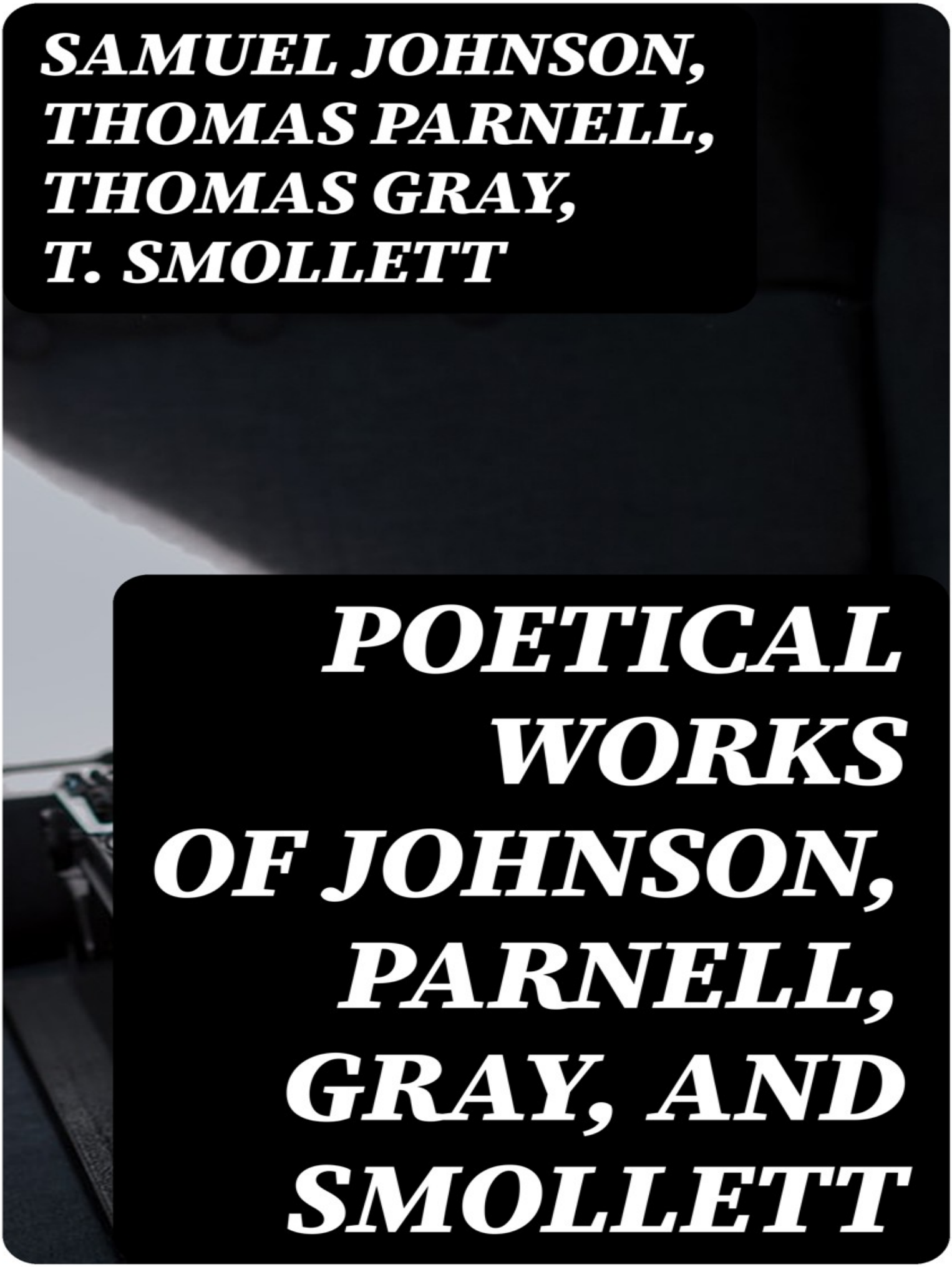

SAMUEL JOHNSON,
THOMAS PARNELL,
THOMAS GRAY,
T. SMOLLETT

POETICAL WORKS OF JOHNSON, PARNELL, GRAY, AND SMOLLETT

Samuel Johnson, Thomas Parnell, Thomas Gray

Poetical Works of Johnson, Parnell, Gray, and Smollett

With Memoirs, Critical Dissertations, and Explanatory Notes

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OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON.

