Written a few hours after the death of Mr. Thrale, which happened by a sudden stroke of apoplexy, on the morning of a day on which half the fashion of London had been invited to an intended assembly at his house in Grosvenor Square." These invitations had been sent out by his own express desire: so little was he aware of his danger.

Letters and messages of condolence poured in from all sides. Johnson (in a letter dated April 5th) said all that could be said in the way of counsel or consolation:

"I do not exhort you to reason yourself into tranquillity. We must first pray, and then labour; first implore the blessing of God, and those means which He puts into our hands. Cultivated ground, has few weeds; a mind occupied by lawful business, has little room for useless regret.

"We read the will to-day; but I will not fill my first letter with any other account than that, with all my zeal for your advantage, I am satisfied; and that the other executors, more used to consider property than I, commended it for wisdom and equity. Yet, why should

I not tell you that you have five hundred pounds for your immediate expenses, and two thousand pounds a-year, with both the houses and all the goods?

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“Let us pray for one another, that the time, whether long or short, that shall yet be granted us, may be well spent; and that when this life, which at the longest is very short, shall come to an end, a better may begin which shall never end.”

On April 9th he writes:

“DEAREST MADAM,—That you are gradually recovering your tranquillity, is the effect to be humbly expected from trust in God. Do not represent life as darker than it is. Your loss has been very great, but you retain more than almost any other can hope to possess. You are high in the opinion of mankind; you have children from whom much pleasure may be expected; and that you will find many friends, you have no reason to doubt. Of my friendship, be it worth more or less, I hope you think yourself certain, without much art or care. It will not be easy for me to repay the benefits that I have received; but I hope to be always ready at your call. Our sorrow has different effects; you are withdrawn into solitude, and I am driven into company. *I* am afraid of thinking what I have lost. I never had such a friend before. Let me have your prayers and those of my dear Queeny.

“The prudence and resolution of your design to return so soon to your business and your duty deserves great praise; I shall communicate it on Wednesday to the other executors. Be pleased to let me know whether you would have me come to Streatham to receive you, or stay here till the next day.”

Johnson was one of the executors and took pride in discharging his share of the trust. Mrs. Thrale’s account of the pleasure he took in signing the documents and cheques, is incidentally confirmed by Boswell:

“I could not but be somewhat diverted by hearing Johnson talk in a pompous manner of his new office, and particularly of the concerns of the brewery, which it was at last resolved should be sold. Lord Lucan tells a very good story, which, if not precisely exact, is certainly characteristical; that when the sale of Thrale’s brewery was going forward, Johnson appeared bustling about, with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole, like an excise-man; and on being asked what he really considered to be the value of the property which was to be disposed of, answered, ’We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.’”

The executors had legacies of 200_l._ each; Johnson, to the surprise of his friends, being placed on no better footing than the rest. He himself was certainly disappointed. Mrs. Thrale says that his complacency towards Thrale was not wholly devoid of interested motives; and she adds that his manner towards Reynolds and Dr. Taylor was also softened by the vague expectation of being named in their wills. One of her marginal notes is: “Johnson mentioned to Reynolds that he had been told by Taylor he was to be his heir. His fondness for Reynolds, ay, and for Thrale, had a dash of interest

to keep it warm." Again, on his saying to Reynolds, "I did not mean to offend you,"—"He never would offend Reynolds: he had his reason."

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Many and heavy as were the reproaches subsequently heaped upon the widow, no one has accused her of having been found wanting in energy, propriety, or self-respect at this period. She took the necessary steps for promoting her own interests and those of her children with prudence and promptitude. Madame D'Arblay, who was carrying on a flirtation with one of the executors (Mr. Crutchley), and had personal motives for watching their proceedings, writes, April 29th:—

"Miss Thrale is steady and constant, and very sincerely grieved for her father.

"The four executors, Mr. Cator, Mr. Crutchley, Mr. Henry Smith, and Dr. Johnson, have all behaved generously and honourably, and seem determined to give Mrs. Thrale all the comfort and assistance in their power. She is to carry on the business jointly with them. Poor soul! it is a dreadful toil and worry to her."

In "Thraliana":

"*Streatham, 1st May*, 1781.—I have now appointed three days a week to attend at the counting-house. If an angel from heaven had told me twenty years ago that the man I knew by the name of *Dictionary Johnson* should one day become partner with me in a great trade, and that we should jointly or separately sign notes, drafts, &c., for three or four thousand pounds of a morning, how unlikely it would have seemed ever to happen! Unlikely is no word tho',—it would have seemed *incredible*, neither of us then being worth a groat, God knows, and both as immeasurably removed from commerce as birth, literature, and inclination could get us. Johnson, however, who desires above all other good the accumulation of new ideas, is but too happy with his present employment; and the influence I have over him, added to his own solid judgment and a regard for truth, will at last find it in a small degree difficult to win him from the dirty delight of seeing his name in a new character flaming away at the bottom of bonds and leases."

* * * * *

"Apropos to writing verses in a language one don't understand, there is always the allowance given, and that allowance (like our excise drawbacks) commonly larger than it ought to be. The following translation of the verses written with a knife, has been for this reason uncommonly commended, though they have no merit except being done quick. Piozzi asked me on Sunday morning if ever I had seen them, and could explain them to *him*, for that he heard they were written by his friend Mr. Locke. The book in which they were reposited was not ferreted out, however, till Monday night, and on Tuesday morning I sent him verses and translation: we used to think the original was Garrick's, I remember."

Translation of the verses written with a knife.

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“Taglia Amore un coltello,
Cara, l’hai sentita dire;
Per l’Amore alla Moda,
Esso poco puo soffrire.
Cuori che non mai fur giunti
Pronti stanno a separar,
Cari nodi come i nostri
Non son facili tagliar.
Questo dico, che se spezza
Tua tenera bellezza,
Molto ancor ci restera;
Della mia buona fede
Il Coltello non s’avvede,
Ne di tua gran bonta.
Che tagliare speranze
  Ben tutto si puo,
Per piaceri goduti
  Oh, questo poi no?
    Dolci segni!
    Cari pegni!
Di felecita passata,
Non temer la coltellata,
Resterete—Io loro:
  Se del caro ben gradita,
  Trovo questa donatura,
  Via pur la tagliatura
  Sol d’Amore sta ferita.”

“The power of emptying one’s head of a great thing and filling it with little ones to amuse care, is no small power, and I am proud of being able to write Italian verses while I am bargaining 150,000_l_., and settling an event of the highest consequence to my own and my children’s welfare. David Barclay, the rich Quaker, will treat for our brewhouse, and the negotiation is already begun. My heart palpitates with hope and fear—my head is bursting with anxiety and calculation; yet I can listen to a singer and translate verses about a knife.”

“Mrs. Montagu has been here; she says I ought to have a statue erected to me for my diligent attendance on my compting-house duties. The *wits* and the *blues* (as it is the fashion to call them) will be happy enough, no doubt, to have me safe at the brewery—-*out of their way*.”

“A very strange thing happened in the year 1776, and I never wrote it down,—I must write it down now. A woman came to London from a distant county to prosecute some business, and fell into distress; she was sullen and silent, and the people with whom her

affairs connected her advised her to apply for assistance to some friend. What friends can I have in London? says the woman, nobody here knows anything of me. One can't tell *that*, was the reply. Where have you lived? I have wandered much, says she, but I am originally from Litchfield. Who did you know in Litchfield in your youth? Oh, nobody of any note, I'll warrant: I knew one *David Garrick*, indeed, but I once heard that he turned strolling player, and is probably dead long ago; I also knew an obscure man, *Samuel Johnson*, very good he was too; but who can know anything of poor Johnson? I was likewise acquainted with *Robert James*, a quack doctor. *He* is, I suppose, no very reputable connection if I could find him. Thus did this woman name and discriminate the three best known characters in London—perhaps in Europe."

"'Such,' says Mrs. Montagu, 'is the dignity of Mrs. Thrale's virtue, and such her superiority in all situations of life, that nothing now is wanting but an earthquake to show how she will behave on *that* occasion.' Oh, brave Mrs. Montagu! She is a monkey, though, to quarrel with Johnson so about Lyttleton's life: if he was a great character, nothing said of him in that book can hurt him; if he was not a great character, they are bustling about nothing."

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“Mr. Crutchley lives now a great deal with me; the business of executor to Mr. Thrale’s will makes much of his attendance necessary, and it begins to have its full effect in seducing and attaching him to the house,—Miss Burney’s being always about me is probably another reason for his close attendance, and I believe it is so. What better could befall Miss Burney, or indeed what better could befall *him*, than to obtain a woman of honour, and character, and reputation for superior understanding? I would be glad, however, that he fell honestly in love with her, and was not trick’d or trapp’d into marriage, poor fellow; he is no match for the arts of a novel-writer. A mighty particular character Mr. Crutchley is: strangely mixed up of meanness and magnificence; liberal and splendid in large sums and on serious occasions, narrow and confined in the common occurrences of life; warm and generous in some of his motives, frigid and suspicious, however, for eighteen hours at least out of the twenty-four; likely to be duped, though always expecting fraud, and easily disappointed in realities, though seldom flattered by fancy. He is supposed by those that knew his mother and her connections to be Mr. Thrale’s natural son, and in many things he resembles him, but not in person: as he is both ugly and awkward. Mr. Thrale certainly believed he was his son, and once told me as much when Sophy Streatfield’s affair was in question but nobody could persuade him to court the S.S. Oh! well does the Custom-house officer Green say,—

“’Coquets! leave off affected arts,
Gay fowlers at a flock of hearts;
Woodcocks, to shun your snares have skill,
You show so plain you strive to kill.’”

“*3rd June*, 1781.—Well! here have I, with the grace of God and the assistance of good friends, completed—I really think very happily—the greatest event of my life. I have sold my brewhouse to Barclay, the rich Quaker, for 135,000_l_., to be in four years’ time paid. I have by this bargain purchased peace and a stable fortune, restoration to my original rank in life, and a situation undisturbed by commercial jargon, unpolluted by commercial frauds, undisgraced by commercial connections. They who succeed me in the house have purchased the power of being rich beyond the wish of rapacity[1], and I have procured the improbability of being made poor by flights of the fairy, speculation. ’Tis thus that a woman and men of feminine minds always—I speak popularly—decide upon life, and chuse certain mediocrity before probable superiority; while, as Eton Graham says sublimely,—

“’Nobler souls,
Fir’d with the tedious and disrelish’d good,
Seek their employment in acknowledg’d ill,
Danger, and toil, and pain.’

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“On this principle partly, and partly on worse, was dear Mr. Johnson something unwilling—but not much at last—to give up a trade by which in some years 15,000_l._ or 16,000_l._ had undoubtedly been got, but by which, in some years, its possessor had suffered agonies of terror and tottered twice upon the verge of bankruptcy. Well! if thy own conscience acquit, who shall condemn thee? Not, I hope, the future husbands of our daughters, though I should think it likely enough; however, as Johnson says very judiciously, they must either think right or wrong: if they think right, let us now think with them; if wrong, let us never care what they think. So adieu to brewhouse, and borough wintering; adieu to trade, and tradesmen’s frigid approbation; may virtue and wisdom sanctify our contract, and make buyer and seller happy in the bargain!”

[Footnote 1: There is a curious similarity here to Johnson’s phrase, “the potentiality of becoming rich beyond the dreams of avarice.”]

After mentioning some friends who disapproved of the sale, she adds: “Mrs. Montagu has sent me her approbation in a letter exceedingly affectionate and polite. ‘Tis over now, tho’, and I’ll clear my head of it and all that belongs to it; I will go to church, give God thanks, receive the sacrament and forget the frauds, follies, and inconveniences of a commercial life this day.”

Madame D’Arblay was at Streatham on the day of the sale, and gives a dramatic colour to the ensuing scene:

“*Streatham, Thursday*.—This was the great and most important day to all this house, upon which the sale of the brewery was to be decided. Mrs. Thrale went early to town, to meet all the executors, and Mr. Barclay, the Quaker, who was the *bidder*. She was in great agitation of mind, and told me, if all went well she would wave a white pocket-handkerchief out of the coach window.

“Four o’clock came and dinner was ready, and no Mrs. Thrale. Five o’clock followed, and no Mrs. Thrale. Queeny and I went out upon the lawn, where we sauntered, in eager expectation, till near six, and then the coach appeared in sight, and a white pocket-handkerchief was waved from it. I ran to the door of it to meet her, and she jumped out of it, and gave me a thousand embraces while I gave my congratulations. We went instantly to her dressing-room, where she told me, in brief, how the matter had been transacted, and then we went down to dinner. Dr. Johnson and Mr. Crutchley had accompanied her home.”

The event is thus announced to Langton by Johnson, in a letter printed by Boswell, dated June 16, 1781: “You will perhaps be glad to hear that Mrs. Thrale is disencumbered of her brewhouse, and that it seemed to the purchaser so far from an evil that he was content to give for it 135,000_l_. Is the nation ruined.” *Marginal note*: “I suppose he was neither glad nor sorry.”

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Thrale died on the 4th April, 1781, and Mrs. Thrale left Streatham on the 7th October, 1782. The intervening eighteen months have been made the subject of an almost unprecedented amount of misrepresentation. Hawkins, Boswell, Madame D'Arblay, and Lord Macaulay have vied with each other in founding uncharitable imputations on her conduct at this period of her widowhood; and it has consequently become necessary to recapitulate the authentic evidence relating to it. As Piozzi's name will occur occasionally, he must now be brought upon the scene.

He is first mentioned in "Thraliana" thus:

"*Brighton, July*, 1780.—I have picked up Piozzi here, the great Italian singer. He is amazingly like my father. He shall teach Hester."

A detailed account of the commencement of the acquaintance is given in one of the autobiographical fragments. She says he was recommended to her by letter by Madame D'Arblay as "a man likely to lighten the burthen of life to her," and that both she and Mr. Thrale took to him at once. Madame D'Arblay is silent as to the introduction or recommendation; but gives an amusing account of one of their first meetings:

"A few months after the Streathamite morning visit to St. Martin's Street, an evening party was arranged by Dr. Burney, for bringing thither again Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, at the desire of Mr. and Mrs. Greville and Mrs. Crewe; who wished, under the quiet roof of Dr. Burney, to make acquaintance with these celebrated personages." The conversation flagged, and recourse was had to music—

"Piozzi, a first-rate singer, whose voice was deliciously sweet, and whose expression was perfect, sung in his very best manner, from his desire to do honour to *il Capo di Casa*; but *il Capo di Casa* and his family alone did justice to his strains: neither the Grevilles nor the Thrales heeded music beyond what belonged to it as fashion: the expectations of the Grevilles were all occupied by Dr. Johnson; and those of the Thrales by the authoress of the Ode to Indifference. When Piozzi, therefore, arose, the party remained as little advanced in any method or pleasure for carrying on the evening, as upon its first entrance into the room....

"Dr. Burney now began to feel considerably embarrassed; though still he cherished hopes of ultimate relief from some auspicious circumstance that, sooner or later, would operate, he hoped, in his favour, through the magnetism of congenial talents.

"Vainly, however, he sought to elicit some observations that might lead to disserting discourse; all his attempts received only quiet, acquiescent replies, 'signifying nothing.' Every one was awaiting some spontaneous opening from Dr. Johnson.

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“Mrs. Thrale, of the whole coterie, was alone at her ease. She feared not Dr. Johnson; for fear made no part of her composition; and with Mrs. Greville, as a fair rival genius, she would have been glad, from curiosity, to have had the honour of a little tilt, in full carelessness of its event; for though triumphant when victorious, she had spirits so volatile, and such utter exemption from envy or spleen, that she was gaily free from mortification when vanquished. But she knew the meeting to have been fabricated for Dr. Johnson; and, therefore, though not without difficulty, constrained herself to be passive.

“When, however, she observed the sardonic disposition of Mr. Greville to stare around him at the whole company in curious silence, she felt a defiance against his aristocracy beat in every pulse; for, however grandly he might look back to the long ancestry of the Brookes and the Grevilles, she had a glowing consciousness that her own blood, rapid and fluent, flowed in her veins from Adam of Saltsberg; and, at length, provoked by the dullness of a taciturnity that, in the midst of such renowned interlocutors, produced as narcotic a torpor as could have been caused by a dearth the most barren of human faculties; she grew tired of the music, and yet more tired of remaining, what as little suited her inclinations as her abilities, a mere cipher in the company; and, holding such a position, and all its concomitants, to be ridiculous, her spirits rose rebelliously above her control; and, in a fit of utter recklessness of what might be thought of her by her fine new acquaintance, she suddenly, but softly, arose, and stealing on tip-toe behind Signor Piozzi, who was accompanying himself on the piano-forte to an animated *arria parlante*, with his back to the company, and his face to the wall; she ludicrously began imitating him by squaring her elbows, elevating them with ecstatic shrugs of the shoulders, and casting up her eyes, while languishingly reclining her head; as if she were not less enthusiastically, though somewhat more suddenly, struck with the transports of harmony than himself.

“This grotesque ebullition of ungovernable gaiety was not perceived by Dr. Johnson, who faced the fire, with his back to the performer and the instrument. But the amusement which such an unlooked for exhibition caused to the party, was momentary; for Dr. Burney, shocked lest the poor Signor should observe, and be hurt by this mimicry, glided gently round to Mrs. Thrale, and, with something between pleasantness and severity, whispered to her, ’Because, Madam, you have no ear yourself for music, will you destroy the attention of all who, in that one point, are otherwise gifted?’

“It was now that shone the brightest attribute of Mrs. Thrale, sweetness of temper. She took this rebuke with a candour, and a sense of its justice the most amiable: she nodded her approbation of the admonition; and, returning to her chair, quietly sat down, as she afterwards said, like a pretty little miss, for the remainder of one of the most humdrum evenings that she had ever passed.

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“Strange, indeed, strange and most strange, the event considered, was this opening intercourse between Mrs. Thrale and Signor Piozzi. Little could she imagine that the person she was thus called away from holding up to ridicule, would become, but a few years afterwards, the idol of her fancy and the lord of her destiny! And little did the company present imagine, that this burlesque scene was but the first of a drama the most extraordinary of real life, of which these two persons were to be the hero and heroine: though, when the catastrophe was known, this incident, witnessed by so many, was recollected and repeated from coterie to coterie throughout London, with comments and sarcasms of endless variety."[1]

[Footnote 1: Memoirs of Dr. Burney, &c., vol. ii, pp. 105—111.]

Madame D’Arblay mentioned the same circumstance in conversation to the Rev. W. Harness: yet it seems strange in connection with an entry in “Thraliana” from which it would appear that her friend was far from wanting in susceptibility to sweet sounds:

“13 *August*, 1780.—Piozzi is become a prodigious favourite with me, he is so intelligent a creature, so discerning, one can’t help wishing for his good opinion; his singing surpasses everybody’s for taste, tenderness, and true elegance; his hand on the forte piano too is so soft, so sweet, so delicate, every tone goes to the heart, I think, and fills the mind with emotions one would not be without, though inconvenient enough sometimes. He wants nothing from us: he comes for his health he says: I see nothing ail the man but pride. The newspapers yesterday told what all the musical folks gained, and set Piozzi down 1200_l_. o’ year.”

On the 24th August, 1780, Madame D’Arblay writes: “I have not seen Piozzi: he left me your letter, which indeed is a charming one, though its contents puzzled me much whether to make me sad or merry.” Mrs. Thrale was still at Brighton; so that the scene at Dr. Burney’s must have occurred subsequently; when she had already begun to find Piozzi what the Neapolitan ladies understand by *simpatico*. Madame D’Arblay’s “Memoirs,” as I shall have occasion to point out, are by no means so trustworthy a register of dates, facts, or impressions as her “Diary.”

Whilst Thrale lived, Mrs. Thrale’s regard for Piozzi was certainly not of a nature to cause scandal or provoke censure, and as it ripened into love, it may be traced, step by step, from the frankest and fullest of all possible unveilings of the heart. Rare indeed are the instances in which such revelations as we find in “Thraliana” could be risked by either man or woman, without giving scope to malevolence; and they should not only be judged as a whole and by the context, but the most favourable construction should be put upon them. When, in this sort of self-communing, every passing emotion, every transitory inclination, is set down, it would be unfair and even foolish to infer that the emotion at once became a passion, or that the inclination was criminally indulged.

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The next notice of Piozzi occurs in Madame D'Arblay's "Diary" for July 10th, 1781:

"You will believe I was not a little surprised to see Sacchini. He is going to the Continent with Piozzi, and Mrs. Thrale invited them both to spend the last day at Streatham, and from hence proceed to Margate.... The first song he sang, beginning 'En quel amabil volto,' you may perhaps know, but I did not; it is a charming mezza bravura. He and Piozzi then sung together the duet of the 'Amore Soldato;' and nothing could be much more delightful; Piozzi taking pains to sing his very best, and Sacchini, with his soft but delicious whisper, almost thrilling me by his exquisite and pathetic expression. They then went through that opera, great part of 'Creso,' some of 'Erifile,' and much of 'Rinaldo.'"

Piozzi's attentions had attracted Johnson's notice without troubling his peace. On November 24th, 1781, he wrote from Ashbourne: "Piozzi, I find, is coming in spite of Miss Harriet's prediction, or second sight, and when *he* comes and *I* come, you will have two about you that love you; and I question if either of us heartily care how few more you have. But how many soever they may be, I hope you keep your kindness for me, and I have a great mind to have Queeny's kindness too."

Again, December 3rd, 1781: "You have got Piozzi again, notwithstanding pretty Harriet's dire denunciations. The Italian translation which he has brought, you will find no great accession to your library, for the writer seems to understand very little English. When we meet we can compare some passages. Pray contrive a multitude of good things for us to do when we meet. Something that may *hold all together*; though if any thing makes *me* love you more, it is going from you."

We learn from "Thraliana," that the entanglement with Piozzi was not the only one of which Streatham was contemporaneously the scene:

"*August,* 1781.—I begin to wish in good earnest that Miss Burney should make impression on Mr. Crutchley. I think she honestly loves the man, who in his turn appears to be in love with some one else—Hester, I fear, Oh! that would indeed be unlucky! People have said so a long while, but I never thought it till now; young men and women will always be serving one so, to be sure, if they live at all together, but I depended on Burney keeping him steady to herself. Queeny behaves like an angel about it. Mr. Johnson says the name of Crutchley comes from *croix lea*, the cross meadow; *lea* is a meadow, I know, and *crutch*, a crutch stick, is so called from having the handle go *crosswise*."

"*September,* 1781.—My five fair daughters too! I have so good a pretence to wish for long life to see them settled. Like the old fellow in 'Lucian,' one is never at a loss for an excuse. They are five lovely creatures to be sure, but they love not me. Is it my fault or theirs?"

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"*12th October*, 1781.—Yesterday was my wedding-day; it was a melancholy thing to me to pass it without the husband of my youth.

"'Long tedious years may neither moan,
Sad, deserted, and alone;
May neither long condemned to stay
Wait the second bridal day!!!'[1]

"Let me thank God for my children, however, my fortune, and my friends, and be contented if I cannot be happy."

[Footnote 1: *Note by Mrs. T.*: "Samuel Wesley's verses, making part of an epithalamium."]

"*15th October*, 1781.—My maid Margaret Rice dreamed last night that my eldest daughter was going to be married to Mr. Crutchley, but that Mr. Thrale *himself* prevented her. An odd thing to me, who think Mr. Crutchley is his son."

Although the next day but one after Thrale's death Johnson carried Boswell to dine at the Queen's Arms' Club, his grief was deep and durable. Indeed, it is expressed so often and so earnestly as to rebut the presumption that "my mistress" was the sole or chief tie which bound him to Streatham. Amongst his Prayers and Meditations is the following:

"*Good Friday, April 13th*, 1781.—On Wednesday, 11th, was buried my dear friend Thrale, who died on Wednesday, 4th; and with him were buried many of my hopes and pleasures. About five, I think, on Wednesday morning, he expired. I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect or benignity. Farewell. May God, that delighteth in mercy, have had mercy on thee! I had constantly prayed for him some time before his death. The decease of him, from whose friendship I had obtained many opportunities of amusement, and to whom I turned my thoughts as to a refuge from misfortunes, has left me heavy. But my business is with myself."

On the same paper is a note: "My first knowledge of Thrale was in 1765. I enjoyed his favours for almost a fourth part of my life."

On the 20th March, 1782, he wrote thus to Langton:

"Of my life, from the time we parted, the history is mournful. The spring of last year deprived me of Thrale, a man whose eye for fifteen years had scarcely been turned upon me but with respect or tenderness; for such another friend, the general course of human things will not suffer man to hope. I passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale; and having idled away the summer with a weakly body and neglected

mind, I made a journey to Staffordshire on the edge of winter. The season was dreary, I was sickly, and found the friends sickly whom I went to see."

There is ample evidence that he neither felt nor suspected any diminution of kindness or regard, and continued, till their final departure from Streatham, to treat it as his home.

In November she writes, "Do not forget Streatham and its inhabitants, who are all much yours;" and he replies:

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“Birmingham, Dec. 8th, 1781.

“DEAR MADAM,—I am come to this place on my way to London and to Streatham. I hope to be in London on Tuesday or Wednesday, and Streatham on Thursday, by your kind conveyance. I shall have nothing to relate either wonderful or delightful. But remember that you sent me away, and turned me out into the world, and you must take the chance of finding me better or worse. This you may know at present, that my affection for you is not diminished, and my expectation from you is increased. Do not neglect me, nor relinquish me. Nobody will ever love you better or honour you more.”

“Feb. 16th, 1782.

“DEAREST LADY,—I am better, but not yet well; but hope springs eternal. As soon as I can think myself not troublesome, you may be sure of seeing me, *for such a place to visit nobody ever had*. Dearest Madam, do not think me worse than I am; be sure, at least, that whatever happens to me, I am with all the regard that admiration of excellence and gratitude for kindness can excite, Madam, your” &c.

In “Thraliana”:

“*23rd February, 1782 (Harley Street)*.—The truth is, Mr. Johnson has some occult disorder that I cannot understand; Jebb and Bromfield fancy it is water between the heart and pericardium—I do not think it is *that*, but I do not know what it is. He apprehends no danger himself, and he knows more of the matter than any of them all.”

On February 27th, 1782, he writes to Malone: “I have for many weeks been so much out of order, that I have gone out only in a coach to Mrs. Thrale’s, where I can use all the freedom that sickness requires.”

On March 20th, 1782, to Mrs. Grastrell and Mrs. Aston: “When Dr. Falconer saw me, I was at home only by accident, for I lived much with Mrs. Thrale, and had all the care from her that she could take or could be taken.”

April 26th, 1782, to Mrs. Thrale:

“MADAM,—I have been very much out of order since you sent me away; but why should I tell you, who do not care, nor desire to know? I dined with Mr. Paradise on Monday, with the Bishop of St. Asaph yesterday, with the Bishop of Chester I dine to-day, and with the Academy on Saturday, with Mr. Hoole on Monday, and with Mrs. Garrick on Thursday, the 2nd of May, and then—what care you? *What then*?

“The news run, that we have taken seventeen French transports; that Langton’s lady is lying down with her eighth child, all alive; and Mrs. Carter’s Miss Sharpe is going to marry a schoolmaster sixty-two years old.

“Do not let Mr. Piozzi nor any body else put me quite out of your head, and do not think that any body will love you like your” &c.

“April 30th, 1782.

“Mrs. Sheridan refused to sing, at the Duchess of Devonshire’s request, a song to the Prince of Wales. They pay for the Theatre neither principal nor interest; and poor Garrick’s funeral expenses are yet unpaid, though the undertaker is broken. Could you have a better purveyor for a little scandal? But I wish I was at Streatham. I beg Miss to come early, and I may perhaps reward you with more mischief.”

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She went to Streatham on the 18th April, 1782, and Johnson evidently with her. In "Thraliana" she writes:

"*Saturday, 9th May, 1782.*—To-day I bring home to Streatham my poor Dr. Johnson: he went to town a week ago by the way of amusing himself, and got so very ill that I thought I should never get him home alive,"—by *home* meaning Streatham.

Johnson to Mrs. Thrale:

"June 4th, 1782.

"This day I dined upon skate, pudding, goose, and your asparagus, and could have eaten more, but was prudent. Pray for me, dear Madam; I hope the tide has turned. The change that I feel is more than I durst have hoped, or than I thought possible; but there has not yet passed a whole day, and I may rejoice perhaps too soon. Come and see me, and when you think best, upon due consideration, take me away."

From her to him:

"Streatham, June 14th, 1782.

"DEAR SIR,—I am glad you confess yourself peevish, for confession must precede amendment. Do not study to be more unhappy than you are, and if you can eat and sleep well, do not be frighted, for there can be no real danger. Are you acquainted with Dr. Lee, the master of Baliol College? And are you not delighted with his gaiety of manners and youthful vivacity now that he is eighty-six years old? I never heard a more perfect or excellent pun than his, when some one told him how, in a late dispute among the Privy Counsellors, the Lord Chancellor (Thurlow) struck the table with such violence that he split it. 'No, no,' replied the Master, drily, 'I can hardly persuade myself that he *split the table*, though I believe he *divided the Board*.' Will you send me anything better from Oxford than this? for there must be no more fastidiousness now; no more refusing to laugh at a good quibble, when you so loudly profess the want of amusement and the necessity of diversion."

From him to her:

"Oxford, June 17th, 1782.

"Oxford has done, I think, what for the present it can do, and I am going slyly to take a place in the coach for Wednesday, and you or my sweet Queeny will fetch me on Thursday, and see what you can make of me."

Hannah More met him during this visit to Oxford, and writes, June 13th, 1782: "Who do you think is my principal cicerone at Oxford? only Dr. Johnson! and we do so gallant it about."

Madame D'Arblay, then at Streatham, writes, June 26th, 1782: "Dr. Johnson, who had been in town some days, returned, and Mr. Crutchley came also, as well as my father." After describing some lively conversation, she adds: "I have *very often*, though I mention them not, long and melancholy discourses with Dr. Johnson, about our dear deceased master, whom, indeed, he regrets unceasingly; but I love not to dwell on subjects of sorrow when I can drive them away, especially to you (her sister), upon this account as you were so much a stranger to that excellent friend, whom you only lamented for the sake of those who survived him." He had only returned that very day, and she had been absent from Streatham, as she states elsewhere, till "the Cecilian business was arranged," *i.e.* till the end of May.

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On the 24th August, 1782 (this date is material) Johnson writes to Boswell:

“DEAR SIR,—Being uncertain whether I should have any call this autumn into the country, I did not immediately answer your kind letter. I have no call; but if you desire to meet me at Ashbourne, I believe I can come thither; if you had rather come to London, I can stay at Streatham: take your choice.”

This was two days after Mrs. Thrale, with his full concurrence, had made up her mind to let Streatham. He treats it, notwithstanding, as at his disposal for a residence so long as she remains in it.

The books and printed letters from which most of these extracts are taken, have been all along accessible to her assailants. Those from “Thraliana,” which come next, are new:

“*25th November*, 1781.—I have got my Piozzi[1] home at last; he looks thin and battered, but always kindly upon me, I think. He brought me an Italian sonnet written in his praise by Marco Capello, which I instantly translated of course; but he, prudent creature, insisted on my burning it, as he said it would inevitably get about the town how *he* was praised, and how Mrs. Thrale translated and echoed the praises, so that, says he, I shall be torn in pieces, and you will have some *infamita* said of you that will make you hate the sight of me. He was so earnest with me that I could not resist, so burnt my sonnet, which was actually very pretty; and now I repent I did not first write it into the Thraliana. Over leaf, however, shall go the translation, which happens to be done very closely, and the last stanza is particularly exact. I must put it down while I remember it:

1.

“’Favoured of Britain’s pensive sons,
Though still thy name be found,
Though royal Thames where’er he runs
Returns the flattering sound,

2.

Though absent thou, on every joy
Her gloom privation flings,
And Pleasure, pining for employ,
Now droops her nerveless wings,

3.

Yet since kind Fates thy voice restore
To charm our land again[2],—

Return not to their rocky shore,
Nor tempt the angry main.

4.

Nor is their praise of so much worth,
Nor is it justly given,
That angels sing to them on earth
Who slight the road to heaven.'

"He tells me—Piozzi does—that his own country manners greatly disgusted him, after having been used to ours; but Milan is a comfortable place, I find. If he does not fix himself for life here, he will settle to lay his bones at Milan. The Marquis D'Araciel, his friend and patron, who resides there, divides and disputes his heart with me: I shall be loth to resign it."

[Footnote 1: This mode of expression did not imply then what it might now. See *ante*, p. 92, where Johnson writes to "my Baretti."]

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[Footnote 2: “Capello is a Venetian poet.”]

“*17th December, 1781.*—Dear Mr. Johnson is at last returned; he has been a vast while away to see his country folks at Litchfield. My fear is lest he should grow paralytick,—-there are really some symptoms already discoverable, I think, about the mouth particularly. He will drive the gout away so when it comes, and it must go *somewhere*. Queeny works hard with him at the classicks; I hope she will be *out* of leading-strings at least before he gets *into* them, as poor women say of their children.”

“*1st January, 1782.*—Let me not, while censuring the behaviour of others, however, give cause of censure by my own. I am beginning a new year in a new character. May it be worn decently yet lightly! I wish not to be rigid and fright my daughters by too much severity. I will not be wild and give them reason to lament the levity of my life. Resolutions, however, are vain. To pray for God’s grace is the sole way to obtain it—-’Strengthen Thou, O Lord, my virtue and my understanding, preserve me from temptation, and acquaint me with myself; fill my heart with thy love, restrain it by thy fear, and keep my soul’s desires fixed wholly on that place where only true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord,—Amen.’”

January, 1782.—(After stating her fear of illness and other ills.) “*If* nothing of all these misfortunes, however, befall one; *if* for my sins God should take from me my monitor, my friend, my inmate, my dear Doctor Johnson; *if* neither I should marry, nor the brewhouse people break; *if* the ruin of the nation should not change the situation of affairs so that one could not receive regular remittances from England: and *if* Piozzi should not pick him up a wife and fix his abode in this country,—*if*, therefore, and *if* and *if* and *if* again all should conspire to keep my present resolution warm, I certainly would, at the close of the four years from the sale of the Southwark estate, set out for Italy, with my two or three eldest girls, and see what the world could show me.”

In a marginal note, she adds:

“Travelling with Mr. Johnson *I* cannot bear, and leaving him behind *he* could not bear, so his life or death must determine the execution or laying aside my schemes. I wish it were within reason to *hope* he could live four years.”

“*Streatham, 4th January*, 1782.—I have taken a house in Harley Street for these three months next ensuing, and hope to have some society,—not company tho’: crowds are out of the question, but people will not come hither on short days, and ’tis too dull to live all alone so. The world will watch me at first, and think I come o’ husband-hunting for myself or my fair daughters, but when I have behaved prettily for a while, they will change their mind.”

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"*Harley Street, 14th January*, 1782.—The first seduction comes from Pepys. I had a letter to-day desiring me to dine in Wimpole Street, to meet Mrs. Montagu and a whole *army of blues*, to whom I trust my refusal will afford very pretty speculation ... and they may settle my character and future conduct at their leisure. Pepys is a worthless fellow at last; he and his brother run about the town, spying and enquiring what Mrs. Thrale is to do this winter, what friends she is to see, what men are in her confidence, how soon she will be *married*, &c.; the brother Dr.—the Medico, as we call him—lays wagers about me, I find; God forgive me, but they'll make me hate them both, and they are no better than two fools for their pains, for I was willing to have taken them to my heart."

"They say Pacchierotti, the famous soprano singer, is ill, and *they say* Lady Mary Duncan, his frightful old protectress, has made him so by her *caresses denaturees*. A little envy of the new woman, Allegrante, has probably not much mended his health, for Pacchierotti, dear creature, is envious enough. I was, however, turning over Horace yesterday, to look for the expression *tenui fronte*[1], in vindication of my assertion to Johnson that low foreheads were classical, when the 8th Ode of the First Book of Horace struck me so, I could not help imitating it while the scandal was warm in my mind:

1.