We feel considerable trepidation in beginning a life of Johnson, not so much on account of the magnitude of the man—for in Milton, and one or two others, we have already met his match—but on account of the fact that the field has been so thoroughly exhausted by former writers. It is in the shadow of Boswell, the best of all biographers, and not in that of Johnson, that we feel ourselves at present cowering. Yet we must try to give a rapid account of the leading incidents in Johnson's life, as well as a short estimate of his vast, rugged genius.

Samuel Johnson was born at Lichfield, Staffordshire, on the 18th of September 1709, and was baptized the same day. His father was Michael Johnson, a bookseller and stationer, and his mother, Sarah Ford. Samuel was the first-born of the family. Nathaniel, who died in his twenty-fifth year, was the second and the last. Johnson very early began to manifest both his peculiar prejudices and his peculiar powers. When a mere child, we see him in Lichfield Cathedral, perched on his father's shoulders, gazing at Sacheverel, the famous Tory preacher. We hear him, about the same time, roaring to his mother, who had given him, a minute before, a collect in the Common Prayer-Book to get

by heart as his day's task,—"Mother, I can say it already!" His first teacher, Dame Oliver, a widow, thought him, as she well might, the best scholar she ever had. From her he passed into the hands of one Tom Brown, an original, who once published a spelling-book, and dedicated it "to the Universe!"—without permission, we presume. He began to learn Latin first with a Mr Hawkins, and then with a Mr Hunter, head-master of Lichfield,—a petty tyrant, although a good scholar, under whom, to use Gay's language, Johnson was

"Lash'd into Latin by the tingling rod."

At the age of fifteen, he was transferred to Stourbridge school, and to the care of a Mr Wentworth, who "taught him a great deal." There he remained twelve months, at the close of which he returned home, and for two years lived in his father's house, in comparative idleness, loitering in the fields, and reading much, but desultorily. In 1728, being flattered with some promises of aid from a Shropshire gentleman, named Corbet, which were never fulfilled, he went to Oxford, and was entered as a commoner in Pembroke College. His father accompanied and introduced him to Dr Adams, and to Jorden, who became his tutor, recommending his son as a good scholar and a poet. Under Jorden's care, however, he did little except translate Pope's "Messiah" into Latin verse,—a task which he performed with great rapidity, and so well, that Pope warmly commended it when he saw it printed in a miscellany of poems. About this time, the hypochondriac affection, which rendered Johnson's long life a long disease, began to manifest itself. In the vacation of 1729, he was seized with the darkest

despondency, which he tried to alleviate by violent exercise and other means, but in vain. It seems to have left him during a fit of indignation at Dr Swinfen (a physician at Lichfield, who, struck by the elegant Latinity of an account of his malady, which the sufferer had put into his hands, showed it in all directions), but continued to recur at frequent intervals till the close of his life. His malady was undoubtedly of a maniacal cast, resembling Cowper's, but subdued by superior strength of will—a Bucephalus, which it required all the power of a Johnson to back and bridle. In his early days, he had been piously inclined, but after his ninth year, fell into a state of indifference to religion. This continued till he met, at Oxford, Law's "Serious Call," which, he says, "overmatched" and compelled him to consider the subject with earnestness. And whatever, in after years, were the errors of his life, he never, from that hour, ceased to have a solemn sense of the verities of the Christian religion.

At Oxford, he paid little attention to his regular tasks, but read, or rather devoured, all the books he could lay his hands on, and began to display his unrivalled conversational powers, being often seen "lounging about the college gates, with a circle of young students around him, whom he was entertaining with wit, keeping from their studies, and sometimes rousing to rebellion against the college discipline." He was, at this time, so miserably poor, that his shoes were worn to tatters, and his feet appeared through them, to the scandal of the Christ-Church men, when he occasionally visited their college. Some compassionate individual laid a new pair at his door, which he tossed away with indignation. At last,—his debts increasing, his supplies

diminishing, and his father becoming bankrupt,—he was, in autumn 1731, compelled to leave college without a degree. In the December of the same year his father died.