"'He's sick indeed! and very sick,
For if it is not all a trick
    You'd better look about ye.
Dear Lady Mary, prythee tell
Why thus by loving him too well
    You kill your Pacchierotti?

2.

Nor sun nor dust can he abide,
Nor careless in a snaffle ride,
    The steed we saw him mount ill.
You stript him of his manly force,
When tumbling headlong from his horse
    He pressed the plains of Fonthill.[2]

3.

Why the full opera should he shun?
Where crowds of critics smiling run,
    To applaud their Allegrante.
Why is it worse than viper's sting,

To see them clap, or hear her sing?
Surely he's envious, ain't he?

4.

Forbear his house, nor haunt his bed
With that strange wig and fearful head,
Then, though he now so ill is,
We o'er his voice again may doze,
When, cover'd warm with women's clothes,
He acts a young Achilles.'"

[Footnote 1: Insignem tenui fronte Lycorida Cyri torret amor—

But *tenuis* is *small* or *narrow* rather than *low*. One of Fielding's beauties, Sophia Western, has a low forehead: another, Fanny, a high one.]

[Footnote 2: *Note by Mrs. T.:* "Fonthill, the seat of young Beckford. They set him o' horseback, and he tumbled off."]

"*1st February, 1782.*—Here is Mr. Johnson ill, very ill indeed, and—I do not see what ails him; 'tis repelled gout, I fear, fallen on the lungs and breath of course. What shall we do for him? If I lose *him*, I am more than undone; friend, father, guardian, confident! —God give me health and patience. What shall I do?"

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"*Harley Street, 13th April, 1782.*—When I took off my mourning, the watchers watched me very exactly, 'but they whose hands were mightiest have found nothing:' so I shall leave the town, I hope, in a good disposition towards me, though I am sullen enough with the town for fancying me such an amorous idiot that I am dying to enjoy every filthy fellow. God knows how distant such dispositions are from the heart and constitution of H.L.T. Lord Loughboro', Sir Richard Jebb, Mr. Piozzi, Mr. Selwyn, Dr. Johnson, every man that comes to the house, is put in the papers for me to marry. In good time, I wrote to-day to beg the 'Morning Herald' would say no more about me, good or bad."

"*Streatham, 17th April, 1782.*—I am returned to Streatham, pretty well in health and very sound in heart, notwithstanding the watchers and the wager-layers, who think more of the charms of their sex by half than I who know them better. Love and friendship are distinct things, and I would go through fire to serve many a man whom nothing less than fire would force me to go to bed to. Somebody mentioned my going to be married t'other day, and Johnson was joking about it. I suppose, Sir, said I, they think they are doing me honour with these imaginary matches, when, perhaps the man does not exist who would do me honour by marrying me! This, indeed, was said in the wild and insolent spirit of Baretti, yet 'tis nearer the truth than one would think for. A woman of passable person, ancient family, respectable character, uncommon talents, and three thousand a year, has a right to think herself any man's equal, and has nothing to seek but return of affection from whatever partner she pitches on. To marry for love would therefore be rational in me, who want no advancement of birth or fortune, and *till I am in love*, I will not marry, nor perhaps then."

"*22nd August, 1782.*—An event of no small consequence to our little family must here be recorded in the 'Thraliana.' After having long intended to go to Italy for pleasure, we are now settling to go thither for convenience. The establishment of expense here at Streatham is more than my income will answer; my lawsuit with Lady Salusbury turns out worse in the event and infinitely more costly than I could have dreamed on; 8000_l._ is supposed necessary to the payment of it, and how am I to raise 8000_l_.? My trees will (after all my expectations from them) fetch but 4000_l_., the money lent Perkins on his bond 1600_l_., the Hertfordshire copyholds may perhaps be worth 1000_l_., and where is the rest to spring from? I must go abroad and save money. To show Italy to my girls, and be showed it by Piozzi, has long been my dearest wish, but to leave Mr. Johnson shocked me, and to take him appeared impossible. His recovery, however, from an illness we all thought dangerous, gave me courage to speak to him on the subject, and this day (after having been let blood) I mustered up resolution to

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tell him the necessity of changing a way of life I had long been displeased with. I added that I had mentioned the matter to my eldest daughter, whose prudence and solid judgment, unbiassed by passion, is unequalled, as far as my experience has reached; that she approved the scheme, and meant to partake it, though of an age when she might be supposed to form connections here in England—attachments of the tenderest nature; that she declared herself free and resolved to follow my fortunes, though perfectly aware temptations might arise to prevent me from ever returning—a circumstance she even mentioned herself.

"Mr. Johnson thought well of the project, and wished me to put it early in execution: seemed less concerned at parting with me than I wished him: thought his pupil Miss Thrale quite right in forbearing to marry young, and seemed to entertain no doubt of living to see us return rich and happy in two or three years' time. He told Hester in my absence that he would not go with me if I asked him. See the importance of a person to himself. I fancied Mr. Johnson could not have existed without me, forsooth, as we have now lived together for above eighteen years. I have so fondled him in sickness and in health. Not a bit of it. He feels nothing in parting with me, nothing in the least; but thinks it a prudent scheme, and goes to his books as usual. This is philosophy and truth; he always said he hated a *feeler*....

"The persecution I endure from men too who want to marry me—in good time—is another reason for my desiring to be gone. I wish to marry none of them, and Sir Philip's teazing me completed my mortification; to see that one can rely on *nobody!* The expences of this house, however, which are quite past my power to check, is the true and rational cause of our departure. In Italy we shall live with twice the respect and at half the expence we do here; the language is familiar to me and I love the Italians; I take with me all I love in the world except my two baby daughters, who will be left safe at school; and since Mr. Johnson cares nothing for the loss of my personal friendship and company, there is no danger of any body else breaking their hearts. My sweet Burney and Mrs. Byron will perhaps think they are sorry, but my consciousness that no one *can* have the cause of concern that Johnson has, and my conviction that he has *no concern at all*, shall cure me of lamenting friends left behind."

In the margin of this entry she has written, "I begin to see (now everything shows it) that Johnson's connection with me is merely an interested one; he *loved* Mr. Thrale, I believe, but only wished to find in me a careful nurse and humble friend for his sick and his lounging hours; yet I really thought he could not have *existed* without *my conversation* forsooth! He cares more for my roast beef and plum pudden, which he now devours too dirtily for endurance; and since he is glad to get rid of me, I'm sure I have good cause to desire the getting rid of him."

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No great stress should be laid on this ebullition of mortified self-love; but it occurs oddly enough at the very time when, according to Lord Macaulay, she was labouring to produce the very feeling that irritated her.

"*August 28th*, 1782.—He (Piozzi) thinks still more than he says, that I shall give him up; and if Queeney made herself more amiable to me, and took the proper methods—I suppose I should."

"*20 September* 1782, *Streatham*.—And now I am going to leave Streatham (I have let the house and grounds to Lord Shelburne, the expence of it eat me up) for three years, where I lived—never happily indeed, but always easily: the more so perhaps from the total absence of love and ambition—

"'Else these two passions by the way
Might chance to show us scurvy play.'"

Ten days later (October 1st) she thus argues out the question of marriage:

"Now! that dear little discerning creature, Fanny Burney, says I'm in love with Piozzi: very likely; he is so amiable, so honourable, so much above his situation by his abilities, that if

"'Fate had not fast bound her
With Styx nine times round her,
Sure musick and love were victorious.'

But if he is ever so worthy, ever so lovely, he is *below me* forsooth! In what is he below me? In virtue? I would I were above him. In understanding? I would mine were from this instant under the guardianship of his. In birth? To be sure he is below me in birth, and so is almost every man I know or have a chance to know. But he is below me in fortune: is mine sufficient for us both?—more than amply so. Does he deserve it by his conduct, in which he has always united warm notions of honour with cool attention to oeconomy, the spirit of a gentleman with the talents of a professor? How shall any man deserve fortune, if he does not? But I am the guardian of five daughters by Mr. Thrale, and must not disgrace *their* name and family. Was then the man my mother chose for me of higher extraction than him I have chosen for myself? No,—but his fortune was higher.... I wanted fortune then, perhaps: do I want it now?—Not at all; but I am not to think about myself; I married the first time to please my mother, I must marry the second time to please my daughter. I have always sacrificed my own choice to that of others, so I must sacrifice it again: but why? Oh, because I am a woman of superior understanding, and must not for the world degrade myself from my situation in life. But if I *have* superior understanding, let me at least make use of it for once, and rise to the rank of a human being conscious of its own power to discern good from ill. The person who has uniformly acted by the will of others has hardly that dignity to boast.

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“But once again: I am guardian to five girls; agreed: will this connection prejudice their bodies, souls, or purse? My marriage may assist *my* health, but I suppose it will not injure *theirs*. Will his company or companions corrupt their morals? God forbid; if I did not believe him one of the best of our fellow beings, I would reject him instantly. Can it injure their fortunes? Could he impoverish (if he would) five women, to whom their father left *20,000l.* each, independent almost of possibilities?—To what then am I guardian? to their pride and prejudice? and is anything else affected by the alliance? Now for more solid objections. Is not the man of whom I desire protection, a foreigner? unskilled in the laws and language of our country? Certainly. Is he not, as the French say, *Arbitre de mon sort?* and from the hour he possesses my person and fortune, have I any power of decision how or where I may continue or end my life? Is not the man, upon the continuance of whose affection my whole happiness depends, *younger* than myself[1], and is it wise to place one’s happiness on the continuance of *any* man’s affection? Would it not be painful to owe his appearance of regard more to his honour than his love? and is not my person, already faded, likelier to fade sooner, than his? On the other hand, is his life a good one? and would it not be lunacy even to risque the wretchedness of losing all situation in the world for the sake of living with a man one loves, and then to lose both companion and consolation? When I lost Mr. Thrale, every one was officious to comfort and to soothe me; but which of my children or quondam friends would look with kindness upon Piozzi’s widow? If I bring children by him, must they not be Catholics, and must not I live among people the *ritual* part of whose religion I disapprove?

“These are *my* objections, these *my* fears: not those of being censured by the world, as it is called, a composition of vice and folly, though ’tis surely no good joke to be talked of

“’By each affected she that tells my story,
And blesses her good stars that *she* was prudent.’

“These objections would increase in strength, too, if my present state was a happy one, but it really is not. I live a quiet life, but not a pleasant one. My children govern without loving me; my servants devour and despise me; my friends caress and censure me; my money wastes in expences I do not enjoy, and my time in trifles I do not approve. Every one is made insolent, and no one comfortable; my reputation unprotected, my heart unsatisfied, my health unsettled. I will, however, resolve on nothing. I will take a voyage to the Continent in spring, enlarge my knowledge and repose my purse. Change of place may turn the course of these ideas, and external objects supply the room of internal felicity. If he follow me, I may reject or receive at pleasure

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the addresses of a man who follows on *no explicit promise*, nor much probability of success, for I would really wish to marry no more without the consent of my children (such I mean as are qualified to give their opinions); and how should *Miss Thrales* approve of my marrying *Mr. Piozzi*? Here then I rest, and will torment my mind no longer, but commit myself, as he advises, to the hand of Providence, and all will end *all' ottima perfezzione*.

"Written at Streatham, 1st October, 1782."

[Footnote 1: *Note by Mrs. Piozzi*: "He was half a year *older* when our registers were both examined."]

"*October, 1782.*—There is no mercy for me in this island. I am more and more disposed to try the continent. One day the paper rings with my marriage to Johnson, one day to Crutchley, one day to Seward. I give no reason for such impertinence, but cannot deliver myself from it. Whitbred, the rich brewer, is in love with me too; oh, I would rather, as Ann Page says, be set breast deep in the earth[1] and bowled to death with turnips.

"Mr. Crutchley bid me make a curtsey to my daughters for keeping me out of a goal (*sic*), and the newspapers insolent as he! How shall I get through? How shall I get through? I have not deserved it of any of them, as God knows.

"Philip Thicknesse put it about Bath that I was a poor girl, a mantua maker, when Mr. Thrale married me. It is an odd thing, but Miss Thrales like, I see, to have it believed."

[Footnote 1: Anne Page says, "quick in the earth."]

The general result down to this point is that, whatever the disturbance in Mrs. Thrale's heart and mind, Johnson had no ground of complaint, nor ever thought he had, which is the essential point in controversy. In other words, he was not driven, hinted, or manoeuvred out of Streatham. Yet almost all his worshippers have insisted that he was. Hawkins, after mentioning the kind offices undertaken by Johnson (which constantly took him to Streatham) says:—"Nevertheless it was observed by myself, and other of Johnson's friends, that soon after the decease of Mr. Thrale, his visits to Streatham became less and less frequent, and that he studiously avoided the mention of the place or the family." This statement is preposterous, and is only to be partially accounted for by the fact that Hawkins, as his daughter informs us, had no personal acquaintance with Mrs. Thrale or Streatham. Boswell, who was in Scotland when Johnson and Mrs. Thrale left Streatham together, gratuitously infers that he left it alone, angry and mortified, in consequence of her altered manner:

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“The death of Mr. Thrale had made a very material alteration with respect to Johnson’s reception in that family. The manly authority of the husband no longer curbed the lively exuberance of the lady; and as her vanity had been fully gratified, by having the Colossus of Literature attached to her for many years, she gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain; but it is plain that Johnson’s penetration was alive to her neglect or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year we find him making a ‘parting use of the library’ at Streatham, and pronouncing a prayer which he composed on leaving Mr. Thrale’s family.

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

“One cannot read this prayer without some emotions not very favourable to the lady whose conduct occasioned it.

“The next day, he made the following memorandum:

“’*October 7.*—I was called early. I packed up my bundles, and used the foregoing prayer, with my morning devotions somewhat, I think, enlarged. Being earlier than the family, I read St. Paul’s farewell in the Acts, and then read fortuitously in the Gospels,—-which was my parting use of the library.’”

Mr. Croker, whose protest against the groundless insinuations of Boswell should have put subsequent writers on their guard, states in a note:—“He seems to have taken leave of the kitchen as well as the church at Streatham in Latin.” The note of his last dinner there, done into English, would run thus:

“Oct. 6th, Sunday, 1782.

“I dined at Streatham on boiled leg of lamb, with spinach, the stuffing of flour and raisins, round of beef, and turkey poult; and after the meat service, figs, grapes, not yet ripe in consequence of the bad season, with peaches, also hard. I took my place at table in no joyful mood, and partook of the food moderately, lest I should finish by intemperance. If I rightly remember, the banquet at the funeral of Hadon came into my mind.[1] When shall I revisit Streatham?”

[Footnote 1: “Si recte memini in mentem venerunt epulae in exequiis Hadoni celebratae.” I cannot explain this allusion.]

The exclamation “When shall I revisit Streatham?” loses much of its pathos when connected with these culinary details.

Madame D’Arblay’s description of the last year at Streatham is too important to be much abridged:

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“Dr. Burney, *when the Cecilian business was arranged*[1], again conveyed the Memorialist to Streatham. No further reluctance on his part, nor exhortations on that of Mr. Crisp, sought to withdraw her from that spot, where, while it was in its glory, they had so recently, and with pride, seen her distinguished. And truly eager was her own haste, when mistress of her time, to try once more to soothe those sorrows and chagrins in which she had most largely participated, by answering to the call, which had never ceased tenderly to pursue her, of return.

“With alacrity, therefore, though not with gaiety, they re-entered the Streatham gates—-but they soon perceived that they found not what they had left!

“Changed, indeed, was Streatham! Gone its chief, and changed his relict! unaccountably, incomprehensibly, indefinably changed! She was absent and agitated; not two minutes could she remain in a place; she scarcely seemed to know whom she saw; her speech was so hurried it was hardly intelligible; her eyes were assiduously averted from those who sought them; and her smiles were faint and forced.”

[Footnote 1: This may mean when the arrangements were made for the publication, or when the book was published. It was published about the beginning of June, 1782.]

“The mystery, however, soon ceased; the solicitations of the most affectionate sympathy could not long be urged in vain;—the mystery passed away—not so the misery! That, when revealed, was but to both parties doubled, from the different feelings set in movement by its disclosure.

“The astonishing history of the enigmatical attachment which impelled Mrs. Thrale to her second marriage, is now as well known as her name: but its details belong not to the history of Dr. Burney; though the fact too deeply interested him, and was too intimately felt in his social habits, to be passed over in silence in any memoirs of his life.

“But while ignorant yet of its cause, more and more struck he became at every meeting, by a species of general alienation which pervaded all around at Streatham. His visits, which, heretofore, had seemed galas to Mrs. Thrale, were now begun and ended almost without notice: and all others,—Dr. Johnson not excepted,—were cast into the same gulph of general neglect, or forgetfulness;—all,—save singly this Memorialist!—to whom, the fatal secret once acknowledged, Mrs. Thrale clung for comfort; though she saw, and generously pardoned, how wide she was from meeting approbation.

“In this retired, though far from tranquil manner, *passed many months; during which*, with the acquiescent consent of the Doctor, his daughter, wholly devoted to her unhappy friend, *remained uninterruptedly at sad and altered Streatham;* sedulously avoiding, what at other times she most wished, a *tete-a-tete* with her father. Bound by ties indissoluble of honour not to betray a trust that, in the ignorance

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of her pity, she had herself unwittingly sought, even to him she was as immutably silent, on this subject, as to all others—save, singly, to the eldest daughter of the house: whose conduct, through scenes of dreadful difficulty, notwithstanding her extreme youth, was even exemplary; and to whom the self-beguiled, yet generous mother, gave full and free permission to confide every thought and feeling to the Memorialist."

* * * * *

"Various incidental circumstances began, at length, to open the reluctant eyes of Dr. Burney to an impelled, though clouded foresight, of the portentous event which might latently be the cause of the alteration of all around at Streatham. He then naturally wished for some explanation with his daughter, though he never forced, or even claimed her confidence; well knowing, that voluntarily to give it him had been her earliest delight.

"But in taking her home with him one morning, to pass a day in St. Martin's Street, he almost involuntarily, in driving from the paddock, turned back his head towards the house, and, in a tone the most impressive, sighed out: 'Adieu, Streatham!—Adieu!'"

* * * * *

"*A few weeks earlier*, the Memorialist had passed a nearly similar scene with Dr. Johnson. Not, however, she believes, from the same formidable species of surmise; but from the wounds inflicted upon his injured sensibility, through the palpably altered looks, tone, and deportment, of the bewildered lady of the mansion; who, cruelly aware what would be his wrath, and how overwhelming his reproaches against her projected union, wished to break up their residing under the same roof before it should be proclaimed.

"This gave to her whole behaviour towards Dr. Johnson, a sort of restless petulancy, of which she was sometimes hardly conscious, at others, nearly reckless; but which hurt him far more than she purposed, *though short of the point at which she aimed*, of precipitating a change of dwelling that would elude its being cast, either by himself or the world, upon a passion that her understanding blushed to own, even while she was sacrificing to it all of inborn dignity that she had been bred to hold most sacred.

"Dr. Johnson, while still uninformed of an entanglement it was impossible he should conjecture, attributed her varying humours to the effect of wayward health meeting a sort of sudden wayward power: and imagined that caprices, which he judged to be partly feminine, *and partly wealthy*, would soberise themselves away in being unnoticed."

"But at length, as she became more and more dissatisfied with her own situation, and impatient for its relief, she grew less and less scrupulous with regard to her celebrated

guest: she slighted his counsel; did not heed his remonstrances; avoided his society; was ready at a moment's hint to lend him her carriage when he wished to return to Bolt Court; but awaited a formal request to accord it for bringing him back.

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“The Doctor then began to be stung; his own aspect became altered; and depression, with indignant uneasiness, sat upon his venerable front.

“It was at this moment that, finding the Memorialist was going one morning to St. Martin’s Street, he desired a cast thither in the carriage, and then to be set down at Bolt Court.

“Aware of his disturbance, and far too well aware how short it was of what it would become when the cause of all that passed should be detected, it was in trembling that the Memorialist accompanied him to the coach, filled with dread of offending him by any reserve, should he force upon her any inquiry; and yet impressed with the utter impossibility of betraying a trusted secret.

“His look was stern, though dejected, as he followed her into the vehicle; but when his eye, which, however short-sighted, was quick to mental perception, saw how ill at ease appeared his companion, all sternness subsided into an undisguised expression of the strongest emotion, that seemed to claim her sympathy, though to revolt from her compassion; while, with a shaking hand, and pointing finger, he directed her looks to the mansion from which they were driving; and, when they faced it from the coach window, as they turned into Streatham Common, tremulously exclaiming: ’That house ... is lost to *me*—for ever!’

“During a moment he then fixed upon her an interrogative eye, that impetuously demanded: ’Do you not perceive the change I am experiencing?’

“A sorrowing sigh was her only answer.

“Pride and delicacy then united to make him leave her to her taciturnity.

“He was too deeply, however, disturbed to start or to bear any other subject; and neither of them uttered a single word till the coach stopt in St. Martin’s Street, and the house and the carriage door were opened for their separation! He then suddenly and expressively looked at her, abruptly grasped her hand, and, with an air of affection, though in a low, husky voice, murmured rather than said: ‘Good morning, dear lady!’ but turned his head quickly away, to avoid any species of answer.”

“She was deeply touched by so gentle an acquiescence in her declining the confidential discourse upon which he had indubitably meant to open, relative to this mysterious alienation. But she had the comfort to be satisfied, that he saw and believed in her sincere participation in his feelings; while he allowed for the grateful attachment that bound her to a friend so loved; who, to her at least, still manifested a fervour of regard that resisted all change; alike from this new partiality, and from the undisguised, and even strenuous opposition of the Memorialist to its indulgence.”

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The Memoirs of Dr. Burney, by his daughter, published in 1832, together with her Diary and Letters, supplied the materials of Lord Macaulay's celebrated article on Madame D'Arblay in the "Edinburgh Review" for January, 1843, since reprinted amongst his Essays. He describes the Memoirs as a book "which it is impossible to read without a sensation made up of mirth, shame, and loathing," and adds:—"The two works are lying side by side before us; and we never turn from the Memoirs to the Diary without a sense of relief. The difference is as great as the difference between the atmosphere of a perfumer's shop, scented with lavender water and jasmine soap, and the air of a heath on a fine morning in May."[1]

[Footnote 1: Critical and Historical Essays (one volume edition), 1851, p. 652. The Memoirs were composed between 1828 and 1832, more than forty years after the occurrence of the scenes I have quoted from them.]

The passages I have quoted amply establish the justice of this comparison, for they are utterly irreconcileable with the unvarnished statements of the Diary; from which we learn that "Cecilia" was published about the beginning of June, when Johnson was absent from Streatham; that the Diarist had left Streatham prior to August 12th, and did not return to it again that year. How could she have passed many months there after she was entrusted with the great secret, which (as stated in "Thraliana") she only guessed in September or October?

How again could Johnson have attributed Mrs. Thrale's conduct to caprices "partly wealthy," when he knew that one main source of her troubles was pecuniary; or how can his alleged sense of ill-treatment be reconciled with his own letters? That he groaned over the terrible disturbance of his habits involved in the abandonment of Streatham, is likely enough; but as the only words he uttered were, "That house is lost to *me* for ever," and "Good morning, dear lady," the accompanying look is about as safe a foundation for a theory of conduct or feeling as Lord Burleigh's famous nod in "The Critic." The philosopher was at this very time an inmate of Streatham, and probably returned that same evening to register a sample of its hospitality. At all events, we know that, spite of hints and warnings, sighs and groans, he stuck to Streatham to the last; and finally left it with Mrs. Thrale, as a member of her family, to reside in her house at Brighton, as her guest, for six weeks.[1] To talk of conscious ill-treatment or wounded dignity, in the teeth of facts like these, is laughable.

[Footnote 1: The Edinburgh reviewer says, "Johnson went in Oct. 1782 from Streatham to Brighton, where he lived a kind of boarding-house life;" and adds, "he was not asked out into company with his fellow-lodgers." The Thrales had a handsome furnished house at Brighton, which is mentioned both in the Correspondence and Autobiography.

It is amusing enough to watch these attempts to shade away the ruinous effect of the Brighton trip on Lord Macaulay's Streatham pathos.]

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Madame D'Arblay joined the party as Mrs. Thrale's guest on the 26th October, and on the 28th she writes:

"At dinner, we had Dr. Delap and Mr. Selwyn, who accompanied us in the evening to a ball; as did also Dr. Johnson, to the universal amazement of all who saw him there:—-but he said he had found it so dull being quite alone the preceding evening, that he determined upon going with us: 'for,' he said, 'it cannot be worse than being alone.' Strange that he should think so! I am sure I am not of his mind."

On the 29th, she records that Johnson behaved very rudely to Mr. Pepys, and fairly drove him from the house. The entry for November 10th is remarkable:—"We spent this evening at Lady De Ferrars, where Dr. Johnson accompanied us, for the first time he has been invited of our parties since my arrival." On the 20th November, she tells us that Mrs. and the three Miss Thrales and herself got up early to bathe. "We then returned home, and dressed by candle-light, and, *as soon as we could get Dr. Johnson ready*, we set out upon our journey in a coach and a chaise, and arrived in Argyll Street at dinner time. Mrs. Thrale has there fixed her tent for this short winter, which will end with the beginning of April, when her foreign journey takes place."

One incident of this Brighton trip is mentioned in the "Anecdotes":

"We had got a little French print among us at Brighthelmstone, in November 1782, of some people skaiting, with these lines written under:

'Sur un mince chrystal l'hyver conduit leurs pas,
Le precipice est sous la glace;
Telle est de nos plaisirs la legere surface,
Glissez, mortels; n'appuyez pas.'

"And I begged translations from every body: Dr. Johnson gave me this:

'O'er ice the rapid skater flies,
With sport above and death below;
Where mischief lurks in gay disguise,
Thus lightly touch and quickly go.'

"He was, however, most exceedingly enraged when he knew that in the course of the season I had asked half a dozen acquaintance to do the same thing; and said, it was a piece of treachery, and done to make every body else look little when compared to my favourite friends the *Pepyses*, whose translations were unquestionably the best."[1]

[Footnote 1: By Sir Lucas:

"O'er the ice, as o'er pleasure, you lightly should glide,
Both have gulphs which their flattering surfaces hide."

By Sir William:

"Swift o'er the level how the skaiters slide,
And skim the glitt'ring surface as they go:
Thus o'er life's specious pleasures lightly glide,
But pause not, press not on the gulph below."]

Madame D'Arblay's Diary describes the outward and visible state of things at Brighton. "Thraliana" lays bare the internal history, the struggles of the understanding and the heart:

"At Brighthelmstone, whither I went when I left Streatham, 7th October 1782, I heard this comical epigram about the Irish Volunteers:

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"'There's not one of us all, my brave boys, but would rather
Do ought than offend great King George our good father;
But our country, you know, my dear lads, is our *mother*,
And that is a much surer side than the other.'"

"I had looked ill, or perhaps appeared to feel so much, that my eldest daughter would, out of tenderness perhaps, force me to an explanation. I could, however, have evaded it if I would; but my heart was bursting, and partly from instinctive desire of unloading it—partly, I hope, from principle, too—I called her into my room and fairly told her the truth; told her the strength of my passion for Piozzi, the impracticability of my living without him, the opinion I had of his merit, and the resolution I had taken to marry him. Of all this she could not have been ignorant before. I confessed my attachment to him and her together with many tears and agonies one day at Streatham; told them both that I wished I had two hearts for their sakes, but having only one I would break it between them, and give them each *ciascheduno la meta!* After that conversation she consented to go abroad with me, and even appointed the place (Lyons), to which Piozzi meant to follow us. He and she talked long together on the subject; yet her never mentioning it again made me fear she was not fully apprized of my intent, and though her concurrence might have been more easily obtained when left only to my influence in a distant country, where she would have had no friend to support her different opinion—yet I scorned to take such mean advantage, and told her my story *now*, with the winter before her in which to take her measures—her guardians at hand—all displeased at the journey: and to console her private distress I called into the room to her my own bosom friend, my beloved Fanny Burney, whose interest as well as judgment goes all against my marriage; whose skill in life and manners is superior to that of any man or woman in this age or nation; whose knowledge of the world, ingenuity of expedient, delicacy of conduct, and zeal in the cause, will make her a counsellor invaluable, and leave me destitute of every comfort, of every hope, of every expectation.

"Such are the hands to which I have cruelly committed thy cause—my honourable, ardent, artless Piozzi!! Yet I should not deserve the union I desire with the most disinterested of all human hearts, had I behaved with less generosity, or endeavoured to gain by cunning what is withheld by prejudice. Had I set my heart upon a scoundrel, I might have done virtuously to break it and get loose; but the man I love, I love for his honesty, for his tenderness of heart, his dignity of mind, his piety to God, his duty to his mother, and his delicacy to me. In being united to this man only can I be happy in this world, and short will be my stay in it, if it is not passed with him."

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"*Brighthelmstone, 16th November 1782*.—For him I have been contented to reverse the laws of nature, and request of my child that concurrence which, at my age and a widow, I am not required either by divine or human institutions to ask even of a parent. The life I gave her she may now more than repay, only by agreeing to what she will with difficulty prevent; and which, if she does prevent, will give her lasting remorse; for those who stab *me* shall hear me groan: whereas if she will—but how can she?—gracefully or even compassionately consent; if she will go abroad with me upon the chance of his death or mine preventing our union, and live with me till she is of age— ... perhaps there is no heart so callous by avarice, no soul so poisoned by prejudice, no head so feather'd by foppery, that will forbear to excuse her when she returns to the rich and the gay—for having saved the life of a mother thro' compliance, extorted by anguish, contrary to the received opinions of the world."

"*Brighthelmstone, 19th November, 1782*.—What is above written, though intended only to unload my heart by writing it, I shewed in a transport of passion to Queeney and to Burney. Sweet Fanny Burney cried herself half blind over it; said there was no resisting such pathetic eloquence, and that, if she was the daughter instead of the friend, she should be tempted to attend me to the altar; but that, while she possessed her reason, nothing should seduce her to approve what reason itself would condemn: that children, religion, situation, country, and character—besides the diminution of fortune by the certain loss of 800_l._ a year, were too much to sacrifice for any *one man*. If, however, I were resolved to make the sacrifice, *a la bonne heure!* it was an astonishing proof of an attachment very difficult for mortal man to repay."

"I will talk no more about it."

What comes next was written in London:

"*Nov. 27, 1782*.—I have given my Piozzi some hopes—dear, generous, prudent, noble-minded creature; he will hardly permit himself to believe it ever can be—*come quei promessi miracoli*, says he, *che non vengono mai*. For rectitude of mind and native dignity of soul I never saw his fellow."

"*Dec. 1, 1782*.—The guardians have met upon the scheme of putting our girls in Chancery. I was frighted at the project, not doubting but the Lord Chancellor would stop us from leaving England, as he would certainly see no joke in three young heiresses, his wards, quitting the kingdom to frisk away with their mother into Italy: besides that I believe Mr. Crutchley proposed it merely for a stumbling-block to my journey, as he cannot bear to have Hester out of his sight.

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“Nobody much applauded my resolution in going, but Johnson and Cator said they would not concur in stopping me by violence, and Crutchley was forced to content himself with intending to put the ladies under legal protection as soon as we should be across the sea. This measure I much applaud, for if I die or marry in Italy their fortunes will be safer in Chancery than any how else. Cator[1] said *I* had a right to say that going to Italy would benefit the children as much as *they* had to say it would *not*; but I replied that as I really did not mean anything but my own private gratification by the voyage, nothing should make me say I meant *their* good by it; and that it would be like saying I eat roast beef to mend my daughters’ complexions. The result of all is that we certainly *do go*. I will pick up what knowledge and pleasure I can here this winter to divert myself, and perhaps my *compagno fidele* in distant climes and future times, with the recollection of England and its inhabitants, all which I shall be happy and content to leave *for him*.”

[Footnote 1: *Note by Mrs. T.:* “Cator said likewise that the attorney’s bill ought to be paid by the ladies as a bill of Mr. Thrale’s, but I replied that perhaps I might marry and give my estate away, and if so it would be unjust that they should pay the bill which related to that estate only. Besides, if I should leave it to Hester, says I, ... why should Susan and Sophy and Cecilia and Harriet pay the lawyer’s bill for their sister’s land? He agreed to this plea, and I will live on bread and water, but I will pay Norris myself. ’Tis but being a better huswife in pins.”]

Madame D’Arblay writes, Friday, December 27th, 1782:

“I dined with Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson, who was very comic and good-humoured.... Mrs. Thrale, who was to have gone with me to Mrs. Orde’s, gave up her visit in order to stay with Dr. Johnson. Miss Thrale, therefore, and I went together.”

I return to “Thraliana”:

“*January*, 1783.—A fit of jealousy seized me the other day: some viper had stung me up to a notion that my Piozzi was fond of a Miss Chanon. I call’d him gently to account, and after contenting myself with slight excuses, told him that, whenever we married, I should, however, desire to see as little as possible of the lady *chez nous*.”

There is a large gap in “Thraliana” just in the most interesting part of the story of her parting with Piozzi in 1783, and his recall.

“*January 29, 1783*.—Adieu to all that’s dear, to all that’s lovely; I am parted from my life, my soul, my Piozzi. If I can get health and strength to write my story here, ’tis all I wish for now—oh misery! [Here are four pages missing.] The cold dislike of my eldest daughter I thought might wear away by familiarity with his merit, and that we might live tolerably together, or, at least, part friends—but no; her

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aversion increased daily, and she communicated it to the others; they treated *me* insolently, and *him* very strangely—running away whenever he came as if they saw a serpent—and plotting with their governess—a cunning Italian—how to invent lyes to make me hate him, and twenty such narrow tricks. By these means the notion of my partiality took air, and whether Miss Thrale sent him word slily or not I cannot tell, but on the 25th January, 1783, Mr. Crutchley came hither to conjure me not to go to Italy; he had heard such things, he said, and by *means* next to *miraculous*. The next day, Sunday, 26th, Fanny Burney came, said I must marry him instantly or give him up; that my reputation would be lost else.

“I actually groaned with anguish, threw myself on the bed in an agony which my fair daughter beheld with frigid indifference. She had indeed never by one tender word endeavoured to dissuade me from the match, but said, coldly, that if I *would* abandon my children I *must*; that their father had not deserved such treatment from me; that I should be punished by Piozzi’s neglect, for that she knew he hated me; and that I turned out my offspring to chance for his sake, like puppies in a pond to swim or drown according as Providence pleased; that for her part she must look herself out a place like the other servants, for my face would she never see more.’ ’Nor write to me?’ said I. ‘I shall not, madam,’ replied she with a cold sneer, ’easily find out your address; for you are going you know not whither, I believe.’

“Susan and Sophy said nothing at all, but they taught the two young ones to cry ’Where are you going, mama? will you leave us and die as our poor papa did?’ There was no standing *that*., so I wrote my lover word that my mind was all distraction, and bid him come to me the next morning, 27th January—my birthday—and spent the Sunday night in torture not to be described. My falsehood to my Piozzi, my strong affection for him, the incapacity I felt in myself to resign the man I so adored, the hopes I had so cherished, inclined me strongly to set them all at defiance, and go with him to church to sanctify the promises I had so often made him; while the idea of abandoning the children of my first husband, who left me so nobly provided for, and who depended on my attachment to his offspring, awakened the voice of conscience, and threw me on my knees to pray for *His* direction who was hereafter to judge my conduct. His grace illuminated me, His power strengthened me, and I flew to my daughter’s bed in the morning and told her my resolution to resign my own, my dear, my favourite purpose, and to prefer my children’s interest to my love. She questioned my ability to make the sacrifice; said one word from him would undo all my—[Here two pages are missing].

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“I told Dr. Johnson and Mr. Crutchley three days ago that I had determined—seeing them so averse to it—that I would not go abroad, but that, if I did not leave England, I *would* leave London, where I had not been treated to my mind, and where I had flung away much unnecessary money with little satisfaction; that I was greatly in debt, and somewhat like distress’d: that borrowing was always bad, but of one’s children worst: that Mr. Crutchley’s objection to their lending me their money when I had a mortgage to offer as security, was unkind and harsh: that I would go live in a little way at Bath till I had paid all my debts and cleared my income: that I would no more be tyrannized over by people who hated or people who plundered me, in short that I would retire and save my money and lead this uncomfortable life no longer. They made little or no reply, and I am resolved to do as I declared. I will draw in my expenses, lay by every shilling I can to pay off debts and mortgages, and perhaps—who knows? I may in six or seven years be freed from all incumbrances, and carry a clear income of 2500_l._ a year and an estate of 500_l._ in land to the man of my heart. May I but live to discharge my obligations to those who *hate me*; it will be paradise to discharge them to him who *loves me*.”