Perhaps there was not now in broad Britain a person apparently more helpless and hopeless than this tall, half-blind, half-mad, and wholly miserable lad, with ragged shoes, and no degree, left suddenly fatherless in Lichfield. But he had a number of warm friends in his native place, such as Captain Garrick, father of the actor, and Gilbert Walmsley, Registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court, who would not suffer him to starve outright. He had learning and genius; and he had, moreover, under all his indolence and all his melancholy, an indomitable resolution, which needed only to be roused to make all obstacles melt before it. He knew that he was great and strong, and would yet struggle into recognition. At first, however, nothing offered save the post of usher in a school at Market-Bosworth, which he occupied long enough to learn to loathe the occupation with all his heart and soul, and mind and strength, but which he soon resigned, and was again idle. He was invited next to spend some time with Mr Hector, an early friend, who was residing in Birmingham. Here he became acquainted with one Porter, a mercer, whose widow he afterwards married. Here, too, he executed his first literary work,—a translation of Lobo's "Voyage to Abyssinia," which was published in 1735, and for which he received the munificent sum of five guineas! He had previously, without success, issued proposals for an edition of the Latin poems of Politian; and, with a similar result, offered the service of his pen to Edward

Cave, the editor and publisher of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, to which he afterwards became a leading contributor.

Shortly after this, Porter dying, Johnson married the widow—a lady more distinguished for sense, and particularly for *the* sense to appreciate his talents, than for personal charms, and who was twice her husband's age. It does not seem to have been a very happy match, although, probably, both parties loved each other better than they imagined. He was now assisted by his wife's portion, which amounted to £800, and opened a private academy at Echal, near Lichfield, but obtained only three pupils,—a Mr Offely, who died early, the celebrated David Garrick, and his brother George. At the end of a year and a half, disgusted alike with the duties of the office, and with his want of success in their discharge, Johnson left for London, with David Garrick for his companion, and reached it with one letter of introduction from Gilbert Walmsley, three acts of the tragedy of "Irene," and (according to his fellow-traveller) threepence-halfpenny in his pocket!

To London he had probably looked as to the great mart of genius, but at first he met with mortifying disappointment. He made one influential friend, however, in an officer named Henry Hervey, of whom he said, "He was a vicious man, but very kind to me; were you to call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." In summer he came back to Lichfield, where he stayed three months, and finished his tragedy. He returned to London in autumn, along with his wife, and tried, but in vain, to get "Irene" presented on the stage. This did not happen till 1749, when his old pupil David Garrick had become manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

In March 1738, he began to contribute to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a magazine he had long admired, and the original printing-place of which—St John's Gate—he "beheld with reverence" when he first passed it. Amidst the variety of his contributions, the most remarkable were his "Debates in the Senate of Lilliput"—vigorous paraphrases of the parliamentary discussions—of which Johnson finding the mere skeleton given him by the reporters, was at the pains of clothing it with the flesh and blood of his own powerful diction. In May of the same year appeared his noble imitation of Juvenal, "London," which at once made him famous. After it had been rejected by several publishers, it was bought by Dodsley for ten guineas. It came out the same morning with Pope's satire, entitled "1738," and excited a much greater sensation. The buzzing question ran, "What great unknown genius can this be?" The poem went to a second edition in a week; and Pope himself, who had read it with pleasure, when told that its author was an obscure man named Johnson, replied, "He will soon be *déterré*."

Famous as he had now become, he continued poor; and tired to death of slaving for the booksellers, he applied, through the influence of Pope and Lord Gower, to procure a degree from Dublin, that it might aid him in his application for a school at Appleby, in Leicestershire. In this, however, he failed, and had to persevere for many years more in the ill-paid drudgery of authorship—meditating a translation of "Father Paul's History," which was never executed—writing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* lives of Böerhaave and Father Paul, &c., &c., &c.—and published separately "Marmor