“*April, 1783*.—I will go to Bath: nor health, nor strength, nor my children’s affections, have I. My daughter does not, I suppose, much delight in this scheme [viz, retrenchment of expenses and removal to Bath], but why should I lead a life of delighting her, who would not lose a shilling of interest or an ounce of pleasure to save my life from perishing? When I was near losing my existence from the contentions of my mind, and was seized with a temporary delirium in Argyll Street, she and her two eldest sisters laughed at my distress, and observed to dear Fanny Burney, that it was *monstrous droll*. *She* could hardly suppress her indignation.

“Piozzi was ill.... A sore throat, Pepys said it was, with four ulcers in it: the people about me said it had been lanced, and I mentioned it slightly before the girls.’ Has he cut his own throat?’ says Miss Thrale in her quiet manner. This was less inexcusable because she hated him, and the other was her sister; though, had she exerted the good sense I thought her possessed of, she would not have treated him so: had she adored, and fondled, and respected him as he deserved from her hands, and from the heroic conduct he shewed in January when he gave into her hands, that dismal day, all my letters containing promises of marriage, protestations of love, &c., who knows but she might have kept us separated? But never did she once caress or thank me, never treat him with common civility, except on the very day which gave her hopes of our final parting. Worth while to be sure it was, to break one’s heart for her! The other two are, however, neither wiser nor kinder; all swear by her I believe, and follow her footsteps exactly. Mr. Thrale had not much heart, but his fair daughters have none at all."[1]

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[Footnote 1: This is the very accusation they brought against her.]

Johnson was not called in to counsel on these matters of the heart, but he was not cast off or neglected. Madame D'Arblay lands him in Argyll Street on the 20th November, 1782. We hear of him at Mrs. Thrale's house or in her company repeatedly from Madame D'Arblay and Dr. Lort. "Johnson," writes Dr. Lort, January 28th, 1783, "is much better. I saw him the other evening at Madame Thrale's in very good spirits." Boswell says:

"On Friday, March 21, (1783) having arrived in London the night before, I was glad to find him at Mrs. Thrale's house, in Argyle Street, appearances of friendship between them being still kept up. I was shown into his room; and after the first salutation he said, 'I am glad you are come; I am very ill'....

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

This is quite decisive so far as Boswell is concerned, and disposes at once of all his preceding insinuations to her disadvantage. He had not seen her before since Thrale's death; and now, finding them together and jealously scrutinising their tone and manner towards each, he imagined all to be as well as formerly.[1] That they were on the point of living apart, and of keeping up their habitual interchange of mind exclusively by letters, is no proof that either was capriciously or irrecoverably estranged.

[Footnote 1: "Now on March 21, 1783, fifteen months before the marriage in question, Boswell speaks of the severance of the old friendship as effected: 'appearances of friendship,' he says, 'were still maintained between them.' Boswell was at feud with the lady when he wrote, as we all know. But his evidence is surely sufficient as to the fact of the rupture, though not as to its causes."—*(Edin. Rev.* p. 510.) Boswell's concluding evidence, that to the best of his knowledge and observation, there was no change or rupture, is suppressed!]

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The pleasures of intimacy in friendship depend far more on external circumstances than people of a sentimental turn of mind are willing to concede; and when constant companionship ceases to suit the convenience of both parties, the chances are that it will be dropped on the first favourable opportunity. Admiration, esteem, or affection may continue to be felt for one whom, from altered habits or new ties, we can no longer receive as an inmate or an established member of the family. Johnson was now in his seventy-fourth year, haunted by the fear of death, and fond of dwelling nauseously on his ailments and proposed remedies. From what passed at Brighton, it would seem that there were moods in which he was positively unbearable, and could not be received in a house without driving every one else out of it. In a roomy mansion like Streatham he might be endured, because he could be kept out of the way; but in an ordinary town-house or small establishment, such a guest would resemble an elephant in a private menagerie.

There is also a very great difference, when arrangements are to be made for the domestication of a male visitor, between a family with a male head, and one consisting exclusively of females. Let any widow with daughters make the case her own, and imagine herself domesticated in Argyll or Harley Street with the lexicographer. The manly authority of Thrale was required to keep Johnson in order quite as much as to steady the imputed flightiness of the lady; and his idolaters must really remember that she was a sentient being, with feelings and affections which she was fully entitled to consult in arranging her scheme of life. When Lord Macaulay and his school tacitly assume that these are to weigh as dust in the balance against the claims of learning, they argue like sundry upholders of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope, who contend that his subjects should complacently endure any amount of oppression rather than endanger (what they deem) the vital interests of the Church. When it is maintained that the discomfort was amply repaid by the glory he conferred, we are reminded of what the Strasbourg goose undergoes for fame: “Crammed with food, deprived of drink, and fixed near a great fire, before which it is nailed with its feet upon a plank, this goose passes, it must be owned, an uncomfortable life. The torment would indeed be intolerable, if the idea of the lot which awaits him did not serve as a consolation. But when he reflects that his liver, bigger than himself, loaded with truffles, and clothed in a scientific *pate*, will, through the instrumentality of M. Corcellet, diffuse all over Europe the glory of his name, he resigns himself to his destiny, and suffers not a tear to flow."[1]

[Footnote 1: Almanach des Gourmands.]

Her case for a separation *de corps* is thus stated in the “Anecdotes “:

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“All these exactnesses in a man who was nothing less than exact himself, made him extremely impracticable as an inmate, though most instructive as a companion, and useful as a friend. Mr. Thrale too could sometimes overrule his rigidity, by saying coldly, ’There, there, now we have had enough for one lecture, Dr. Johnson, we will not be upon education any more till after dinner, if you please,’—or some such speech; but when there was nobody to restrain his dislikes, it was extremely difficult to find any body with whom he could converse, without living always on the verge of a quarrel, or of something too like a quarrel to be pleasing. I came into the room, for example, one evening, where he and a gentleman, whose abilities we all respected exceedingly, were sitting; a lady who had walked in two minutes before me had blown ’em both into a flame, by whispering something to Mr. S——d, which he endeavoured to explain away, so as not to affront the Doctor, whose suspicions were all alive. ’And have a care, Sir,’ said he, just as I came in; ’the old lion will not bear to be tickled.’[1] The other was pale with rage, the lady wept at the confusion she had caused, and I could only say with Lady Macbeth,

’So! you’ve displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting
With most admir’d disorder.’

“Such accidents, however, occurred too often, and I was forced to take advantage of my lost lawsuit, and plead inability of purse to remain longer in London or its vicinage. I had been crossed in my intentions of going abroad, and found it convenient, for every reason of health, peace, and pecuniary circumstances, to retire to Bath, where I knew Mr. Johnson would not follow me, and where I could for that reason command some little portion of time for my own use; a thing impossible while I remained at Streatham or at London, as my hours, carriage, and servants, had long been at his command, who would not rise in the morning till twelve o’clock perhaps, and oblige me to make breakfast for him till the bell rung for dinner, though much displeased if the toilet was neglected, and though much of the time we passed together was spent in blaming or deriding, very justly, my neglect of economy, and waste of that money which might make many families happy. The original reason of our connexion, his *particularly disordered health and spirits*[2], had been long at an end, and he had no other ailments than old age and general infirmity, which every professor of medicine was ardently zealous and generally attentive to palliate, and to contribute all in their power for the prolongation of a life so valuable.

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“Veneration for his virtue, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my husband first put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr. Johnson; but the perpetual confinement I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last, nor could I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more. To the assistance we gave him, the shelter our house afforded to his uneasy fancies, and to the pains we took to soothe or repress them, the world perhaps is indebted for the three political pamphlets, the new edition and correction of his Dictionary, and for the Poets’ Lives, which he would scarce have lived, I think, and kept his faculties entire, to have written, had not incessant care been exerted at the time of his first coming to be our constant guest in the country; and several times after that, when he found himself particularly oppressed with diseases incident to the most vivid and fervent imaginations. I shall for ever consider it as the greatest honour which could be conferred on any one, to have been the confidential friend of Dr. Johnson’s health; and to have in some measure, with Mr. Thrale’s assistance, saved from distress at least, if not from worse, a mind great beyond the comprehension of common mortals and good beyond all hope of imitation from perishable beings.”

[Footnote 1: This must be the quarrel between Johnson and Seward at which Miss Streatfield cried. *(Ante,* p. 116.)]

[Footnote 2: These words are underlined in the manuscript.]

This was written in Italy in 1785, when, painfully alive to the insults heaped upon her on Johnson’s account, she may be excused for dwelling on what she had endured for his sake. But if, as may be inferred from her statement, some of the cordiality shewn him during the palmy days of their intimacy was forced, this rather enhances than lessens the merit of her services, which thus become elevated into sacrifices. The question is not how she uniformly felt, but how she uniformly behaved to him; and the fact of her being obliged to retire to Bath to get out of his way proves that there had been no rupture, no coolness, no serious offence given or taken on either side, up to April, 1783; just one year-and-a-half after the alleged expulsion from Streatham.

There were ample avowable reasons for her retirement, and no suspicion could have crossed Johnson’s mind that he was an incumbrance, or he would not have been found at her house by Boswell, as he was found on the 21st March, 1783, when she said “she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr. Johnson before I came.” Considering the heart-rending struggle in which she was engaged at this time, with the aggravated infliction of an unsympathising and dogmatic friend, the wonder is how she retained her outward placidity at all.

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"*Sunday Morning, 6th April*, 1783.—I have been very busy preparing to go to Bath and save my money; the Welch settlement has been examined and rewritten by Cator's desire in such a manner that a will can revoke it or charge the estate, or anything. I signed my settlement yesterday, and, before I slept, wrote my will, charging the estate with pretty near *3000l*. But what signifies it? My daughters deserve no thanks from my tenderness and they want no pecuniary help from my purse—let me provide in some measure, for my dear, my absent Piozzi.—God give me strength to part with him courageously.—I expect him every instant to breakfast with me for the *last time*.—-Gracious Heavens, what words are these! Oh no, for mercy may we but meet again! and without diminished kindness. Oh my love, my love!

"We did meet and part courageously. I persuaded him to bring his old friend Mecci, who goes abroad with him and has long been his confidant, to keep the meeting from being too tender, the separation from being too poignant—his presence was a restraint on our conduct, and a witness of our vows, which we renewed with fervour, and will keep sacred in absence, adversity, and age. When all was over I flew to my dearest, loveliest friend, my Fanny Burney, and poured all my sorrows into her tender bosom."

"*Bath, April 14th, 1783.*—Here I am, settled in my plan of economy, with three daughters, three maids and a man," &c.

Piozzi left England the night of the 8th May, 1783.

"Come, friendly muse! some rhimes discover
With which to meet my dear at Dover,
Fondly to bless my wandering lover
And make him dote on dirty Dover.
Call each fair wind to waft him over,
Nor let him linger long at Dover,
But there from past fatigues recover,
And write his love some lines from Dover.
Too well he knows his skill to move her,
To meet him two years hence at Dover,
When happy with her handsome rover
She'll bless the day she din'd at Dover."

"*Russell Street, Bath, Thursday, 8th May*, 1783.—I sent him these verses to divert him on his passage. Dear angel! *this day* he leaves a nation to which he was sent for my felicity perhaps, I hope for his own. May I live but to make him happy, and hear him say 'tis *me* that make him so!"—

In a note on the passage in which he states that Johnson studiously avoided all mention of Streatham or the family after Thrale's death, Hawkins says:—"It seems that between him and the widow there was a formal taking of leave, for I find in his Diary the following

note: ’1783, April 5th, I took leave of Mrs. Thrale. I was much moved. I had some expostulations with her. She said she was likewise affected. I commended the Thrales with great good will to God; may my petitions have been heard.’” This being the day before her parting interview with Piozzi, no doubt she was much affected: and as the newspapers had already taken up the topic of her engagement, the expostulations probably referred to it.

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Preceding commentators were not bound to know what is now learned from “Thraliana”; but they were bound to know what might always have been learned from Johnson’s printed letters; and the tone of these from the separation in April, 1783, to the marriage in July, 1784, is identically the same as at any period of the intimacy which can be specified. There are the same warm expressions of regard, the same gratitude for acknowledged kindness, the same alternations of hope and disappointment, the same medical details, and the same reproaches for silence or fancied coldness, in which he habitually indulged towards all his female correspondents. Shew me a complaint or reproach, and I will instantly match it with one from a period when the intimacy was confessedly and notoriously at its height. If her occasional explosions of irritability are to be counted, what inference is to be drawn from Johnson’s depreciatory remarks on her, and indeed on everybody, so carefully treasured up by Hawkins and Boswell?

On June 13th, 1783, he writes to her:

“Your last letter was very pleasing; it expressed kindness to me, and some degree of placid acquiescence in your present mode of life, *which is, I think, the best which is at present within your reach*.

“My powers and attention have for a long time been almost wholly employed upon my health, I hope not wholly without success, but solitude is very tedious.”

She replies:

“Bath, June 15th, 1783.

“I believe it is too true, my dear Sir, that you think on little except yourself and your own health, but then they are subjects on which every one else would think too—and that is a great consolation.

“I am willing enough to employ all my thoughts upon *myself*, but there is nobody here who wishes to think with or about me, so I am very sick and a little sullen, and disposed now and then to say, like king David, ’My lovers and my friends have been put away from me, and my acquaintance hid out of my sight.’ If the last letter I wrote showed some degree of placid acquiescence in a situation, which, however displeasing, is the best I can get at just now, I pray God to keep me in that disposition, and to lay no more calamity upon me which may again tempt me to murmur and complain. *In the meantime assure yourself of my undiminished kindness and veneration: they have been long out of accident’s power either to lessen or increase."*....

“That *you* should be solitary is a sad thing, and a strange one too, when every body is willing to drop in, and for a quarter of an hour at least, save you from a *tete-a-tete* with yourself. I never could catch a moment when you were alone whilst we were in London, and Miss Thrale says the same thing.”

A few days afterwards, June 19th, he writes:

“I am sitting down in no cheerful solitude to write a narrative which would once have affected you with tenderness and sorrow, but which you will perhaps pass over now with the careless glance of frigid indifference. For this diminution of regard, however, I know not whether I ought to blame you, who may have reasons which I cannot know, and I do not blame myself, who have for a great part of human life done you what good I could, and have never done you evil.”

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Two days before, he had suffered a paralytic stroke, and lost the power of speech for a period. After minutely detailing his ailments and their treatment by his medical advisers, he proceeds:

“How this will be received by you I know not. I hope you will sympathise with me; but perhaps

“My mistress gracious, mild, and good,
Cries! Is he dumb? ’Tis time he should.

“But can this be possible? I hope it cannot. I hope that what, when I could speak, I spoke of you, and to you, will be in a sober and serious hour remembered by you; and surely it cannot be remembered but with some degree of kindness. I have loved you with virtuous affection; I have honoured you with sincere esteem. Let not all our endearments be forgotten, but let me have in this great distress your pity and your prayers. *You see, I yet turn to you with my complaints as a settled and unalienable friend*; do not, do not drive me from you, for I have not deserved either neglect or hatred.

“O God! give me comfort and confidence in Thee; forgive my sins; and if it be thy good pleasure, relieve my diseases for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

"I am almost ashamed of this querulous letter, but now it is written, let it go."

The Edinburgh reviewer quotes the first paragraph of this letter to prove Johnson’s consciousness of change on her side, and omits all mention of the passages in which he turns to her as “a settled and unalienable friend,” and apologises for his querulousness!

Some time before (November 1782), she had written to him:

“My health is growing very bad, to be sure. I will starve still more rigidly for a while, and watch myself carefully; but more than six months will I not bestow upon that subject; you shall not have in me a valetudinary correspondent, *who is always writing such letters, that to read the labels tied on bottles by an apothecary’s boy would be more eligible and amusing*; nor will I live, like Flavia in ’Law’s Serious Call,’ who spends half her time and money on herself, with sleeping draughts, and waking draughts, and cordials and broths. My desire is always to determine against my own gratification, so far as shall be possible for my body to co-operate with my mind, and you will not suspect me of wearing blisters, and living wholly upon vegetables for sport. If that will do, the disorder may be removed; but if health is gone, and gone for ever, we will act as Zachary Pearce the famous bishop of Rochester did, when he lost the wife he loved so—call for one glass to the health of her who is departed, never more to return—and so go quietly back

to the usual duties of life, and forbear to mention her again from that time till the last day of it."

Instead of acting on the same principle, he perseveres in addressing his "ideal Urania" as if she had been a consulting physician:

"London, June 20th, 1783.

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“DEAREST MADAM,—I think to send you for some time a regular diary. You will forgive the gross images which disease must necessarily present. Dr. Lawrence said that medical treatises should be always in Latin. The two vesicatories did not perform well,” &c. &c.

“June 23, 1783.

“*Your offer, dear Madam, of coming to me, is charmingly kind*; but I will lay it up for future use, and then let it not be considered as obsolete; *a time of dereliction may come, when I may have hardly any other friend*, but in the present exigency I cannot name one who has been deficient in civility or attention. What man can do for man has been done for me. Write to me very often.”

That the offer was serious and heartfelt, is clear from “Thraliana”:

“*Bath, June 24th*, 1783.—A stroke of the palsy has robbed Johnson of his speech, I hear. Dreadful event! and I at a distance. Poor fellow! A letter from himself, *in his usual style*, convinces me that none of his faculties have failed, and his physicians say that all present danger is over.”

He writes:

“June 24th, 1783.

“Both Queeny’s letter and yours gave me, to-day, great pleasure. Think as well and as kindly of me as you can, but do not flatter me. Cool reciprocations of esteem are the great comforts of life; hyberbolical praise only corrupts the tongue of the one, and the ear of the other.”

“June 28th, 1783.

“Your letter is just such as I desire, and as from you I hope always to deserve.”

Her own state of mind at this time may be collected from “Thraliana”:

“*June,* 1783.—Most sincerely do I regret the sacrifice I have made of health, happiness, and the society of a worthy and amiable companion, to the pride and prejudice of three insensible girls, who would see nature perish without concern ... were their gratification the cause.

“The two youngest have, for ought I see, hearts as impenetrable as their sister. They will all starve a favourite animal—all see with unconcern the afflictions of a friend; and when the anguish I suffered on their account last winter, in Argyll Street, nearly took away my life and reason, the younger ridiculed as a jest those agonies which the eldest despised as a philosopher. When all is said, they are exceeding valuable girls—-

beautiful in person, cultivated in understanding, and well-principled in religion: high in their notions, lofty in their carriage, and of intents equal to their expectations; wishing to raise their own family by connections with some more noble ... and superior to any feeling of tenderness which might clog the wheels of ambition. What, however, is my state? who am condemned to live with girls of this disposition? to teach without authority; to be heard without esteem; to be considered by them as their superior in fortune, while I live by the money borrowed from them; and in good sense, when they have seen me submit my judgment to theirs at the hazard of my life and wits. Oh, ’tis a pleasant situation! and whoever would wish, as the Greek lady phrased it, to teize himself and repent of his sins, let him borrow his children’s money, be in love against their interest and prejudice, forbear to marry by their advice, and then shut himself up and live with them."[1]

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[Footnote 1: After Buckingham had been some time married to Fairfax's daughter, he said it was like marrying the devil's daughter and keeping house with your father-in-law.]

Is it possible to misconstrue such a letter as the following from Johnson to her, now that the querulous and desponding tone of the writer is familiar to us?

"London, Nov. 13th, 1783.

"DEAR MADAM,—Since you have written to me with the attention and tenderness of ancient time, your letters give me a great part of the pleasure which a life of solitude admits. You will never bestow any share of your good-will on one who deserves better. Those that have loved longest, love best. A sudden blaze of kindness may by a single blast of coldness be extinguished, but that fondness which length of time has connected with many circumstances and occasions, though it may for a while be suppressed by disgust or resentment, with or without a cause, is hourly revived by accidental recollection.[1] To those that have lived long together, every thing heard and every thing seen recals some pleasure communicated, or some benefit conferred, some petty quarrel, or some slight endearment. Esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week, but a friendship of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of life. A friend may be often found and lost, but an *old friend* never can be found, and Nature has provided that he cannot easily be lost."

[Footnote 1:

"Yet, oh yet thyself deceive not:
Love may sink by slow decay,
But by sudden wrench believe not
Hearts can thus be torn away."—BYRON.]

The date of the following scene, as described by Madame D'Arblay in the "Memoirs," is towards the end of November, 1783:

"Nothing had yet publicly transpired, with certainty or authority, relative to the projects of Mrs. Thrale, who had now been nearly a year at Bath[1]; though nothing was left unreported, or unasserted, with respect to her proceedings. Nevertheless, how far Dr. Johnson was himself informed, or was ignorant on the subject, neither Dr. Burney nor his daughter could tell; and each equally feared to learn.

"Scarcely an instant, however, was the latter left alone in Bolt Court, ere she saw the justice of her long apprehensions; for while she planned speaking upon some topic that might have a chance to catch the attention of the Doctor, a sudden change from kind tranquillity to strong austerity took place in his altered countenance; and, startled and affrighted, she held her peace....

“Thus passed a few minutes, in which she scarcely dared breathe; while the respiration of the Doctor, on the contrary, was of asthmatic force and loudness; then, suddenly turning to her, with an air of mingled wrath and woe, he hoarsely ejaculated: ‘Piozzi!’

“He evidently meant to say more; but the effort with which he articulated that name robbed him of any voice for amplification, and his whole frame grew tremulously convulsed.

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“His guest, appalled, could not speak; but he soon discerned that it was grief from coincidence, not distrust from opposition of sentiment, that caused her taciturnity. This perception calmed him, and he then exhibited a face ‘in sorrow more than anger.’ His see-sawing abated of its velocity, and, again fixing his looks upon the fire, he fell into pensive rumination.

“At length, and with great agitation, he broke forth with: ’She cares for no one! You, only—You, she loves still!—but no one—and nothing else!—You she still loves——’

“A half smile now, though of no very gay character, softened a little the severity of his features, while he tried to resume some cheerfulness in adding: ‘As ... she loves her little finger!’

“It was plain by this burlesque, or, perhaps, playfully literal comparison, that he meant now, and tried, to dissipate the solemnity of his concern.

“The hint was taken; his guest started another subject; and this he resumed no more. He saw how distressing was the theme to a hearer whom he ever wished to please, not distress; and he named Mrs. Thrale no more! Common topics took place, till they were rejoined by Dr. Burney, whom then, and indeed always, he likewise spared upon this subject.”

[Footnote 1: About six months.]

After quoting this description at length, Lord Brougham remarks:

“Now Johnson was, perhaps unknown to himself, in love with Mrs. Thrale, but for Miss Burney’s thoughtless folly there can be no excuse. And her father, a person of the very same rank and profession with Mr. Piozzi, appears to have adopted the same senseless cant, as if it were less lawful to marry an Italian musician than an English. To be sure, Miss Burney says, that Mrs. Thrale was lineally descended from Adam de Saltsburg, who came over with the Conqueror. But assuredly that worthy, unable to write his name, would have held Dr. Johnson himself in as much contempt as his fortunate rival, and would have regarded his alliance as equally disreputable with the Italian’s, could his consent have been asked."[1]

[Footnote 1: Lives of Men of Letters, &c, vol. ii.]

If the scene took place at all, it must have taken place within a few days after the profession of satisfied and unaltered friendship contained in Johnson’s letter of November 13th. His next letter is to Miss Thrale:

“Nov. 18th, 1783.

“Dear Miss,—Here is a whole week, and nothing heard from your house. Baretti said what a wicked house it would be, and a wicked house it is. Of you, however, I have no complaint to make, for I owe you a letter. Still I live here by my own self, and have had of late very bad nights; but then I have had a pig to dinner, which Mr. Perkins gave me. Thus life is chequered.”

On February 24th, 1784, Dr. Lort writes to Bishop Percy:

“Poor Dr. Johnson has had a very bad winter, attended by Heberden and Brocklesby, who neither of them expected he would have survived the frost: that being gone, he still remains, and I hope will now continue, at least till the next severe one. It has indeed carried off a great many old people.”

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Johnson to Mrs. Thrale:

“March 10th, 1784.

“Your kind expressions gave me great pleasure; do not reject me from your thoughts. Shall we ever exchange confidence by the fireside again?”

He was so absorbed with his own complaints as to make no allowance for hers. Yet her health was in a very precarious state, and in the autumn of the same year, his complaints of silence and neglect were suspended by the intelligence that her daughter Sophia was lying at death’s door. On March 27th, 1784, she writes:

“You tell one of my daughters that you know not with distinctness the cause of my complaints. I believe she who lives with me knows them no better; one very dreadful one is however removed by dear Sophia’s recovery. It is kind in you to quarrel no more about expressions which were not meant to offend; but unjust to suppose, I have not lately thought myself dying. Let us, however, take the Prince of Abyssinia’s advice, *and not add to the other evils of life the bitterness of controversy.* If courage is a noble and generous quality, let us exert it *to* the last, and *at* the last: if faith is a Christian virtue, let us willingly receive and accept that support it will most surely bestow—and do permit me to repeat those words with which I know not why you were displeased: *Let us leave behind us the best example that we can*.

“All this is not written by a person in high health and happiness, but by a fellow-sufferer, who has more to endure than she can tell, or you can guess; and now let us talk of the Severn salmons, which will be coming in soon; I shall send you one of the finest, and shall be glad to hear that your appetite is good.”

Johnson to Mrs. Thrale:

“April 21st, 1784.

“The Hooles, Miss Burney, and Mrs. Hull (Wesley’s sister), feasted yesterday with me very cheerfully on your noble salmon. Mr. Allen could not come, and I sent him a piece, and a great tail is still left.”

“April 26th, 1784.

“Mrs. Davenant called to pay me a guinea, but I gave two for you. Whatever reasons you have for frugality, it is not worth while to save a guinea a year by withdrawing it from a public charity.”

“Whilst I am writing, the post has brought me your kind letter. Do not think with dejection of your own condition: a little patience will probably give you health: it will certainly give you riches, and all the accommodations that riches can procure.”

Up to this time she had put an almost killing restraint on her inclinations, and had acted according to Johnson's advice in everything but the final abandonment of Piozzi; yet Boswell reports him as saying, May 16th: "Sir, she has done everything wrong since Thrale's bridle was off her neck."

The next extracts are from "Thraliana":

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"*Bath, Nov. 30th, 1783.*—Sophia will live and do well; I have saved my daughter, perhaps obtained a friend. They are weary of seeing me suffer so, and the eldest beg'd me yesterday not to sacrifice my life to her convenience. She now saw my love of Piozzi was incurable, she said. Absence had no effect on it, and my health was going so fast she found that I should soon be useless either to her or him. It was the hand of God and irresistible, she added, and begged me not to endure any longer such unnecessary misery.

"So now we may be happy if we will, and now I trust *some* [*(sic) query "no?*"] other cross accident will start up to torment us; I wrote my lover word that he might come and fetch me, but the Alps are covered with snow, and if his prudence is not greater than his affection—my life will yet be lost, for it depends on his safety. Should he come at my call, and meet with any misfortune on the road ... death, with accumulated agonies, would end me. May Heaven avert such insupportable distress!"

"*Dec.* 1783.—My dearest Piozzi's Miss Chanon is in distress. I will send her 10_l_. Perhaps he loved her; perhaps she loved *him*; perhaps both; yet I have and will have confidence in his honour. I will not suffer love or jealousy to narrow a heart devoted to *him*. He would assist her if he were in England, and *she* shall not suffer for his absence, tho' I *do*. She and her father have reported many things to my prejudice; she will be ashamed of herself when she sees me forgive and assist her. O Lord, give me grace so to return good for evil as to obtain thy gracious favour who died to procure the salvation of thy professed enemies. 'Tis a good Xmas work!"

"*Bath, Jan. 27th*, 1784.—On this day twelvemonths ... oh dreadfullest of all days to me I did I send for my Piozzi and tell him we must part. The sight of my countenance terrified Dr. Pepys, to whom I went into the parlour for a moment, and the sight of the agonies I endured in the week following would have affected anything but interest, avarice, and pride personified, ... with such, however, I had to deal, so my sorrows were unregarded. Seeing them continue for a whole year, indeed, has mollified my strong-hearted companions, and they *now* relent in earnest and wish me happy: I would now therefore be *loath to dye*, yet how shall I recruit my constitution so as to live? The pardon certainly did arrive the very instant of execution—for I was ill beyond all power of description, when my eldest daughter, bursting into tears, bid me call home the man of my heart, and not expire by slow torture in the presence of my children, who had my life in their power. 'You are dying *now*,' said she. 'I know it,' replied I, 'and I should die in peace had I but seen him *once again*.' 'Oh send for him,' said she, 'send for him quickly!' 'He is at Milan, child,' replied I, 'a thousand

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miles off!' 'Well, well,' returns she, 'hurry him back, or I myself will send him an express.' At these words I revived, and have been mending ever since. This was the first time that any of us had named the name of Piozzi to each other since we had put our feet into the coach to come to Bath. I had always thought it a point of civility and prudence never to mention what could give nothing but offence, and cause nothing but disgust, while they desired nothing less than a revival of old uneasiness; so we were all silent on the subject, and Miss Thrale thought him dead."

According to the Autobiography, the daughters did not conclusively relent till the end of April or the beginning of May, when a missive was dispatched for Piozzi, and Mrs. Thrale went to London to make the requisite preparations.

Mrs. Thrale to Miss F. Burney.

"Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square,
"Tuesday Night, May, 1784.

"I am come, dearest Burney. It is neither dream nor fiction; though I love you dearly, or I would not have come. Absence and distance do nothing towards wearing out real affection; so you shall always find it in your true and tender H.L.T.

"I am somewhat shaken bodily, but 'tis the mental shocks that have made me unable to bear the corporeal ones. 'Tis past ten o'clock, however, and I must lay myself down with the sweet expectation of seeing my charming friend in the morning to breakfast. I love Dr. Burney too well to fear him, and he loves me too well to say a word which should make me love him less."

Journal (Madame D'Arblay's) Resumed.

"May 17.—Let me now, my Susy, acquaint you a little more connectedly than I have done of late how I have gone on. The rest of that week I devoted almost wholly to sweet Mrs. Thrale, whose society was truly the most delightful of cordials to me, however, at times mixed with bitters the least palatable.

"One day I dined with Mrs. Grarrick to meet Dr. Johnson, Mrs. Carter, Miss Hamilton, and Dr. and Miss Cadogan; and one evening I went to Mrs. Vesey, to meet almost everybody,—the Bishop of St. Asaph, and all the Shipleys, Bishop Chester and Mrs. Porteous, Mrs. and Miss Ord, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Miss Palmer, Mrs. Buller, all the Burrows, Mr. Walpole, Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Grarrick, and Miss More, and some others. But all the rest of my time I gave wholly to dear Mrs. Thrale, who lodged in Mortimer Street, and who saw nobody else. Were I not sensible of her goodness, and full of incurable affection for her, should I not be a monster?

* * * * *

“I parted most reluctantly with my dear Mrs. Thrale, whom, when or how, I shall see again, Heaven only knows! but in sorrow we parted—on *my* side in real affliction.”

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The excursion is thus mentioned in “Thraliana”: “*28th May*, 1784.—Here is the most sudden and beautiful spring ever seen after a dismal winter: so may God grant me a renovation of comfort after my many and sharp afflictions. I have been to London for a week to visit Fanny Burney, and to talk over my intended (and I hope approaching) nuptials, with Mr. Borghi: a man, as far as I can judge in so short an acquaintance with him, of good sense and real honour:—who loves my Piozzi, *likes* my conversation, and wishes to serve us sincerely. He has recommended Duane to take my power of attorney, and Cator’s loss will be the less felt. Duane’s name is as high as the Monument, and his being known familiarly to Borghi will perhaps quicken his attention to our concerns.

“Dear Burney, who loves me *kindly* but the world *reverentially*, was, I believe, equally pained as delighted with my visit: ashamed to be seen in my company, much of her fondness for me must of course be diminished; yet she had not chatted freely so long with anybody but Mrs. Philips, that my coming was a comfort to her. We have told all to her father, and he behaved with the utmost propriety.

“Nobody likes my settling at Milan except myself and Piozzi; but I think ’tis nobody’s affair but our own: it seems to me quite irrational to expose ourselves to unnecessary insults, and by going straight to Italy all will be avoided.”

The crisis is told in “Thraliana”:

“*10th June*, 1784.—I sent these lines to meet Piozzi on his return. They are better than those he liked so last year at Dover:

“Over mountains, rivers, vallies,
See my love returns to Calais,
After all their taunts and malice,
Ent’ring safe the gates of Calais,
While delay’d by winds he dallies,
Fretting to be kept at Calais,
Muse, prepare some sprightly sallies
To divert my dear at Calais,
Say how every rogue who rallies
Envies him who waits at Calais
For her that would disdain a Palace
Compar’d to Piozzi, Love, and Calais.”

“*24th June*, 1784.—He is set out sure enough, here are letters from Turin to say so.... Now the Misses *must* move; they are very loath to stir: from affection perhaps, or perhaps from art—’tis difficult to know.—Oh ’tis, yes, it is from tenderness, they want me to go with them to see Wilton, Stonehenge, &c.—I *will* go with them to be sure.”

"*27th June, Sunday*.—We went to Wilton, and also to Fonthill; they make an admirable and curious contrast between ancient magnificence and modern glare: Gothic and Grecian again, however. A man of taste would rather possess Lord Pembroke's seat, or indeed a single room in it; but one feels one should live happier at Beckford's.—My daughters parted with me at last prettily enough *considering* (as the phrase is). We shall perhaps be still better friends apart than together. Promises of correspondence and kindness were very sweetly reciprocated, and the eldest wished for Piozzi's safe return very obligingly.

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“I fancy two days more will absolutely bring him to Bath. The present moments are critical and dreadful, and would shake stronger nerves than mine! Oh Lord, strengthen me to do Thy will I pray.”

“*28th June*.—I am not *yet sure of* seeing him again—not *sure* he lives, not *sure* he loves me *yet*.... Should anything happen now!! Oh, I will not trust myself with such a fancy: it will either kill me or drive me distracted.”

“*Bath, 2nd July*, 1784.—The happiest day of my whole life, I think—Yes, quite the happiest: my Piozzi came home yesterday and dined with me; but my spirits were too much agitated, my heart was too much dilated. I was too *painfully* happy *then*; my sensations are more quiet to-day, and my felicity less tumultuous.”

Written in the margin of the last entry—“We shall go to London about the affairs, and there be married in the Romish Church.”

“*25th July*, 1784.—I am returned from church the happy wife of my lovely faithful Piozzi ... subject of my prayers, object of my wishes, my sighs, my reverence, my esteem.—His nerves have been horribly shaken, yet he lives, he loves me, and will be mine for ever. He has sworn, in the face of God and the whole Christian Church; Catholics, Protestants, all are witnesses.”

In one of her memorandum books she has set down:

“We were married according to the Romish Church in one of our excursions to London, by Mr. Smith, Padre Smit as they called him, chaplain to the Spanish Ambassador.... Mr. Morgan tacked us together at St. James’s, Bath, 25th July, 1784, and on the first day I think of September, certainly the first week, we took leave of England.”