Norfolciense," a disguised invective against Sir Robert Walpole, the obnoxious premier of the day. About this time he became intimate with the notorious Richard Savage, and with him spent too many of his private hours. Both were poor, both proud, both patriotic, both at that time lovers of pleasure, and they became for a season inseparable; often perambulating the streets all night, engaged now, we fear, in low revels, and now in high talk, and sometimes determined to stand by their country when they could stand by nothing else. Yet, if Savage for a season corrupted Johnson, he also communicated to him much information, and at last left himself in legacy, as one of the best subjects to one of the greatest masters of moral anatomy. In 1744, Johnson rolled off from his powerful pen, with as much ease as a thick oak a thunder-shower, the sounding sentences which compose the "Life of Savage," and which shall for ever perpetuate the memory and the tale of that "unlucky rascal." It is a wasp preserved in the richest amber. The whole reads like one sentence, and is generally read at one sitting. Sir Joshua Reynolds, meeting it in a country inn, began to read it while standing with his arm leaning on a chimney-piece, and was not able to lay it aside till he had finished it, when he found his arm totally benumbed. In 1745, Johnson issued proposals for a new edition of Shakspeare, but laid them aside for a time, owing to the great expectations entertained of the edition then promised by Warburton.

For several years, except a few trifles in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and his famous "Prologue delivered at the Opening of Drury Lane Theatre," he seems to have written

nothing. But in 1745 appeared the prospectus of his most laborious undertaking, the "English Dictionary." This continued his principal occupation for some years, and, as Boswell truly observes, "served to relieve his constitutional melancholy by the steady, yet not oppressive, employment it secured him." In its unity, too, and gigantic size, the task seemed fitted for the powers of so strong a man; and although he says he dismissed it at last with "frigid tranquillity," he had no doubt felt its influence during the time to be at once that of a protecting guardian and of an inspiring genius. In 1749, he published his "Vanity of Human Wishes," for which he received the sum of fifteen guineas,—a miserable recompense for a poem which Byron pronounces "sublime," and which is as true as it is magnificent in thought, and terse in language. In the same year, Garrick had "Irene" acted, but it was "damned" the first night, although it dragged on heavily for eight nights more. When the author was asked how he felt at its ill-success, he replied, "Like the Monument!" How different from Addison, walking restlessly, and perspiring with anxiety behind the scenes, while the fate of "Cato" was hanging in the balance!

In 1750 he began his "Rambler," and carried it on with only tolerable success till 1752. The world has long ago made up its mind on the merits and defects of this periodical, its masculine thought and energetic diction, alternating with disguised common-place and (as he would have said himself) "turgescent tameness"—its critical and fictitious papers, often so rich in fancy, and felicitous in expression, mixed with others which exhibit "bulk without

spirit vast," and are chiefly remarkable for their bold, bad innovations on that English tongue of which the author was piling up the standard Dictionary. Many have dwelt severely on Johnson's inequalities, without attending to their cause; that was unquestionably the "body of death" which hung so heavily upon his system, and rendered writing at times a positive torment. Let his fastidious critics remember that he never spent a single day, of which he could say that he was entirely well, and free from pain, and that his spirits were often so depressed, that he was more than once seen on his knees, praying God to preserve his understanding.

A great calamity now visited his household. This was the death of his wife. She expired on the 17th of March 1752. She had been married to him sixteen years; and notwithstanding the difference of age, and other causes of disagreement, he seems to have loved her with sincerity, and to have lamented her death with deep and long-continued sorrow. He relaxed not, however, an instant in his literary labours, continued the preparation of his Dictionary, and contributed a few lively and vigorous papers to the "Adventurer"—a paper, edited by Dr Hawkesworth, a writer of some talent, who did his best to tower up to the measure and stature of the "Rambler."

During this time Johnson was filling his house with a colony of poor dependants,—such as Mrs Anna Williams, a soured female poetaster; and Levet, a tenth-rate medical peripatetic, who, as well as Hodge, the great lexicographer's cat, and Francis Barber, his black servant, now share in his immortality,—besides becoming acquainted with such men of eminence as Reynolds, the inimitable painter; Bennet