When her first engagement with Piozzi became known, the newspapers took up the subject, and rang the changes on the amorous disposition of the widow, and the adroit cupidity of the fortune-hunter. On the announcement of the marriage, they recommenced the attack, and people of our day can hardly form a notion of the storm of obloquy that broke upon her, except from its traces, which have never been erased. To this hour, we may see them in the confirmed prejudices of writers like Mr. Croker and Lord Macaulay, who, agreeing in little else, agree in denouncing “this miserable *mes*alliance” with one who figures in their pages sometimes as a music-master, sometimes as a fiddler, never by any accident in his real character of a professional singer and musician of established reputation, pleasing manners, ample means, and unimpeachable integrity. The repugnance of the daughters to the match was reasonable and intelligible, but to appreciate the tone taken by her friends, we must bear in mind the social position of Italian singers and musical performers at the period. “Amusing vagabonds” are the epithets by which Lord Byron designates Catalani and Naldi, in 1809[1]; and such is the light in which they were undoubtedly regarded in

1784. Mario would have been treated with the same indiscriminating illiberality as Piozzi.

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[Footnote 1:

"Well may the nobles of our present race
Watch each distortion of a Naldi's face;
Well may they smile on Italy's buffoons,
And worship Catalani's pantaloons."

"Naldi and Catalani require little notice; for the visage of the one and the salary of the other will enable us long to recollect these amusing vagabonds."—*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Artists in general, and men of letters by profession, did not rank much higher in the fine world. (See Miss Berry's "England and France," vol. ii. p. 42.) A German author, non-noble, had a *liaison* with a Prussian woman of rank. On her husband's death he proposed marriage, and was indignantly refused. The lady was conscious of no degradation from being his mistress, but would have forfeited both caste and self-respect by becoming his wife.]

Did those who took the lead in censuring or repudiating Mrs. Piozzi, ever attempt to enter into her feelings, or weigh her conduct with reference to its tendency to promote her own happiness? Could they have done so, had they tried? Rarely can any one so identify himself or herself with another as to be sure of the soundness of the counsel or the justice of the reproof. She was neither impoverishing her children (who had all independent fortunes) nor abandoning them. She was setting public opinion at defiance, which is commonly a foolish thing to do; but what is public opinion to a woman whose heart is breaking, and who finds, after a desperate effort, that she is unequal to the sacrifice demanded of her? She accepted Piozzi deliberately, with full knowledge of his character; and she never repented of her choice.

The Lady Cathcart, whose romantic story is mentioned in "Castle Rackrent," was wont to say:—"I have been married three times; the first for money, the second for rank, the third for love; and the third was worst of all." Mrs. Piozzi's experience would have led to an opposite conclusion. Her love match was a singularly happy one; and the consciousness that she had transgressed conventional observances or prejudices, not moral rules, enabled her to outlive and bear down calumny.[1]

[Footnote 1: The *pros* and *cons* of the main question at issue are well stated in *Corinne*: "Ah, pour heureux,' interrompit le Comte d'Erfeuil, 'je n'en crois rien: on n'est heureux que par ce qui est convenable. La societe a, quoi qu'on fasse, beaucoup d'empire sur le bonheur; et ce qu'elle n'approuve pas, il ne faut jamais le faire.' 'On vivrait done toujours pour ce que la societe dira de nous,' reprit Oswald; 'et ce qu'on pense et, ce qu'on sent ne servirait jamais de guide.' 'C'est tres bien dit,' reprit le comte, 'tres-philosophiquement pense; mais avec ces maximes la, l'on se perd; et quand l'amour est passe, le blame de l'opinion reste. Moi qui vous parais leger, je ne ferai jamais rien qui puisse m'attirer la desapprobation du monde. On peut se permettre de petites libertes, d'aimables plaisanteries, qui annoncent de l'independance dans la

maniere d’agir; car, quand cela touche au serieux.’—’Mais le serieux, repondit Lord Nelvil, ’c’est l’amour et le bonheur.’”—*Corinne*, liv. ix. ch. 1.]

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In reference to these passages, the Edinburgh reviewer remarks:

“Nothing can be more reasonable; and we should certainly live in a more peaceful (if not more entertaining) world, if nobody in it reproved another until he had so far identified himself with the culprit as to be sure of the justice of the reproof; perhaps, also, if a fiddler were rated higher in society than a duke without accomplishments, and a carpenter far higher than either. But neither reasoning nor gallantry will alter the case, nor prevail over the world’s prejudice against unequal marriages, any more than its prejudices in favour of birth and fashion. It has never been quite established to the satisfaction of the philosophic mind, why the rule of society should be that ‘as the husband, so the wife is,’ and why a lady who contracts a marriage below her station is looked on with far severer eyes than a gentleman *qui s’encanaille* to the same degree. But these things are so,—as the next dame of rank and fortune, and widow of an M.P., who, rashly relying on Mr. Hayward’s assertion that the world has grown wiser, espouses a foreign ‘professional,’ will assuredly find to her cost, although she may escape the ungenerous public attacks which poor Mrs. Piozzi earned by her connexion with literary men.”

In 1784 they hanged for crimes which we should think adequately punished by a short imprisonment; as they hooted and libelled for transgressions or errors which, whatever their treatment by a portion of our society, would certainly not provoke the thunders of our press. I think (though I made no assertion of the kind) that the world has grown wiser; and the reviewer admits as much when he says that his supposititious widow “may escape the ungenerous public attacks which poor Mrs. Piozzi earned by her connexion with literary men.” But where do I recommend unequal marriages, or dispute the claims of birth and fashion, or maintain that a fiddler should be rated higher than a duke without accomplishments, and a carpenter *far* higher than either? All this is utterly beside the purpose; and surely there is nothing reprehensible in the suggestion that, before harshly reproving another, we should do our best to test the justice of the reproof by trying to make the case our own. Goethe proposed to extend the self-same rule to criticism. One of his favourite canons was that a critic should always endeavour to place himself temporarily in the author’s point of view. If the reviewer had done so, he might have avoided several material misapprehensions and misstatements, which it is difficult to reconcile with the friendly tone of the article or the known ability of the writer.

Envy at Piozzi’s good fortune sharpened the animosity of assailants like Baretti, and the loss of a pleasant house may have had a good deal to do with the sorrowing indignation of her set. Her meditated social extinction amongst them might have been commemorated in the words of the French epitaph:

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"Ci git une de qui la vertu
Etait moins que la table encensee;
On ne plaint point la femme abattue,
Mais bien la table renversee."

Which may be freely rendered:

"Here lies one who adulation
By dinners more than virtues earn'd;
Whose friends mourned not her reputation—
But her table—overturned."

Madame D'Arblay has recorded what took place between Mrs. Piozzi and herself on the occasion:

Miss F. Burney to Mrs. Piozzi.

"Norbury Park, Aug. 10, 1784.

"When my wondering eyes first looked over the letter I received last night, my mind instantly dictated a high-spirited vindication of the consistency, integrity, and faithfulness of the friendship thus abruptly reproached and cast away. But a sleepless night gave me leisure to recollect that you were ever as generous as precipitate, and that your own heart would do justice to mine, in the cooler judgment of future reflection. Committing myself, therefore, to that period, I determined simply to assure you, that if my last letter hurt either you or Mr. Piozzi, I am no less sorry than surprised; and that if it offended you, I sincerely beg your pardon.

"Not to that time, however, can I wait to acknowledge the pain an accusation so unexpected has caused me, nor the heartfelt satisfaction with which I shall receive, when you are able to write it, a softer renewal of regard.

"May Heaven direct and bless you!

"F.B.

"N.B. This is the sketch of the answer which F.B. most painfully wrote to the unmerited reproach of not sending *cordial congratulations* upon a marriage which she had uniformly, openly, and with deep and avowed affliction, thought wrong."

Mrs. Piozzi to Miss Burney.

"'Wellbeck Street, No. 33, Cavendish Square.
"'Friday, Aug. 13, 1784.

“’Give yourself no serious concern, sweetest Burney, All is well, and I am too happy myself to make a friend otherwise; quiet your kind heart immediately, and love my husband if you love his and your

“’H.L. PIOZZI.’

“N.B. To this kind note, F.B. wrote the warmest and most affectionate and heartfelt reply; but never received another word! And here and thus stopped a correspondence of six years of almost unequalled partiality, and fondness on her side; and affection, gratitude, admiration, and sincerity on that of F.B., who could only conjecture the cessation to be caused by the resentment of Piozzi, when informed of her constant opposition to the union.”

If F.B. thought it wrong, she knew it to be inevitable, and in the conviction that it was so, she and her father had connived at the secret preparations for it in the preceding May.

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A very distinguished friend, whose masterly works are the result of a consummate study of the passions, after dwelling on the “impertinence” of the hostility her marriage provoked, writes: “She was evidently a very vain woman, but her vanity was sensitive, and very much allied to that exactingness of heart which gives charm and character to woman. I suspect it was this sensitiveness which made her misunderstood by her children.” The justness of this theory of her conduct is demonstrated by the self-communings in “Thraliana;” and she misunderstood them as much as they misunderstood her. By her own showing she had little reason to complain of what they *did* in the matter of the marriage; it was what they said, or rather did not say, that irritated her. She yearned for sympathy, which was sternly, chillingly, almost insultingly withheld.

In 1800, she wrote thus to Dr. Gray: “What a good example have you set them (his children)! going to visit dear mama at Twickenham—long may they keep their parents, pretty creatures! and long may they have sense to know and feel that no love is like parental affection,—the only good perhaps which cannot be flung away."[1]

[Footnote 1: “We may have many friends in life, but we can only have one mother: a discovery, says Gray, which I never made till it was too late.”—ROGERS.]

Madame D’Arblay states that her father was not disinclined to admit Mrs. Piozzi’s right to consult her own notions of happiness in the choice of a second husband, had not the paramount duty of watching over her unmarried daughters interfered. But they might have accompanied her to Italy as was once contemplated; and had they done so, they would have seen everything and everybody in it under the most favourable auspices. The course chosen for them by the eldest was the most perilous of the two submitted for their choice. The lady, Miss Nicholson, whom their mother had so carefully selected as their companion, soon left them; or according to another version was summarily dismissed by Miss Thrale (afterwards Viscountess Keith), who fortunately was endowed with high principle, firmness, and energy. She could not take up her abode with either of her guardians, one a bachelor under forty, the other the prototype of Briggs, the old miser in “Caecilia.” She could not accept Johnson’s hospitality in Bolt Court, still tenanted by the survivors of his menagerie; where, a few months later, she sate by his death-bed and received his blessing. She therefore called to her aid an old nurse-maid, named Tib, who had been much trusted by her father, and with this homely but respectable duenna, she shut herself up in the house at Brighton, limited her expenses to her allowance of 200_l._ a-year, and resolutely set about the course of study which seemed best adapted to absorb attention and prevent her thoughts from wandering. Hebrew, Mathematics, Fortification, and Perspective have been named to me by one of trusted friends as specimens of her acquirements and her pursuits.

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"There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we may."

In that solitary abode at Brighton, and in the companionship of Tib, may have been laid the foundation of a character than which few, through the changeful scenes of a long and prosperous life, have exercised more beneficial influence or inspired more genuine esteem. On coming of age, and being put into possession of her fortune, she hired a house in London, and took her two eldest sisters to live with her. They had been at school whilst she was living at Brighton. The fourth and youngest, afterwards Mrs. Mostyn, had accompanied the mother. On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi, Miss Thrale made a point of paying them every becoming attention, and Piozzi was frequently dining with her. Latterly, she used to speak of him as a very worthy sort of man, who was not to blame for marrying a rich and distinguished woman who took a fancy to him. The other sisters seem to have adopted the same tone; and so far as I can learn, no one of them is open to the imputation of filial unkindness, or has suffered from maternal neglect in a manner to bear out Dr. Burney's forebodings by the result. Occasional expressions of querulousness are matters of course in family differences, and are seldom totally suppressed by the utmost exertion of good feeling and good sense.

Johnson's idolised wife was, at the lowest estimate, twenty-one years older than himself when he married her; and her sons were so disgusted by the connection, that they dropped the acquaintance. Yet it never crossed his mind that "Hetty" had as much right to please herself as "Tetty." Of the six letters that passed between him and Mrs. Piozzi on the subject of the marriage, only two (Nos. 1 and 5) have hitherto been made public; and the incompleteness of the correspondence has caused the most embarrassing confusion in the minds of biographers and editors, too prone to act on the maxim that, wherever female reputation is concerned, we should hope for the best and believe the worst. Hawkins, apparently ignorant that she had written to Johnson, to announce her intention, says, "He was made uneasy by a report" which induced him to write a strong letter of remonstrance, of which what he calls an *adumbration* was published in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for December 1784. Mr. Croker, avoiding a similar error, says: —"In the lady's own (part) publication of the correspondence, this letter (No. 1) is given as from Mrs. Piozzi, and is signed with the initial of her name: Dr. Johnson's answer is also addressed to Mrs. Piozzi, and both the letters allude to the matter as *done*; yet it appears by the periodical publications of the day, that the marriage did not take place until the 25th July. The editor knew not how to account for this but by supposing that Mrs. Piozzi, to avoid Johnson's importunity, had stated that as done which was only *settled to be done*."

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The matter of fact is made plain by the circular (No. 2) which states that “Piozzi is coming back from Italy.” He arrived on July 1st, after a fourteen months’ absence, which proved both his loyalty and the sincerity of the struggle in her own heart and mind. Her letter (No. 1) as printed, is not signed with the initial of her name; and both Dr. Johnson’s autograph letters are addressed to *Mrs. Thrale*. But she has occasioned the mistake into which so many have fallen, by her mode of heading these when she printed the two-volume edition of “Letters” in 1788. By the kindness of Mr. Salusbury I am now enabled to print the whole correspondence, with the exception of her last letter, which she describes.

No. 1.

Mrs. Piozzi to Dr. Johnson.

“Bath, June 30.

“My Dear Sir,—The enclosed is a circular letter which I have sent to all the guardians, but our friendship demands somewhat more; it requires that I should beg your pardon for concealing from you a connexion which you must have heard of by many, but I suppose never believed. Indeed, my dear Sir, it was concealed only to save us both needless pain; I could not have borne to reject that counsel it would have killed me to take, and I only tell it you now because all is irrevocably settled and out of your power to prevent. I will say, however, that the dread of your disapprobation has given me some anxious moments, and though perhaps I am become by many privations the most independent woman in the world, I feel as if acting without a parent’s consent till you write kindly to

“Your faithful servant.”

No. 2. *Circular*.

“Sir,—As one of the executors of Mr. Thrale’s will and guardian to his daughters, I think it my duty to acquaint you that the three eldest left Bath last Friday (25th) for their own house at Brighthelmstone in company with an amiable friend, Miss Nicholson, who has sometimes resided with us here, and in whose society they may, I think, find some advantages and certainly no disgrace. I waited on them to Salisbury, Wilton, &c., and offered to attend them to the seaside myself, but they preferred this lady’s company to mine, having heard that Mr. Piozzi is coming back from Italy, and judging perhaps by our past friendship and continued correspondence that his return would be succeeded by our marriage.

“I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant.

“Bath, June 30, 1784.”

No. 3.[1]

[Footnote 1: What Johnson termed an “adumbration” of this letter appeared in the “Gentleman’s Magazine” for Dec. 1784:

“MADAM,—If you are already ignominiously married, you are lost beyond all redemption;—if you are not, permit me one hour’s conversation, to convince you that such a marriage must not take place. If, after a whole hour’s reasoning, you should not be convinced, you will still be at liberty to act as you think proper. I have been extremely ill, and am still ill; but if you grant me the audience I ask, I will instantly take a post-chaise and attend you at Bath. Pray do not refuse this favour to a man who hath so many years loved and honoured you.”]

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“MADAM,—If I interpret your letter right, you are ignominiously married: if it is yet undone, let us *once* more *talk* together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness; if you have forfeited your fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief. If the last act is yet to do, I who have loved you, esteemed you, reverenced you, and *served you*[1], I who long thought you the first of womankind, entreat that, before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see you. I was, I once was, Madam, most truly yours,

“SAM. JOHNSON.

“July 2, 1784.

“I will come down, if you permit it.”

[Footnote 1: The four words which I have printed in italics are indistinctly written, and cannot be satisfactorily made out.]

No. 4.

“July 4, 1784.

“SIR,—I have this morning received from you so rough a letter in reply to one which was both tenderly and respectfully written, that I am forced to desire the conclusion of a correspondence which I can bear to continue no longer. 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. It is want of fortune, then, that is ignominious; the character of the man I have chosen has no other claim to such an epithet. The religion to which he has been always a zealous adherent will, I hope, teach him to forgive insults he has not deserved; mine will, I hope, enable me to bear them at once with dignity and patience. To hear that I have forfeited my fame is indeed the greatest insult I ever yet received. My fame is as unsullied as snow, or I should think it unworthy of him who must henceforth protect it.

“I write by the coach the more speedily and effectually to prevent your coming hither. Perhaps by my fame (and I hope it is so) you mean only that celebrity which is a consideration of a much lower kind. I care for that only as it may give pleasure to my husband and his friends.

“Farewell, dear Sir, and accept my best wishes. You have always commanded my esteem, and long enjoyed the fruits of a friendship *never infringed by one harsh expression on my part during twenty years of familiar talk. Never did I oppose your will, or control your wish; nor can your unmerited severity itself lessen my regard*; but till you have changed your opinion of Mr. Piozzi, let us converse no more. God bless you.”

No. 5.

To Mrs. Piozzi.

“London, July 8, 1784.

“DEAR MADAM,—What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me: I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

“I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

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“Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle in England: you may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons, but every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy.

“I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

“When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrew’s, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremeable stream[1] that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection pressed her to return. The Queen went forward.—If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther.—The tears stand in my eyes.

“I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes, for I am, with great affection,

“Your, &c.

“Any letters that come for me hither will be sent me.”

[Footnote 1: Queen Mary left the Scottish for the English coast, on the Firth of Solway, in a fishing-boat. The incident to which Johnson alludes is introduced in “The Abbot;” where the scene is laid on the sea-shore. The unusual though expressive term “irremeable,” is defined in his dictionary, “admitting no return.” His authority is Dryden’s Virgil:

“The keeper dream’d, the chief without delay
Pass’d on, and took th’ irremeable way.”

The word is a Latin one anglicised:

“Evaditque celer ripam irremeabilis undae.”]

In a memorandum on this letter, she says:—“I wrote him (No. 6) a very kind and affectionate farewell.”

Before calling attention to the results of this correspondence, I must notice a charge built upon it by the reviewer, with the respectable aid of the foul-mouthed and malignant Baretti:

“This letter is now printed for the first time by Mr. Hayward. But he has omitted to notice the light which is thrown on it by Baretti’s account of the marriage. That account is

given in the ’European Magazine’ for 1788. It is very circumstantial, and too long to transcribe, but the upshot is this: He says that, in order to meet her returning lover, she left Bath with her daughters as for a journey to Brighton; quitted them on some pretence at Salisbury, and posted off to town, *deceiving Dr. Johnson, who continued to direct to her at Bath as usual*.[1] ’In London she kept herself concealed for some days in my parish, and not very far distant from my own habitation, ... in Suffolk Street, Middlesex Hospital.’ ’In a *few weeks*,’ he adds, ’she was in a condition personally to resort to Mr. Greenland (her lawyer) to settle preliminaries, then returned

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to Bath with Piozzi, and there was married.' Now Baretti was a libeller, *and not to be believed except upon compulsion*; but if he does speak the truth, then the date, 'Bath, June 30,' of her circular letter, is a mystification; so is the passage in her letter to Johnson of July *4*, about 'sending it by the coach to prevent his coming.' Of course she was mortally afraid of the Doctor's coming, for if he had come he would have found her flown. According to this supposition, she did not return to Bath at all, but remained perdue in London, with her lover, during the whole 'Correspondence.' Is it the true one?

"We cannot but suspect that it is, and that the solution of the whole of this little domestic mystery is to be found in a passage in the 'Autobiographical Memoir,' vol. i. p. 277. There were *two* marriages:—

"'Miss Nicholson went with us to Stonehenge, Wilton, &c., *whence I returned to Bath* to wait for Piozzi. He was here on the eleventh day after he got Dobson's letter. In twenty-six more we were married *in London* by the Spanish ambassador's chaplain, and returned hither to be married by Mr. Morgan, of Bath, at St. James's Church, July 25, 1784.'

"Now in order to make this account tally with Baretti's we must allow for a slight exertion of that talent for 'white lies' on the lady's part, of which her friends, Johnson included, used half playfully and half in earnest to accuse her. And we are afraid Baretti's story does appear, on the face of it, the more probable of the two. It does seem more likely, since they were to be married in London (of which Baretti knew nothing), that she met Piozzi secretly in London on his arrival, than that she performed the awkward evolutions of returning from Salisbury to Bath to wait for him there, then going to London in company with him to be married, and then back to Bath to be married over again. But if this be so, then the London marriage most likely took place almost immediately on the meeting of the enamoured couple, and while the 'Correspondence' was going on. In which case the words in the 'Memoir' 'in twenty-six days,' &c., were apparently intended, by a little bit of feminine adroitness, to appear to apply to this first marriage,—of the suddenness of which she may have been ashamed,—while they really apply to the conclusion of the whole affair by the *second*. Will any one have the Croker-like curiosity to inquire whether any record remains of the dates of marriages celebrated by the Spanish ambassador's chaplain?"[2]

[Footnote 1: These words, italicised by the reviewer, contain the pith of the charge, which has no reference to her visit to London six weeks before.]

[Footnote 2: Edinb. Review, No. 230, p. 522.]

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Why Croker-like curiosity? Was there anything censurable in the curiosity which led an editor to ascertain whether a novel like “Evelina” was written by a girl of eighteen or a woman of twenty-six? But Lord Macaulay sneered at the inquiry[1], and his worshippers must go on sneering like their model—*vitiis imitabile*. The certificate of the London marriage (now before me) shews that it was solemnised on the 23rd July, by a clergyman named Richard Smith, in the presence of three attesting witnesses. This, and the entries in “Thraliana,” prove Baretti’s whole story to be false. “Now Baretti was a libeller, and not to be believed except upon compulsion;” meaning, I suppose, without confirmatory evidence strong enough to dispense with his testimony altogether. He was notorious for his *black* lies. Yet he is believed eagerly, willingly, upon no compulsion, and without any confirmatory evidence at all.

[Footnote 1: The following passage is reprinted in the corrected edition of Lord Macaulay’s Essays:—“There was no want of low minds and bad hearts in the generation which witnessed her (Miss Burney’s) first appearance. There was the envious Kenrick and the savage Wolcot; the asp George Steevens and the polecat John Williams. It did not, however, occur to them to search the parish register of Lynn, in order that they might be able to twit a lady with having concealed her age. That truly chivalrous exploit was reserved for a bad writer of our own time, whose spite she had provoked by not furnishing him with materials for a worthless edition of Boswell’s Life of Johnson, some sheets of which our readers have doubtless seen round parcels of better books.” There is reason to believe that the entry Mr. Croker copied was that of the baptism of an elder sister of the same name who died before the birth of the famous Fanny.]

The internal evidence of the improbability of the story has disappeared in the reviewer’s paraphrase. Baretti says that at Salisbury “she suddenly declared that a letter she found of great importance demanded her immediate presence *in London*.... But Johnson did not know the least tittle of this transaction, and he continued to direct his letters to Bath as usual, expressing, no doubt, an immense wonder *at her pertinacious silence*.” So she told her daughters that she was going to London, whilst she deceived Johnson, who was sure to learn the truth from them; and he was wondering at her pertinacious silence at the very time when he was receiving letters from her, dated Bath! Why, having formally announced her determination to marry Piozzi, she should not give him the meeting in London if she chose, fairly passes my comprehension.

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Whilst the reviewer thinks he is strengthening one point, he is palpably weakening another. She would not have been "mortally afraid of the Doctor's coming," if she had already thrown him off and finally broken with him? That she was afraid, and had reason to be so, is quite consistent with my theory, quite inconsistent with Lord Macaulay's and the critic's. Johnson's letter (No. 3) is that of a coarse man who had always been permitted to lecture and dictate with impunity. Her letter (No. 4) is that of a sensitive woman, who, for the first time, resents with firmness and retorts with dignity. The sentences I have printed in italics speak volumes. "Never did I oppose your will, or control your wish, nor can your unmitigated severity itself lessen my regard." There is a shade of submissiveness in her reply, yet, on receiving it, he felt as a falcon might feel if a partridge were to shew fight. Nothing short of habitual deference on her part, and unrepressed indulgence of temper on *his*, can account for or excuse his not writing before this unexpected check as he wrote after it. If he had not been systematically humoured and flattered, he would have seen at a glance that he had "no pretence to resent," and have been ready at once to make the best return in his power for "that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched." She wrote him a kind and affectionate farewell; and there (so far as we know) ended their correspondence. But in "Thraliana" she sets down:

"*Milan, 27th Nov*. 1784.—I have got Dr. Johnson's picture here, and expect Miss Thrale's with impatience. I do love them dearly, as ill as they have used me, and always shall. Poor Johnson did not *mean* to use me ill. He only grew upon indulgence till patience could endure no further."

In a letter to Mr. S. Lysons from Milan, dated December 7th, 1784, which proves that she was not frivolously employed, she says:

"My next letter shall talk of the libraries and botanical gardens, and twenty other clever things here. I wish you a comfortable Christmas, and a happy beginning of the year 1785. 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."

"Forgiveness to the injured doth belong,
But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong."

What he said of her can only be learned from her bitter enemies or hollow friends, who have preserved nothing kindly or creditable.

Hawkins states that a letter from Johnson to himself contained these words:—"Poor Thrale! I thought that either her virtue or her vice (meaning her love of her children or her pride) would have saved 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."

Madame D'Arblay gives two accounts of the last interview she ever had with Johnson, —on the 25th November, 1784. In the "Diary" she sets down:

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“I had seen Miss T. the day before.”

“‘So,’ said he, ‘did I.’

“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.[1] I have burnt all I can find. I never speak of her, and I desire never to hear of her name. I drive her, as I said, wholly from my mind.’”

[Footnote 1: If this was true, it is strange that he did not destroy the letter (No. 4) which gave him so sudden and mortifying a check. Miss Hawkins says in her Memoirs: “It was I who discovered the letter. I carried it to my father; he enclosed and sent it to her, *there never having been any intercourse between them*.” Anything from Hawkins about Streatham and its inmates must therefore have been invention or hearsay.]

In the “Memoirs,” describing the same interview, she says:—“We talked then of poor Mrs. Thrale, but only for a moment, for I saw him greatly incensed, and with such severity of displeasure, that I hastened to start another subject, and he solemnly enjoined me to mention that no more.”

This was only eighteen days before he died, and he might be excused for being angry at the introduction of any agitating topic. It would stain his memory, not hers, to prove that, belying his recent professions of tenderness and gratitude, he directly or indirectly encouraged her assailants.

“I was tempted to observe,” says the author of “Piozziana,” “that I thought, as I still do, that Johnson’s anger on the event of her second marriage was excited by some feeling of disappointment; and that I suspected he had formed some hope of attaching her to himself. It would be disingenuous on my part to attempt to repeat her answer. I forget it; but the impression on my mind is that she did not contradict me.” Sir James Fellowes’ marginal note on this passage is: “This was an absurd notion, and I can undertake to say it was the last idea that ever entered her head; for when I once alluded to the subject, she ridiculed the idea: she told me she always felt for Johnson the same respect and veneration as for a Pascal."[1]

[Footnote 1: When Sheridan was accused of making love to Mrs. Siddons, he said he should as soon think of making love to the Archbishop of Canterbury.]

On the margin of the passage in which Boswell says, “Johnson wishing to unite himself with this rich widow was much talked of, but I believe without foundation,”—she has written, “I believe so too!!” The report sufficed to bring into play the light artillery of the wits, one of whose best hits was an “Ode to Mrs. Thrale, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D., on their approaching Nuptials,” beginning:

“If e’er my fingers touched the lyre,
  In satire fierce, in pleasure gay,
Shall not my Thralia’s smiles inspire,
  Shall Sam refuse the sportive lay?

“My dearest lady, view your slave,
  Rehold him as your very *Scrub*:
Ready to write as author grave,
  Or govern well the brewing tub.

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"To rich felicity thus raised,
  My bosom glows with amorous fire;
Porter no longer shall be praised,
  'Tis I Myself am *Thrale's Entire*."

She has written opposite these lines, "Whose fun was this? It is better than the other." The other was:

"Cervisial coctor's viduate dame,
Opinst thou this gigantick frame,
Procumbing at thy shrine,
Shall catinated by thy charms,
A captive in thy ambient arms
Perennially be thine."

She writes opposite: "Whose silly fun was this? Soame Jenyn's?"

The following paragraph is copied from the note-book of the late Miss Williams Wynn[1], who had recently been reading a large collection of Mrs. Piozzi's letters addressed to a Welsh neighbour:

[Footnote 1: Daughter of Sir Watkyn Wynn (the fourth baronet) and granddaughter of George Grenville, the Minister. She was distinguished by her literary taste and acquirements, as well as highly esteemed for the uprightness of her character, the excellence of her understanding, and the kindness of her heart. Her journals and note-books, carefully kept during a long life passed in the best society, are full of interesting anecdotes and curious extracts from rare books and manuscripts. They are now in the possession of her niece, the Honourable Mrs. Rowley.]

"*London, March*, 1825.—I have had an opportunity of talking to old Sir William Pepys on the subject of his old friend, Mrs. Piozzi, and from his conversation am more than ever impressed with the idea that she was one of the most inconsistent characters that ever existed. Sir William says he never met with any human being who possessed the talent of conversation in such a degree. I naturally felt anxious to know whether Piozzi could in any degree add to this pleasure, and found, as I expected, that he could not even understand her.

"Her infatuation for him seems perfectly unaccountable. Johnson in his rough (I may here call it brutal) manner said to her, 'Why Ma'am, he is not only a stupid, ugly dog, but he is an old dog too.' Sir William says he really believes that she combated her inclination for him as long as possible; so long, that her senses would have failed her if she had attempted to resist any longer. She was perfectly aware of her degradation. One day, speaking to Sir William of some persons whom he had been in the habit of meeting continually at Streatham during the lifetime of Mr. Thrale, she said, not one of

them has taken the smallest notice of me ever since: they dropped me before I had done anything wrong. Piozzi was literally at her elbow when she said this."

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The reviewer quotes the remark, “She was perfectly aware of her degradation,” as resting on the personal responsibility of Miss Wynn, “who knew her in later life in Wales.” The context shews that Miss Wynn (who did not know her) was simply repeating the impressions of Sir William Pepys, one of the bitterest opponents of the marriage, to whom she certainly never said anything derogatory to her second husband. The uniform tenor of her letters and her conduct shew that she never regarded her second marriage as discreditable, and always took a high and independent, instead of a subdued or deprecating, tone with her alienated friends. A bare statement of the treatment she received from them is surely no proof of conscious degradation.

In a letter to a Welsh neighbour, near the end of her life, some time in 1818, she says:

“Mrs. Mostyn (her youngest daughter) has written again on the road back to Italy, where she likes the Piozzis above all people, she says, *if they were not so proud of their family*. Would not that make one laugh two hours before one’s own death? But I remember when Lady Egremont raised the whole nation’s ill will here, while the Saxons were wondering how Count Bruhle could think of marrying a lady born Miss Carpenter. The Lombards doubted in the meantime of my being a gentlewoman by birth, because my first husband was a brewer. A pretty world, is it not? A Ship of Fooles, according to the old poem; and they will upset the vessel by and by.”

This is not the language of one who wished to apologise for a misalliance.

As to Piozzi’s assumed want of youth and good looks, Johnson’s knowledge of womankind, to say nothing of his self-love, should have prevented him from urging this as an insuperable objection. He might have recollected the Roman matron in Juvenal, who considers the world well lost for an old and disfigured prize-fighter; or he might have quoted Spenser’s description of one—

> “Who rough and rude and filthy did appear,
> Unseemly man to please fair lady’s eye,
> Yet he of ladies oft was loved dear,
> When fairer faces were bid standen by:
> Oh! who can tell the bent of woman’s phantasy?”

Madame Campan, speaking of Caroline of Naples, the sister of Marie Antoinette, says, she had great reason to complain of the insolence of a Spaniard named Las Casas, whom the king, her father-in-law, had sent to persuade her to remove M. Acton[1] from the conduct of affairs and from about her person. She had told him, to convince him of the nature of her sentiments, that she would have Acton painted and sculptured by the most celebrated artists of Italy, and send his bust and his portrait to the King of Spain, to prove to him that the desire of fixing a man of superior capacity could alone have induced her to confer the favour he enjoyed. Las Casas had dared to reply, that she

would be taking useless trouble; that a man's ugliness did not always prevent him from pleasing, and that the King of Spain had too much experience to be ignorant that the caprices of a woman were inexplicable. Johnson may surely be allowed credit for as much knowledge of the sex as the King of Spain.

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[Footnote 1: M. Acton, as Madame Campan calls him, was a member of the ancient English family of that name. He succeeded to the baronetcy in 1791, and was the grandfather of Sir John E.E. Dalberg Acton, Bart., M.P., &c.]

Others were simultaneously accusing her of marrying a young man to indulge a sensual inclination. The truth is, Piozzi was a few months older than herself, and was neither ugly nor disagreeable. Madame D'Arblay has been already quoted as to his personal appearance, and Miss Seward (October, 1787) writes:

"I am become acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi. Her conversation is that bright wine of the intellects which has no lees. Dr. Johnson told me truth when he said she had more colloquial wit than most of our literary women; it is indeed a fountain of perpetual flow. But he did not tell me truth when he asserted that Piozzi was an ugly dog, without particular skill in his profession. Mr. Piozzi is a handsome man, in middle life, with gentle, pleasing, unaffected manners, and with very eminent skill in his profession. Though he has not a powerful or fine-toned voice, he sings with transcending grace and expression. I am charmed with his perfect expression on his instrument. Surely the finest sensibilities must vibrate through his frame, since they breathe so sweetly through his song."

The concluding sentence contains what Partridge would call a *non sequitur*, for the finest musical sensibility may coexist with the most commonplace qualities. But the lady's evidence is clear on the essential point; and another passage from her letters may assist us in determining the precise nature of Johnson's feelings towards Mrs. Piozzi, and the extent to which his later language and conduct regarding her were influenced by pique:

"Love is the great softener of savage dispositions. Johnson had always a metaphysic passion for one princess or another: first, the rustic Lucy Porter, before he married her nauseous mother; next the handsome, but haughty, Molly Aston; next the sublimated, methodistic Hill Boothby, who read her bible in Hebrew; and lastly, the more charming Mrs. Thrale, with the beauty of the first, the learning of the second, and with more worth than a bushel of such sinners and such saints. It is ridiculously diverting to see the old elephant forsaking his nature before these princesses:

"'To make them mirth, use all his might, and writhe,
His mighty form disporting.'

"*This last and long-enduring passion for Mrs. Thrale was, however, composed perhaps of cupboard love, Platonic love, and vanity tickled and gratified, from morn to night, by incessant homage*. The two first ingredients are certainly oddly heterogeneous; but Johnson, in religion and politics, in love and in hatred, was composed of such opposite and contradictory materials, as never before met in the human mind. This is the reason why folk are never weary of talking, reading, and writing about a man—

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"'So various that he seem'd to be,
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.'"

After quoting the sentence printed in italics, the reviewer says: "On this hint Mr. Hayward enlarges, nothing loth." I quoted the entire letter without a word of comment, and what is given as my "enlarging" is an *olla podrida* of sentences torn from the context in three different and unconnected passages of this Introduction. The only one of them which has any bearing on the point shews, though garbled, that, in attributing motives, I distinguished between Johnson and his set.

Having thus laid the ground for fixing on me opinions I had nowhere professed, the reviewer asks, "Had Mr. Hayward, when he passed such slighting judgment on the motives of the venerable sage who awes us still, no fear before his eyes of the anathema aimed by Carlyle at Croker for similar disparagement? 'As neediness, and greediness, and vain glory are the chief qualities of most men, so no man, not even a Johnson, acts, or can think of acting, on any other principle. Whatever, therefore, cannot be referred to the two former categories, Need and Greed, is without scruple ranged under the latter.'"[1]

[Footnote 1: Edinb, Review, No. 230, p. 511.]