Langton, the amiable and excellent country-gentleman; and Beauclerk, the smart and witty "man about town." In 1755 (exactly a hundred years ago), Johnson chastised Lord Chesterfield for his mean, finessing conduct to him about his Dictionary, in a letter unparalleled, unless in "Junius," for its noble and condensed scorn,—a scorn which "burns frore," cold performing the effect of fire—and which reached that callous Lord, under the sevenfold shield of his conceit and conventionalism; visited Oxford, and was presented by acclamation with that degree of M.A. which he had left twenty-four years before without receiving; and, in fine, issued his Dictionary, the work of eight years, and which, undoubtedly, is the truest monument of his talent, industry, and general capacity, if not of the richness of his invention, or of the strength of his genius. He had obtained for it only the sum of £1575, which was all spent in the progress of the work; and he was compelled again to become a contributor to the periodical press, writing copiously and characteristically to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Universal Visitor*, and the *Literary Magazine*. In 1756, he was arrested for a debt of £5, 18s., but was relieved by Richardson, the novelist. In the same year he resumed his intention of an edition of Shakspeare, of which he issued proposals, and which he promised to finish in little more than a year, although nine years were to elapse ere it saw the light. In 1758, he began the "Idler," which reached the 103d No., and was considered lighter and more agreeable than the "Rambler." He has seldom written anything so powerful as his fable of "The Vultures." In 1759, his mother died, at the age of ninety,—an event which deeply affected

him. Soon after this, and to defray the expenses of her funeral, he wrote his brilliant tale of "Rasselas," in the evenings of a single week,—a rare feat of readiness and rapid power, reminding one of Byron writing the "Corsair" in a fortnight, and of Sir Walter Scott finishing "Guy Mannering" in three weeks. There are perhaps more invention and more fancy in "Rasselas" than in any of his works, although a gloom, partly the shadow of his mother's death, and partly springing from his own temperament, rests too heavily on its pages. He received one hundred guineas for the copyright. In 1762, the Earl of Bute, both as a reward for past services, and as a prepayment of future, bestowed on him a pension of £300 for life. This raised a clamour against him, which he treated with silent contempt.

In 1763 occurred what was really a most important event in Johnson's life,—his acquaintance with Boswell,—who attached himself to him with a devotion reminding one more of the canine species than of man, sacrificed to him much of his time, his feelings, his very individuality, and became qualified to write a biography, in which fulness, interest, minute detail, and dramatic skill have never been equalled or approached. In 1764, Johnson founded the celebrated "Literary Club,"—perhaps the most remarkable cluster of distinguished men that ever existed; and in 1765 he was created LL.D. by Trinity College, Dublin. In 1765, too, he published his "Shakspeare;" and he became intimate with the Thrales,—the husband being a great brewer in Southwark; the wife, a lady of literary tastes, better known as Madame Piozzi, the author of "Anecdotes of Dr Johnson;" both distinguished for their attachment to him. He was often

domesticated in their house for months together. In 1767 he had an interview with George III., in the library of the Queen's house; which, because Johnson preserved his self-possession, and talked with his usual precision and power, has been recounted by Boswell as if it had been a conversation with an apostle or an angel. In 1770 he did some work for his pension in a pamphlet entitled the "False Alarm," defending the conduct of the Ministry in the case of the Middlesex election. In 1771 he wrote another political pamphlet, entitled "Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falklands' Islands;" and five years later appeared "Taxation no Tyranny,"—an elaborate defence of the American war. Johnson was too dogmatic, and too fiercely passionate for a good political writer; and these productions added nothing to his fame, and increased the number of his enemies.

In 1773 he fulfilled his long-cherished purpose of visiting Scotland and the Hebrides, the story of which trip he told afterwards in his usual rotund and massive style, and which was recounted with far more liveliness and verisimilitude by Boswell. In 1774 he lost Goldsmith, who had long been his friend, whom he had counselled, rebuked, assisted, loved, and laughed at, and at whose death he was deeply grieved. In 1775, the publication of his "Tour to the Hebrides" brought him in collision with the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, and especially with James Macpherson, to whom Johnson sent a letter which crushed him like a catapult. Macpherson, as well as Rob Roy, was only strong on his native heath, and off it was no match for old Sam, whose prejudices, passions, and gigantic powers, combined to

make him altogether irresistible in a literary duel. The same year, the University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Laws; and in the close of it, he paid a visit, along with the Thrales, to Paris.

In 1776 nothing remarkable occurred in his history, unless it were the interview which Boswell so admirably manoeuvred to bring about between him and Jack Wilkes. Everybody remembers how well the bear and the monkey for the time agreed, and how both turned round to snub the spaniel, who had been the medium of their introduction to each other.