This style of criticism is as loose as it is unjust; for one main ingredient in Miss Seward's mixture is Platonic love, which cannot be referred to either of the three categories. Her error lay in not adding a fourth ingredient,—the admiration which Johnson undoubtedly felt for the admitted good qualities of Mrs. Thrale. But the lady was nearer the truth than the reviewer, when he proceeds in this strain:

"We take an entirely different view at once of the character and the feelings of Johnson. Rude, uncouth, arrogant as he was—spoilt as he was, which is far worse, by flattery and toadying and the silly homage of inferior worshippers—selfish as he was in his eagerness for small enjoyments and disregard of small attentions—that which lay at the very bottom of his character, that which constitutes the great source of his power in life, and connects him after death with the hearts of all of us, is his spirit of imaginative romance. He was romantic in almost all things—in politics, in religion, in his musings on the supernatural world, in friendship for men, and in love for women."

* * * * *

"Such was his fancied 'padrona,' his 'mistress,' his 'Thralia dulcis,' a compound of the bright lady of fashion and the ideal Urania who rapt his soul into spheres of perfection."

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Imaginative romance in politics, in religion, and in musings on the supernatural world, is here only another term for prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, and credulity—for rabid Toryism, High Church doctrines verging on Romanism, and a confirmed belief in ghosts. Imaginative romance in love and friendship is an elevating, softening, and refining influence, which, especially when it forms the basis of character, cannot co-exist with habitual rudeness, uncouthness, arrogance, love of toadying, selfishness, and disregard of what Johnson himself called the minor morals. Equally heterogeneous is the "compound of the bright lady of fashion and the ideal Urania." A goddess in crinoline would be a semi-mundane creature at best; and the image unluckily suggests that Johnson was unphilosophically, not to say vulgarly, fond of rank, fashion, and their appendages.

His imagination, far from being of the richest or highest kind, was insufficient for the attainment of dramatic excellence, was insufficient even for the nobler parts of criticism. Nor had he much to boast of in the way of delicacy of perception or sensibility. His strength lay in his understanding; his most powerful weapon was argument: his grandest quality was his good sense.

Thurlow, speaking of the choice of a successor to Lord Mansfield, said, "I hesitated long between the intemperance of Kenyon, and the corruption of Buller; not but what there was a d——d deal of corruption in Kenyon's intemperance, and a d——d deal of intemperance in Buller's corruption." Just so, we may hesitate long between the romance and the worldliness of Johnson, not but what there was a d——d deal of romance in his worldliness, and a d——d deal of worldliness in his romance.

The late Lord Alvanley, whose heart was as inflammable as his wit was bright, used to tell how a successful rival in the favour of a married dame offered to retire from the field for *5001*., saying, "I am a younger son: her husband does not give dinners, and they have no country house: no *liaison* suits me that does not comprise both." At the risk of provoking Mr. Carlyle's anathema, I now avow my belief that Johnson was, nay, boasted of being, open to similar influences; and as for his "ideal Uranias," no man past seventy idealises women with whom he has been corresponding for years about his or their "natural history," to whom he sends recipes for "lubricity of the bowels," with an assurance that it has had the best effect upon his own.[1]

[Footnote 1: Letters, vol. ii. p. 397. The letter containing the recipe actually begins "My dear Angel." Had Johnson forgotten Swift's lines on Celia? or the repudiation of the divine nature by Ermodotus, which occurs twice in Plutarch? The late Lord Melbourne complained that two ladies of quality, sisters, told him too much of their "natural history."]

Rough language, too, although not incompatible with affectionate esteem, can hardly be reconciled with imaginative romance—

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"Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But why did you kick me down stairs?"

"His ugly old wife," says the reviewer, "was an angel." Yes, an angel so far as exalted language could make her one; and he had always half-a-dozen angels or goddesses on his list. "*Je change d'objet, mais la passion reste*." For this very reason, I repeat, his affection for Mrs. Piozzi was not a deep, devoted, or absorbing feeling at any time; and the gloom which settled upon the evening of his days was owing to his infirmities and his dread of death, not to the loosening of cherished ties, nor to the compelled solitude of a confined dwelling in Bolt Court. The plain matter of fact is that, during the last two years of his life, he was seldom a month together at his own house, unless when the state of his health prevented him from enjoying the hospitality of his friends. When the fatal marriage was announced, he was planning what Boswell calls a jaunt into the country; and in a letter dated Lichfield, Oct. 4, 1784, he says: "I passed the first part of the summer at Oxford (with Dr. Adams); afterwards I went to Lichfield, then to Ashbourne (Dr. Taylor's), and a week ago I returned to Lichfield."

In the journal which he kept for Dr. Brocklesby, he writes, Oct. 20: "The town is my element; there are my friends, there are my books to which I have not yet bid farewell, and there are my amusements. Sir Joshua told me long ago that my vocation was to public life; and I hope still to keep my station, till God shall bid me *Go in peace*." Boswell reports him saying about this time, "Sir, I look upon every day to be lost when I do not make a new acquaintance."

After another visit to Dr. Adams, at Pembroke College, he returned on the 16th Nov. to London, where he died on the 13th Dec. 1784. The proximate cause of his death was dropsy; and there is not the smallest sign of its having been accelerated or embittered by unkindness or neglect.

Whoever has accompanied me thus far will be fully qualified to form an independent opinion of Lord Macaulay's dashing summary of Mrs. Piozzi's imputed ill-treatment of Johnson:

"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 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 dependants to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and, in the silence of his home, he regretted even the noise of their scolding matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more; and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond any thing in the world, tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave.

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“With some estimable, and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband, a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, her worst offences had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness ending in 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 perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion. But the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner 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."[1]

[Footnote 1: “Encyclopaedia Britannica,” last edition. The Essay on Johnson is reprinted in the first volume of Lord Macaulay’s “Miscellaneous Writings.”]

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“Splendid recklessness,” is the happy expression used by the “Saturday Review” in characterising this account of the alleged rupture with its consequences; and no reader will fail to admire the rhetorical skill with which the expulsion from Streatham with its library formed by himself, the chapter in the Greek testament, the gloomy and desolate home, the music-master in whom nobody but herself could see anything to admire, the few and evil days, the emotions that convulsed the frame, the painful and melancholy death, and the merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties, have been grouped together with the view of giving picturesqueness, impressive unity, and damnatory vigour to the sketch. “Action, action, action,” says the orator; “effect, effect, effect,” says the historian. Give Archimedes a place to stand on, and he would move the world. Give Fouche a line of a man’s handwriting, and he would engage to ruin him. Give Lord Macaulay the semblance of an authority, an insulated fact or phrase, a scrap of a journal, or the tag end of a song, and on it, by the abused prerogative of genius, he would construct a theory of national or personal character, which should confer undying glory or inflict indelible disgrace.

Johnson was never driven or expelled from Mrs. Piozzi’s house or family: if very intelligible hints were given, they certainly were not taken; the library was not formed by him; the Testament may or may not have been Greek; his powerful frame shook with no convulsions but what may have been occasioned by the unripe grapes and hard peaches; he did not leave Streatham for his gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street; the few and evil days (two years, nine weeks) did not run out in that house; the music-master was generally admired and esteemed; and the merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade-parties is simply another sample of the brilliant historian’s mode of turning the abstract into the concrete in such a manner as to degrade or elevate at will. An Italian concert is not a merry meeting; and a lemonade-party, I presume, is a party where (instead of *eau-sucree* as at Paris) the refreshment handed about is lemonade: not an enlivening drink at Christmas. In a word, all these graphic details are mere creations of the brain, and the general impression intended to be conveyed by them is false, substantially false; for Mrs. Piozzi never behaved otherwise than kindly and considerately to Johnson at any time.

Her life in Italy has been sketched in her best manner by her own lively pen in the “Autobiography” and what she calls the “Travel Book,” to be presently mentioned. Scattered notices of her proceedings occur in her letters to Mr. Lysons, and in the printed correspondence of her cotemporaries.

On the 19th October, 1784, she writes to Mr. Lysons from Turin:

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“We are going to Alexandria, Genoa, and Pavia, and then to Milan for the winter, as Mr. Piozzi finds friends everywhere to delay us, and I hate hurry and fatigue; it takes away all one’s attention. Lyons was a delightful place to me, and we were so feasted there by my husband’s old acquaintances. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland too paid us a thousand caressing civilities where we met with them, and we had no means of musical parties neither. The Prince of Sisterna came yesterday to visit Mr. Piozzi, and present me with the key of his box at the opera for the time we stay at Turin. Here’s honour and glory for you! When Miss Thrale hears of it, she will write perhaps; the other two are very kind and affectionate.”

In “Thraliana”:

“*3rd November*, 1784.—Yesterday I received a letter from Mr. Baretti, full of the most flagrant and bitter insults concerning my late marriage with Mr. Piozzi, against whom, however, he can bring no heavier charge than that he disputed on the road with an innkeeper concerning the bill in his last journey to Italy; while he accuses me of murder and fornication in the grossest terms, such as I believe have scarcely ever been used even to his old companions in Newgate, whence he was released to scourge the families which cherished, and bite the hands that have since relieved him. Could I recollect any provocation I ever gave the man, I should be less amazed, but he heard, perhaps, that Johnson had written me a rough letter, and thought he would write me a brutal one: like the Jewish king, who, trying to imitate Solomon without his understanding, said, ’My father whipped you with whips, but I will whip you with scorpions.’”

“Milan, Dec. 7.

“I correspond constantly and copiously with such of my daughters as are willing to answer my letters, and I have at last received one cold scrap from the eldest, which I instantly and tenderly replied to. Mrs. Lewis too, and Miss Nicholson, have had accounts of my health, for I found *them* disinterested and attached to me: those who led the stream, or watched which way it ran, that they might follow it, were not, I suppose, desirous of my correspondence, and till they are so, shall not be troubled with it.”

Miss Nicholson was the lady left with the daughters, and Mrs. Piozzi could have heard no harm of her from them or others when she wrote thus. The same inference must be drawn from the allusions to this lady at subsequent periods. After stating that she “dined at the minister’s o’ Tuesday, and he called all the wise men about me with great politeness indeed”—“Once more,” she continues, “keep me out of the newspapers if you possibly can: they have given me many a miserable hour, and my enemies many a merry one: but I have not deserved public persecution, and am very happy to live in a place where one is free from unmerited insolence, such as London abounds with.

"'Illic credulitas, illic temerarius error.'

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God bless you, and may you conquer the many-headed monster which I could never charm to silence." In "Thraliana," she says:

"*January*, 1785.—I see the English newspapers are full of gross insolence to me: all burst out, as I guessed it would, upon the death of Dr. Johnson. But Mr. Boswell (who I plainly see is the author) should let the *dead* escape from his malice at least. I feel more shocked at the insults offered to Mr. Thrale's memory than at those cast on Mr. Piozzi's person. My present husband, thank God! is well and happy, and able to defend himself: but dear Mr. Thrale, that had fostered these cursed wits so long! to be stung by their malice even in the grave, is too cruel:—

"'Nor church, nor churchyards, from such fops are free.'"[1]—POPE.

[Footnote 1: Probably misquoted for—

"No place is sacred, not the church is free."

Prologue to the Satires.]

The license of our press is a frequent topic of complaint. But here is a woman who had never placed herself before the public in any way so as to give them a right to discuss her conduct or affairs, not even as an author, made the butt of every description of offensive personality for months, with the tacit encouragement of the first moralist of the age.

January 20th, 1785, she writes from Milan:—"The Minister, Count Wilsick, has shown us many distinctions, and we are visited by the first families in Milan. The Venetian Resident will, however, be soon sent to the court of London, and give a faithful account, as I am sure, to all their *obliging* inquiries."

In "Thraliana":

"*25th Jan*., 1785.—I have recovered myself sufficiently to think what will be the consequence to me of Johnson's death, but must wait the event, as all thoughts on the future in this world are vain. Six people have already undertaken to write his life, I hear, of which Sir John Hawkins, Mr. Boswell, Tom Davies, and Dr. Kippis are four. Piozzi says he would have me add to the number, and so I would, but that I think my anecdotes too few, and am afraid of saucy answers if I send to England for others. The saucy answers *I* should disregard, but my heart is made vulnerable by my late marriage, and I am certain that, to spite me, they would insult my husband.

"Poor Johnson! I see they will leave *nothing untold* that I laboured so long to keep secret; and I was so very delicate *in trying to conceal his [fancied][1] insanity* that I retained no proofs of it, or hardly any, nor even mentioned it in these books, lest by my dying first *they* might be printed and the secret (for such I thought it) discovered. I used

to tell him in jest that his biographers would be at a loss concerning some orange-peel he used to keep in his pocket, and many a joke we had about the lives that would be published. Rescue me out of their hands, my dear, and do it yourself, said he;

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Taylor, Adams, and Hector will furnish you with juvenile anecdotes, and Baretti will give you all the rest that you have not already, for I think Baretti is a lyar only when he speaks of himself. Oh, said I, Baretti told me yesterday that you got by heart six pages of Machiavel's History once, and repeated them thirty years afterwards word for word. Why this is a *gross* lye, said Johnson, I never read the book at all. Baretti too told me of you (said I) that you once kept sixteen cats in your chamber, and yet they scratched your legs to such a degree, you were forced to use mercurial plaisters for some time after. Why this (replied Johnson) is an unprovoked lye indeed; I thought the fellow would not have broken through divine and human laws thus to make puss his heroine, but I see I was mistaken."

[Footnote 1: Sic in the MS. See *ante*, p. 202.]

On February 3rd, 1785, Horace Walpole writes from London to Sir Horace Mann at Florence:—"I have lately been lent a volume of poems composed and printed at Florence, in which another of our exheroines, Mrs. Piozzi, has a considerable share; her associates three of the English bards who assisted in the little garland which Ramsay the painter sent me. The present is a plump octavo; and if you have not sent me a copy by our nephew, I should be glad if you could get one for me: not for the merit of the verses, which are moderate enough and faint imitations of our good poets; but for a short and sensible and genteel preface by La Piozzi, from whom I have just seen a very clever letter to Mrs. Montagu, to disavow a jackanapes who has lately made a noise here, one Boswell, by Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson. In a day or two we expect another collection by the same Signora."

Her associates were Greathead, Merry, and Parsons. The volume in question was "The Florence Miscellany." "A copy," says Mr. Lowndes, "having fallen into the hands of W. Grifford, gave rise to his admirable satire of the 'Baviad and Moeviad.'"

In his Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides, Boswell makes Johnson say of Mrs. Montagu's "Essay on Shakespeare": "Reynolds is fond of her book, and I wonder at it; for neither I, nor Beauclerc, nor Mrs. Thrale could get through it." This is what Mrs. Piozzi wrote to disavow, so far as she was personally concerned. In a subsequent letter from Vienna, she says: "Mrs. Montagu has written to me very sweetly." The other collection expected from her was her "Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, during the last Twenty Years of his Life. Printed for T. Cadell in the Strand, 1786."

She opened the matter to Mr. Cadell in the following terms:

"Florence, 7th June, 1785.

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"*Sir*.,—As you were at once the bookseller and friend of Dr. Johnson, who always spoke of your character in the kindest terms, I could wish you likewise to be the publisher of some Anecdotes concerning the last twenty years of his life, collected by me during the many days I had opportunity to spend in his instructive company, and digested into method since I heard of his death. As I have a large collection of his letters in England, besides some verses, known only to myself, I wish to delay printing till we can make two or three little volumes, not unacceptable, perhaps, to the public; but I desire my intention to be notified, for divers reasons, and, if you approve of the scheme, should wish it to be immediately advertized. My return cannot be in less than twelve months, and we may be detained still longer, as our intention is to complete the tour of Italy; but the book is in forwardness, and it has been seen by many English and Italian friends."

On July 27th, 1785, she writes from Florence:

"We celebrated our wedding anniversary two days ago with a magnificent dinner and concert, at which the Prince Corsini and his brother the Cardinal did us the honour of assisting, and wished us joy in the tenderest and politest terms. Lord and Lady Cowper, Lord Pembroke, and *all* the English indeed, doat on my husband, and show us every possible attention."

On the 18th July, 1785, she writes again to Mr. Cadell:—"I am favoured with your answer and pleased with the advertisement, but it will be impossible to print the verses till my return to England, as they are all locked up with other papers in the Bank, nor should I choose to put the key (which is now at Milan) in any one's hand except my own."

She therefore proposes that the "Anecdotes" shall be printed first, and published separately. On the 20th October, 1785, she writes from Sienna:

"I finished my 'Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson' at Florence, and taking them with me to Leghorn, got a clear transcript made there, such as I hope will do for you to print from; though there may be some errors, perhaps many, which have escaped me, as I am wholly unused to the business of sending manuscripts to the press, and must rely on you to get everything done properly when, it comes into your hands."

Such was the surviving ascendency of Johnson, or such the placability of her disposition, that, but for Piozzi's remonstrances, she would have softened down her "Anecdotes" to an extent which would have destroyed much of their sterling value.

Mr. Lysons made the final bargain with Cadell, and had full power to act for her. She writes thus to Cadell:

"Rome, 28th March, 1786.

“SIR,—I hasten to tell you that I am perfectly pleased and contented with the alterations made by my worthy and amiable friends in the ‘Anecdotes of Johnson’s Life.’ Whatever is done by Sir Lucas Pepys is certainly well done, and I am happy in the thoughts of his having interested himself about it. Mr. Lysons was very judicious and very kind in going to the Bishop of Peterboro’, and him and Dr. Lort for advice. There is no better to be had in the world, I believe; and it is my desire that they should be always consulted about any future transactions of the same sort relating to, Sir, your most obedient servant,

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“H. L. PIOZZI."[1]

[Footnote 1: The letters to Mr. Cadell were published in the “Gentleman’s Magazine” for March and April, 1852.]

The early portions of “Thraliana” were evidently amongst the papers locked up in the Bank, and she consequently wrote most of the Anecdotes from memory, which may account for some minor discrepancies, like that relating to the year in which she made the acquaintance with Johnson.

The book attracted great attention; and whilst some affected to discover in it the latent signs of wounded vanity and pique, others vehemently impugned its accuracy. Foremost amongst her assailants stood Boswell, who had an obvious motive for depreciating her, and he attempts to destroy her authority, first, by quoting Johnson’s supposed imputations on her veracity; and secondly, by individual instances of her alleged departure from truth.

Thus, Johnson is reported to have said:—“It is amazing, Sir, what deviations there are from precise truth, in the account which is given of almost everything. I told Mrs. Thrale, You have so little anxiety about truth that you never tax your memory with the exact thing.”

Her proneness to exaggerated praise especially excited his indignation, and he endeavours to make her responsible for his rudeness on the strength of it.

“Mrs. Thrale gave high praise to Mr. Dudley Long (now North). *Johnson*. ’Nay, my dear lady, don’t talk so. Mr. Long’s character is very *short*. It is nothing. He fills a chair. He is a man of genteel appearance, and that is all. I know nobody who blasts by praise as you do: for whenever there is exaggerated praise, every body is set against a character. They are provoked to attack it. Now there is Pepys; you praised that man with such disproportion, that I was incited to lessen him, perhaps more than he deserves. *His blood is upon your head*. By the same principle, your malice defeats itself; for your censure is too violent. And yet (looking to her with a leering smile) she is the first woman in the world, could she but restrain that wicked tongue of hers;—she would be the only woman, could she but command that little whirligig.’”

Opposite the words I have printed in italics she has written: “An expression he would not have used; no, not for worlds.”

In Boswell’s note of a visit to Streatham in 1778, we find:—

“Next morning, while we were at breakfast, Johnson gave a very earnest recommendation of what he himself practised with the utmost conscientiousness: I mean a strict attention to truth even in the most minute particulars. ‘Accustom your

children,' said he, 'constantly to this: if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them: you do not know where deviation from truth will end.' *Boswell*. 'It may come to the door: and when once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it

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may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened.' Our lively hostess, whose fancy was impatient of the rein, fidgeted at this, and ventured to say 'Nay, this is too much. If Dr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea, I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a day: but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day, if one is not perpetually watching.' *Johnson*. 'Well, Madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth, than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world.'"

Now for the illustrative incident, which occurred during the same visit:—

"I had before dinner repeated a ridiculous story told me by an old man, who had been a passenger with me in the stage-coach to-day. Mrs. Thrale, having taken occasion to allude to it in talking to me, called it, 'The story told you by the old *woman*.' 'Now, Madam,' said I, 'give me leave to catch you in the fact: it was not an old *woman*, but an old *man*, whom I mentioned as having told me this.' I presumed to take an opportunity, in the presence of Johnson, of showing this lively lady how ready she was, unintentionally, to deviate from exact authenticity of narration."

In the margin: "Mrs. Thrale knew there was no such thing as an Old Man: when a man gets superannuated, they call him an Old Woman."

The remarks on the value of truth attributed to Johnson are just and sound in the main, but when they are pointed against character, they must be weighed in reference to the very high standard he habitually insisted upon. He would not allow his servant to say he was not at home when he was. "A servant's strict regard for truth," he continued, "must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for me, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for himself?"

One of his townspeople, Mr. Wickens, of Lichfield, was walking with him in a small meandering shrubbery formed so as to hide the termination, and observed that it might be taken for an extensive labyrinth, but that it would prove a deception, though it was, indeed, not an unpardonable one. "Sir," exclaimed Johnson, "don't tell me of deception; a lie, Sir, is a lie, whether it be a lie to the eye or a lie to the ear." Whilst he was in one of these paradoxical humours, there was no pleasing him; and he has been known to insult persons of respectability for repeating current accounts of events, sounding new and strange, which turned out to be literally true; such as the red-hot shot at Gibraltar, or the effects of the earthquake at Lisbon. Yet he could be lax when it suited him, as speaking of epitaphs: "The writer of an epitaph should not be considered as saying nothing but what is strictly true. Allowance

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must be made for some degree of exaggerated praise. In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath." Is he upon oath in narrating an anecdote? or could he do more than swear to the best of his recollection and belief, if he was. Boswell's notes of conversations are wonderful results of a peculiar faculty, or combination of faculties, but the utmost they can be supposed to convey is the substance of what took place, in an exceedingly condensed shape, lighted up at intervals by the *ipsissima verba*, of the speaker.

"Whilst he went on talking triumphantly," says Boswell, "I was fixed in admiration, and said to Mrs. Thrale, 'O for short-hand to take this down!' 'You'll carry it all in your head,' said she; 'a long head is as good as short-hand.'" On his boasting of the efficiency of his own system of short-hand to Johnson, he was put to the test and failed.

Mrs. Piozzi at once admits and accounts for the inferiority of her own collection of anecdotes, when she denounces "a trick which I have seen played on common occasions, of sitting steadily down at the other end of the room, to write at the moment what should be said in company, either *by* Dr. Johnson or *to* him, I never practised myself, nor approved of in another. There is something so ill-bred, and so inclining to treachery in this conduct, that were it commonly adopted, all confidence would soon be exiled from society, and a conversation assembly room would become tremendous as a court of justice." This is a hit at Boswell, who (as regards Johnson himself) had full licence to take notes the best way he could. Madame D'Arblay's are much fuller, and bear a suspicious resemblance to the dialogues in her novels.

In a reply to Boswell, dated December 14th, 1793, Miss Seward pointedly remarks:

"Dr. Johnson's frequently-expressed contempt for Mrs. Thrale on account of that want of veracity which he imputes to her, at least as Mr. Boswell has recorded, either convicts him of narrating what Johnson never said, or Johnson himself of that insincerity of which there are too many instances, amidst all the recorded proofs of his unprovoked personal rudeness, to those with whom he conversed; for, this repeated contempt was coeval with his published letters, which express such high and perfect esteem for that lady, which declare that 'to hear her, was to hear Wisdom, that to see her, was to see Virtue.'"

Lord Macaulay and his advocate in the "Edinburgh Review," who speak of Mrs. Piozzi's "white lies," have not convicted her of one; and Mr. Croker bears strong testimony to her accuracy.

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Mrs. Piozzi prefaces some instances of Johnson's rudeness and harshness by the remark, that "he did not hate the persons he treated with roughness, or despise them whom he drove from him by apparent scorn. He really loved and respected many whom he would not suffer to love him." Boswell echoes the remark, multiplies the instances, and then accuses her of misrepresenting their friend. After mentioning a discourteous reply to Robertson the historian, which was subsequently confirmed by Boswell, she proceeds to show that Johnson was no gentler to herself or those for whom he had the greatest regard. "When I one day lamented the loss of a first cousin, killed in America, 'Prithee, my dear (said he), have done with canting: how would the world be worse for it, I may ask, if all your relations were at once spitted like larks and roasted for Presto's supper?'—Presto was the dog that lay under the table." To this Boswell opposes the version given by Baretti:

"Mrs. Thrale, while supping very heartily upon larks, laid down her knife and fork, and abruptly exclaimed, 'O, my dear Johnson! do you know what has happened? The last letters from abroad have brought us an account that our poor cousin's head was taken off by a cannon-ball.' Johnson, who was shocked both at the fact and her light unfeeling manner of mentioning it, replied, 'Madam, it would give *you* very little concern if all your relations were spitted like those larks, and dressed for Presto's supper."

This version, assuming its truth, aggravates the personal rudeness of the speech. But her marginal notes on the passage are: "Boswell appealing to Baretti for a testimony of the truth is comical enough! I never addressed him (Johnson) so familiarly in my life. I never did eat any supper, and there were no larks to eat."

"Upon mentioning this story to my friend Mr. Wilkes," adds Boswell, "he pleasantly matched it with the following sentimental anecdote. He was invited by a young man of fashion at Paris to sup with him and a lady who had been for some time his mistress, but with whom he was going to part. He said to Mr. Wilkes that he really felt very much for her, she was in such distress, and that he meant to make her a present of 200 louis d'ors. Mr. Wilkes observed the behaviour of Mademoiselle, who sighed indeed very piteously, and assumed every pathetic air of grief, but ate no less than three French pigeons, which are as large as English partridges, besides other things. Mr. Wilkes whispered the gentleman, 'We often say in England, "Excessive sorrow is exceeding dry," but I never heard "Excessive sorrow is exceeding hungry." Perhaps one hundred will do. The gentleman took the hint." Mrs. Piozzi's marginal ebullition is: "Very like my hearty supper of larks, who never eat supper at all, nor was ever a hot dish seen on the table after dinner at Streatham Park."

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Two instances of inaccuracy, announced as particularly worthy of notice, are supplied by “an eminent critic,” understood to be Malone, who begins by stating, “I have often been in his (Johnson’s) company, and never *once* heard him say a severe thing to any one; and many others can attest the same.” Malone had lived very little with Johnson, and to appreciate his evidence, we should know what he and Boswell would agree to call a severe thing. Once, on Johnson’s observing that they had “good talk” on the “preceding evening,” “Yes, Sir,” replied Boswell, “you tossed and gored several persons.” Do tossing and goring come within the definition of severity? In another place he says, “I have seen even Mrs. Thrale stunned;” and Miss Reynolds relates that “One day at her own table he spoke so very roughly to her, that every one present was surprised that she could bear it so placidly; and on the ladies withdrawing, I expressed great astonishment that Dr. Johnson should speak so harshly to her, but to this she said no more than ‘Oh, dear, good man.’”

One of the two instances of Mrs. Piozzi’s inaccuracy is as follows:—“He once bade a very celebrated lady (Hannah More) who praised him with too much zeal perhaps, or perhaps too strong an emphasis (which always offended him) consider what her flattery was worth before she choaked *him* with it.”

Now, exclaims Mr. Malone, let the genuine anecdote be contrasted with this:

“The person thus represented as being harshly treated, though a very celebrated lady, was *then* just come to London from an obscure situation in the country. At Sir Joshua Reynolds’s one evening, she met Dr. Johnson. She very soon began to pay her court to him in the most fulsome strain. ‘Spare me, I beseech you, dear Madam,’ was his reply. She still *laid it on*. ’Pray, Madam, let us have no more of this,’ he rejoined. Not paying any attention to these warnings, she continued still her eulogy. At length, provoked by this indelicate and *vain* obtrusion of compliments, he exclaimed, ’Dearest lady, consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely.’

“How different does this story appear, when accompanied with all those circumstances which really belong to it, but which Mrs. Thrale either did not know, or has suppressed!”

How do we know that these circumstances really belong to it? what essential difference do they make? and how do they prove Mrs. Thrale’s inaccuracy, who expressly states the nature of the probable, though certainly most inadequate, provocation.

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The other instance is a story which she tells on Mr. Thrale's authority, of an argument between Johnson and a gentleman, which the master of the house, a nobleman, tried to cut short by saying loud enough for the doctor to hear, "Our friend has no meaning in all this, except just to relate at the Club to-morrow how he teased Johnson at dinner to-day; this is all to do himself honour." "No, upon my word," replied the other, "I see no honour in it, whatever you may do." "Well, Sir," returned Mr. Johnson sternly, "if you do not see the honour, I am sure I feel the disgrace." Malone, on the authority of a nameless friend, asserts that it was not at the house of a nobleman, that the gentleman's remark was uttered in a low tone, and that Johnson made no retort at all. As Mrs. Piozzi could hardly have invented the story, the sole question is, whether Mr. Thrale or Malone's friend was right. She has written in the margin: "It was the house of Thomas Fitzmaurice, son to Lord Shelburne, and Pottinger the hero."[1]

"Mrs. Piozzi," says Boswell, "has given a similar misrepresentation of Johnson's treatment of Garrick in this particular (as to the Club), as if he had used these contemptuous expressions: 'If Garrick does apply, I'll blackball him. Surely one ought to sit in a society like ours—

"'Unelbow'd by a gamester, pimp, or player.'"

The lady retorts, "He did say so, and Mr. Thrale stood astonished." Johnson was constantly depreciating the profession of the stage.[2]

[Footnote 1: "Being in company with Count Z——, at Lord ——'s table, the Count thinking the Doctor too dogmatical, observed, he did not at all think himself honoured by the conversation.' And what is to become of me, my lord, who feel myself actually disgraced?"—*Johnsoniana*, p. 143, first edition.]

[Footnote 2: "*Boswell*. There, Sir, you are always heretical, you never will allow merit to a player. *Johnson*. Merit, Sir, what merit? Do you respect a rope-dancer or a ballad-singer?"—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*, p. 556.]

Whilst finding fault with Mrs. Piozzi for inaccuracy in another place, Boswell supplies an additional example of Johnson's habitual disregard of the ordinary rules of good breeding in society:—

"A learned gentleman [Dr. Vansittart], who, in the course of conversation, wished to inform us of this simple fact, that the council upon the circuit of Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. He in a plenitude of phrase told us, that large bales of woollen cloth were lodged in the town-hall; that by reason of this, fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the council were near the town-hall; and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility. Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out (playfully however), 'It is a pity, Sir,

that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelve-month.'"

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He complains in a note that Mrs. Piozzi, to whom he told the anecdote, has related it “as if the gentleman had given the natural history of the mouse.” But, in a letter to Johnson she tells *him* “I have seen the man that saw the mouse,” and he replies “Poor V——, he is a good man, &c.;” so that her version of the story is the best authenticated. Opposite Boswell’s aggressive paragraph she has written: “I saw old Mitchell of Brighthelmstone affront him (Johnson) terribly once about fleas. Johnson, being tired of the subject, expressed his impatience of it with coarseness. ‘Why, Sir,’ said the old man, ’why should not Flea bite o’me be treated as Phlebotomy? It empties the capillary vessels.’”

Boswell’s Life of Johnson was not published till 1791; but the controversy kindled by the Tour to the Hebrides and the Anecdotes, raged fiercely enough to fix general attention and afford ample scope for ridicule: “The Bozzi &c. subjects,” writes Hannah More in April 1786, “are not exhausted, though everybody seems heartily sick of them. Everybody, however, conspires not to let them drop. *That*, the Cagliostro, and the Cardinal’s necklace, spoil all conversation, and destroyed a very good evening at Mr. Pepys’ last night.” In one of Walpole’s letters about the same time we find:

“All conversation turns on a trio of culprits—Hastings, Fitzgerald, and the Cardinal de Rohan.... So much for tragedy. Our comic performers are Boswell and Dame Piozzi. The cock biographer has fixed a direct lie on the hen, by an advertisement in which he affirms that he communicated his manuscript to Madame Thrale, and that she made no objection to what he says of her low opinion of Mrs. Montagu’s book. It is very possible that it might not be her real opinion, but was uttered in compliment to Johnson, or for fear he should spit in her face if she disagreed with him; but how will she get over her not objecting to the passage remaining? She must have known, by knowing Boswell, and by having a similar intention herself, that his ‘Anecdotes’ would certainly be published: in short, the ridiculous woman will be strangely disappointed. As she must have heard that *the whole first impression of her book was sold the first day*, no doubt she expected on her landing, to be received like the governor of Gibraltar, and to find the road strewed with branches of palm. She, and Boswell, and their Hero, are the joke of the public. A Dr. Walcot, *soi-disant* Peter Pindar, has published a burlesque eclogue, in which Boswell and the Signora are the interlocutors, and all the absurdest passages in the works of both are ridiculed. The print-shops teem with satiric prints in them: one in which Boswell, as a monkey, is riding on Johnson, the bear, has this witty inscription, ‘My Friend *delineavit*.’ But enough of these mountebanks.”

What Walpole calls the absurdest passages are precisely those which possess most interest for posterity; namely, the minute personal details, which bring Johnson home to the mind’s eye. Peter Pindar, however, was simply labouring in his vocation when he made the best of them, as in the following lines. His satire is in the form of a Town Eclogue, in which Bozzy and Madame Piozzi contend in anecdotes, with Hawkins for umpire:

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BOZZY.

"One Thursday morn did Doctor Johnson wake,
And call out 'Lanky, Lanky,' by mistake—
But recollecting—'Bozzy, Bozzy,' cry'd—
For in *contractions* Johnson took a pride!"

MADAME PIOZZI.

"I ask'd him if he knock'd Tom Osborn down; As such a tale was current through the town,— Says I, 'Do tell me, Doctor, what befell.'— 'Why, dearest lady, there is nought to *tell*; 'I ponder'd on the *proper'st* mode to *treat* him— 'The dog was impudent, and so I beat him! 'Tom, like a fool, proclaim'd his fancied wrongs; '*Others*, that I belabour'd, held their tongues.'"

"Did any one, that he was *happy*, cry—
Johnson would tell him plumply, 'twas a lie.
A Lady told him she was really so;
On which he sternly answer'd, 'Madam, no!
'Sickly you are, and ugly—foolish, poor;
'And therefore can't he happy, I am sure.
''Twould make a fellow hang himself, whose ear
'Were, from such creatures, forc'd such stuff to hear.'"

BOZZY.

"Lo, when we landed on the Isle of Mull,
The megrims got into the Doctor's skull:
With such bad humours he began to fill,
I thought he would not go to Icolmkill:
But lo! those megrims (wonderful to utter!)
Were banish'd all by tea and bread and butter!"

At last they get angry, and tell each other a few home truths:—

BOZZY.

"How could your folly tell, so void of truth,
That miserable story of the youth,
Who, in your book, of Doctor Johnson begs
Most seriously to know if cats laid eggs!"

MADAME PIOZZI.

"*Who* told of Mistress Montagu the lie—
So palpable a falsehood?—Bozzy, fie!"

BOZZY.

"*Who*, madd'ning with an anecdotic itch,
Declar'd that Johnson call'd his mother *b-tch?*"

MADAME PIOZZI.

"*Who*, from M'Donald's rage to save his snout,
Cut twenty lines of defamation out?"

BOZZY.

"*Who* would have said a word about Sam's wig, Or told the story of the peas and pig? Who would have told a tale so very flat, Of Frank the Black, and Hodge the mangy cat?"

MADAME PIOZZI.

"Good me! you're grown at once confounded *tender*; Of Doctor Johnson's fame a *fierce* defender: I'm sure you've mention'd many a pretty story Not much redounding to the Doctor's glory. *Now* for a *saint* upon us you would palm him— First *murder* the poor man, and then *embalm him!*"

BOZZY.

"Well, Ma'am! since all that Johnson said or wrote,
You hold so sacred, how have you forgot
To grant the wonder-hunting world a reading
Of Sam's Epistle, just before your *wedding*:
Beginning thus, (in strains not form'd to flatter)
'Madam,
'*If that most ignominious matter*
'Be not concluded'—[1]
Farther shall I say?
No—we shall have it from *yourself* some day,
To justify your passion for the *Youth*,
With all the charms of eloquence and truth."