In 1777 he was requested by the London booksellers to prefix prefaces to the "English Poets," part of which was issued the next year, and the rest in 1780 and 1781, as the "Lives of English Poets." This work has generally been regarded as Johnson's masterpiece. It nowhere, indeed, displays so much of the creative, the inventive, the poetical, as his "Rasselas," and many of his smaller tales and fictions. Its judgments, too, have been often and justly controverted. The book is, undoubtedly, a storehouse of his prejudices, as well as of his wisdom. Its treatment of Milton, the man, for instance, is insufferably insolent, although ample justice is done to Milton, the poet of the "Paradise Lost." Some poetasters he has overpraised, and some true but minor poets he has thrust down too far in the scale. But the work, as a whole, is full of inextinguishable life, and has passages verging on the eloquence and power of genius. A piece of stern, sober, yet broad and animated composition, rather careless in dates, and rather cursory in many of its criticisms, it displays unequalled force of thought, and

pointed vigour of style, and when taken in connexion with the age of the author (seventy), is altogether marvellous. Truly there were "giants in those days," and this was a Briareus.

For the details of his later life, his conversations, growing weakness, little journeys, unconquerable love of literature, &c., we must refer our readers to Boswell's teeming narrative. In 1783, he had a stroke of palsy, which deprived him for a time of speech. That returned to him, however, but a complication of complaints, including asthma, sciatica, and dropsy, began gradually to undermine his powerful frame. He continued to the last to cherish the prospect of a tour to Italy, but never accomplished his purpose. Death had all along been his great object of dread, and its fast approaches were regarded with unmitigated terror. "Cut deeper," he cried to the physicians who were operating on his limbs; "cut deeper; I don't care for pain, but I fear death." He fixed all his dying hope upon the Cross, and recommended Clarke's Sermons as fullest on the doctrine of a Propitiation. He spoke of the Bible and of the Sabbath with the warmest feelings of belief and respect. At last, on the 13th day of December 1784, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, this great, good man, whose fears had subsided, and who had become as a little child, fell asleep in Jesus. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, on Monday, December 20th, and his funeral was attended by the most distinguished men of the day.

Perhaps no literary man ever exerted, during his lifetime, the same personal influence as Samuel Johnson. Shelley used to call Byron the "Byronic Energy," from a sense of his

exceeding power. The author of "Rasselas" was the "Johnsonian Energy;" and the demon within him, if not so ethereal and terrible as Byron's, was far more massive, equally strong, and in conversation, at least, much more ready to do his work. First-rate conversation generally springs from a desire to shine, or from the effort of a full mind to relieve itself, or from exuberant animal spirits, or from deep-seated misery. In Johnson it sprang from a combination of all these causes. He went to conversation as to an arena—his mind was richly-stored, even to overflowing—in company his spirits uniformly rose—and yet there was always at his heart a burden of wretchedness, seeking solace, not in silence, but in speech. Hence, with the exception of Burke, no one ever matched him in talk; and Burke, we imagine, although profounder in thought, more varied in learning, and more brilliant in imagination, seldom fairly pitted himself against Johnson. He was a younger man, and held the sage in too much reverence to encounter him often with any deliberate and determined purpose of contest. He frequently touched the shield of the general challenger, not with the sharp, but with the butt-end of his lance. He said, on one occasion, when asked why he had not talked more in Johnson's company, "Oh! it is enough for me to have rung the bell to him!"

In all Johnson's works you see the traces of the triumphant conversationalist—of one who has met with few to contradict, and scarcely one to rival him. Hence the dogmatic strength and certainty, and hence, too, the one-sidedness and limitation of much of his writings. He does not "allow for the wind." He seems to anticipate no reply,

and to defy all criticism. One is tempted to quote the words of Solomon, "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." No such searching seems ever to have entered into Johnson's apprehensions. His sentences roll forth like the laws of the Medes and Persians; his praise alights with the authoritativeness of a sun-burst on a mountain; summit; and when he blames, he seems to add, like an ancient doomster, the words, "I pronounce for doom." With Burke, it was very different. Accustomed to parliamentary debate in its vicissitudes and interchange—gifted, too, with a prophetic insight into coming objections, which "cast their shadows before," and with an almost diseased subtlety of thinking, he binds up his answers to opponents with every thesis he propounds; and his paragraphs sometimes remind you of the plan of generals in great emergencies, putting foot soldiers on the same saddles with cavalry—they seem to *ride double*.