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MADAME PIOZZI.

“What was my marriage, Sir, to *you* or *him? He* tell me what to do!—a pretty whim! *He*, to *propriety*, (the beast) *resort!* As well might *elephants preside* at *court*. Lord! let the world to *damn* my match *agree;* Good God! James Boswell, what’s *that world* to *me?* The folks who paid respects to Mistress Thrale, Fed on her pork, poor souls! and swill’d her ale, May *sicken* at Piozzi, nine in ten— Turn up the nose of scorn—good God! what then? For *me*, the Dev’l may fetch their souls so *great*; *They* keep their homes, and *I*, thank God, my meat. When they, poor owls! shall beat their cage, a jail, I, unconfin’d, shall spread my peacock tail; Free as the birds of air, enjoy my ease, Choose my own food, and see what climes I please. *I* suffer only—if I’m in the wrong: So, now, you prating puppy, hold your tongue.”

[Footnote 1: This evidently referred to the “adumbration” of Johnson’s letter (No. 4), *ante*, p. 239.]

Walpole’s opinion of the book itself had been expressed in a preceding letter, dated March 28th, 1786:

“Two days ago appeared Madame Piozzi’s Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson. I am lamentably disappointed—in her, I mean: not in him. I had conceived a favourable opinion of her capacity. But this new book is wretched; a high-varnished preface to a heap of rubbish in a very vulgar style, and too void of method even for such a farrago. . . The Signora talks of her doctor’s *expanded* mind and has contributed her mite to show that never mind was narrower. In fact, the poor woman is to be pitied: he was mad, and his disciples did not find it out[1], but have unveiled all his defects; nay, have exhibited all his brutalities as wit, and his worst conundrums as humour. Judge! The Piozzi relates that a young man asking him where Palmyra was, he replied: ‘In Ireland: it was a bog planted with palm trees.’”

[Footnote 1: See *ante*, p. 202 and 270.]

Walpole’s statement, that the whole first impression was sold the first day, is confirmed by one of her letters, and may be placed alongside of a statement of Johnson’s reported in the book. Clarissa being mentioned as a perfect character, “on the contrary (said he) you may observe that there is always something which she prefers to truth. Fielding’s Amelia was the most pleasing heroine of all the romances; but that vile broken nose never cured, ruined the sale of perhaps the only book, which, being printed off betimes one morning, a new edition was called for before night.”

When the king sent for a copy of the “Anecdotes” on the evening of the publication, there was none to be had.

In April, 1786, Hannah More writes:

“Mrs. Piozzi’s book is much in fashion. It is indeed entertaining, but there are two or three passages exceedingly unkind to Garrick which filled me with indignation. If Johnson had been envious enough to utter them, she might have been prudent enough to suppress them.”

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In a preceding letter she had said:

“Boswell tells me he is printing anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, not his *life*, but, as he has the vanity to call it, his *pyramid*, I besought his tenderness for our virtuous and most revered departed friend, and begged he would mitigate some of his asperities. He said roughly, he would not cut off his claws, nor make a tiger a cat to please anybody.” The retort will serve for both Mrs. Piozzi and himself.

Mrs. Piozzi writes from Venice, May 20th, 1786: “Cadell says he never yet published a work the sale of which was so rapid, and that rapidity of so long continuance. I suppose the fifth edition will meet me at my return.”

“Milan, July 6th, 1786.

“If Cadell would send me some copies, I should be very much obliged to him. *’Tis like living without a looking-glass never to see one’s own book so*.”

The copy of the “Anecdotes” in my possession has two inscriptions on the blank leaves before the title-page. The one is in Mrs. Piozzi’s handwriting: “This little dirty book is kindly accepted by Sir James Fellowes from his obliged friend, H.L. Piozzi, 14th February, 1816;” the other: “This copy of the ‘Anecdotes’ was found at Bath, covered with dirt, the book having been long out of print[1], and after being bound was presented to me by my excellent friend, H.L.P. (signed) J.F.”

[Footnote 1: The “Anecdotes” were reprinted by Messrs. Longman in 1856, and form part of their “Traveller’s Library.”]

It is enriched by marginal notes in her handwriting, which enable us to fill up a few puzzling blanks, besides supplying some information respecting men and books, which will be prized by all lovers of literature.

One of the anecdotes runs thus: “I asked him once concerning the conversation powers of a gentleman with whom I was myself unacquainted. ’He talked to me at the Club one day (replies our Doctor) concerning Catiline’s conspiracy; so I withdrew my attention, and thought about Tom Thumb.’”

In the margin is written “Charles James Fox.” Mr. Croker came to the conclusion that the gentleman was Mr. Vesey. Boswell says that Fox never talked with any freedom in the presence of Johnson, who accounted for his reserve by suggesting that a man who is used to the applause of the House of Commons, has no wish for that of a private company. But the real cause was his sensitiveness to rudeness, his own temper being singularly sweet. By an odd coincidence he occupied the presidential chair at the Club on the evening when Johnson emphatically declared patriotism the last refuge of a scoundrel.

Again: “On an occasion of less consequence, when he turned his back on Lord Bolingbroke in the rooms of Brighthelmstone, he made this excuse: ‘I am not obliged, Sir,’ said he to Mr. Thrale, who stood fretting, ’to find reasons for respecting the rank of him who will not condescend to declare it by his dress or some other visible mark: what are stars and other signs of superiority made for?’ The next evening, however, he made us comical amends, by sitting by the same nobleman, and haranguing very loudly about the nature, and use, and abuse, of divorces. Many people gathered round them to hear what was said, and when my husband called him away, and told him to whom he had been talking, received an answer which I will not write down.”

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The marginal note is: "He said: 'Why, Sir, I did not know the man. If he will put on no other mark of distinction, let us make him wear his horns.'" Lord Bolingbroke had divorced his wife, afterwards Lady Diana Beauclerc, for infidelity.

A marginal note naming the lady of quality (Lady Catherine Wynne) mentioned in the following anecdote, verifies Mr. Croker's conjectural statement concerning her:

"For a lady of quality, since dead, who received us at her husband's seat in Wales, with less attention than he had long been accustomed to, he had a rougher denunciation: 'That woman,' cries Johnson, 'is like sour small beer, the beverage of her table, and produce of the wretched country she lives in: like that, she could never have been a good thing, and even that bad thing is spoiled.' It was in the same vein of asperity, and I believe with something like the same provocation, that he observed of a Scotch lady, 'that she resembled a dead nettle; were she alive,' said he, 'she would sting.'"

From similar notes we learn that the "somebody" who declared Johnson "a tremendous converser" was George Grarrick; and that it was Dr. Delap, of Sussex, to whom, when lamenting the tender state of his *inside*, he cried out: "Dear Doctor, do not be like the spider, man, and spin conversation thus incessantly out of thy own bowels."

On the margin of the page in which Hawkins Browne is commended as the most delightful of conversers, she has written: "Who wrote the 'Imitation of all the Poets' in his own ludicrous verses, praising the pipe of tobacco. Of Hawkins Browne, the pretty Mrs. Cholmondeley said she was soon tired; because the first hour he was so dull, there was no bearing him; the second he was so witty, there was no bearing him; the third he was so drunk, there was no bearing him." [1]

[Footnote 1: Query, whether this is the gentleman immortalised by Peter Plymley: "In the third year of his present Majesty (George III.) and in the thirtieth of his own age, Mr. Isaac Hawkins Brown, then upon his travels, danced one evening at the court of Naples. His dress was a volcano silk, with lava buttons. Whether (as the Neapolitan wits said) he had studied dancing under Saint Vitus, or whether David, dancing in a linen vest, was his model, is not known; but Mr. Brown danced with such inconceivable alacrity and vigour, that he threw the Queen of Naples into convulsions of laughter, which terminated in a miscarriage, and changed the dynasty of the Neapolitan throne."]

In the "Anecdotes" she relates that one day in Wales she meant to please Johnson with a dish of young peas. "Are they not charming?" said I, while he was eating them. "Perhaps," said he, "they would be so—to a pig;" meaning (according to the marginal note), because they were too little boiled. Pennant, the historian, used to tell this as having happened at Mrs. Cotton's, who, according to him, called out, "Then do help yourself, Mr. Johnson." But the well-known high breeding of the lady justifies a belief that this is one of the many repartees which, if conceived, were never uttered at the time.[1]

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[Footnote 1: I have heard on good authority that Pennant afterwards owned it as his own invention.]

When a Lincolnshire lady, shewing Johnson a grotto, asked him: “Would it not be a pretty cool habitation in summer?” he replied: “I think it would, Madam, *for a toad*.” Talking of Gray’s Odes, he said, “They are forced plants, raised in a hotbed; and they are poor plants: they are but cucumbers after all.” A gentleman present, who had been running down ode-writing in general, as a bad species of poetry, unluckily said, “Had they been literally cucumbers, they had been better things than odes.” “Yes, Sir,” said Johnson, “*for a hog*.”

To return to the Anecdotes:

“Of the various states and conditions of humanity, he despised none more, I think, than the man who marries for maintenance: and of a friend who made his alliance on no higher principles, he said once, ‘Now has that fellow,’ it was a nobleman of whom we were speaking, ’at length obtained a certainty of three meals a day, and for that certainty, like his brother dog in the fable, he will get his neck galled for life with a collar.’” The nobleman was Lord Sandys.

“He recommended, on something like the same principle, that when one person meant to serve another, he should not go about it slily, or, as we say, underhand, out of a false idea of delicacy, to surprise one’s friend with an unexpected favour; ‘which, ten to one,’ says he, ’fails to oblige your acquaintance, who had some reasons against such a mode of obligation, which you might have known but for that superfluous cunning which you think an elegance. Oh! never be seduced by such silly pretences,’ continued he; ’if a wench wants a good gown, do not give her a fine smelling-bottle, because that is more delicate: as I once knew a lady lend the key of her library to a poor scribbling dependant, as if she took the woman for an ostrich that could digest iron.’” This lady was Mrs. Montagu.

“I mentioned two friends who were particularly fond of looking at themselves in a glass—’They do not surprise me at all by so doing,’ said Johnson: ’they see reflected in that glass, men who have risen from almost the lowest situations in life; one to enormous riches, the other to everything this world can give—rank, fame, and fortune. They see, likewise, men who have merited their advancement by the exertion and improvement of those talents which God had given them; and I see not why they should avoid the mirror.’” The one, she writes, was Mr. Cator, the other, Wedderburne. Another great lawyer and very ugly man, Dunning, Lord Ashburton, was remarkable for the same peculiarity, and had his walls covered with looking-glasses. His personal vanity was excessive; and his boast that a celebrated courtesan had died with one of his letters in her hand, provoked one of Wilkes’s happiest repartees.

Opposite a passage descriptive of Johnson's conversation she has written: "We used to say to one another familiarly at Streatham Park, 'Come, let us go into the library, and make Johnson speak Ramblers.'"

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Dr. Lort writes to Bishop Percy:

“December 16th, 1786.

“I had a letter lately from Mrs. Piozzi, dated Vienna, November 4, in which she says that, after visiting Prague and Dresden, she shall return home by Brussels, whither I have written to her; and I imagine she will be in London early in the new year. Miss Thrale is at her own house at Brighthelmstone, accompanied by a very respectable companion, an officer’s widow, recommended to her as such.[1] There is a new life of Johnson published by a Dr. Towers, a Dissenting minister and Dr. Kippis’s associate in the Biographia Britannica, for which work I take it for granted this life is to be hashed up again when the letter ‘J’ takes its turn. There is nothing new in it; and the author gives Johnson and his biographers all fair play, except when he treats of his political opinions and pamphlets. I was glad to hear that Johnson confessed to Dr. Fordyce, a little before his death, that he had offended both God and man by his pride of understanding.[2] Sir John Hawkins’ Life of him is also finished, and will be published with the works in February next. From all these I suppose Boswell will borrow largely to make up his quarto life;—and so our modern authors proceed, preying on one another, and complaining sorely of each other.”

[Footnote 1: The Hon. Mrs. Murray, afterwards Mrs. Aust!]

[Footnote 2: He used very different language to Langton.]

“March 8th, 1787.

“I had a letter lately from Mrs. Piozzi from Brussels, intimating that she should soon be in England, and I expect every day to hear of her arrival. I do not believe that she purchased a marquisate abroad; but it is said, with some probability, that she will here get the King’s license, or an act of Parliament, to change her name to Salusbury, her maiden name. Sir John Hawkins, I am told, bears hard upon her in his ‘Life of Johnson.’”

“March 21st, 1787.

“Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi are arrived at an hotel in Pall Mall, and are about to take a house in Hanover Square; they were with me last Saturday evening, when I asked some of her friends to meet her; she looks very well, and seems in good spirits; told me she had been that morning at the bank to get ‘Johnson’s Correspondence’ amongst other papers, which she means forthwith to commit to the press. There is a bookseller has printed two supplementary volumes to Hawkins’ eleven, consisting almost wholly of the ‘Lilliputian Speeches.’ Hawkins has printed a Review of the ‘Sublime and Beautiful’ as Johnson’s, which Murphy says was his.”

"March 13th, 1787.

"Mrs. Piozzi and her *caro sposo* seem very happy here at a good house in Hanover Square, where I am invited to a rout next week, the first I believe she has attempted, and then will be seen who of her old acquaintance continue such. She is now printing Johnson's Letters in 2 vols. octavo, with some of her own; but if they are not ready before the recess they will not be published till next winter. Poor Sir John Hawkins, I am told, is pulled all to pieces in the Review." Sir John was treated according to his deserts, and did not escape whipping. One of the severest castigations was inflicted by Porson.

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Before mentioning her next publication, I will show from “Thraliana” her state of mind when about to start for England, and her impressions of things and people on her return:

“1786.—It has always been my maxim never to influence the inclination of another: Mr. Thrale, in consequence, lived with me seventeen and a half years, during which time I tried but twice to persuade him to *do* anything, and but once, and that in vain, to let anything alone. Even my daughters, as soon as they could reason, were always allowed, and even encouraged, by me to reason their own way, and not suffer their respect or affection for me to mislead their judgment. Let us keep the mind clear if we can from prejudices, or truth will never be found at all.[1] The worst part of this disinterested scheme is, that other people are not of my mind, and if I resolve not to use my lawful influence to make my children love me, the lookers-on will soon use their unlawful influence to make them hate me: if I scrupulously avoid persuading my husband to become a Lutheran or be of the English church, the Romanists will be diligent to teach him all the narrowness and bitterness of their own unfeeling sect, and soon persuade him that it is not delicacy but weakness makes me desist from the combat. Well! let me do right, and leave the consequences in His hand who alone sees every action’s motive and the true cause of every effect: let me endeavour to please God, and to have only my own faults and follies, not those of another, to answer for.”

[Footnote 1: “Clear your mind of *cant*.”—JOHNSON.]

“1787, *May* 1_st_.—It was not wrong to come home after all, but very right. The Italians would have said we were afraid to face England, and the English would have said we were confined abroad in prisons or convents or some stuff. I find Mr. Smith (one of our daughter’s guardians) told that poor baby Cecilia a fine staring tale how my husband locked me up at Milan and fed me on bread and water, to make the child hate Mr. Piozzi. Good God! What infamous proceeding was this! My husband never saw the fellow, so could not have provoked him.”

“*May* 19_th_.—We bad a fine assembly last night indeed: in my best days I never had finer: there were near a hundred people in the rooms which were besides much admired.”

“1788, *January* 1_st_.—How little I thought this day four years that I should celebrate this 1st of January, 1788, here at Bath, surrounded with friends and admirers? The public partial to *me*, and almost every individual whose kindness is worth wishing for, sincerely attached to my husband.”

“Mrs. Byron is converted by Piozzi’s assiduity, she really likes him now: and sweet Mrs. Lambert told everybody at Bath she was in love with him.”

“I have passed a delightful winter in spite of them, caressed by my friends, adored by my husband, amused with every entertainment that is going forward: what need I think about three sullen Misses? ... and yet!”——

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"*August* 1_st_—Baretti has been grossly abusive in the 'European Magazine' to me: *that* hurts me but little; what shocks me is that those treacherous Burneys should abet and puff him. He is a most ungrateful because unprincipled wretch; but I *am* sorry that anything belonging to Dr. Burney should be so monstrously wicked."

"1789, *January* 17_th_.—Mrs. Siddons dined in a coterie of my unprovoked enemies yesterday at Porteous's. She mentioned our concerts, and the Erskines lamented their absence from one we gave two days ago, at which Mrs. Garrick was present and gave a good report to the *Blues*. Charming Blues! blue with venom I think; I suppose they begin to be ashamed of their paltry behaviour. Mrs. Grarrick, more prudent than any of them, left a loophole for returning friendship to fasten through, and it *shall* fasten: that woman has lived a *very wise life*, regular and steady in her conduct, attentive to every word she speaks and every step she treads, decorous in her manners and graceful in her person. My fancy forms the Queen just like Mrs. Grarrick: they are countrywomen and have, as the phrase is, had a hard card to play; yet never lurched by tricksters nor subdued by superior powers, they will rise from the table unhurt either by others or themselves ... having played a *saving game. I* have run risques to be sure, that I have; yet—

"'When after some distinguished leap
She drops her pole and seems to slip,
Straight gath'ring all her active strength,
She rises higher half her length;'

and better than *now* I have never stood with the world in general, I believe. May the books just sent to press confirm the partiality of the Public!"

"1789, *January*.—I have a great deal more prudence than people suspect me for: they think I act by chance while I am doing nothing in the world unintentionally, and have never, I dare say, in these last fifteen years uttered a word to husband, or child, or servant, or friend, without being very careful what it should be. Often have I spoken what I have repented after, but that was want of *judgment*, not of *meaning*. What I said I meant to say at the time, and thought it best to say, ... I do not err from haste or a spirit of rattling, as people think I do: when I err, 'tis because I make a false conclusion, not because I make no conclusion at all; when I rattle, I rattle on purpose."

"1789, *May* 1_st_.—Mrs. Montagu wants to make up with me again. I dare say she does; but I will not be taken and left even at the pleasure of those who are much nearer and dearer to me than Mrs. Montagu. We want no flash, no flattery. I never had more of either in my life, nor ever lived half so happily: Mrs. Montagu wrote creeping letters when she wanted my help, or foolishly *thought* she did, and then turned her back upon me and set her adherents to do the same. I despise such conduct, and Mr. Pepys, Mrs. Ord, &c. now sneak about and look ashamed of themselves—well they may!"

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“1790, *March* 18_th_.—I met Miss Burney at an assembly last night—’tis six years since I had seen her: she appeared most fondly rejoyced, in good time! and Mrs. Locke, at whose house we stumbled on each other, pretended that she had such a regard for me, &c. I answered with ease and coldness, but in exceeding good humour: and we talked of the King and Queen, his Majesty’s illness and recovery ... and all ended, as it should do, with perfect indifference.”

“I saw *Master Pepys*[1] too and Mrs. Ord; and only see how foolish and how mortified the people do but look.”

[Footnote 1: This is Sir W. Pepys mentioned *ante*, p. 252.]

“Barclay and Perkins live very genteelly. I dined with them at our brewhouse one day last week. I felt so oddly in the old house where I had lived so long.”

“The Pepyses find out that they have used me very ill.... I hope they find out too that I do not care, Seward too sues for reconcilement underhand ... so they do all; and I sincerely forgive them—but, like the linnet in ’Metastasio’—

“’Cauto divien per prova
Ne piu tradir si fa.’

“’When lim’d, the poor bird thus with eagerness strains,
Nor regrets his torn wing while his freedom he gains:
The loss of his plumage small time will restore,
And once tried the false twig—it shall cheat him no more.’”

“1790, *July* 28_th_.—We have kept our seventh wedding day and celebrated our return to *this house*[1] with prodigious splendour and gaiety. Seventy people to dinner.... Never was a pleasanter day seen, and at night the trees and front of the house were illuminated with coloured lamps that called forth our neighbours from all the adjacent villages to admire and enjoy the diversion. Many friends swear that not less than a thousand men, women, and children might have been counted in the house and grounds, where, though all were admitted, nothing was stolen, lost, or broken, or even damaged—a circumstance almost incredible; and which gave Mr. Piozzi a high opinion of English gratitude and respectful attachment.”

[Footnote 1: Streatham.]

“1790, *December 1st*.—Dr. Parr and I are in correspondence, and his letters are very flattering: I am proud of his notice to be sure, and he seems pleased with my acknowledgments of esteem: he is a prodigious scholar ... but in the meantime I have lost Dr. Lort."[1]

[Footnote 1: He died November 5th, 1790.]

In the Conway Notes, she thus sums up her life from March 1787 to 1791:

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“On first reaching London, we drove to the Royal Hotel in Pall Mall, and, arriving early, I proposed going to the Play. There was a small front box, in those days, which held only two; it made the division, or connexion, with the side boxes, and, being unoccupied, we sat in it, and saw Mrs. Siddons act Imogen, I well remember, and Mrs. Jordan, Priscilla Tomboy. Mr. Piozzi was amused, and the next day was spent in looking at houses, counting the cards left by old acquaintances, &c. The lady-daughters came, behaved with cold civility, and asked what I thought of *their* decision concerning Cecilia, then at school. No reply was made, or a gentle one; but she was the first cause of contention among us. The lawyers gave her into my care, and we took her home to our new habitation in Hanover Square, which we opened with music, cards, &c., on, I think, the 22nd March. Miss Thrales refused their company; so we managed as well as we could. Our affairs were in good order, and money ready for spending. The World, as it is called, appeared good-humoured, and we were soon followed, respected, and admired. The summer months sent us about visiting and pleasuring, ... and after another gay London season, Streatham Park, unoccupied by tenants, called us as if *really home*. Mr. Piozzi, with more generosity than prudence, spent two thousand pounds on repairing and furnishing it in 1790;—and we had danced all night, I recollect, when the news came of Louis Seize’s escape from, and recapture by, his rebel subjects.’”

The following are some of the names most frequently mentioned in her Diary as visiting or corresponding with her after her return from Italy: Lord Fife, Dr. Moore, the Kembles, Dr. Currie, Mrs. Lewis (widow of the Dean of Ossory), Dr. Lort, Sir Lucas Pepys, Mr. Selwin, Sammy Lysons (*sic*), Sir Philip Clerke, Hon. Mrs. Byron, Mrs. Siddons, Arthur Murphy, Mr. and Mrs. Whalley, the Greatheads, Mr. Parsons, Miss Seward, Miss Lee, Dr. Barnard (Bishop of Killaloe, better known as Dean of Derry), Hinchcliffe (Bishop of Peterborough), Mrs. Lambert, the Staffords, Lord Huntingdon, Lady Betty Cobb and her daughter Mrs. Gould, Lord Dudley, Lord Cowper, Lord Pembroke, Marquis Araciel, Count Marteningo, Count Meltze, Mrs. Drummond Smith, Mr. Chappelow, Mrs. Hobart, Miss Nicholson, Mrs. Locke, Lord Deerhurst.

Resentment for her imputed unkindness to Johnson might have been expected to last longest at his birthplace. But Miss Seward writes from Lichfield, October 6th, 1787:

“Mrs. Piozzi completely answers your description: her conversation is indeed that bright wine of the intellects which has no lees.... I shall always feel indebted to him (Mr. Perkins) for eight or nine hours of Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi’s society. They passed one evening here, and I the next with them at their inn.”

Again to Miss Helen Williams, Lichfield, December, 25th, 1787:

“Yes, it is very true, on the evening he (Colonel Barry) mentioned to you, when Mrs. Piozzi honoured this roof, his conversation greatly contributed to its Attic spirit. Till that day I had never conversed with her. There has been no exaggeration, there could be

none, in the description given you of Mrs. Piozzi's talents for conversation; at least in the powers of classic allusion and brilliant wit."

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Mrs. Piozzi's next publication was "Letters To and From the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., &c." In the Preface she speaks of the "Anecdotes" having been received with a degree of approbation she hardly dared to hope, and exclaims, "May these Letters in some measure pay my debt of gratitude! they will not surely be the *first*, the *only* thing written by Johnson, with which our nation has not been pleased." ... "The good taste by which our countrymen are distinguished, will lead them to prefer the native thoughts and unstudied phrases scattered over these pages to the more laboured elegance of his other works; as bees have been observed to reject roses, and fix upon the wild fragrance of a neighbouring heath."

Whenever Johnson took pen in hand, the chances were, that what he produced would belong to the composite order; the unstudied phrases were reserved for his "talk;" and he wished his Letters to be preserved.[1] The main value of these consists in the additional illustrations they afford of his conduct in private life, and of his opinions on the management of domestic affairs. The lack of literary and public interest is admitted and excused:

[Footnote 1: "Do you keep my letters? I am not of your opinion that I shall not like to read them hereafter."—*Letters*, vol. i. p. 295.]

"None but domestic and familiar events can be expected from a private correspondence; no reflexions but such as they excite can be found there; yet whoever turns away disgusted by the insipidity with which this, and I suppose every correspondence must naturally and almost necessarily begin—will here be likely to lose some genuine pleasure, and some useful knowledge of what our heroic Milton was himself contented to respect, as

"'That which before thee lies in daily life.'

"And should I be charged with obtruding trifles on the public, I might reply, that the meanest animals preserved in amber become of value to those who form collections of natural history; that the fish found in Monte Bolca serve as proofs of sacred writ; and that the cart-wheel stuck in the rock of Tivoli, is now found useful in computing the rotation of the earth."

In "Thraliana" she thus refers to the reception of the book:

"The Letters are out. They were published on Saturday, 8th of March. Cadell printed 2,000 copies, and says 1,100 are already sold. My letter to Jack Rice on his marriage (Vol. i. p. 96), seems the universal favourite. The book is well spoken of on the whole; yet Cadell murmurs. I cannot make out why."

This entry is not dated; the next is dated March 27th, 1788.

“This collection,” says Boswell, “as a proof of the high estimation set on any thing that came from his pen, was sold by that lady for the sum of 500_l_.” She has written on the margin: “How spiteful.”

Boswell states that “Horace Walpole thought Johnson a more amiable character after reading his Letters to Mrs. Thrale, but never was one of the true admirers of that great man.” Madame D’Arblay came to an opposite conclusion; in her Diary, January 9th, 1788, she writes:

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“To-day Mrs. Schwellenberg did me a real favour, and with real good nature, for she sent me the letters of my poor lost friends, Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, which she knew me to be almost pining to procure. The book belongs to the Bishop of Carlisle, who lent it to Mr. Turbulent, from whom it was again lent to the Queen, and so passed on to Mrs. S. It is still unpublished. With what a sadness have I been reading! What scenes has it revived! What regrets renewed! These letters have not been more improperly published in the whole than they are injudiciously displayed in their several parts. She has given all, every word, and thinks that perhaps a justice to Dr. Johnson, which, in fact, is the greatest injury to his memory.

“The few she has selected of her own do her, indeed, much credit; she has discarded all that were trivial and merely local, and given only such as contain something instructive, amusing, or ingenious.”

She admits only four of Johnson’s letters to be worthy of his exalted powers: one upon Death, in considering its approach, as we are surrounded, or not, by mourners; another upon the sudden death of Mrs. Thrale’s only son. Her chief motive for “almost pining” for the book, steeped as she was in egotism, may be guessed:

“Our name once occurred; how I started at its sight! ’Tis to mention the party that planned the first visit to our house.”

She says she had so many attacks upon “her (Mrs. Piozzi’s) subject,” that at last she fairly begged quarter. Yet nothing she could say could put a stop to, “How can you defend her in this? how can you justify her in that? &c. &c.” “Alas! that I cannot defend her is precisely the reason I can so ill bear to speak of her. How differently and how sweetly has the Queen conducted herself upon this occasion. Eager to see the Letters, she began reading them with the utmost avidity. A natural curiosity arose to be informed of several names and several particulars, which she knew I could satisfy; yet when she perceived how tender a string she touched, she soon suppressed her inquiries, or only made them with so much gentleness towards the parties mentioned, that I could not be distressed in my answers; and even in a short time I found her questions made in so favourable a disposition, that I began secretly to rejoice in them, as the means by which I reaped opportunity of clearing several points that had been darkened by calumny, and of softening others that had been viewed wholly through false lights. To lessen disapprobation of a person, and so precious to me in the opinion of another, so respectable both in rank and virtue, was to me a most soothing task, &c.”

This is precisely what many will take the liberty to doubt; or why did she shrink from it, or why did she not afford to others the explanations which proved so successful with the Queen?

The day following (Jan. 10th), her feelings were so worked upon by the harsh aspersions on her friend, that she was forced, she tells us, abruptly to quit the room; leaving not her own (like Sir Peter Teazle) but her friend's character behind her:

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“I returned when I could, and the subject was over. When all were gone, Mrs. Schwellenberg said, ’I have told it Mr. Fisher, that he drove you out from the room, and he says he won’t do it no more.’

“She told me next, that in the second volume I also, was mentioned. Where she may have heard this I cannot gather, but it has given me a sickness at heart, inexpressible. It is not that I expect severity; for at the time of that correspondence, at all times indeed previous to the marriage with Piozzi, if Mrs. Thrale loved not F. B., where shall we find faith in words, or give credit to actions. But her present resentment, however unjustly incurred, of my constant disapprobation of her conduct, may prompt some note, or other mark, to point out her change of sentiment. But let me try to avoid such painful expectations; at least not to dwell upon them. O, little does she know how tenderly at this moment I could run into her arms, so often opened to receive me with a cordiality I believed inalienable. And it was sincere then, I am satisfied; pride, resentment of disapprobation, and consciousness if unjustifiable proceedings—these have now changed her; but if we met, and she saw and believed my faithful regard, how would she again feel all her own return! Well, what a dream I am making!”

The ingrained worldliness of the diarist is ill-concealed by the mask of sensibility. The correspondence that passed between the ladies during their temporary rupture (*ante*, p. 230) shews that there was nothing to prevent her from flying into her friend’s arms, could she have made up her mind to be seen on open terms of affectionate intimacy with one who was repudiated by the Court. In a subsequent conversation with which the Queen honoured her on the subject, she did her best to impress her Majesty with the belief that Mrs. Piozzi’s conduct had rendered it impossible for her former friends to allude to her without regret, and she ended by thanking her royal mistress for her forbearance.

“Indeed,” cried she, with eyes strongly expressive of the complacency with which she heard me, “I have always spoken as little as possible upon this affair. I remember but twice that I have named it: once I said to the Bishop of Carlisle that I thought most of these letters had better have been spared the printing; and once to Mr. Langton, at the drawing-room I said, ’Your friend Dr. Johnson, Sir, has had many friends busy to publish his books, and his memoirs, and his meditations, and his thoughts; but I think he wanted one friend more.’ ‘What for, Ma’am?’ cried he. ‘A friend to suppress them,’ I answered. And, indeed, this is all I ever said about the business.”

Hannah More’s opinion of the Letters is thus expressed in her Memoirs:

“They are such as ought to have been written but ought not to have been printed: a few of them are very good: sometimes he is moral, and sometimes he is kind. The imprudence of editors and executors is an additional reason why men of parts should be afraid to die.[1] Burke said to me the other day, in allusion to the innumerable lives,

anecdotes, remains, &c. of this great man, 'How many maggots have crawled out of that great body!'"

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[Footnote 1: In reference to the late Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," it was remarked, that, as regards persons who had attained the dignity, the threatened continuation of the work had added a new pang to death. I am assured by the Ex-Chancellor to whom I attributed this joke, that it was made by Sir Charles Wetherell at a dinner at Lincoln's-Inn.]

Miss Seward writes to Mrs. Knowles, April, 1788:

"And now what say you to the last publication of your sister wit, Mrs. Piozzi? It is well that she has had the good nature to extract almost all the corrosive particles from the old growler's letters. By means of her benevolent chemistry, these effusions of that expansive but gloomy spirit taste more oily and sweet than one could have imagined possible."

The letters contained two or three passages relating to Baretti, which exasperated him to the highest pitch. One was in a letter from Johnson, dated July 15th, 1775:

"The doctor says, that if Mr. Thrale comes so near as Derby without seeing us, it will be a sorry trick. I wish, for my part, that he may return soon, and rescue the fair captives from the tyranny of B——i. Poor B——i! do not quarrel with him; to neglect him a little will be sufficient. He means only to be frank, and manly, and independent, and perhaps, as you say, a little wise. To be frank, he thinks is to be cynical, and to be independent, is to be rude. Forgive him, dearest lady, the rather, because of his misbehaviour, I am afraid he learned part of me. I hope to set him hereafter a better example."

The most galling was in a letter of hers to Dr. Johnson:

"How does Dr. Taylor do? He was very kind I remember when my thunder-storm came first on, so was Count Manucci, so was Mrs. Montagu, so was everybody. The world is not guilty of much general harshness, nor inclined I believe to increase pain which they do not perceive to be deserved.—Baretti alone tried to irritate a wound so very deeply inflicted, and he will find few to approve his cruelty. Your friendship is our best cordial; continue it to us, dear Sir, and write very soon."

In the margin of the printed copy is written, "Cruel, cruel Baretti." He had twitted her, whilst mourning over a dead child, with having killed it by administering a quack medicine instead of attending to the physician's prescriptions; a charge which he acknowledged and repeated in print. He published three successive papers in "The European Magazine" for 1788, assailing her with the coarsest ribaldry. "I have just read for the first time," writes Miss Seward in June, 1788, "the base, ungentleman-like, unmanly abuse of Mrs. Piozzi by that Italian assassin, Baretti. The whole literary world should unite in publicly reprobating such venomed and foul-mouthed railing." He died soon afterwards, May 5th, 1789, and the notice of him in the "Gentleman's Magazine" begins: "Mrs. Piozzi has reason to rejoice in the death of Mr. Baretti, for he had a very

long memory and malice to relate all he knew." And a good deal that he did not know, into the bargain; as when he prints a pretended conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Thrale about Piozzi, which he afterwards admits to be a gratuitous invention and rhetorical figure of his own, for conveying what is a foolish falsehood on the face of it.

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Baretti's death is thus noticed in "Thraliana," 8th May, 1789:

"Baretti is dead. Poor Baretti! I am sincerely sorry for him, and as Zanga says, 'If I lament thee, sure thy worth was great.' He was a manly character, at worst, and died, as he lived, less like a Christian than a philosopher, refusing all spiritual or corporeal assistance, both which he considered useless to him, and perhaps they were so. He paid his debts, called in some single acquaintance, told him he was dying, and drove away that *Panada* conversation which friends think proper to administer at sick-bedsides with becoming steadiness, bid him write his brothers word that he was dead, and gently desired a woman who waited to leave him quite alone. No interested attendants watching for ill-deserved legacies, no harpy relatives clung round the couch of Baretti. He died!

"'And art thou dead? so is my enmity:
I war not with the dead.'

"Baretti's papers—manuscripts I mean—have been all burnt by his executors without examination, they tell me. So great was his character as a mischief-maker, that Vincent and Fendall saw no nearer way to safety than that hasty and compendious one. Many people think 'tis a good thing for me, but as I never trusted the man, I see little harm he could have done me."

In the fury of his onslaught Baretti forgot that he was strengthening her case against Johnson, of whom he says: "His austere reprimand, and unrestrained upbraidings, when face to face with her, always delighted Mr. Thrale and were approved even by her children. 'Harry,' said his father to her son, 'are you listening to what the doctor and mamma are talking about?' 'Yes, papa.' And quoth Mr. Thrale, 'What are they saying?' 'They are disputing, and mamma has just such a chance with Dr. Johnson as Presto (a little dog) would have were he to fight Dash (a big one).'" He adds that she left the room in a huff to the amusement of the party. If scenes like this were frequent, no wonder the "yoke" became unendurable.

Baretti was obliged to admit that, when Johnson died, they were not on speaking terms. His explanation is that Johnson irritated him by an allusion to his being beaten by Omai, the Sandwich Islander, at chess. Mrs. Piozzi's marginal note on Omai is: "When Omai played at chess and at backgammon with Baretti, everybody admired at the savage's good breeding and at the European's impatient spirit."

Amongst her papers was the following sketch of his character, written for "The World" newspaper.

"*Mr. Conductor*.—Let not the death of Baretti pass unnoticed by 'The World,' seeing that Baretti was a wit if not a scholar: and had for five-and-thirty years at least lived in a foreign country, whose language he so made himself completely master of, that he

could satirise its inhabitants in their own tongue, better than they knew how to defend themselves; and often pleased, without ever

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praising man or woman in book or conversation. Long supported by the private bounty of friends, he rather delighted to insult than flatter; he at length obtained competence from a public he esteemed not: and died, refusing that assistance he considered as useless—leaving no debts (but those of gratitude) undischarged; and expressing neither regret of the past, nor fear of the future, I believe. Strong in his prejudices, haughty and independent in his spirit, cruel in his anger,—even when unprovoked; vindictive to excess, if he through misconception supposed himself even slightly injured, pertinacious in his attacks, invincible in his aversions: the description of Menelaus in 'Homer's Iliad,' as rendered by Pope, exactly suits the character of Baretti:

"'So burns the vengeful Hornet, soul all o'er,
Repuls'd in vain, and thirsty still for gore;
Bold son of air and heat on angry wings,
Untamed, untired, he turns, attacks, and stings.'"

In reference to this article, she remarks in "Thraliana":

"There seems to be a language now appropriated to the newspapers, and a very wretched and unmeaning language it is. Yet a certain set of expressions are so necessary to please the diurnal readers, that when Johnson and I drew up an advertisement for charity once, I remember the people altered our expressions and substituted their own, with good effect too. The other day I sent a Character of Baretti to 'The World,' and read it two mornings after more altered than improved in my mind: but no matter: they will talk of *wielding* a language, and of *barbarous* infamy,—sad stuff, to be sure, but such is the taste of the times. They altered even my quotation from Pope; but that was too impudent."

The comparison of Baretti to the hornet was truer than she anticipated: *animamque in vulnere ponit*. Internal evidence leads almost irresistibly to the conclusion that he was the author or prompter of "The *Sentimental* Mother: a Comedy in Five Acts. The Legacy of an Old Friend, and his 'Last Moral Lesson' to Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, now Mrs. Hester Lynch Piozzi. London: Printed for James Ridgeway, York Street, St. James's Square, 1789. Price three shillings." The principal *dramatis personae* are Mr. Timothy Tunskull (Thrale), Lady Fantasma Tunskull, two Misses Tunskull, and Signor Squalici.

Lady Fantasma is vain, affected, silly, and amorous to excess. Not satisfied with Squalici as her established gallant, she makes compromising advances to her daughter's lover on his way to a *tete-a-tete* with the young lady, who takes her wonted place on his knee with his arm round her waist. Squalici is also a domestic spy, and in league with the mother to cheat the daughters of their patrimony. Mr. Tunskull is a respectable and complacent nonentity.

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The dialogue is seasoned with the same malicious insinuations which mark Baretti's letters in the "European Magazine;" without the saving clause with which shame or fear induced him to qualify them, namely, that no breach of chastity was suspected or believed. It is difficult to imagine who else would have thought of reverting to Thrale's establishment eight years after it had been broken up by death; and in one of his papers in the "European Magazine," he holds out a threat that she might find herself the subject of a play: "Who knows but some one of our modern dramatic geniusses may hereafter entertain the public with a laughable comedy in five long acts, entitled, with singular propriety, 'the *Scientific* Mother'?"

Mrs. Piozzi had some-how contracted a belief, to which she alludes more than once with unfeigned alarm, that Mr. Samuel Lysons had formed a collection of all the libels and caricatures of which she was the subject on the occasion of her marriage. His collections have been carefully examined, and the sole semblance of warrant for her fears is an album or scrap-book containing numerous extracts from the reviews and newspapers, relating to her books. The only caricature preserved in it is the celebrated one by Sayers entitled "Johnson's Ghost." The ghost, a flattering likeness of the doctor, addresses a pretty woman seated at a writing table:

"When Streatham spread its pleasant board,
I opened learning's valued hoard,
And as I feasted, prosed.
Good things I said, good things I eat,
I gave you knowledge for your meat,
And thought th' account was closed.

"If obligations still I owed,
You sold each item to the crowd,
I suffered by the tale.
For God's sake, Madam, let me rest,
No longer vex your *quondam* guest,
I'll pay you for your ale."

When a prize was offered for the best address on the rebuilding of Drury Lane, Sheridan proposed an additional reward for one without a phoenix. Equally acceptable for its rarity would be a squib on Mrs. Piozzi without a reference to the brewery.

Her manuscript notes on the two volumes of Letters are numerous and important, comprising some curious fragments of autobiography, written on separate sheets of paper and pasted into the volumes opposite to the passages which they expand or explain. They would create an inconvenient break in the narrative if introduced here, and they are reserved for a separate section.

Her next literary labour is thus mentioned in "Thraliana":

“While Piozzi was gone to London I worked at my Travel Book, and wrote it in two months complete—but ’tis all to correct and copy over again. While my husband was away I wrote him these lines: he staid just a fortnight:

“I think I’ve worked exceeding hard
  To finish five score pages.
I write you this upon a card,
  In hopes you’ll pay my wages.
The servants all get drunk or mad,
  This heat their blood enrages,
But your return will make me glad,—
  That hope one pain assuages.

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"To shew more kindness, we defy
All nations and all ages,
And quite prefer your company
To all the seven sages.
Then hasten home, oh, haste away!
And lengthen not your stages;
We then will sing, and dance and play,
And quit awhile our cages."

She had now taken rank as a popular writer, and thought herself entitled to use corresponding language to her publisher:

"MR. CADELL,—Sir, this is a letter of business. I have finished the book of observations and reflections made in the course of my journey thro' France, Italy, and Germany, and if you have a mind to purchase the MS. I make you the first offer of it. Here, if complaints had any connection with business, I would invent a thousand, and they should be very kind ones too; but it is better to tell you the size and price of the book. My calculations bring it to a thousand pages of letter-press like Dr. Moore's; or you might print it in three small volumes, to go with the 'Anecdotes.' Be that as it will, the price, at a word (as the advertisers say of their horse), is 500 guineas and twelve copies to give away, though I will not, like them, warrant it free from blemishes. No creature has looked over the papers but Lord Huntingdon, and he likes them exceedingly. Direct your answer here, if you write immediately; if not, send the letter under cover to Mrs. Lewis, London Street, Reading, Berks; and believe me, dear Sir, your faithful humble servant,

"H. L. PIOZZI.

"Bennet Street, Bath,
Friday, Nov. 14th, 1788."

Whether these terms were accepted, does not appear; but in Dec. 1789 she published (Cadell and Strahan) "Observations and Reflections made in the course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany," in two volumes octavo of about 400 pages each. As happened to almost everything she did or wrote, this book, which she calls the "Travel-book," was by turns assailed with inveterate hostility and praised with animated zeal. It would seem that sustained calumny had seasoned her against the malevolence of criticism. On the passage in Johnson's letter to T. Warton, "I am little afraid for myself," her comment is: "That is just what I feel when insulted, not about literary though, but social quarrels. The others are not worth a thought." In "Thraliana," Dec. 30th, 1789, she writes: "I think my Observations and Reflexions in Italy, &c., have been, upon the whole, exceedingly well liked, and much read."

Walpole writes to Mrs. Carter, June 13th, 1789:

“I do not mean to misemploy much of your time, which I know is always passed in good works, and usefully. You have, therefore, probably not looked into Piozzi’s Travels. I, who have been almost six weeks lying on a couch, have gone through them. It was said that Addison might have written his without going out of England. By the excessive vulgarisms so plentiful in these volumes, one might suppose the

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writer had never stirred out of the parish of St. Giles. Her Latin, French, and Italian, too, are so miserably spelt, that she had better have studied her own language before she floundered into other tongues. Her friends plead that she piques herself on writing as she talks: methinks, then, she should talk as she would write. There are many indiscretions too in her work of which she will perhaps be told though Baretti is dead."

Miss Seward, much to her credit, repeated to Mrs. Piozzi both the praise and the blame she had expressed to others. On December 21st, 1789, she writes:

"Suffer me now to speak to you of your highly ingenious, instructive, and entertaining publication; yet shall it be with the sincerity of friendship, rather than with the flourish of compliment. No work of the sort I ever read possesses, in an equal degree, the power of placing the reader in the scenes and amongst the people it describes. Wit, knowledge, and imagination illuminate its pages—but the infinite inequality of the style! —Permit me to acknowledge to you what I have acknowledged to others, that it excites my exhaustless wonder, that Mrs. Piozzi, the child of genius, the pupil of Johnson, should pollute, with the vulgarisms of unpolished conversation, her animated pages!—-that, while she frequently displays her power of commanding the most chaste and beautiful style imaginable, she should generally use those inelegant, those strange *dids*, and *does*, and *thoughs*, and *toos*, which produce jerking angles, and stop-short abruptness, fatal at once to the grace and ease of the sentence;—which are, in language, what the rusty black silk handkerchief and the brass ring are upon the beautiful form of the Italian countess she mentions, arrayed in embroidery, and blazing in jewels."

Mrs. Piozzi's theory was that books should he written in the same colloquial and idiomatic language which is employed by cultivated persons in conversation, "Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar;" and vulgar she certainly was not, although she sometimes indulged her fondness for familiarity too far. The period was unluckily chosen for carrying such a theory into practice; for Johnson's authority had discountenanced idiomatic writing, whilst many phrases and forms of speech, which would not be endured now, were tolerated in polite society.

The laws of spelling, too, were unfixed or vague, and those of pronunciation, which more or less affect spelling, still more so. "When," said Johnson, "I published the plan of my dictionary, Lord Chesterfield told me that the word *great* should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *state*; and Sir William Yonge sent me word that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *seat*, and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it *grait*. Now here were two men of the highest rank, one the best speaker in the House of Lords, the other the best speaker in the House of Commons, differing entirely." Mrs. Piozzi has written on the margin:—"Sir William was in the right." Two well-known couplets of Pope imply similar changes:—

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"Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged."

* * * * *

"Here thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea."

Within living memory, elderly people of quality, both in writing and conversation, stuck to Lunnun, Brummagem, and Cheyny (China). Charles Fox would not give up "Bour_dux_." Johnson pronounced "heard" *heerd*. In 1800 "flirtation" was deemed a vulgar word.[1] Lord Byron wrote *redde* (for *read*, in the past tense), and Lord Dudley declined being helped to apple *tart*. When, therefore, we find Mrs. Piozzi using words or idioms rejected by modern taste or fastidiousness, we must not be too ready to accuse her of ignorance or vulgarity. I have commonly retained her original syntax, and her spelling, which frequently varies within a page.

[Footnote 1: "Those abstractions of different pairs from the rest of the society, which I must call 'flirtation,' spite of the vulgarity of the term."—*Journal kept during a Visit to Germany* in 1799 and 1800. Edited by the Dean of Westminster (not published), p. 38.]

Two days afterwards, Walpole returns to the charge in a letter to Miss Berry, which is alone sufficient to prove the worthlessness of his literary judgments:—

"Read 'Sindbad the Sailor's Voyages,' and you will be sick of AEneas's. What woful invention were the nasty poultry that dunged on his dinner, and ships on fire turned into Nereids! A barn metamorphosed into a cascade in a pantomime is full as sublime an effort of genius.... I do not think the Sultaness's narratives very natural or very probable, but there is a wildness in them that captivates. However, if you could wade through two octavos of Dame Piozzi's *though's* and *so's* and *I trows*, and cannot listen to seven volumes of Scheherezade's narratives, I will sue for a divorce in foro Parnassi, and Boccalini shall be my proctor."

A single couplet of Gifford's was more damaging than all Walpole's petulance:

"See Thrale's grey widow with a satchel roam,
And bring in pomp laborious nothings home."[1]

[Footnote 1: "She, one evening, asked me abruptly if I did not remember the scurrilous lines in which she had been depicted by Gifford in his 'Baviad and Moeviad.' And, not waiting for my answer, for I was indeed too much embarrassed to give one quickly, she recited the verses in question, and added, 'how do you think "Thrale's grey widow" revenged herself? I contrived to get myself invited to meet him at supper at a friend's house, (I think she said in Pall Mall), soon after the publication of his poem, sate

opposite to him, saw that he was “perplexed in the extreme;” and smiling, proposed a glass of wine as a libation to our future good fellowship. Gifford was sufficiently a man of the world to understand me, and nothing could be more courteous and entertaining than he was while we remained together.’”—*Piozziana*.]

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This condemnatory verse is every way unjust. The nothings, or somethings, which form the staple of the book, are not laboured; and they are presented without the semblance of pomp or pretension. The Preface commences thus:

“I was made to observe at Rome some vestiges of an ancient custom very proper in those days. It was the parading of the street by a set of people called Preciae, who went some minutes before the Flamen Dialis, to bid the inhabitants leave work or play, and attend wholly to the procession; but if ill-omens prevented the pageants from passing, or if the occasion of the show was scarce deemed worthy its celebration, these Precise stood a chance of being ill-treated by the spectators. A prefatory introduction to a work like this can hope little better usage from the public than they had. It proclaims the approach of what has often passed by before; adorned most certainly with greater splendour, perhaps conducted with greater regularity and skill. Yet will I not despair of giving at least a momentary amusement to my countrymen in general; while their entertainment shall serve as a vehicle for conveying expressions of particular kindness to those foreign individuals, whose tenderness softened the sorrows of absence, and who eagerly endeavoured by unmerited attentions to supply the loss of their company, on whom nature and habit had given me stronger claims.”

The Preface concludes with the happy remark that—“the labours of the press resemble those of the toilette: both should be attended to and finished with care; but once completed, should take up no more of our attention, unless we are disposed at evening to destroy all effect of our morning’s study.”

It would be difficult to name a book of travels in which anecdotes, observations, and reflections are more agreeably mingled, or one from which a clearer bird’s-eye view of the external state of countries visited in rapid succession may be caught. I can only spare room for a few short extracts:

“The contradictions one meets with every moment at Paris likewise strike even a cursory observer,—a countess in a morning, her hair dressed, with diamonds too perhaps, a dirty black handkerchief about her neck, and a flat silver ring on her finger, like our ale-wives; a *femme publique*, dressed avowedly for the purposes of alluring the men, with a not very small crucifix hanging at her bosom;—and the Virgin Mary’s sign at an ale-house door, with these words,

“’Je suis la mere de mon Dieu,
Et la gardienne de ce lieu.’”

“I have stolen a day to visit my old acquaintance the English Austin Nuns at the Foffee, and found the whole community alive and cheerful; they are many of them agreeable women, and having seen Dr. Johnson with me when I was last abroad, inquired much for him: Mrs, Fermor, the Prioress, niece to Belinda in the Rape of the Lock, taking occasion to tell me, comically enough, ’that she believed there was but little

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comfort to be found in a house that harboured *poets*; for that she remembered Mr. Pope's praise made her aunt very troublesome and conceited, while his numberless caprices would have employed ten servants to wait on him; and he gave one,' (said she) 'no amends by his talk neither, for he only sate dozing all day, when the sweet wine was out, and made his verses chiefly in the night; during which season he kept himself awake by drinking coffee, which it was one of the maids' business to make for him, and they took it by turns.'"

At Milan she institutes a delicate inquiry: "The women are not behind-hand in openness of confidence and comical sincerity. We have all heard much of Italian cicisbeism; I had a mind to know how matters really stood; and took the nearest way to information by asking a mighty beautiful and apparently artless young creature, *not noble*, how that affair was managed, for there is no harm done *I am sure*, said I: 'Why no,' replied she, 'no great *harm* to be sure: except wearisome attentions from a man one cares little about; for my own part,' continued she, 'I detest the custom, as I happen to love my husband excessively, and desire nobody's company in the world but his. We are not *people of fashion* though you know, nor at all rich; so how should we set fashions for our betters? They would only say, see how jealous he is! if *Mr. Such-a-one* sat much with me at home, or went with me to the Corso; and I *must* go with some gentleman you know: and the men are such ungenerous creatures, and have such ways with them: I want money often, and this *cavaliere servente* pays the bills, and so the connection draws closer—*that's all*.' And your husband! said I—'Oh, why he likes to see me well dressed; he is very good-natured, and very charming; I love him to my heart.' And your confessor! cried I.—'Oh! why he is *used to it*'—in the Milanese dialect—*e assuefaa."*

"An English lady asked of an Italian
What were the actual and official duties
Of the strange thing, some women set a value on,
Which hovers oft about some married beauties,
Called 'cavalier servente,' a Pygmalion
Whose statues warm, I fear! too true 't is
Beneath his art. The dame, press'd to disclose them,
Said, Lady, I beseech you to *suppose them*."[1]

[Footnote 1: "Don Juan," Canto ix. See also "Beppo," verses 36, 37:

"But Heaven preserve Old England from such courses!
Or what becomes of damage and divorces?"]

At Venice, the tone was somewhat different from what would be employed now by the finest lady on the Grand Canal:

“This firmly-fixed idea of subordination (which I once heard a Venetian say, he believed must exist in heaven from one angel to another), accounts immediately for a little conversation which I am now going to relate.

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“Here were two men taken up last week, one for murdering his fellow-servant in cold blood, while the undefended creature had the lemonade tray in his hand going in to serve company; the other for breaking the new lamps lately set up with intention to light this town in the manner of the streets at Paris. ‘I hope,’ said I, ’that they will hang the murderer.’ ‘I rather hope,’ replied a very sensible lady who sate near me, ’that they will hang the person who broke the lamps: for,’ added she, ’the first committed his crime only out of revenge, poor fellow!! because the other had got his mistress from him by treachery; but this creature has had the impudence to break our fine new lamps, all for the sake of spiting *the Arch-duke!!*’ The Arch-duke meantime hangs nobody at all; but sets his prisoners to work upon the roads, public buildings, &c., where they labour in their chains; and where, strange to tell! they often insult passengers who refuse them alms when asked as they go by; and, stranger still, they are not punished for it when they do.” ...

The lover sacrificing his reputation, his liberty, or his life, to save the fair fame of his mistress, is not an unusual event in fiction, whatever it may be in real life. Balzac, Charles de Bernard, and M. de Jarnac have each made a self-sacrifice of this kind the basis of a romance. But neither of them has hit upon a better plot than might be formed out of the following Venetian story:

“Some years ago then, perhaps a hundred, one of the many spies who ply this town by night, ran to the state inquisitor, with information that such a nobleman (naming him) had connections with the French ambassador, and went privately to his house every night at a certain hour. The *messergrando*, as they call him, could not believe, nor would proceed, without better and stronger proof, against a man for whom he had an intimate personal friendship, and on whose virtue he counted with very particular reliance. Another spy was therefore set, and brought back the same intelligence, adding the description of his disguise: on which the worthy magistrate put on his mask and bauta, and went out himself; when his eyes confirming the report of his informants, and the reflection on his duty stifling all remorse, he sent publicly for *Foscarini* in the morning, whom the populace attended all weeping to his door.

“Nothing but resolute denial of the crime alleged could however be forced from the firm-minded citizen, who, sensible of the discovery, prepared for that punishment he knew to be inevitable, and submitted to the fate his friend was obliged to inflict: no less than a dungeon for life, that dungeon so horrible that I have heard Mr. Howard was not permitted to see it.

“The people lamented, but their lamentations were vain. The magistrate who condemned him never recovered the shock: but Foscarini was heard of no more, till an old lady died forty years after in Paris, whose last confession declared she was visited with amorous intentions by a nobleman of Venice whose name she never knew, while she resided there as companion to the ambassadress. So was Foscarini lost! so died he a martyr to love, and tenderness for female reputation!”

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The Mendicanti was a Venetian institution which deserves to be commemorated for its singularity:

“Apropos to singing;—we were this evening carried to a well-known conservatory called the Mendicanti, who performed an oratorio in the church with great, and I dare say deserved applause. It was difficult for me to persuade myself that all the performers were women, till, watching carefully, our eyes convinced us, as they were but slightly grated. The sight of girls, however, handling the double bass, and blowing into the bassoon, did not much please *me*; and the deep-toned voice of her who sung the part of Saul seemed an odd unnatural thing enough.

“Well! these pretty sirens were delighted to seize upon us, and pressed our visit to their parlour with a sweetness that I know not who would have resisted. We had no such intent; and amply did their performance repay my curiosity for visiting Venetian beauties, so justly celebrated for their seducing manners and soft address. They accompanied their voices with the forte-piano, and sung a thousand buffo songs, with all that gay voluptuousness for which their country is renowned.

“The school, however, is running to ruin apace; and perhaps the conduct of the married women here may contribute to make such *conservatorios* useless and neglected. When the Duchess of Montespan asked the famous Louison D’Arquien, by way of insult, as she pressed too near her, ‘*Comment alloit le metier*?’ ’*Depuis que les dames s’en melent*,’ (replied the courtesan with no improper spirit,) ’*il ne vaut plus rien*.’”

Describing Florence, she says:—

“Sir Horace Mann is sick and old; but there are conversations at his house of a Saturday evening, and sometimes a dinner, to which we have been almost always asked.”

So much for Walpole’s assertion that “she had broken with his Horace, because he could not invite her husband with the Italian nobility.” She held her own, if she did not take the lead, in whatever society she happened to be thrown, and no one could have objected to Piozzi without breaking with her. In point of fact, no one did object to him.

One of her notes on Naples is:

“Well, well! if the Neapolitans do bury Christians like dogs, they make some singular compensations we will confess, by nursing dogs like Christians. A very veracious man informed me yester morning, that his poor wife was half broken-hearted at hearing such a Countess’s dog was run over; ‘for,’ said he, ’having suckled the pretty creature herself, she loved it like one of her children.’ I bid him repeat the circumstance, that no mistake might be made: he did so; but seeing me look shocked, or ashamed, or something he did not like,—’Why, Madam,’ said the fellow, ’it is a common thing enough for ordinary men’s wives to suckle the lap-dogs of ladies of quality:’ adding, that they were paid for

their milk, and he saw no harm in gratifying one's *superiors*. As I was disposed to see nothing *but* harm in disputing with such a competitor, our conference finished soon; but the fact is certain."

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On the margin she has written:

“Mrs. Greathead could scarcely be made to credit so hideous a fact, till I showed her the portrait (at a broker’s shop) of a woman *suckling a cat*.”

Cornelia Knight says: “Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi passed the winter at Naples and gave little concerts. He played with great taste on the pianoforte, and used to carry about a miniature one in his carriage.”

Whilst discussing the propriety of complying with the customs of the country, she relates:

“Poor Dr. Goldsmith said once—’I would advise every young fellow setting out in life *to love gravy*:’—and added, that he had formerly seen a glutton’s eldest nephew disinherited, because his uncle never could persuade him to say he liked gravy.”

Mr. Forster thinks that the concluding anecdote conveys a false impression of one

“Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll.”

“Mrs. Piozzi, in her travels, quite solemnly sets forth that poor Dr. Goldsmith said once, ’I would advise every young fellow setting forth in life to love gravy,’ alleging for it the serious reason that ’he had formerly seen a glutton’s eldest nephew disinherited because his uncle never could persuade him to say he liked gravy.’ Imagine the dullness that would convert a jocose saying of this kind into an unconscious utterance of grave absurdity."[1] In his index may be read: “Mrs. Piozzi’s absurd instance of Goldsmith’s absurdity.” Mrs. Piozzi does not quote the saying as an instance of absurdity; nor set it forth solemnly. She repeats it, as an illustration of her argument, in the same semi-serious spirit in which it was originally hazarded. Sydney Smith took a different view of this grave gravy question. On a young lady’s declining gravy, he exclaimed: “I have been looking all my life for a person who, on principle, rejected gravy: let us vow eternal friendship.”

[Footnote 1: Life of Goldsmith, vol. ii. p. 205. Mr. Forster allows her the credit of discovering the lurking irony in Goldsmith’s verses on Cumberland, vol. ii. p. 203.]

The “British Synonymy” appeared in 1794. It was thus assailed by Gifford:

“Though ‘no one better knows his own house’ than I the vanity of this woman; yet the idea of her undertaking such a work had never entered my head; and I was thunderstruck when I first saw it announced. To execute it with any tolerable degree of success, required a rare combination of talents, among the least of which may be numbered neatness of style, acuteness of perception, and a more than common accuracy of discrimination; and Mrs. Piozzi brought to the task, a jargon long since become proverbial for its vulgarity, an utter incapability of defining a single term in the

language, and just as much Latin from a child's Syntax, as sufficed to expose the ignorance she so anxiously labours to conceal. 'If such a one be fit to write on Synonimes, speak.' Pignotti himself laughs in his sleeve; and his countrymen, long since undeceived, prize the lady's talents at their true worth,

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"Et centum Tales[1] curto centusse licentur."

[Footnote 1: Quere Thrales?—*Printer's Devil*."]

Other critics have been more lenient or more just. Enough philosophical knowledge and acuteness were discovered in the work to originate a rumour that she had retained some of the great lexicographer's manuscripts, or derived a posthumous advantage, in some shape, from her former intimacy with him. In "Thraliana," Denbigh, 2nd January, 1795, she writes:

"My 'Synonimes' have been reviewed at last. The critics are all civil for aught I see, and nearly just, except when they say that Johnson left some fragments of a work upon Synonymy: of which God knows I never heard till now one syllable; never had he and I, in all the time we lived together, any conversation upon the subject."

Even Walpole admits that it has some marked and peculiar merits, although its value consists rather in the illustrative matter, than in the definitions and etymologies. Thus, in distinguishing between *lavish*, *profuse* and *prodigal*, she relates:

"Two gentlemen were walking leisurely up the Hay-Market some time in the year 1749, lamenting the fate of the famous Cuzzona, an actress who some time before had been in high vogue, but was then as they heard in a very pitiable situation. 'Let us go and visit her,' said one of them, 'she lives but over the way.' The other consented; and calling at the door, they were shown up stairs, but found the faded beauty dull and spiritless, unable or unwilling to converse on any subject. 'How's this?' cried one of her consolers, 'are you ill? or is it but low spirits chains your tongue so?'—'Neither,' replied she: ''tis hunger I suppose. I ate nothing yesterday, and now 'tis past six o'clock, and not one penny have I in the world to buy me any food.'—'Come with us instantly to a tavern; we will treat you with the best roast fowls and Port wine that London can produce.'—'But I will have neither my dinner nor my place of eating it prescribed to *me*,' answered Cuzzona, in a sharper tone, 'else I need never have wanted.' 'Forgive me,' cries the friend; 'do your own way; but eat in the name of God, and restore fainting nature.'—She thanked him then; and, calling to her a friendly wretch who inhabited the same theatre of misery, gave *him* the guinea the visitor accompanied his last words with; 'and run with this money,' said she, 'to such a wine-merchant,' (naming him); 'he is the only one keeps good Tokay by him. 'Tis a guinea a bottle, mind you,' to the boy; 'and bid the gentleman you buy it of give you a loaf into the bargain,—he won't refuse.' In half an hour or less the lad returned with the Tokay. 'But where,' cries Cuzzona, 'is the loaf I spoke for?' 'The merchant would give me no loaf,' replies her messenger; 'he drove me from the door, and asked if I took him for a baker.' 'Blockhead!' exclaims she; 'why I must have bread to my wine, you know,

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and I have not a penny to purchase any. Go beg me a loaf directly.' The fellow returns once more with one in his hand and a halfpenny, telling 'em the gentleman threw him three, and laughed at his impudence. She gave her Mercury the money, broke the bread into a wash-hand basin which stood near, poured the Tokay over it, and devoured the whole with eagerness. This was indeed a heroine in PROFUSION. Some active well-wishers procured her a benefit after this; she gained about 350_l_., 'tis said, and laid out two hundred of the money instantly in a *shell-cap*. They wore such things then."

When Savage got a guinea, he commonly spent it in a tavern at a sitting; and referring to the memorable morning when the "Vicar of Wakefield" was produced, Johnson says: "I sent him (Goldsmith) a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him." Mrs. Piozzi continues:

"But Doctor Johnson had always some story at hand to check extravagant and wanton wastefulness. His improviso verses made on a young heir's coming of age are highly capable of restraining such folly, if it is to be restrained: they never yet were printed, I believe.

"'Long expected one-and-twenty,
    Lingering year, at length is flown;
Pride and pleasure, pomp and plenty,
    Great Sir John, are now your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
    Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind, and light as feather,
    Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

Call the Betseys, Kates, and Jennies,
    All the names that banish care;
LAVISH of your grandsire's guineas,
    Show the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice or folly
    Joy to see their quarry fly;
There the gamester light and jolly,
    There the lender grave and sly.

Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,
    Let it wander as it will;

Call the jockey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full, and spirits high—
What are acres? what are houses?
Only dirt or wet or dry.

Should the guardian friend or mother
Tell the woes of wilful waste;
Scorn their counsel, scorn their pother—
You can hang or drown at last.'"

These verses were addressed to Thrale's nephew, Sir John Lade, in August, 1780. They bear a strong resemblance to some of Burns' in his "Beggar's Sonata," written in 1785:—

"What is title, what is treasure,
What is reputation's care;
If we lead a life of pleasure,
Can it matter how or where?"

Boswell's "Life of Johnson" was published in May, 1791. It is thus mentioned in "Thraliana":—

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"*May*, 1791.—Mr. Boswell's book is coming out, and the wits expect me to tremble: what will the fellow say? ... that has not been said already."

No date, but previous to 25th May, 1791.—"I have been now laughing and crying by turns, for two days, over Boswell's book. That poor man should have a *Bon Bouillon* and be put to bed ... he is quite light-headed, yet madmen, drunkards, and fools tell truth, they say ... and if Johnson was to me the back friend he has represented ... let it cure me of ever making friendship more with any human being."

"*25th May*, 1791.—The death of my son, so suddenly, so horribly produced before my eyes now suffering from the tears then shed ... so shockingly brought forward in Boswell's two guinea book, made me very ill this week, very ill indeed[1]; it would make the modern friends all buy the work I fancy, did they but know how sick the *ancient* friends had it in their power to make me, but I had more wit than tell any of 'em. And what is the folly among all these fellows of wishing we may know one another in the next world.... Comical enough! when we have only to expect deserved reproaches for breach of confidence and cruel usage. Sure, sure I hope, rancour and resentment will at least be put off in the last moments: ... sure, surely, we shall meet no more, except on the great day when each is to answer to other and before other.... After *that* I hope to keep better company than any of them."

[Footnote 1: The death of her son is not unkindly mentioned by Boswell. See p. 491, roy. oct. edit. But the imputations on her veracity rest exclusively on his prejudiced testimony.]

In 1801, Mrs. Piozzi published "Retrospection; or a Review of the Most Striking and Important Events, Characters, Situations, and their Consequences, which the Last Eighteen Hundred Years have presented to the View of Mankind." It is in two volumes quarto, containing rather more than 1000 pages. A fitting motto for it would have been *De omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis.* The subject, or range of subjects, was beyond her grasp; and the best that can be said of the book is that a good general impression of the stream of history, lighted up with some striking traits of manners and character, may be obtained from it. It would have required the united powers and acquirements of Raleigh, Burke, Gibbon, and Voltaire to fill so vast a canvass with appropriate groups and figures; and she is more open to blame for the ambitious conception of the work than for her comparative failure in the execution. In 1799 she writes to Dr. Gray: "The truth is, my plans stretch too far for these times, or for my own age; but the wish, though scarce hope, of my heart, is to finish the work I am engaged in, get you to look it over for me, and print in March 1801." She published it in January 1801, but it was not looked over by her learned correspondent. Some slight misgiving is betrayed in the Preface:

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“If I should have made improper choice of facts, and if I should be found at length most to resemble Maister Fabyan of old, who writing the life of Henry V. lays heaviest stress on a new weathercock set-up on St. Paul’s steeple during that eventful reign, my book must share the fate of his, and be like that forgotten: reminding before its death perhaps a friend or two of a poor man (Macbean) living in later times, that Doctor Johnson used to tell us of; who being advised to take subscriptions for a new Geographical Dictionary, hastened to Bolt Court and begged advice. There having listened carefully for half-an-hour, ‘Ah, but dear Sir,’ exclaimed the admiring parasite, ’if I am to make all this eloquent ado about Athens and Rome, where shall we find place, do you think, for Richmond, or Aix La Chapelle?’”

Writing from Bath, December 15th, 1802, she says:

“The ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for July 1801 contained my answer to such critics as confined themselves to faults I could have helped committing—had they been faults. Those who merely told disagreeable truths concerning my person, or dress, or age, or such stuff, expected, of course, no reply. There are innumerable press errors in the book, from my being obliged to print on new year’s day—during an insurrection of the printers. These the ‘Critical Review’ laid hold of with an acuteness sharpened by malignity.”

Moore, who was staying at Bowood, sets down in his diary for April, 1823: “Lord L. in the evening, quoted a ridiculous passage from the Preface to Mrs. Piozzi’s ‘Retrospections,’ in which, anticipating the ultimate perfection of the human race, she says she does not despair of the time arriving when ’Vice will take refuge in the arms of impossibility.’ Mentioned also an ode of hers to Posterity, beginning, ‘Posterity, gregarious dame,’ the only meaning of which must be, a lady *chez qui* numbers assemble—a lady at *home*."[1]

[Footnote 1: Memoirs, &c., vol. iv. p. 38.]

There is no such passage in the Preface to “Retrospection,” and the ode is her “Ode to Society,” who is not improperly addressed as “gregarious.”

“I repeated,” adds Moore, “what Jekyll told the other day of Bearcroft saying to Mrs. Piozzi, when Thrale, after she had repeatedly called him Mr. Beercraft: ’Beercraft is not my name, Madam; it may be your trade, but it is not my name.’” It may always be questioned whether this offensive description of repartee was really uttered at the time. But Bearcroft was capable of it. He began his cross-examination of Mr. Vansittart by—-“With your leave, Sir, I will call you Mr. Van for shortness.” “As you please, Sir, and I will call you Mr. Bear.”

Towards the end of 1795, Mrs. Piozzi left Streatham for her seat in North Wales, where (1800 or 1801) she was visited by a young nobleman, now an eminent statesman,

distinguished by his love of literature and the fine arts, who has been good enough to recall and write down his impressions of her for me:

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“I did certainly know Madame Piozzi, but had no habits of acquaintance with her, and she never lived in London to my knowledge. When in my youth I made a tour in Wales—times when all inns were bad, and all houses hospitable—I put up for a day at her house, I think in Denbighshire, the proper name of which was Bryn, and to which, on the occasion of her marriage I was told, she had recently added the name of Bella. I remember her taking me into her bed-room to show me the floor covered with folios, quartos, and octavos, for consultation, and indicating the labour she had gone through in compiling an immense volume she was then publishing, called ‘Retrospection.’ She was certainly what was called, and is still called, blue, and that of a deep tint, but good humoured and lively, though affected; her husband, a quiet civil man, with his head full of nothing but music.

“I afterwards called on her at Bath, where she chiefly resided. I remember it was at the time Madame de Stael’s ‘Delphine,’ and ‘Corinne,’ came out[1], and that we agreed in preferring ‘Delphine,’ which nobody reads now, to ‘Corinne,’ which most people read then, and a few do still. She rather avoided talking of Johnson. These are trifles, not worth recording, but I have put them down that you might not think me neglectful of your wishes; but now *j’ai vuide mon sac*.”

[Footnote 1: “Delphine” appeared in 1804; “Corinne,” in 1806.]

Her mode of passing her time when she had ceased writing books, with the topics which interested her, will be best learned from her letters. Her vivacity never left her, and the elasticity of her spirits bore up against every kind of depression. A lady who met her on her way to Wynnstay in January, 1803, describes her as “skipping about like a kid, quite a figure of fun, in a tiger skin shawl, lined with scarlet, and *only* five colours upon her head-dress—on the top of a flaxen wig a bandeau of blue velvet, a bit of tiger ribbon, a white beaver hat and plume of black feathers—as gay as a lark.”

In a letter, dated Jan. 1799, to a Welsh neighbour, Mrs. Piozzi says:

“Mr. Piozzi has lost considerably in purse, by the cruel inroads of the French in Italy, and of all his family driven from their quiet homes, has at length with difficulty saved one little boy who is now just turned of five years old. We have got him here (Bath) since I wrote last, and his uncle will take him to school next week; for as our John has nothing but his talents and education to depend upon, he must be a scholar, and we will try hard to make him a very good one.