This is not the place, nor have we room, to dilate on Johnson's obvious merits and faults—his straight-forward sincerity—his strong manly sense—the masterly force with which he grasps all his subjects—the measured fervour of his style—the precision and vivacity of his shorter sentences—the grand swell and sonorousness of his longer; on his frequent monotony—his *sesguipedalia verba*—the "timorous meaning" which sometimes lurks under his "boldest words;" or on the deep *chiaroscuro* which discolours all his pictures of man, nature, society, and human life. We have now only to speak of his poetry. That is, unfortunately, small in amount, although its quality is so excellent as to excite keen

regret that he had not, as he once intended, written many more pieces in the style of "London," and the "Vanity of Human Wishes." In these, the model of his mere manner is Pope, although coloured by Juvenal, his Latin original; but the matter and spirit are intensely his own. In "London," satire seems swelling out of itself into something stronger and statelier—it is the apotheosis of that kind of poetry. You see in it a mind purer and sterner than Dryden's, or Pope's, or Churchill's, or even Juvenal's; "doing well to be angry" with a degenerate age, and a false, cowardly country, of which he deems himself unworthy to be a citizen. If there is rather too much of the *saeva indignatio*, which Swift speaks of as lacerating his heart, it is a nobler and less selfish ire than his, and the language and verse which it inspires are full of the very soul of dignity. In the "Vanity of Human Wishes," he becomes one of those "hunters whose game is man" (to use the language of Soame Jenyns, in that essay on "The Origin of Evil," which Johnson, in the *Literary Review*, so mercilessly lashed); and from assailing premiers, parliaments, and the vices of London and England, he passes, in a very solemn spirit, to expose the vain hopes, wishes, and efforts of humanity at large. Parts of this poem are written more in sorrow than in anger, and parts more in anger than in sorrow. The portraits of Wolsey, Bacon, and Charles the Twelfth, are admirable in their execution, and in their adaptation to the argument of the piece; and the last paragraph, for truth and masculine energy is unsurpassed, we believe, in the whole compass of ethical poetry. We are far from assenting to the statement we once heard ably and elaborately advocated, "that there had been no *strong*

poetry in Britain since the two satires of Johnson;" and we are still further from classing their author with the Shakspeares, Miltons, Wordsworths, and Coleridges of song; but we are nevertheless prepared, not only for the sake of these two satires, of his prologue, and of some other pieces in verse, but on account of the general spirit of much of his prose, to pronounce him potentially, if not actually, a great poet.

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JOHNSON'S POEMS.

LONDON:

A POEM IN IMITATION OF THE THIRD SATIRE OF JUVENAL, 1738.

"—Quis ineptæ
Tam patiens urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?"

—JUVENAL.

Though grief and fondness in my breast rebel
When injured Thales[1] bids the town farewell,
Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend;
I praise the hermit, but regret the friend;
Resolved, at length, from vice and London far,
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
Give to St David one true Briton more.
For who would leave, unbribed, Hibernia's land,
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand? 10

There none are swept by sudden fate away,
But all whom hunger spares, with age decay:
Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire,
And now a rabble rages, now a fire;
Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay,
And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;
Here falling houses thunder on your head,
And here a female atheist talks you dead.
    While Thales waits the wherry that contains
Of dissipated wealth the small remains,
On Thames's bank in silent thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood;
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza[2] birth,
We kneel and kiss the consecrated earth;
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew,
And call Britannia's glories back to view;
Behold her cross triumphant on the main,
The guard of commerce, and the dread of Spain;
Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,
Or English honour grew a standing jest.
    A transient calm the happy scenes bestow,
And for a moment lull the sense of woe.
At length awaking, with contemptuous frown,
Indignant Thales eyes the neighbouring town.
Since worth, he cries, in these degenerate days,
Wants e'en the cheap reward of empty praise;
In those cursed walls, devote to vice and gain,
Since unrewarded science toils in vain;
Since hope but soothes to double my distress,
And every moment leaves my little less;