“My poor little boy from Lombardy said as I walked him across our market, ‘These are sheeps’ heads, are they not, aunt? I saw a basket of men’s heads at Brescia.’

“As he was by a lucky chance baptized, in compliment to me, John Salusbury, five years ago, when happier days smiled on his family, he will be known in England by no other,

and it will be forgotten he is a foreigner. A lucky circumstance for one who is intended to work his way among our islanders by talent, diligence, and education."

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She thus mentions this event in “Thraliana,” January 17th, 1798:

“Italy is ruined and England threatened. I have sent for one little boy from among my husband’s nephews. He was christened John Salusbury: he shall be naturalised, and then we will see whether he will be more grateful and natural and comfortable than Miss Thrales have been to the mother they have at length driven to desperation.”

She could hardly have denied her husband the satisfaction of rescuing a single member of his family from the wreck; and they were bound to provide handsomely for the child of their adoption. Whether she carried the sentiment too far in giving him the entire estate (not a large one) is a very different question; on which she enters fearlessly in one of the fragments of the Autobiography. In a marginal note on one of the printed letters in which Johnson writes: “Mrs. Davenant says you regain your health,”—she remarks: “Mrs. Davenant neither knew nor cared, as she wanted her brother Harry Cotton to marry Lady Keith, and I offered my estate with her. Miss Thrale said she wished to have nothing to do either with my family or my fortune. They were all cruel and all insulting.” Her fits of irritation and despondency never lasted long.

Her mode of bringing up her adopted nephew was more in accordance with her ultimate liberality, than with her early intentions or professions of teaching him to “work his way among our islanders.” Instead of suffering him to travel to and from the University by coach, she insisted on his travelling post; and she is said to have remarked to the mother of a Welsh baronet, who was similarly anxious for the comfort and dignity of her heir, “Other people’s children are baked in coarse common pie dishes, ours in patty-pans.”

She was misreported, or afterwards improved upon the thought; for, in June 1810, she writes to Dr. Gray: “He is a boy of excellent principle. Education at a private school has an effect like baking loaves in a tin. The bread is more insipid, but it comes out *clean*; and Mr. Gray laughed, when at breakfast this morning, our undercrusts suggested the comparison.”

In the Conway Notes, she says:

“Had we vexations enough? We had certainly many pleasures. The house in Wales was beautiful, and the Boy was beautiful too. Mr. Piozzi said I had spoiled my own children and was spoiling his. My reply was, that I loved spoiling people, and hated any one I could not spoil. Am I not now trying to spoil dear Mr. Conway?”

When she talks of spoiling, she must not be understood literally. In 1817 she writes from Bath to Dr. Gray:

“Sir John and Lady Salusbury staid with me six or seven weeks, and made themselves most beloved among us. They are very good young creatures.... My children read your

Key to each other on Sunday noons: the *Connection* on Sunday nights. You remember me hoping and proposing to make dear Salusbury a gentleman, a Christian, and a scholar; and when one has succeeded in the first two wishes, there is no need to fret if the third does fail a *little*. Such is my situation concerning my *adopted*, as you are accustomed to call him."

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Before she died she had the satisfaction of seeing him sheriff of his county; and on carrying up an address, he was knighted and became Sir John Salusbury Piozzi Salusbury. Miss Williams Wynn has preserved a somewhat apocryphal anecdote of his disinterestedness:

“When I read her (Mrs. P.’s) lamentations over her poverty, I could not help believing that Sir J. Salusbury had proved ungrateful to his benefactress. For the honour of human nature I rejoice to find this is not the case. When he made known to his aunt his wish to marry, she promised to make over to him the property of Brynbella. Even before the marriage was concluded she had distressed herself by her lavish expenditure at Streatham. I saw by the letters that Gillow’s bill amounted to near 2,400_l_., and Mr. (the late Sir John) Williams tells me she had continually very large parties from London. Sir John Salusbury then came to her, offered to relinquish all her promised gifts and the dearest wish of his heart, saying he should be most grateful to her if she would only give him a commission in the army, and let him seek his fortune. At the same time he added that he made this offer because all was still in his power, but that from the moment he married, she must be aware that it would be no longer so, that he should not feel himself justified in bringing a wife into distress of circumstances, nor in entailing poverty on children unborn.[1] She refused; he married; and she went on in her course of extravagance. She had left herself a life income only, and large as it was, no tradesman would wait a reasonable time for payment; she was nearly eighty; and they knew that at her death nothing would be left to pay her debts, and so they seized the goods.”

[Footnote 1: If the estate was settled in the usual manner, he would have only a life estate; and I believe it was so settled.]

When Fielding, the novelist, rather boastingly avowed that he never knew, and believed he never should know, the difference between a shilling and sixpence, he was told: “Yes, the time will come when you will know it—when you have only eighteen pence left.” If the author of “Tom Jones” could not be taught the value of money, we must not be too hard on Mrs. Piozzi for not learning it, after lesson upon lesson in the hard school of “impecuniosity.” Whilst Piozzi lived, her affairs were faithfully and carefully administered. Although they built Brynbella, spent a good deal of money on Streatham, and lived handsomely, they never wanted money. He had a moderate fortune, the produce of his professional labours, and left it, neither impaired nor materially increased, to his family. With peculiar reference probably to her habits of profuse expenditure, he used to say that “white monies were good for ladies, yellow for gentlemen.” He took the guineas under his especial charge, leaving only the silver to her. This was a matter of notoriety in the neighbourhood, and the tenants, to please her or humour the joke, sometimes brought bags of shillings and sixpences in part payment of their rents.

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In the Conway Notes she says:

“Our head-quarters were in Wales, where dear Piozzi repaired my church, built a new vault for my old ancestors, chose the place in it where he and I are to repose together.... He lived some twenty-five years with me, however, but so punished with gout that we found Bath the best wintering-place for many, many seasons.—Mrs. Siddons’ last appearance there he witnessed, when she played Calista to Dimond’s Lothario, in which he looked *so* like Garrick, it shocked us *all three*, I believe; for Garrick adored Mr. Piozzi, and Siddons hated the little great man to her heart. Poor Dimond! he was a well-bred, pleasing, worthy creature, and did the honours of his own house and table with peculiar grace indeed. No likeness in private life or manner,—none at all; no wit, no fun, no frolic humour had Mr. Dimond:—no grace, no dignity, no real unaffected elegance of mien or behaviour had his predecessor, David,—whose partiality to my fastidious husband was for that reason never returned. Merriment, difficult for *him* to comprehend, made no amends for the want of that which no one understood better,—so he hated all the wits but Murphy.”

There is hardly a family of note or standing within visiting distance of their place, that has not some tradition or reminiscence to relate concerning them; and all agree in describing him as a worthy good sort of man, obliging, inoffensive, kind to the poor, principally remarkable for his devotion to music, and utterly unable to his dying day to familiarise himself with the English language or manners. It is told of him that being required to pay a turnpike toll near the house of a country neighbour whom he was on his way to visit, he took it for granted that the toll went into his neighbour’s pocket, and proposed setting up a gate near Brynbella with the view of levying toll in his turn.

In September, 1800, she wrote from Brynbella to Dr. Gray:

“Dear Mr. Piozzi, who takes men out of misery so far as his power extends in this neighbourhood, feels flattered and encouraged by your very kind approbation. He has been getting rugs for the cottagers’ beds to keep them warm this winter, while we are away, and they all take me into their sleeping rooms when I visit them *now*, to show how comfortably they live. As for the old hut you so justly abhorred, and so kindly noticed—it is knocked down and its coarse name too, Potlicko: we call it Cottage-o’-the-Park. Some recurrence to the original derivation in soup season will not, however, be much amiss I suppose.”

“Amongst the company,” says Moore, “was Mrs. John Kemble. She mentioned an anecdote of Piozzi, who upon calling upon some old lady of quality, was told by the servant, she was ‘indifferent.’ ’Is she indeed?’ answered Piozzi, huffishly, ’then pray tell her I can be as indifferent as she;’ and walked away."[1]

[Footnote 1: Moore’s Memoirs, vol. iv. p. 329.]

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Till he was disabled by the gout, his principal occupation was his violin, and it was her delight to listen to him. She more than once observed to the vicar, “Such music is quite heavenly.” “I am in despair,” cried out the village fiddler, “I may now stick my fiddle in my thatched roof, for a greater performer is come to reside in the parish.” The existing superstition of the country is that his spirit, playing on his favourite instrument, still haunts one wing of Brynbella. If he designed the building, his architectural taste does not merit the praises she lavishes on it. The exterior is not prepossessing; but there is a look of comfort about the house; the interior is well arranged: the situation, which commands a fine and extensive view of the upper part of the valley of the Clywd, is admirably chosen; the garden and grounds are well laid out; and the walks through the woods on either side, especially one called the Lovers’ Walk, are remarkably picturesque. Altogether, Brynbella may be fairly held to merit the appellation of a “pretty villa.” The name implies a compliment to Piozzi’s country as well as to his taste; for she meant it to typify the union between Wales and Italy in his and her own proper persons. She says in the Conway Notes:

“Mr. Piozzi built the house for me, he said; my own old chateau, Bachygraig by name, tho’ very curious, was wholly uninhabitable; and we called the Italian villa he set up as mine in the Vale of Cluid, Brynbella, or the beautiful brow, making the name half Welsh and half Italian, as *we* were.”

Dr. Burney, in a letter to his daughter, thus described the position and feelings of the couple towards each other in 1808:

“During my invalidity at Bath I had an unexpected visit from your Streatham friend, of whom I had lost sight for more than ten years. She still looks very well, but is graver, and candour itself; though she still says good things, and writes admirable notes and letters, I am told, to my granddaughters C. and M., of whom she is very fond. We shook hands very cordially, and avoided any allusion to our long separation and its cause. The *caro sposo* still lives, but is such an object from the gout, that the account of his sufferings made me pity him sincerely; he wished, she told me, ’to see his old and worthy friend,’ and *un beau matin* I could not refuse compliance with his wish. She nurses him with great affection and tenderness, never goes out or has company when he is in pain.”

In the Conway Notes she says:

“Piozzi’s fine hand upon the organ and pianoforte deserted him. Gout, such as I never knew, fastened on his fingers, distorting them into every dreadful shape.... A little girl, shown to him as a musical wonder of five years old, said, ’Pray, Sir, why are your fingers wrapped up in black silk so?’ ‘My dear,’ replied he, ’they are in mourning for my voice.’ ‘Oh, me!’ cries the child, ‘*is she dead?*’ He sung an easy song, and the baby exclaimed, ’Ah, Sir! you are very naughty—you tell fibs!’ Poor dears! and both gone now!”

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“When life was gradually, but perceptibly, closing round him at Bath, in 1808, I asked him if he would wish to converse with a Romish priest,—we had full opportunity there. ‘By no means,’ said he. ’Call Mr. Leman of the Crescent.’ We did so,—poor Bessy ran and fetched him. Mr. Piozzi received the blessed Sacrament at his hands; but recovered sufficiently to go home and die in his own house.”

He died of gout at Brynbella in March 1809, and was buried in a vault constructed by her desire in Dymerchion Church. There is a portrait of him (period and painter unknown) still preserved amongst the family portraits at Brynbella. It is that of a good-looking man of about forty, in a straight-cut brown coat with metal buttons, lace frill and ruffles, and some leaves of music in his hand. There are also two likenesses of Mrs. Piozzi: one a three-quarter length (kit-kat), taken apparently when she was about forty; the other a miniature of her at an advanced age. Both confirm her description of herself as too strong-featured to be pretty. The hands in the three-quarter length are gloved.

Brynbella continued her headquarters till 1814, when she gave it up to Sir John Salusbury. From that period she resided principally at Bath and Clifton, occasionally visiting Streatham or making summer trips to the seaside.

That she and her eldest daughter should ever be again (if they ever were) on a perfect footing of confidence and affection, was a moral impossibility. Estrangements are commonly durable in proportion to the closeness of the tie that has been severed; and it is no more than natural that each party, yearning for a reconciliation and not knowing that the wish is reciprocated, should persevere in casting the blame of the prolonged coldness on the other. Occasional sarcasms no more prove disregard or indifference, than Swift’s “only a woman’s hair” implies contempt for the sex.

Miss Thrale’s marriage with Lord Keith in 1808 is thus mentioned in “Thraliana”:

“The ‘Thraliana’ is coming to an end; so are the Thrales. The eldest is married now. Admiral Lord Keith the man; a *good* man for ought I hear: a *rich* man for ought I am told: a *brave* man we have always heard: and a *wise* man I trow by his choice. The name no new one, and excellent for a charade, *e.g*.

“A Faery my first, who to fame makes pretence;
My second a Rock, dear Britannia’s defence;
In my third when combined will too quickly be shown
The Faery and Rock in our brave Elphin-stone.”

Her way of life after Piozzi’s death may be collected from the Letters, with the exception of one strange episode towards the end. When nearly eighty, she took a fancy for an actor named Conway, who came out on the London boards in 1813, and had the honour of acting Romeo and Jaffier to the Juliet and Belvidera of Miss O’Neill (Lady Becher).

He also acted with her in Dean Milman's fine play, "Fazio." But it was his ill fate to reverse Churchill's famous lines:

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"Before such merits all objections fly,
Pritchard's genteel, and Garrick's six feet high."

Conway was six feet high, and a very handsome man to boot; but his advantages were purely physical; not a spark of genius animated his fine features and commanding figure, and he was battling for a moderate share of provincial celebrity, when Mrs. Piozzi fell in with him at Bath. It has been rumoured in Flintshire that she wished to marry him, and offered Sir John Salusbury a large sum in ready money (which she never possessed) to give up Brynbella (which he could not give up), that she might settle it on the new object of her affections. But none of the letters or documents that have fallen in my way afford even plausibility to the rumour, and some of the testamentary papers in which his name occurs, go far towards discrediting the belief that her attachment ever went beyond admiration and friendship expressed in exaggerated terms.[1]

[Footnote 1: Since the appearance of the first edition of this work, it has been stated on the authority of a distinguished man of letters that Conway shewed the late Charles Mathews a letter from Mrs. Piozzi, offering marriage.—*New Monthly Magazine* (edited by Mr. Harrison Ainsworth) for April, 1861.]

Conway threw himself overboard and was drowned in a voyage from New York to Charleston in 1828. His effects were sold at New York, and amongst them a copy of the folio edition of Young's "Night Thoughts," in which he had made a note of its having been presented to him by his "dearly attached friend, the celebrated Mrs. Piozzi." In the preface to "Love Letters of Mrs. Piozzi, Written when she was Eighty, to William Augustus Conway," published in London in 1842, it is stated that the originals, seven in number, were purchased by an American "lady," who permitted a "gentleman" to take copies and use them as he might think fit. What this "gentleman" thought fit, was to publish them with a catchpenny title and an alleged extract by way of motto to sanction it. The genuineness of the letters is doubtful, and the interpolation of three or four sentences would alter their entire tenor. But taken as they stand, their language is not warmer than an old woman of vivid fancy and sensibility might have deemed warranted by her age. "Tell Mr. Johnson I love him exceedingly," is the mission given by the old Countess of Eglinton to Boswell in 1778. *L'age n'a point de sexe*; and no one thought the worse of Madame Du Deffand for the impassioned tone in which she addressed Horace Walpole, whose dread of ridicule induced him to make a most ungrateful return to her fondness.[1] Years before the formation of this acquaintance, Mrs. Piozzi had acquired the difficult art of growing old; *je sais vieillir*: she dwells frequently but naturally on her age: she contemplates the approach of death with firmness and without self-deception: and her elasticity of spirit never for a moment suggests the image of an antiquated coquette. Of the seven letters in question, the one cited as most compromising is the sixth, in which Conway is exhorted to bear patiently a rebuff he had just received from some younger beauty:

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[Footnote 1: "The old woman's fancy for Mr. Conway represents a relation of warm friendship that is of every-day occurrence between youth and age that is not crabbed."—*The Examiner*, Feb. 16, 1861.]

"'Tis not a year and a quarter since, dear Conway, accepting of my portrait sent to Birmingham, said to the bringer, 'Oh if *your lady* but retains her friendship: oh if I can but keep *her* patronage, I care not for the rest.' And now, when that friendship follows you through sickness and through sorrow; now that her patronage is daily rising in importance: upon a lock of hair given or refused by une petite Traitresse, hangs all the happiness of my once high-spirited and high-blooded friend. Let it not be so. EXALT THY LOVE: DEJECTED HEART—and rise superior to such narrow minds. Do not however fancy she will ever be punished in the way you mention: no, no; she'll wither on the thorny stem dropping the faded and ungathered leaves:—a China rose, of no good scent or flavour—false in apparent sweetness, deceitful when depended on—-unlike the flower produced in colder climates, which is sought for in old age, preserved *even after death*, a lasting and an elegant perfume,—a medicine, too, for those whose shattered nerves require *astringent remedies*.

"And now, dear Sir, let me request of you—to love yourself—and to reflect on the necessity of not dwelling on any *particular subject* too long, or too intensely. It is really very dangerous to the health of body and soul. Besides that our time here is but short; a mere preface to the great book of eternity: and 'tis scarce worthy of a reasonable being not to keep the end of human existence so far in view that we may tend to it—-either directly or obliquely in every step. This is preaching—but remember how the sermon is written at three, four, and five o'clock by an octogenary pen—a heart (as Mrs. Lee says) twenty-six years old: and as H.L.P. feels it to be,—ALL YOUR OWN. Suffer your dear noble self to be in some measure benefited by the talents which are left *me*; your health to be restored by soothing consolations while *I remain here*, and am able to bestow them. All is not lost yet. You *have* a friend, and that friend is PIOZZI."

Conway's "high blood" was as great a recommendation to Mrs. Piozzi as his good looks, and he vindicated his claim to noble descent by his conduct, which was disinterested and gentlemanlike throughout.

Moore sets down in his Diary, April 28, 1819: "Breakfasted with the Fitzgeralds. Took me to call on Mrs. Piozzi; a wonderful old lady; faces of other times seemed to crowd over her as she sat,—the Johnsons, Reynoldses, &c. &c.: though turned eighty, she has all the quickness and intelligence of a gay young woman."

Nichol, the bookseller, had said that "Johnson was the link that connected Shakespeare with the rest of mankind." On hearing this, Mrs. Piozzi at eighty exclaimed, "Oh, the dear fellow, I must give him a kiss for that idea." When Nichol told the story, he added, "I never got it, and she went out of the world a kiss in my debt."

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One of the most characteristic feats or freaks of this extraordinary woman was the celebration of her eightieth birthday by a concert, ball, and supper, to between six and seven hundred people, at the Kingston Rooms, Bath, on the 27th January, 1820. At the conclusion of the supper, her health was proposed by Admiral Sir James Sausmarez, and drunk with three times three. The dancing began at two, when she led off with her adopted son, Sir John Salusbury, dancing (according to the author of "Piozziana," an eye-witness) "with astonishing elasticity, and with all the true air of dignity which might have been expected of one of the best bred females in society." When fears were expressed that she had done too much, she replied:—"No: this sort of thing is greatly in the mind; and I am almost tempted to say the same of growing old at all, especially as it regards those of the usual concomitants of age, *viz*., laziness, defective sight, and ill-temper."

"So far from feeling fatigued or exhausted on the following day by her exertions," remarks Sir James Fellowes in a note on this event, "she amused us by her sallies of wit, and her jokes on 'Tully's Offices,' of which her guests had so eagerly availed themselves.". Tully was the cook and confectioner, the Bath Gunter, who provided the supper.

Mrs. Piozzi died in May, 1821. Her death is circumstantially communicated in a letter from Mrs. Pennington, the lady mentioned in Miss Seward's correspondence as the beautiful and agreeable Sophia Weston:—

"Hot Wells, May 5th, 1821.

"Dear Miss Willoughby,—It is my painful task to communicate to you, who have so lately been the kind associate of dearest Mrs. Piozzi, the irreparable loss we have all sustained in that incomparable woman and beloved friend.

"She closed her various life about nine o'clock on Wednesday, after an illness of ten days, with as little suffering as could be imagined under these awful circumstances. Her bed-side was surrounded by her weeping daughters: Lady Keith and Mrs. Hoare arrived in time to be fully recognised[1]; Miss Thrale, who was absent from town, only just before she expired, but with the satisfaction of seeing her breathe her last in peace.

"Nothing could behave with more tenderness and propriety than these ladies, whose conduct, I am convinced, has been much misrepresented and calumniated by those who have only attended to *one* side of the history: but may all that is past be now buried in oblivion! Retrospection seldom improves our view of any subject. Sir John Salusbury was too distant, the close of her illness being so rapid, for us to entertain any expectation of his arriving in time to see the dear deceased. He only reached Clifton late *last* night. I have not yet seen him; my whole time has been devoted to the afflicted ladies."

[Footnote 1: On hearing of their arrival she is reported to have said, “Now, I shall die in state.”]

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Mrs. Pennington told a friend that Mrs. Piozzi's last words were: "I die in the trust and the fear of God." When she was attended by Sir George Gibbes, being unable to articulate, she traced a coffin in the air with her hands and lay calm. Her will, dated the 29th March, 1816, makes Sir John Salusbury Piozzi Salusbury heir to all her real and personal property with the exception of some small bequests, Sir James Fellowes and Sir John Salusbury being appointed executors.

A Memorandum signed by Sir James Fellowes runs thus:—"After I had read the Will, Lady Keith and her two sisters present, said they had long been prepared for the contents and for such a disposition of the property, and they acknowledged the validity of the Will."

* * * * *

In any endeavour to solve the difficult problem of Mrs. Piozzi's conduct and character, it should be kept in view that the highest testimony to her worth has been volunteered by those with whom she passed the last years of her life in the closest intimacy. She had become completely reconciled to Madame D'Arblay, with whom she was actively corresponding when she died, and her mixed qualities of head and heart are thus summed up in that lady's Diary, May, 1821:

"I have lost now, just lost, my once most dear, intimate, and admired friend, Mrs. Thrale Piozzi, who preserved her fine faculties, her imagination, her intelligence, her powers of allusion and citation, her extraordinary memory, and her almost unexampled vivacity, to the last of her existence. She was in her eighty-second year, and yet owed not her death to age nor to natural decay, but to the effects of a fall in a journey from Penzance to Clifton. On her eightieth birthday she gave a great ball, concert, and supper, in the public rooms at Bath, to upwards of two hundred persons, and the ball she opened herself. She was, in truth, a most wonderful character for talents and eccentricity, for wit, genius, generosity, spirit, and powers of entertainment.

"She had a great deal both of good and not good, in common with Madame de Stael Holstein. They had the same sort of highly superior intellect, the same depth of learning, the same general acquaintance with science, the same ardent love of literature, the same thirst for universal knowledge, and the same buoyant animal spirits, such as neither sickness, sorrow, nor even terror, could subdue. Their conversation was equally luminous, from the sources of their own fertile minds, and from their splendid acquisitions from the works and acquirements of others. Both were zealous to serve, liberal to bestow, and graceful to oblige; and both were truly high-minded in prizing and praising whatever was admirable that came in their way. Neither of them was delicate nor polished, though each was flattering and caressing; but both had a fund inexhaustible of good humour, and of sportive gaiety, that made their intercourse with

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those they wished to please attractive, instructive, and delightful; and though not either of them had the smallest real malevolence in their compositions, neither of them could ever withstand the pleasure of uttering a repartee, let it wound whom it might, even though each would serve the very person they goaded with all the means in their power. Both were kind, charitable, and munificent, and therefore beloved; both were sarcastic, careless, and daring, and therefore feared. The morality of Madame de Stael was by far the most faulty, but so was the society to which she belonged; so were the general manners of those by whom she was encircled."

There is one real point of similarity between Madame de Stael and Mrs. Piozzi, which has been omitted in the parallel. Both were treated much in the same manner by the amiable, sensitive, and unsophisticated Fanny Burney. In Feb. 1793, she wrote to her father, then at Paris, to announce her intimacy with a small "colony" of distinguished emigrants settled at Richmond, the cynosure of which was the far-famed daughter of Necker. He writes to caution her on the strength of a suspicious *liaison* with M. de Narbonne. She replies by declaring her belief that the charge is a gross calumny. "Indeed, I think you could not spend a day with them and not see that their commerce is that of pure, but exalted and most elegant, friendship. I would, nevertheless, give the world to avoid being a guest under their roof, now that I have heard even the shadow of such a rumour."

If Mr. Croker was right, she was then in her forty-second year; at all events, no tender, timid, delicate maiden, ready to start at a hint or semblance of impropriety; and she waved her scruples without hesitation when they stood in the way of her intercourse with M. D'Arblay, whom she married in July 1793, he being then employed in transcribing Madame de Stael's Essay on the Influence of the Passions.

As to the parallel, with all due deference to Madame D'Arblay's proved sagacity aided by her personal knowledge of her two gifted friends, it may be suggested that they present fewer points of resemblance than any two women of at all corresponding celebrity.[1] The superiority in the highest qualities of mind will be awarded without hesitation to the French woman, although M. Thiers terms her writings the perfection of mediocrity. She grappled successfully with some of the weightiest and subtlest questions of social and political science; in criticism she displayed powers which Schlegel might have envied while he aided their fullest development in her "Germany"; and her "Corinne" ranks amongst the best of those works of fiction which excel in description, reflection, and sentiment, rather than in pathos, fancy, stirring incident, or artfully contrived plot. But her tone of mind was so essentially and notoriously masculine, that when she asked Talleyrand whether he had read her "Delphine," he answered, "Non, Madame, mais on m'a dit que-nous

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y sommes tous les deux deguises en femmes."[2] This was a material drawback on her agreeability: in a moment of excited consciousness, she exclaimed, that she would give all her fame for the power of fascinating; and there was no lack of bitterness in her celebrated repartee to the man who, seated between her and Madame Recamier, boasted of being between Wit and Beauty, “Oui, et sans posseder ni l’un ni l’autre."[3] The view from Richmond Park she called “calme et animee, ce qu’on doit etre, et que je ne suis pas.”

[Footnote 1: Lady Morgan and Madame de Genlis have been suggested as each presenting a better subject for a parallel.]

[Footnote 2: “To understand the point of this answer,” says Mr. Mackintosh, “it must be known that an old countess is introduced in the novel full of cunning, finessing, and trick, who was intended to represent Talleyrand, and Delphine was intended for herself.”—*Life of Sir James Mackintosh*, vol. ii. p. 453.]

[Footnote 3: This *mot* is given to Talleyrand in Lady Holland’s Life of Sydney Smith. But it may be traced to one mentioned by Hannah More in 1787, as then current in Paris. One of the *notables* fresh from his province was teased by two *petits maitres* to tell them who he was. “Eh bien donc, le voici: je suis ni sot ni fat, mais je suis entre les deux.”—*Memoirs of Hannah More*, vol. ii. p. 57.]

In London she was soon voted a bore by the wits and people of fashion. She thought of convincing whilst they thought of dining. Sheridan and Brummell delighted in mystifying her. Byron complained that she was always talking of himself or herself[1], and concludes his account of a dinner-party by the remark:—“But we got up too soon after the women; and Mrs. Corinne always lingers so long after dinner, that we wish her—in the drawing-room.” In another place he says: “I saw Curran presented to Madame de Stael at Mackintosh’s; it was the grand confluence between the Rhone and the Saone, and they were both so d—d ugly that I could not help wondering how the best intellects of France and England could have taken up respectively such residences.” He afterwards qualifies this opinion: “Her figure was not bad; her legs tolerable; her arms good: altogether I can conceive her having been a desirable woman, allowing a little imagination for her soul, and so forth. She would have made a great man.”

[Footnote 1: Johnson told Boswell: “You have only two topics, yourself and myself, and I am heartily sick of both.”]

This is just what Mrs. Piozzi never would have made. Her mind, despite her masculine acquirements, was thoroughly feminine: she had more tact than genius, more sensibility and quickness of perception than depth, comprehensiveness, or continuity of thought. But her very discursiveness prevented her from becoming wearisome: her

varied knowledge supplied an inexhaustible store of topics and illustrations; her lively fancy

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placed them in attractive lights; and her mind has been well likened to a kaleidoscope which, whenever its glittering and heterogeneous contents are moved or shaken, surprises by some new combination of colour or of form. She professed to write as she talked; but her conversation was doubtless better than her books: her main advantages being a well-stored memory, fertility of images, aptness of allusion, and *apropos*.

Her colloquial excellence and her agreeability are established by the unanimous testimony of her cotemporaries. Her fame in this respect rests on the same basis as that of all great wits, all great actors, and many great orators. To question it for want of more tangible and durable proofs, would be as unreasonable as to question Sydney Smith's humour, Hook's powers of improvisation, Garrick's Richard, or Sheridan's Begum speech. But *ex pede Herculem*. Marked indications of her quality will be found in her letters and her books. "Both," remarks an acute and by no means partial critic[1], "are full of happy touches, and here and there will be found in them those deep and piercing thoughts which come intuitively to people of genius."

[Footnote 1: The Athenaeum. Jan. 26th, 1861.]

Surely these are happy touches:

"I hate a general topic as a pretty woman hates a general mourning when black does not become her complexion."

"Life is a schoolroom, not a playground."

In allusion to the rage for scientific experiment in 1811: "Never was poor Nature so put to the rack, and never, of course, was she made to tell so many lies."

"Science (i.e. learning), which acted as a sceptre in the hand of Johnson, and was used as a club by Dr. Parr, became a lady's fan, when played with by George Henry Glasse."

"Hope is drawn with an anchor always, and Common Sense is never strong enough to draw it up."

"The poppy which Nature sows among the corn, to shew us that sleep is as necessary as bread." [1]

[Footnote 1: Or to shew us that the harvest diminishes with sloth, and that what we gain in sleep we lose in bread. But *qui dort, dine*.]

"The best writers are not the best friends; and the last character is more to be valued than the first by cotemporaries: after fifty years, indeed, the others carry away all the applause."

This is the reason why posterity always takes part with the famous author or man of genius against those who witnessed his meanness or suffered from his selfishness; why fresh apologists will constantly be found for Bacon's want of principle and Johnson's want of manners.

In the course of his famous definition or description of wit, Barrow says: "Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a trivial saying: sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense or the affinity of their sound." If this be so, she possessed it in abundance. In a letter, dated Bath, 26th April, 1818,—about the time when Talleyrand said of Lady F.S.'s robe: "*Elle commence trop tard et finit trop tot*,"—she writes:

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“A genteel young clergyman, in our Upper Crescent, told his mamma about ten days ago, that he had lost his heart to pretty Miss Prideaux, and that he must absolutely marry her or die. *La chere mere* of course replied gravely: ’My dear, you have not been acquainted with the lady above a fortnight: let me recommend you to see more of her.’ ‘More of her!’ exclaimed the lad, ’why I have seen down to the fifth rib on each side already.’ This story will serve to convince Captain T. Fellowes and yourself, that as you have always acknowledged the British Belles to *exceed* those of every other nation, you may now say with truth, that they *outstrip* them.”

On the 1st July, 1818:

“The heat has certainly exhausted my faculties, and I have but just life enough left to laugh at the fourteen tailors who, united under a flag with ‘*Liberty and Independence*’ on it, went to vote for some of these gay fellows, I forget which, but the motto is ill chosen, said I, they should have written up, ‘*Measures not Men*’”

Her verses are advantageously distinguished amongst those of her blue-stocking contemporaries by happy turns of thought and expression, natural playfulness, and an abundant flow of idiomatic language. But her facility was a fatal gift, as it has proved to most female aspirants to poetic fame, who rarely stoop to the labour of the file. Although the first rule laid down by Goldsmith’s connoisseur[1] is far from universally applicable to productions of the pencil or the pen, all fruitful writers would do well to act upon it, and what Mrs. Piozzi could do when she took pains is decisively proved by her “Streatham Portraits.”

[Footnote 1: “Upon my asking him how he had acquired the art of a conoscente so very suddenly, he assured me that nothing was more easy. The whole secret consisted in an adherence to two rules: the one always to observe that the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more pains; and the other to praise the works of Pietro Perugino.”—*The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. xx.]

She was wanting in refinement, which very few of the eighteenth century wits and authors possessed according to more modern notions; and she abounded in vanity, which, if not necessarily a baneful or unamiable quality, is a fruitful source of folly and peculiarly calculated to provoke censure or ridicule. In her, fortunately, its effects were a good deal modified by the frankness of its avowal and display, by her habits of self-examination, by her impulsive generosity of character, and by her readiness to admit the claims and consult the feelings of others. To seek out and appreciate merit as she appreciated it, is a high merit in itself.

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Her piety was genuine; and old-fashioned politicians, whose watchword is Church and King, will be delighted with her politics. Literary men, considering how many curious inquiries depend upon her accuracy, will be more anxious about her truthfulness, and I have had ample opportunities of testing it; having not only been led to compare her narratives with those of others, but to collate her own statements of the same transactions or circumstances at distant intervals or to different persons. It is difficult to keep up a large correspondence without frequent repetition. Sir Walter Scott used to write precisely the same things to three or four fine-lady friends, and Mrs. Piozzi could no more be expected to find a fresh budget of news or gossip for each epistle than the author of "Waverley." Thus, in 1815, she writes to a Welsh baronet from Bath:

"We have had a fine Dr. Holland here.[1] He has seen and written about the Ionian Islands; and means now to practise as a physician, exchanging the Cyclades, say we wits and wags, for the Sick Ladies. We made quite a lion of the man. I was invited to every house he visited at for the last three days; so I got the *Queue du lion* despairing of *le Coeur*."

[Footnote 1: Sir Henry Holland, Bart., who, with many other titles to distinction, is one of the most active and enterprising of modern travellers.]

Two other letters written about the same time contain the same piece of intelligence and the same joke. She was very fond of writing marginal notes; and after annotating one copy of a book, would take up another and do the same. I have never detected a substantial variation in her narratives, even in those which were more or less dictated by pique; and as she generally drew upon the "Thraliana" for her materials, this, having been carefully and calmly compiled, affords an additional guarantee for her accuracy.

Her taste for reading never left her or abated to the last. In reference to a remark (in Boswell) on the irksomeness of books to people of advanced age, she writes: "Not to me at eighty years old: being grieved that year (1819) particularly, I was forced upon study to relieve my mind, and it had the due effect. I wrote this note in 1820."

She sometimes gives anecdotes of authors. Thus, in the letter just quoted, she says: "Lord Byron protests his wife was a fortune without money, a belle without beauty, and a blue-stocking without either wit or learning." But her literary information grew scanty as she grew old: "The literary world (she writes in 1821) is to me terra incognita, far more deserving of the name, now Parry and Ross are returned, than any part of the polar regions:" and her opinions of the rising authors are principally valuable as indications of the obstacles which budding reputations must overcome. "Pindar's fine remark respecting the different effects of music on different characters, holds equally

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true of genius: so many as are not delighted by it are disturbed, perplexed, irritated. The beholder either recognises it as a projected form of his own being, that moves before him with a glory round its head, or recoils from it as a spectre."[1] The octogenarian critic of the Johnsonian school recoils from “Frankenstein” as from an incarnation of the Evil Spirit: she does not know what to make of the “Tales of my Landlord”; and she inquires of an Irish acquaintance whether she retained recollection enough of her own country to be entertained with “that strange caricature, Castle Rack Rent.” Contemporary judgments such as these (not more extravagant than Horace Walpole’s) are to the historian of literature what fossil remains are to the geologist.

[Footnote 1: Coleridge, “Aids to Reflection.”]

Although perhaps no biographical sketch was ever executed, as a labour of love, without an occasional attack of what Lord Macaulay calls the *Lues Boswelliana* or fever of admiration, I hope it is unnecessary for me to say that I am not setting up Mrs. Piozzi as a model letter-writer, or an eminent author, or a pattern of the domestic virtues, or a fitting object of hero or heroine worship in any capacity. All I venture to maintain is, that her life and character, if only for the sake of the “associate forms,” deserve to be vindicated against unjust reproach, and that she has written many things which are worth snatching from oblivion or preserving from decay.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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